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tucson MEET OUR *makers*

As 2024 comes to a close, we're wrapping up the year with a special profile on one of Tucson's few curanderos, Lupita Tineo. Throughout her life, Lupita has faced ongoing adversity, yet she has continuously risen from the ashes, reinventing herself not only as a means of personal survival, but also to help others on their healing journeys. Read on to learn more about Lupita's inspiring story, or click on the What's New link below for the latest media updates from Tucson.

[What's New in Tucson](#)



Meet Lupita Tineo

Lupita Tineo exists in the margins. As a female business owner, a Mexican immigrant, and a queer woman who identifies as a former Catholic and Christian, she navigates multiple layers of identity.

Throughout her life, she's grappled with depression and anxiety, struggles that have led to self-harm and suicidal thoughts. She attributes her challenges to the trauma of forced migration, having been uprooted from Sonora, Mexico at a young age and living as an undocumented immigrant in the U.S. until December 2018, when she was finally issued a green card after multiple attempts.

"Very early on in my life, my parents had a conversation with me about the things that I would and wouldn't be able to do as an undocumented person, and so it really started to establish a certain type of mentality within me as I was growing up ... I didn't really want to try anything," Lupita said. "It was just more like, 'what for?' I knew I wasn't going to be able to go to college, I wasn't going to be able to drive, and I wasn't going to be able to have a job that I liked."

These days, Lupita wears her painful past as a testament to her resilience. She's healing at an extraordinary pace, and through her business, [Yolia Botanica](#), she's helping others navigate and heal from challenges that once felt insurmountable.

"I've asked myself, 'What did I need growing up? What would I have benefited from having? I needed community validation, resources, somebody to talk to, somebody to ask questions to, somebody to explain things to me, somebody that would just receive and not be judgmental about where I'm at in life,'" Lupita said. "Little by little, I've been able to achieve all of that and more for the community at Yolia Botanica."



Lupita is a pioneering force in Tucson's spiritual and healing community, and at the heart of her work are offerings such as limpieas and workshops, each designed to facilitate self-healing and personal introspection. Her storefront provides a tangible reflection of her mission, with shelves filled with empowering self-help books like the "Unfuck Your" series (including "Unfuck Your Boundaries" and "Unfuck Your Brain"), handmade creosote oil, hand-wrapped floral bundles for smoke cleansing, and canelitas - an aromatic alternative to palo santo, which is native to South America and holds sacred significance in Andean traditions. Many of these items are personally crafted by Lupita, embodying her dedication to ethical sourcing, sustainability, and holistic healing for both body and spirit.

A student of the traditional Latin American healing practice curanderismo, Lupita's limpieas are powerful healing rituals that combine smoke cleansing (distinct from smudging, which is specific to some North American Indigenous traditions) with the unraveling of emotional and spiritual wounds. Her approach to curanderismo blends Indigenous healing methods, Spanish influences, and her profound knowledge of traditional plants, creating a healing practice that is as rooted in heritage as it is in transformation.

Though each limpia she offers has a loose framework, Lupita says they're customized to suit the unique needs of each of her clients. The goal is to get closer to "core cutting" and "help people release energetic vines and ties that prohibit them from moving forward in their life. Sometimes it's relationships, sometimes it's habits, mentality, or a combination of all that and more."

While the traditional limpia, a practice rooted in Mesoamerican traditions and passed down through generations across Latin America, often leaves participants feeling as though it "is being done to them" rather than condoning active involvement, Lupita

takes a different approach. She encourages her clients to voice their needs and help guide the session, reflecting her belief in a more collaborative, intuitive healing process.

“People have the right to tell me to stop. They have the right to tell me this is uncomfortable. They have the right to cry, laugh, shout, scream, punch,” Lupita said. “More than anything, I try to provide the most loving, tender and safe space possible.

Lupita is also quick to emphasize that she is not opposed to traditional Western medicine. She openly discusses her use of antidepressants, crediting both them and curanderismo for her improved mental health in recent years. In her healing practice, she asks a series of thoughtful, preliminary questions to ensure that a limpia is the most appropriate course of action before proceeding with a client.

“I am not a substitute for a doctor. I did have a couple of clients that were going through really difficult times, and I remember one ... told me, ‘I just don't want to be here anymore. I got on my motorcycle and I was going to end it all...’” Lupita said. “So, we talked, and he really needed to vent his despair and his hopelessness. And then I gave him a card for a therapist, and I told him that he needed to establish some therapy to help him process all that was going on in his head. And then when he was ready, he could come to me for another limpia.”



Over the past two years, Lupita's business has evolved from a pop-up venture to a small storefront, and this past summer, it expanded into a much larger space. The new location not only showcases her products and serves as the setting for her limpieas, but also acts as a vibrant hub for workshops – of which she hosts dozens each year. These workshops are designed to foster community, boost self-esteem, and support goal setting, all while offering motivation and inspiration. Recent workshop titles include "Spells on the Tree: DIY Intention Ornaments," "Cash Flow & Energy Glow: Orange Slice Candle Workshop," and "Boundaries and Blessings: DIY Florida Water (Florida Water, a cologne with deep cultural significance in Latin American and Afro-Caribbean traditions, is commonly used in cleansing and protection rituals). These gatherings create a space for learning, connection, and spiritual empowerment.

In line with her commitment to ethical practices, Lupita is deeply devoted to sourcing materials with cultural integrity and respect. She thoughtfully curates the items used in her workshops, products, and limpieas, making sure to honor sacred traditions and protect revered plants. For example, she consciously avoids using white sage in her floral bundles, choosing instead to promote locally sourced alternatives that safeguard Indigenous communities and preserve their cultural heritage. This mindful approach reflects Lupita's broader dedication to sustainability and the responsible stewardship of nature.

“There is no regulation for white sage, and so most of the time it is just being aggressively and illegally taken from indigenous land in the Mohave Desert... If as a collective, we don't stop using this plant, we will leave nothing for indigenous members who rely on this plant for medicine, rely on this plant for consumption, and for their rituals and ceremonies,” Lupita said. “I provide seven different alternatives to the White Sage plant, and I offer information cards for all of them, so that people create a connection with the plants they're using. I want people to know what does it do? What does it offer? What kind of energetic targets does it have?”

Fostering community, cultivating respect and encouraging wellness, will continue to be Lupita's focus in 2025. But she's also hoping to do something else – pay herself a salary, so she can better support her two children, ages 4 and 8, while also continuing to grow her business.

“I did this solely with money that I saved, so there is no backup if this fails, there is no emergency fund. But at least if it fails, I won't have any regrets,” Lupita said. “I never used to dream, but now I dream all the time. No matter what, I'm going to keep trying to reach the next and the next and the next.”



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