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CHIME THROUGH THE YEARS

## **“WHO CARES” BY DANIELA REA**

*CHIME FOR CHANGE Through the Years: The Female Fabric is a series curated by CHIME Managing Editor Mariane Pearl featuring stories from the CHIME journalism platform archives by women around the world.*



*From October 8-12, 2018, 12 intrepid female journalists participated in CHIME FOR CHANGE’s third Women Bylines workshop in Mexico City, led by CHIME FOR CHANGE’s Managing Editor Mariane Pearl. The five-day workshop provided a safe space for writers, filmmakers and photographers to discuss and develop under-reported stories affecting women in Mexico. Participants produced seven powerful pieces—four films and three multimedia pieces.*



My name is Daniela Rea and I have two daughters, Naira and Emilia, aged 5 and 2 years-old. Until I became their mothers, I was a woman living in a world built by and for men. **A woman who was used to carving a space for herself in a patriarchal world, to compete rather than to help, to legitimate what was expected of me, rather than figuring out who I was and how I could best contribute to my community.** Giving birth to my daughters made me reflect about what it means to be a woman.

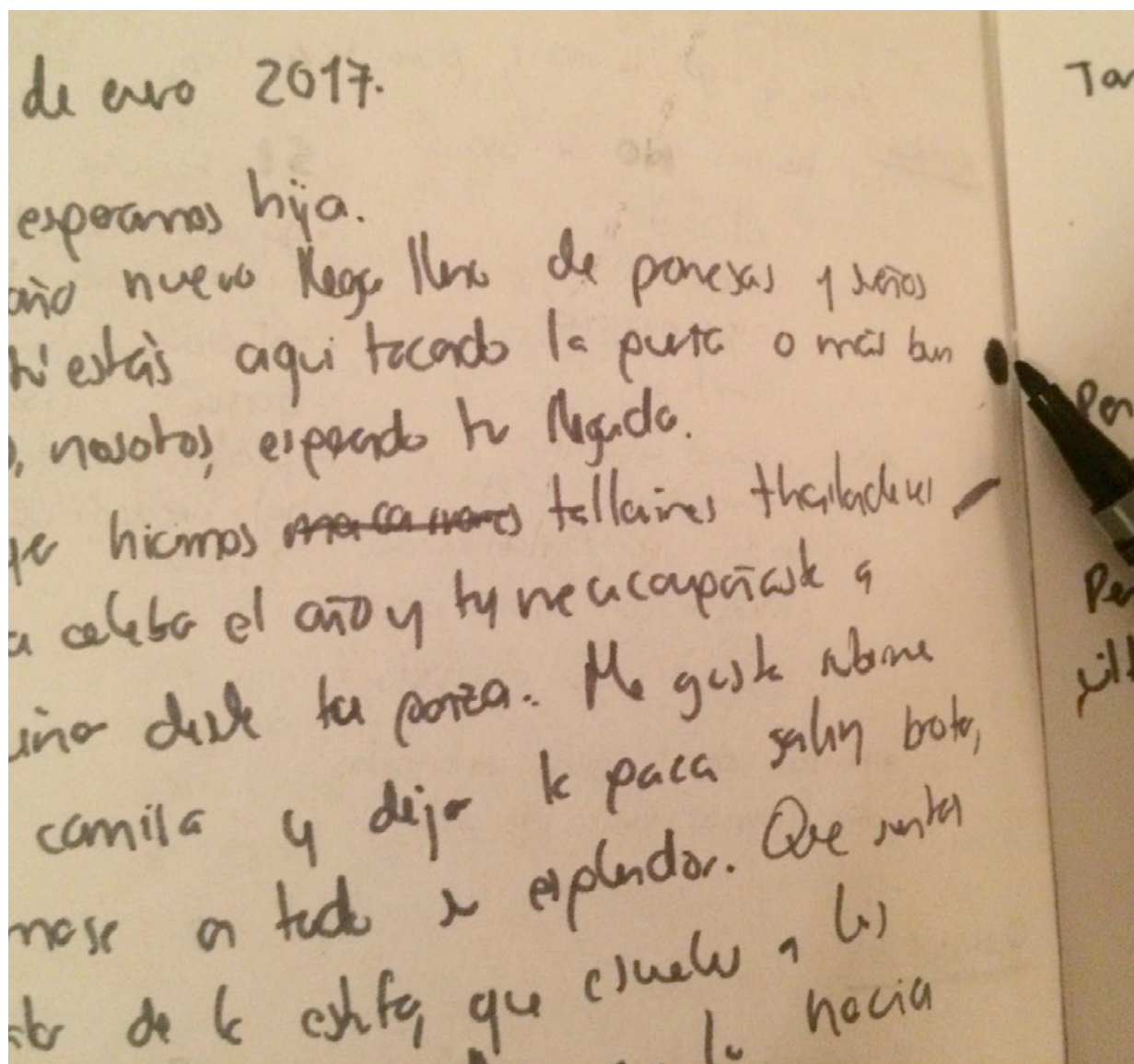


I had never thought of this before.

