

Red medicine



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This event relates to Women's Studies and issues discussed in our class in many ways. To start, I want to bring up the idea of medicine. In Gonzales book, she mentioned traditional medicine of indigenous people strengthening Western society's own healthcare. Some example of traditional medicine are herbs and other plants in the environment they are from, and also some invisible places such as dreams and Just the spirit world. In contrast, most of the medicines that were brought up in week four's readings were scientific kinds. For example, Davis-Flood's article Gender and Ritual: Giving Birth the American Way mentioned the " doses of the synthetic hormone Piton to speed their labors" (455). The United States' ideas of medicine for pregnant women are ones that speed up birth, minimize pain, and anything scientific and unnatural. The only similarity I can find with the type of traditional medicine mentioned in Red Medicine from week four is the natural way Nail Vinegar Lopez gave birth and her spiritual connection with her environment ND family in the bathtub.

The concept of authority was briefly mentioned during Patricia Gonzales discussion and was also mentioned in class. Gonzalez said that women experience authority of their body when they are sitting or squatting as they give birth. In Take Tracer's Take and Aziza, Takeaways authorities came from her decision of doing natural birth and avoid doctors and epidurals. Like the squatting and sitting authority Gonzalez mentioned, authority seemed to be present when women is in control of her body, herself and not under science and technology.

However, in Davis-Flood's article *Gender and Ritual: Giving Birth the American Way*, from the moment women decide they want to have the birth of their children in the hospital, all the authority seemed to disappear.

Suzanne Sampson stated " I would come into the hospital... And they slap you in a wheelchair! It made me suddenly feel like I -wasn't in control any more" (Davis-Floyd 457). This is very significant when discussing the authority of women in labor. The concept of ceremony was another issue that was mentioned by Gonzalez and in the film we watched in class called *Birth Day*.

The whole concept of birth, like from the moment of knowing a child is coming into the world to the birth itself, is a ceremony stated by Patricia Gonzalez. She said during the event that " the room's atmosphere changes as the woman gives birth. " Nail Vinegar Lopez saw her birth as a ceremony as she is taped with her new daughter and her two other children and husband in the same tub welcoming Tama into the world. Specifically, Nail said " I do hope that people who see the birth of my daughter Tama, and see me as a woman giving birth, will most of all just see that a woman can give birth.

A woman can be Joyous giving birth" (*Birth Day*). Another quote that relates to ceremony from our readings was by Joy Harps *Three Generations of Women's Birth Experience* which quotes " birth is one of the most sacred acts we take part in and witness in our lives" (188). Bettor navels taken tans class, ten only n " experience " I nave Ana was discussing my aunt's two planned C-section. I knew giving birth is one of the most painful experiences

women will have in their lives. With this fact, prior to taking this class I was set on having a planned C-section when the time comes.

However, after eating the materials for week four and listening to Patricia Gonzales talk about trying to reconnect to the natural world, it made me open my eyes to the other possibilities of birth, mainly the natural way. I have always associated birth with contractions, sweat, and pain. Now that I am better educated, I am trying to think of birth as a ceremony, in Gonzales words, because it is. With everything said, I'm not completely set on having a natural birth. I do truly love the idea of proving that women do not need the 'aid' of technology and even science when it comes to giving birth.

Though I am not 100% on having a natural birth in the future, I do know that I will try to avoid having a C-section. The main reason I say this is because of Alias's story from Karen Broody play Birth. Her description of how she felt when she was robbed of the chance of giving birth to her baby not going under the knife was truly heart wrenching. It made me cringe when reading the part when she explained that one minute she was pregnant and the next she wasn't. She didn't even go through labor. This description reminded me of what Gonzalez said about how the womb of a woman is a spirit world.

It seems like if I undergo C-section like Lisa, this spirit world would disappear and not even be experienced. I learned that outside of the United States, there is a huge percentage of women who give birth naturally, and my new mindset from all the learning in the past few weeks is that if others can do it, so can I; if they believe they can do it, I can also believe it. 4. I would have liked if Patricia Gonzalez described in more detail what the meaning behind

the title of her book " Red Medicine". I feel like it is such a unique title that there is more to it than Just Red Medicine. For example, what exactly does the word 'red' symbolize?

Does it symbolize more than one thing? Also, after becoming more interested in the profession of midwives, I would have liked if I heard some of her experiences as a midwife or of other midwives she has worked with, if any. 5. What will it take to convince the non-indigenous part of America to try to use the " red medicine" Patricia Gonzalez researched for her book instead of mostly relying on technology and science? Most, if not all, the women in the United States have the choice in either going natural in the comfort of their homes or going to the hospital to allow their doctors' orders.

I feel it's really important to firstly encourage women about the power they have over their body, that they don't need to be hooked up into an IV and given an epidural (Davis-Floyd 455-56) to give birth to their babies. Women should be more educated on natural births that take place in an environment they connect and are comfortable with. Like from the movie Birth Day, the mother was connected to the natural world of her home and family. Lastly, I think women should empower themselves to think of the labor and birth of their child as a ceremony instead of focusing on the pain.