

MONSTERS

[First of all, let me write this parenthesis with a necessary introduction of myself.....]

My name is Tamara Carrasco y García and I was born in Martorell, Barcelona, 36 years ago. I am a social and political worker and activist. I actively participated in the defence of the ballot box, on 1 October 2017, and I am one of the founders of the CDR, Committee for the Defence of the Republic, in Viladecans, the municipality where I live. In April 2018, I was arrested at my home by the Spanish Civil Guard on charges of sedition, rebellion and terrorism. I was preventively imprisoned in Madrid and, subsequently, the National Prosecutor's Office accused me, without providing any evidence, of preparing an attack on the Guardia Civil barracks in Barcelona and of planning to burn flags. I was forbidden to leave the municipality, a confinement that was lifted on 30 May 2019. I am awaiting trial and hoping, too, to see and experience the Catalan Republic.

When I was asked to participate in this publication I was delighted to accept this challenge. I thought a lot about it. What contribution could I make in an academic forum? I wrote several drafts to end up breaking them all down – too neutral, too sentimental, too personal, mixing too many subjects... – and starting over again. I can assure you that the person who commissioned it has been very patient with me.

Therefore, dear reader, I ask you to excuse this explosion of perhaps disorderly ideas, because it is very personal. They are generated by an inner process that I have experienced myself. I have witnessed many other cases. And I have not found a better way to express it.

We can speak on a purely legal, political, anti-repressive, psychosocial, personal, gender-sensitive level and so on. But at the end of the day it is my life, and I will speak to you from the heart. The academic part and the conclusions will have to go to you, I will only leave you my testimony.

When the Guardia Civil detained me under anti-terrorist protocol and held me for three days in the dungeons of Tres Cantos, Madrid, before I went to the Audiencia Nacional, I had no idea what was coming. But, no, this was not the worst moment, this was just the spark that had just been lit.

I was confined for more than a year in my village (now with the Covid19 pandemic that we are unfortunately living through you can hardly imagine what it meant). I had to report to the courts every Monday, I had surveillance and obvious follow-ups and I was subjected to an excessive media lynching. Overnight, someone with a signature turned me into a public figure. All of which led to my diagnosis of PTSD. I think that's the first time I've ever said that in public.

In a way, I was demanding that I be perfect in many ways because someone also decided that I should be a symbol. A hard, strong woman with firm principles, who does not wrinkle, because she symbolizes a movement, the character of a people fighting for their freedom.

But the reality was quite different, the armour I had made gave the image that was expected of me. But from the inside, the syndrome was dominating me, I didn't know what was happening or how to control it. I looked at the window and the peephole a hundred times a day, I couldn't walk down the street alone, I slept on the couch for months and many of my things were just as the Guardia Civil had left them during their searches at my home.

I was obsessed with my surroundings, but most of all I was hurt by the word *terrorist*. How can anyone use such a harsh word against someone who wouldn't hurt a fly? A terrorist is a person full of hate, who uses terror to achieve his goals. If he is to kill, kidnap and extort, he will do so. And I don't, I can't hate. It is something that has taken me a long time to understand. Hate, permanent anger, helplessness, revenge are feelings that destroy you. And they are feelings that only you have, and they will affect you. It was a difficult duality to bear: who you are versus who they think you are.

A turning point comes, you really hit rock bottom and we know that when you get to this point you have two options: either you get out of the way and disappear, or you pull up.

I want to make one thing clear to you: I don't want to be pitied, don't pity me, however hard it may seem. Everyone in life suffers from hard times: deaths of people close to them, serious illnesses... and I have been through this. Don't feel sorry for me, because I decided to ask for help and get out of the darkness in which I was immersed. And today, almost two years later, I can tell you that I am succeeding. That my monsters couldn't handle me.

I like to talk about monsters and mirrors, because I've not stopped running into them this time. It's been very difficult to face, but I think it's made me evolve as a person and make me stronger.

We're talking about two monsters, one that we can't control and one that we can, and that in no case is escape an option, you have to face.