Not all of us are parents, but all of us have been children and have been cared for by others.

Care is vital for our survival.

The day my first daughter, Naira, was born, I began to write a journal, a personal anthology of what it feels like to become a mother.



## Excerpts

6 April 2014.

I woke up early that morning. On one side, Ricardo sleeping, on the other, Naira, our daughter. She was only a few days old. I remained in the dark, in silence, lying between them both. I had doubts, I felt tired, confused, regretful and anxious. I was there, in between them two, but I felt alone. Not only to answer my own questions, but alone in the immensity of life. Alone in the vastness of time. Alone in knowing that I will never in my life stop being a mother and yet, alone in feeling that I wasn't enough. We had just gone through a difficult time. When she was two days old, Naira fainted. She didn't react. We rushed her to the hospital and the doctors, baffled by her condition, took her away from us. Naira naked in the incubator, tubes coming out of her microscopic body. Naira crying in despair because of hunger, cold, pain, loneliness, I don't know. She was only two days old and I still didn't love her. We were just getting to know each other, but what had hit me that morning was that feeling that I wasn't going to be able to take protect her.





Time passed by and another thought kept coming back to me. Laura, the domestic worker who takes care of my house leaves her own daughters alone from 9 am till 9 pm. Then I thought about my mother washing our school uniforms in the early hours of the morning, while we were still sleeping in her bed. I imagined her feeling even more alone, physically and emotionally exhausted, with her four children constantly demanding her care and within a society imposed on her narrow shoulders the task of raising good citizens.



29 April.

I wasn't born a mother. Nor did I become a mother when you were born. I have gotten used to it little by little. When I wake up at night to let you squeeze my breast, my blood, my energy. When I cry because you cry. When I leave the room, and let you cry because I don't know how to sooth you. And in early mornings like this one, when I manage to put you to sleep in my arms, and I'm still alive.



Satisfied

19 June.

You slept almost all night. My breast milk spilled on the blanket. The stain has the shape of an old map.

My parents divorced when I was about 10 years old. They had a king-size bed. When my dad left home, my younger sister and I took his spot. I have a very vivid memory: my mom early in the morning watching movies on television (she chose them with subtitles and turned the volume all the way down so as not to wake us up) while she hand-washed the nun's school uniform for her four children. I would watch her from under the blankets, in silence. Sometimes I curled up between her legs and sometimes I ate peanuts in brine she bought at a stand by the Pan-American Highway between Guanajuato-Irapuato, she passed by it every day on her way to work.



15 January.

It's almost midnight. I've been trying to put you to sleep for the last two hours. and you don't stop crying. You don't want my breast, my arms don't sooth you. I can't take it any longer. I leave the room and leave you there, crying. I let some time go by, I take care of things, I start picking up your scattered toys, tidying up the kitchen. I don't want to go into the room. I turn the lamp on, turn the computer on, try to distract myself. I read the story of a woman who was a model and now she has abandoned her three daughters, the youngest of them is 21 days old. You keep crying in the room. At the bottom of the page there's a link to other cases of women who have been convicted in the last years for killing their children. I read them. They seem lurid to me, but little by little they gain a new dimension. I don't know if I feel empathy, but I think that there are some things that news reports don't tell. I can imagine thousands of moments when you lose your mind: at home, in the bathroom, in the rooms, alone. Alone.





24 August 2017.

I know I can love you, Naira. I also know that I can hurt you.

13 September 2017.

You'll be a girl.





One day in May 2017.

I have accepted that Emilia is sick. We have just spent two months visiting hospitals, doctors, treatments and nobody knows how to remove that eczema on her skin. It turns into scabs which turns into itches which turn into blood. My mum tells me to accept it, to stop fighting against it, that everything will be more bearable. How does one accept something? How?



One day of August 2017.

Emilia, you are healing, you are healing all by yourself. You are winning this battle and I want to be here for your next ones.



20 May 2018.

At 9:16 pm the seismic alarm blasted.

The girls were sleeping and I was reading in my pyjamas. Ricardo was still at work. I took Naira and held her, then Emilia. I walked towards the door and couldn't open it, my hands were too busy holding them. I left Naira on the floor, asked her to wake up, to help me, she was shaky. I opened the door, held her again. I went down the three floors of my building as fast as I could until reaching the street, with twenty two kilos of deadweight over me. The neighbours were already outside. They opened the door, took Naira and covered her up, then they took Emilia and wrapped her in a jacket. They covered me too with a blanket or a towel, I don't remember clearly.

I think that this can be a metaphor of motherhood: twenty-two kilos of deadweight over you.





11 August 2018.

I read this journal and realize how many times you have saved me Naira.

18 August 2018.

I check the journal that I have written in the last 4 years and I delete some entries that seem too cheesy to me. I don't know if I am ready to share some of the others. Why or for whom have I written this journal for four years? Maybe for the girls, in case some they feel curious about their origins. **Maybe for myself, so as not to feel alone. Maybe so that they won't feel alone some day. Maybe so that they can be a bit more free. So that we can be a bit more free.**



Not all of us are parents, but all of us have been children and have been cared for.

