

Margie Olivarez

Why is celebrating the Day of the Dead such an important tradition for you?

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Celebrating the Day of the Dead is important to me because it's a way for us to keep alive the memories of those loved ones that have passed away. And sharing their, their experiences, their memories, you know, death is, you know, sometimes people think it's a sad thing. But it should be a joyful thing because we are filled with memories of those that departed.

Does this holiday help you in your grief process?

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It helps me in my grief process, because I love talking about those that have gone before me, especially my parents, I've been celebrating Dia de los Muertos before they were gone. And so just remembering my grandparents at that time, these were individuals that unfortunately, I did not get to meet. But through their stories that were shared with us, I felt like I knew them. And so some of the consejos that they would give their children is like, I feel like they were given to me too, because I heard them all the time. And so when I lost my dad, it was something "Oh, now I get to add him to my, my altar." But I was able to talk to people, this is my papi. And this is what he did. And this is what he liked to drink, you know, because that's one of the things we also share is we put their favorite drinks and favorite foods on there. So it's a good reason to go and pick up that can of Busch when you don't even drink Busch or put a pack of cigarettes when you don't even smoke but that was there that was them. That's what we remember so.

What do you put on your altar? What do you consider a must-have for this type of altar?

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Well, a must have is you definitely would want to put a picture of your loved one so that people can see who it is that you're remembering, as you're talking to them about it. You want to put some marigolds. That's a Mexican orange flower. And it's known for its strong aroma. So it also is believed that that's what brings the souls back to our homes. And so we want to put that on there. You put a glass of water for the thirsty souls when they arrive. And you also have candles for light. We have Calavera skulls. And they're the bright and colorful and beautiful skulls, not those ugly ones. Those represent the departed ones as well too. And if you're really I guess tempting to you can even make your own sugar skulls. So another thing, we put their favorite food items. So it could be pan de muerto it could be tamales, whatever it is that they they like so you can definitely put all the things that remind you of your loved ones, but definitely want to have marigolds. You want to have candles, you want to have their photos. And of course, for us that practice the Catholic faith we put our saints up, you know, if they had a favorite saint, we'll put that up as well too. And there's also levels so you definitely want to have three levels. And what I mean by levels is like tiers, you know, like staircase. It just represents the different levels that those souls go through.