



Why Dr. Mariel Buqué Believes Healing Leads to Liberation

The Ivy League educated holistic psychologist is revolutionizing her field with Indigenous healing, curanderos, sound baths, and Reiki therapy. Dr. Buqué breaks down her work in mental wellness, and how we can use “micro moments” to connect with ourselves.

Alicia Menendez:

Dr. Mariel Buqué, knew at a very early age that she wanted to help people heal. Today, she's a Holistic Psychologist, an Intergenerational Trauma Expert. You probably follow her on Instagram where her daily prompts always make me stop, mid scroll to think, and to breathe. I was struck during our conversation by Dr. Buqué's energy. You'll hear it disorient me a number of times, but it's clear that she has done the work herself. And we're going to talk about what it takes to approach your life and you're healing with that same curiosity, courage, and intention.

Dr. Buqué, I'm going to toss a question that you often ask on Instagram, back at you. Which is, how's your soul doing today?

Dr. Mariel Buqué:

That's very sweet. It's actually pretty at peace. It's filled with ease and yeah, it's feeling pretty good today. Mind, body, and spirit are pretty steady. How about you, how's yours?

Menendez: It's cluttered, it's what I would say.

Buqué: Cluttered, I haven't heard that one before.

Menendez: Something you've made me think about is that part of that is lifetime work. And part of that is just day to day work of ease or decluttering.

Buqué.: Absolutely. Yeah. That's a really great way of framing it. It absolutely is a bit of both, right? Because even when we're doing the lifetime work, there are some days that can just, just by way of being the days that they are, right. Just produce a bit more just equilibrium for us. And that doesn't necessarily mean that the work that we've been doing the long term work is vain, or that it's not working. It's just that it's just a new day where the daily restoration needs to take place.

Menendez: So many of those days. As a child, you knew you were destined to do this 5 years old, you immigrate from the Dominican Republic to the United States, 6 years old, you're in an immigration office, sort of look around the room and the need for healing becomes very apparent to you. What was it you saw as a child? What was it you were picking up on in that room ?

Buqué: Now that I'm able to see it in retrospect, I know that it's, it was definitely a lot of energy that was captured in these cold walls. If you think about it, temperature wise, as far as energy, you have these cold gray walls and these warm people admitting a lot of heat because they're just exercising a lot of nervous energy, a lot of tense, filled energy, a lot of sadness, just a lot of energy. That's being emitted by the people within these spaces. Now that I'm very much also a holistic psychologist and an energy person, right? A Reiki master, a very energy focused. I see the energy that was being emitted in these spaces and how much that I was capturing.

And I, myself being somebody that's very, just emotionally attuned, and has always been that there was just something that I was seeing in those spaces that maybe was a little bit beyond what someone scans in the room may have been seeing on the surface. I mean, you saw a lot of despair, right? There was very vivid anxiety, a lot of also a lot of taking care of each other. There was a lot of that. So there was a lot of love among strangers. There was also a lot of what I was capturing, which was the emotional energy that was so palpable. And one might even say that for a lot of highly sensitive people, maybe even overwhelming. And maybe that's why it was so memorable because there was just so much there.

Menendez: As a very sensitive person. And especially as a very sensitive kid that really resonates with me. And still, I think my framework would've been, I'm gonna be, become an immigration lawyer and help people like the people in this room, not I'm gonna heal the trauma that is happening in this room. How did that even cross your mind? Were there healers in your family?

Buqué: I thought that I was going to actually go in the direction of doing something like the law, right? Making the work that I would be doing for my community applicable in that way. But a part of the reason why psychology didn't even enter the frame of mind that I held at any point in my life before late 20's was because this really wasn't a profession that was even spoken about or absorbed by my community in any capacity. For me, a lot of this orientation around mental health and psychology came by happenstance. I was actually doing some volunteer work cause I just wanted something that would connect me back to my community. And the volunteer work started taking shape in the mental health field. I started choosing what volunteer sites I could go to. And they started looking more and more like mental health.

There are a lot of people in my family that we call emotional intelligence, psychological mindedness. I feel they are psychologically minded and have this way of being the center of healing for other women or other people in our community. And it's just a natural thing

about them that they just happen to be that person. They have a gift that because they didn't actually pursue the career. It just wasn't exercised the way that mine was. But I do believe that there is something about the feminine energy in my family that already carries a lot of that healing energy.

Menendez: I have never thought about it quite that way. And yet, that is exactly right. And everyone has that person in their family. Dr. Buqué, What is it in your own life that informs your approach to this work?

Buqué: My family is, they are the root of just who I am, my family and my community. I have to say community is an extension of family. Because I think it's just, my family is just very big, right? We're deeply connected still to most of our family in the Dominican Republic. So all of that is all a part of what motivates me every day. And what roots me and grounds me and I think more specifically, it's one, it's the love. My family, my mom always used to say because my mom was the first one to immigrate with us. And then my dad came later. My mom is always saying, I don't have much to give you. I don't have basically anything. Because we grew up, financially deprived, but I do have love. So she would always say that. And I just remember my life was never lacking in love.