The first monster is the dark side of the Spanish state. I kept asking myself: Why me? Logically, I personalized in myself everything that happened to me and it was a wrong approach. It wasn't against me, it was against what it was good for them to represent. That dark side has a thousand tools to make you panic and sink: media, judicial, police, etc.

[If you have time, look up Project MK Ultra, a program on mind control created by the CIA in 1950. It's used by many police forces in different variations. Since it represents that we are in a democracy and physical torture is not allowed, they have their alternative mechanisms. No, it's not a conspiracy theory. It's documented and can be supported by any retaliation in any era. In short, it is a psychological technique that consists of having you with the sword of Damocles over your head, suffering. Everything else you do on your own. That's so clean and easy for them:

1. You deactivate yourself as an activist, and you deactivate your surroundings as a shockwave.

2. They don't invest as many resources as before (because the resource is yourself) so they can use the savings on whatever they want.
3. They demonize a legitimate struggle with cases like you.]

Let's get on with it. I was beginning to receive very harsh threats, criticism and insults too, they pointed at my house with graffiti. And nothing happened. Who was supposed to defend me? No one was supposed to defend you. I was supposed to deal with it by myself. So I created a personal circle with my therapist, my lawyer and former victims of retaliation (accused of the Pandora case, of the arrests in 1992 before the Olympics, in 1995 in Barcelona as well and of retaliation in the Basque Country...). Only they could help me.

Those who were on my side also contributed to the dehumanization. Those who

were supposed to lead us to a so-called Republic were not in it for the job, they put their partisan interests first by putting us practically in a drawer, those who were retaliated against, and in a way they despised our suffering. With what has happened in the last three years since that autumn of 2017, you can draw your own conclusions. They have dominated the tempos and have guided the mobilizations as they have wanted to contain dissidence and continue doing what they have always done. Think for example of the Democratic Tsunami and the Negotiating Table. All this was wrong, very wrong..

This monster cannot be mastered, it is like the god of war, it creates chaos, it destroys, and if you cut off one tentacle it grows three more.

The second monster is yourself, and with a lot of effort and work, you can dominate and defeat this one. When you get into a mess like this, you put yourself in front of a mirror: you and your monsters.

There are hundreds of people who mess with your physique simply because you are a woman, because of how you think, how you breathe, in short how you live. Your immediate environment does not know how to manage it either and in many cases what they do is make the situation worse, because the fault is yours. Because if you were not an independent and activist you would not be in this mess. You become a glass of water that fills up drop by drop. On a social level you must be a symbol of feminism, independence, anti-fascism... And no, you're just a person. With your mistakes and your successes, and it's not fair that you carry all the weight of the world on your shoulders. I was tired of being Tamara Carrasco. And the day came when I decided to put my life in the centre (yes, a big misused phrase lately). I decided to forgive myself, I decided to love myself.

I'm not in favor of making plans for the future, especially when I'm closer to having such a harsh media judgment. But I still understood that my life, my freedom, my dignity, my situation, everything, absolutely everything was mine. Because at some point I would be forgotten, like so many others, and I would be left alone with my monsters. And you know what? That I love this second monster, because he has taught me immense life lessons, which will serve me forever. Because this monster helped me meet wonderful people. And above all, because it made me value things that we don't value daily, like freedom.

I have a lot of work ahead of me, and a hopeful future!

After reading these lines I know that it is very difficult to give an academic character to what I am telling you. I would like you to at least give it a human value, because those who educate, or who teach and learn, are dealing with lives and people. Everything we study and work on, in short, has the objective of improving people's lives, of advancing the progress of history. So, we begin by humanizing ourselves, for once we leave behind the Marxist theories, or so many others that there are, and we look into the eyes. And we put life in the centre, but really, not as a set phrase.

The suffering of so many and so many people who have suffered reprisals in the course of our struggle for freedom must have a meaning. And this is where you come in. I don't know who will read this article, but future lawyers, journalists, psychologists, psychiatrists, and so on have a lot to say.