

# Race, Poverty & the Environment

A newsletter for social and environmental justice

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Special Issue

## Native Nations in 1992: 500 Years of Cultural Survival

### Lost in America

by Paul Smith

The title comes from the name of a funny movie Albert Brooks made a few years ago. It was about a yuppie couple in Southern California who, sick of their spiritually bankrupt lifestyle, cash in their expensive home, life savings, cars, and the rest of their possessions to create a "nest egg." This will give them the freedom to explore their full human potential to be free, travel and "touch Indians."

They never make it to Indian Country, losing the nest egg in a Las Vegas casino. Mrs. Yuppie is reduced to working in a fast food restaurant in Arizona. (In the end Brooks goes back to his old profession with a renewed appreciation of material success; the movie wimps out and becomes so much a cautionary tale about middle-class taking.)

The lost couple might have chosen Compton, but they never consider touching Chicanos or African Americans. What we have here is a paradox: Indians are the poorest of the poor, yet Americans often plan vacations to their communities.

It's easy to laugh at such an absurd example of objectifying Indians. Yet in my experience, as a Comanche activist in the American Indian Movement in the 1970s, and one still committed to the Indian struggle, I find dialogue between Indian and non-Indian progressives consistently frustrated by the distinctive type of racism that confronts Indians. Often the left, feminists, and other movements who should be our allies have sought to "touch Indians" in ways both racist and destructive.



### Discovering Columbus: Re-reading the Past

by Bill Bigelow

Most of my students have trouble with the idea that a book — especially a textbook — can lie. That's why I start my U.S. history class by stealing a student's purse.

As the year opens, my students may not know when the Civil War was fought or what James Madison or Frederick Douglass did; but they know that a brave fellow named Christopher Columbus discovered America. Indeed, this bit of historical lore may be the only knowledge class members share in common.

What students don't know is that their textbooks have, by omission or otherwise, lied to them. They don't know, for example, that on the island Hispaniola, an entire race of people was wiped out in only 40 years of Spanish administration.

#### Finders, Keepers

So I begin class by stealing a student's purse. I announce that the purse is mine, obviously, because look who has it. Most students are fair-minded. They saw me take the purse off the desk so they protest: "That's not yours, it's Nikki's. You took it. We saw you." I brush these objections aside and reiterate that it is, too, mine and to prove it, I'll show all the

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>> see *REREADING THE PAST*, page 24

# Editor's Notes

*He who holds the pen controls history.*

How else can we explain the white-washed versions of what passes as truth in this country?

From the historical lies taught to school children to the false images projected by mainstream media to the tomahawk-chopping stereotypes absorbed

and perpetuated by the masses, the truth about Native peoples and our history has been colorblind and culture-blind for far too long.

After years of repressive struggles, we are finally seeing the voices of

Native peoples emerge to shed much-needed light on the dark past of America's history.

The journeys of Native people through the last 500 years have been painful and much has been lost since the invasions. Whole nations of our relations were wiped out in the holocaust with no survivors to carry on their

distinct cultures. The list of nations

lost that appears in this issue was

researched by the Morning Star Foundation with the

In this issue of *RPE*, we have collected the insightful words of some of Native America's most clear and articulate thinkers — writers whose words educate, anger and inspire us.

acknowledgement that it is only a partial list of those no longer with us, except in spirit.

We remember and mourn for them in 1992, and we learn from them as well.

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## Race, Poverty & the Environment

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### Editorial Policy

*Race, Poverty & the Environment* is a quarterly newsletter dedicated to publishing material exploring the intersection of race, poverty and the environment. The views reflected in *Race, Poverty & the Environment* are not necessarily those of the editors. California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation, or Earth Island Institute.

### Mission Statement

The mission of *Race, Poverty & the Environment* is to provide an authentic voice for environmental justice. *RPE* aims to service its readers with news, articles, book reviews, theory, resources and notices that examine and provide evidence of the relationship among race, poverty, and the environment. Further, we must continue to build the bridges that have been tentatively constructed in the past few years between mainstream environmentalists and grassroots environmentalists, in a way which preserves the autonomy of community groups. *RPE* presents the voices and experiences of a sector of society in a manner that is accessible to grassroots organizers and activists, environmental professionals, concerned citizens, and policy makers alike.