It may lack other things, but love was always so prominent. And so love still remains, right? Love is always that thread that kind of always flows through my family in my life. And I remember I was talking to a friend recently about the healing power of love and even how that actually is something that mental health clinicians can, and do bring into the work. When you care deeply about the people that you serve, you do it with love. Right? So my family and my community deeply informs my work by the power of love because I love what I do, I love helping people to heal and I do what I do with love, right? So.

Menendez: I love that so much. And I got to tell you, I can tell sitting here computer screens between us, that that energy is still in this space. I can feel it. You go to Columbia right after Colombia. You're still very much in the clinical space. How did you take that foundation in clinical psychology and begin to layer onto it? Things like the sound baths, the Reiki, the racial justice work?

Buqué: The perspective in the approach from where I have been trained is a social justice oriented approach to psychology called multicultural counseling. The way that I was trained from day one and my clinical program had been from that perspective the layering of the more holistic methods and also the methods that were culturally responsive that came with a mixture of different influences that were both professional and personal. So some of the professional influences that I was actually incredibly lucky, and this is almost unheard of, especially in our field to have been trained by clinically by individuals that were mostly latinequis. So my two mentors are, one's Cuban, Dr. Marijohn, and then Dr. Balas is Puerto Rican and so. One time when I felt deeply distressed as a student, about how I could advocate for my client, and how anyone would actually believe this Dominican immigrant, anything that she had to say, right?

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And I remember my supervisor saying. Well, this Dominican immigrant and this Puerto Rican from Brooklyn are gonna go in there and state their case, and fight for our patient. And I just remember feeling so held and feeling so seen. These individuals were really in just critical in formalizing my understanding of how we need to see the whole person and how we need to make sure that we're not being rigid. And even traditional one might say in our understanding of what is happening to the human being that's in front of us.

So they really opened my eyes, seeing the humanity of a person. And Dr. Marijohn, I remember that she wanted to bring in, we have this thing called grand rounds or clinical meetings, but within one of them, she wanted to bring a curandera in to help all of us latinequis clinicians, on the Spanish speaking team to actually have a more thorough understanding of how we can integrate our understanding of curanderismo and especially honor the individuals that were part of our patient roster that had this orientation or belief around curanderismo she wanted us to be well versed and to honor, that aspect of healing work.

I offered that example just to show you, these were the moment I started picking up bits and pieces of, this is how you do the work. I was like, this is it. This is where it's, this is what produces healing. It's seeing the whole person, it's integrating, indigenous healing practices that've already been in the community, and that do produce profound healing and have for generations. We have to bring that in. And so that's why it's been an evolution. It didn't just start there. So when you see some of the work or anything that is reflected from 10 years back, you're seeing only portions of it. And I was also a little bit shy about saying that I was doing some of the things that I was doing within my clinical spaces, because the overwhelming majority of mental health clinicians do not practice from a holistic place. And I think we're just getting around to having more of an open-mind as a mental health field around these practices.

Menendez: Okay, I need you to solve for me a debate that we've been having in our girls, WhatsApp chat. Which is whether or not remote Reiki can actually work?

Buqué: Wow. I was just talking to my sister about that an hour ago. It does, the energy that is produced can be so profound. It's so interesting because when I was explaining distance Reiki to my sister

Menendez: Sorry, Can you explain what Reiki is for someone who might not know?

Buqué: Yeah, absolutely. So Reiki is energy healing and what it is a form of energy healing that actually it emphasizes a person's natural ability to self-heal through energy and through energetic exchanges. So there is usually a Reiki facilitator and that person would just channel healing energy onto another person or a group. And the healing energy will go wherever it is needed. So for example, you're performing a Reiki healing session on an individual and you're focusing on specific chakras or areas within their bodies. And the healing that needs to take place is healing that is all the way, down to their toes. Then the

healing energy will go exactly where it is needed because the body intuitively knows where the healing needs to take place.

And the same goes for Reiki, that is distance based. So a person can actually perform a Reiki session on someone that is not close by, and provide that Reiki energy over to that person and it will reach the person in the ways that the person needs, and transition into the place within their bodies, that the energy is needed. When I was explaining it to my sister, she was saying, "Wow, it's almost like when somebody prays for you and they're not right there, sometimes they're not there. They'll say, I'll pray for you and I'll keep you in my prayers." And that prayer has power and energy. And there's something about the prayer that works. So yeah, the short answer is yes, absolutely has immense power.

Menendez: Part of what intrigues me about the ethos of your work is this core notion of liberation. And as we seek that for ourselves, I wonder what has it taken you to become emotionally liberated?