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# We are still here

## *The 500 Years Celebration*

by Winona LaDuke

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### To "discover" implies that something is lost. Something was lost.... it was Columbus.

But unfortunately, he did not discover himself in the process of his lossmess. He went on to destroy peoples, land and ecosystems in his search for material wealth and riches. Columbus was a perpetrator of **genocide**—responsible for setting in motion the most horrendous holocaust to have occurred in the history of the world. Columbus was a slave trader, a thief, a pirate, and most certainly not a hero. To celebrate Columbus is to congratulate the process and history of the invasion.

The Taino, Arawak and other indigenous peoples of the Caribbean, the first "hosts of Columbus" were systematically destroyed. Thirteen at a time were hanged, in honor of the Twelve Apostles and the Redeemer. Every man over 14 years of age was obliged to bring a quota of gold to the conquistadors every three months. Those who could not pay the tribute had their hands cut off, "as a lesson." Most bled to death. The Taino argued with the conquistadors. They pleaded that "when their thousands of people grow enough corn to feed many of the people of **Europe**—was that not enough of a tribute, of a payment?" The conquistadors would not accept their tribute from the land. So the "idle" ships of the second voyage of Columbus were used to transport back 500 Indians to be slaves of the markets of Seville. The repression was so brutal that many of the Taino, Caribs and **Arawaks**, faced with brutality and slavery at the hands of conquistadors, chose instead to commit mass suicide.

Sixty years later, in 1552, the Catholic priest Bartolome de las Casas declared that within the entire western hemisphere, a total of 50 million Indians had already perished, in just over a half century of Spanish invasion. Las Casas had been an eyewitness to some of the slaughter and depopulation caused by diseases accidentally introduced by the Spanish. In his protest of his own countrymen's "abominable cruelties and detestable tyrannies," las Casas cried out that five million had died on the Caribbean islands and that 45 million had died on the mainland.

Although Columbus himself later returned to Europe in disgrace, his methods were subsequently used in Mexico, Peru, the Black Hills, and at Sand Creek and Wounded Knee.

They are still being used in Guatemala and El Salvador, and in Indian territory from Amazonia to Pine Ridge. The invasion set into motion a process, thus far, unabated. This has been a **struggle** for values, religions, resources, but most importantly land.

The age of "discovery" was to mark the age of colonialism, a time when our land suddenly came to be viewed as "your land." While military repression is not in the North American vogue (at least with the exception of the Oka-Mohawk uprising in the summer of 1990), today legal doctrines uphold that "our land" is "your land," based ostensibly on the so-called "doctrine of discovery." This justifies, in a so-called legal system, the same dispossession of people from their land that is caused by outright military conquest, but today, in a "kinder, gentler world," it all appears more legal.

The reality is that the battering has **been** relentless. Each generation more land has been taken from the indigenous **peoples**—either by force or by paper, but in no case with our consent. Today, Indian people in North America retain about four percent of the original land **base**—land called reservations in the US or reserves in Canada. Those lands are facing a new assault. Underlying Indian reservations is approximately two-thirds of uranium resources within the continental US, and one-third of all western low sulphur coal. Other lands include vast oil tracts (including that in the so-called Arctic National Wildlife Refuge—the last unexploited portion of the north shore of Alaska), and final stretches of pristine water and stands of unexploited old growth timber. Similar statistics exist for Canada.

What we have is still what they want: whether it is Exxon, Arco, oil companies, **Rio Tinto** Zinc (the British mining giant), COGEMA (the French uranium company, which is active in Dene and Cree lands in northern Saskatchewan) or lumber companies from Japan and North America. The North American onslaught is matched only by that in South and Central America, where remaining rain forests and resource rich lands are greedily consumed by foreign multinationals and governments.

The rate of exploitation is astounding. In 1975, 100 percent of all federally produced uranium (in the US) came from Indian reservations. Indians were the fifth largest producers of uranium in the world. **That** same year, four of the ten largest coal strip mines in the US were on Indian reservations. By 1985, Dene and Cree lands in Saskatchewan

>> see **STILL HERE**, page 20

# Our Visions — The Next 500 Years

*On October 14, 1992 — just two days after so-called Columbus Day — a gathering of 100 Native writers, artists and wisdom keepers from throughout the Americas came together in Taos, New Mexico to consider our shared visions for the next 500 years.*

*Organized by the Morning Star Foundation and supported by the Martin Foundation, the gathering brought together the collective thoughts and words of Vine Deloria, Jr., Oren Lyons, Suzan Shown Harjo, Thomas Banyanca, Walt Bresette, Joy Harjo, Tom Porter, Emmett White, Lois Risling, Alex White Plume, Susan M. Williams and scores of other Indian people making significant contributions to Native America.*

*At the end of five days of deliberations, we felt it was important to make a statement in memory of more than 500 Native Nations and millions of our relations that did not survive the European invasions, and with respect for those indigenous people who did survive. The following statement was culled from lengthy group statements focused on the spiritual, cultural, social, political and economic aspects of Native people's survival in the next 500 years...*

**-- Valerie Taliman**

## **Statement of vision toward the next 500 years from the gathering of Native writers, artists and wisdom keepers at Taos, October 14-18, 1992...**

In memory of more than 500 distinct Native Nations and millions of our relatives who did not survive the European invasions and with respect for those Indigenous Peoples who have survived, we make this statement.

We, the Indigenous Peoples of this red quarter of Mother Earth, have survived 500 years of genocide, ethnocide, ecocide, racism, oppression, colonization and christianization. These excesses of western civilization resulted from contempt for Mother Earth and all our relations; contempt for women, elders, children and Native Peoples; and contempt for a future beyond the present human generation. Despite this, we are here.

Since time immemorial, Native Nations have lived in harmony with this land and in solidarity with all our relations. Our continued survival depends on this vital relationship. We perpetuate this harmony for our continued survival and world peace. We carry out our religious duties for the good of all. Endangering us endangers us all.

We call for the immediate halt of the abuse, neglect and destruction of life. We call for immediate strategies and compacts to halt the genocide of Native peoples throughout the Western hemisphere.

We demand an end to all exploitation, desecration and commercialization of Indian spirituality and cultures, our sacred places and the remains of our ancestors. We demand an end to the violations of our right of worship, to the disrespect of our religious and cultural property and to the disregard of our very humanity.

Native peoples over the next 500 years must maintain our status as distinct political and cultural communities. Indian Nations expect the world community to honor and enforce treaties that recognize tribal property and sovereignty. Sovereignty is the inherent right based upon traditional systems and laws that arise from the People themselves. Sovereignty includes the right of Native Nations to freely live and develop socially, economically, culturally, spiritually and politically.

The domestic laws of the non-Native countries of this hemisphere have been used to subjugate Native Peoples. Vindication of our rights must be achieved through fair and appropriate procedures, including international procedures.

Indigenous Nations have the right to secure borders and fulfilled treaties for which we gave up vast territory and wealth. Native Nations have the responsibility to provide a safe and secure environment for their peoples' economic self-sufficiency, health and well-being. Tribal economies work best when based on traditional systems. A secure and adequate land base and respect for sovereignty are prerequisites for viable tribal economies.

Indigenous People have the right to educational and social systems that affirm tribal cultures and values; that promote physical, spiritual and mental well-being of people; and that teach the care and healing of Mother Earth and all Her children.

We envision that in five hundred years Indigenous Peoples will be here, **protecting** and living with Mother Earth in our own lands. We see a future of coming generations of Native People who are healthy in body and spirit, who speak Native languages daily and who are supported by traditional extended families.

We look forward to leadership that encourages the religious and cultural manifestations of our traditions, and the

**>> see VISIONS, page 5**

<< from VISIONS, page 4

reclamation and continuing use of our traditional ceremonies, hairstyles, foods, clothes, music, personal and tribal names, and medicines. Our cultural renewal will assure the perpetuation of natural species that are dying, and perhaps even some of those thought to be extinct.

We celebrate our rich, continuing tradition of artistic excellence. The works produced for tribal functions or within a religious or historical context are the sole cultural property of the Native Peoples. Our strong cultural continuums accord great freedom of artistic expression, which enhances the dynamic and incorporative nature of our traditional cultures. We envision a future when our artistic gifts are recognized fully for their spiritual transforming power and beauty.