Buqué: That's a great question. I've had to be courageous around this work when I'm doing my own healing work. Sometimes I chuckled, I laugh because it just, sometimes it just brings so much humanity to the work that I require of others because I see why people sometimes avoid doing the work cause it can feel awful. Right. But I think for the most part, they have taken me to be courageous on a daily basis. And I mean daily, I mean I do healing work on a daily basis on myself whenever I am confronted with a reality of my own that I have to face or new point of insight to my own ways of just being human. I approach it with a curious mind and I approach it with courage because I want to see myself heal to the extent that I am capable. And I want to see that in other people, but I can't require of anyone else something that I'm not willing to do myself. So a lot of the work that I do is work that stands from that place from place of courage and intention.

Menendez: I partly asked that as the type of person who was like, well, I'm going to have to get on my planner and put aside 30 minutes to meditate and 30 minutes to journal. And you advocate for something that I think makes it all a lot easier, which is almost finding micro moments, finding yourself in transit and taking a minute to check-in with yourself. I think part of what has happened in this era of self-care is that it's become another to do. Rather than an integrated practice in our lives. And that's what I'm really interested in. How do we just regularly learn to check-in with ourselves?

Buqué: Sometimes the universe just offers us moments. Yesterday, I happened to step outside very briefly and all of a sudden I felt this gentle breeze. And I was like, wow, that's what a summer breeze feels like." It was just a moment where I could just offer myself an opportunity to feel the gentleness of that breeze on my skin, everything that was happening around me just took a pause and I just gave myself two minutes to just be, and I was randomly in a parking lot. Right. So it's not like I was in a meditation space or sitting outside, crisscross applesauce. It was just a moment, where I was able to offer myself an

opportunity to be mindful and take in a moment that the universe gave me. And that's the thing about sometimes these micro moments is that they're there.

We just need to take them. We just need to offer ourselves an opportunity to just take it. I stopped scheduling sound bath meditations, like within social media, I would just pop in all of a sudden I'm live. And if you're around, let's do this. Let's gather if you're willing, if you're offering yourself that moment. Right? Because sometimes scheduling, it was a bit of pressure for the people that are hoping to just take in this process. And when you add that pressure, you're also adding the internal pressure to soak it all in rather than. Wow, look at that. There's a sound back happening. Let me just kind of Waltz in there and just like take in whatever's being offered.

It's just very different, right? So we don't need to have the structure around a self-care practice. We just need to be open to it and open to all the possibilities in the morning. When you sip in your coffee, that's a moment. That's a moment where you could offer yourself a mindful processing of the just how soothing the warm liquid is. And maybe the aroma is something that is something you may want to focus on. I mean, there's just so many moments in the day that offer us an opportunity to, to step back and heal. The more open that we are to those moments, the more of them we'll see.

Menendez: I feel like in the course of a conversation, it could make a 365 day year calendar quotes to like slow you down, get you centered. What did I miss? What do you never get asked?

Buqué: I think I never get asked about the future. I am going to be training in health practitioner by the Chopra Organization. And I'm also expanding my somatic practices and every time that I learn something new, I want to make it public. I want everybody to know about it because I do believe that, that's in part how we increase access. So I'm excited to learn. This is going to be a learning season for me right now, from now until 2022. I'm excited about getting back into that learning mode and acquiring more ways of being able to produce healing and what I love to do even more, which is just sharing it with the world.

Menendez: Dr. Buqué I just, I love you so much. I love following you regularly. I feel like someone could listen to this without actually listening to the words and just feel the energy and know exactly who is the energy person and who showed up cluttered. So thank you for being amazing.

Buqué: Thank you. It has been such a pleasure. I appreciate you sharing space and energy with me. Thank you so much for that

Menendez: Before I let you go. I want to hone in on the way Dr. Buqué described checking in with ourselves. And that is to say it doesn't always have to be a big elaborate scheduled thing. It can be spontaneous, small, quick, the warmth of your coffee, the joy of a moment of quiet. There's an expression Dr. Buqué used more than once, and I'm going to try to incorporate into my own thinking. And that is offer myself an opportunity. Offer myself an

opportunity to feel the breeze, offer myself an opportunity to be mindful. Offer myself an opportunity to just take it in. I don't know about you, but I am always moving so fast and looking for opportunities outside of myself as things that will come to me or as things that I can relentlessly pursue. And I found this idea of offering myself an opportunity to be radical and liberating.

Hey, thank you so much for listening. *Latina to Latina* is executive produced and owned by Juleyka Lantigua and me, Alicia Menendez. Sarah McClure is our senior producer. Our lead producer is Cedric Wilson. Kojin Tashiro is our associate sound designer. Stephen Colón mixed this episode. Jimmy Gutierrez is our managing editor. Manuela Bedoya is our social media editor and ad ops lead. We love hearing from you, email us at hola at Latinatolatina.com. Slide into our DMs on Instagram or tweet us at Latina to Latina. Remember to subscribe or follow us on radio public, Apple podcast, Google podcast, good pods, wherever you're listening right now. And remember, every time you share the podcast or you leave a review, you help us to grow as a community.

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