Native Peoples are strengthened by relations among each other at all levels of community life. Commitment, integrity, patience, the ability to build consensus and respect are essential components to the flourishing of culture, friendship, strengthening of economies and the pursuit of a common peaceful world.

All life is dependent upon moral and ethical laws which protect earth, water, animals, plants, and tribal traditions and ceremonies. Humanity has the responsibility to live in accordance with natural laws, in order to perpetuate all living beings for the good of all Creation. We share a bond with all the world's Peoples who understand their relationship and responsibility to all aspects of the Creation. The first of these is to walk through life in respectful and loving ways, caring for all life. We look forward to a future of global friendship and the integrity of diverse cultures.

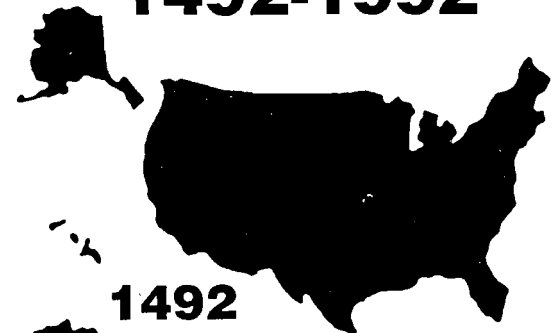
We may have been happy with the land that was originally reserved to us. But continually over the years more and more of our land has been stolen from us by the Canadian and U.S. governments. In the 19th Century, our land was stolen from us for economic reasons because the land was lush and fertile and abounded with food. We were left with what white society thought was worthless land...

Today, what was once called worthless land suddenly becomes valuable as the technology of white society advances. White society would now like to push us off our reservations because beneath the barren land lie valuable mineral and oil resources. It is not a new development for white society to steal from nonwhite peoples. When white society succeeds it's called colonialism. When white society's efforts to colonize people are met with resistance it's called war. But when the colonized Indians of North America meet to stand and resist we are called criminals.

— **Leonard Peltier**

For more information on Leonard Peltier, write the Leonard Peltier Defense Committee, PO Box 583, Lawrence, KS 66044, 913-842-5774. You can also write Leonard Peltier, #89637-132, PO Box 1000, Leavenworth, KS 66048.

# Native Lands 1492-1992



contains 32 known earthquake faults, and lies only 500 feet above a major aquifer which surfaces in California's Death Valley.

The recent earthquake raised new questions about suitability of the site selected by the Department of Energy and Congress in 1987 for storing 70,000 metric tons of high level nuclear waste underground for 10,000 years.

illustrated the danger of groundwater surging up underneath the subterranean complex thereby creating compressed steam within the caverns holding steel canisters of nuclear waste. Szymanski and other scientists warned that the steam could "blow the top off the mountain" and create a nuclear holocaust of unimaginable proportions.

## The U.S. Government Targets Reservations for "Temporary" Storage *Stuck Holding the Nation's Nuclear Waste*

by Valerie Taliman

In 1992, as Native Nations look toward the next 500 years, an ominous cloud looms on the horizon — the danger that the three percent of land remaining in mbal hands may soon become permanent dumping grounds for radioactive, high-level nuclear waste.

With 16 mbes lined up for \$100,000 grants from the U.S. Nuclear Waste Negotiator to study the prospect of "temporarily" storing nuclear waste for half a century, there is good cause to worry.

The storage of highly toxic, used nuclear fuel rods from the nation's 111 commercial nuclear reactors will only be "temporary" if the proposed permanent repository is built at Yucca Mountain, Nevada on land stolen from the Western Shoshone Nation.

Following a 5.6 magnitude earthquake that rocked Yucca Mountain on June 29, members of the scientific community are joining unrelenting public and political opposition in arguing that Yucca Mountain is unsuitable for storing deadly nuclear waste.

The site chosen for the Yucca Mountain underground storage complex, which will contain tunnels up to 115 miles long, shows evidence of earthquake and volcanic activity,

The quake caused \$1 million in damage to top-secret military facilities on the Nevada Test Site where the U.S. and Great Britain have "tested" more than 700 nuclear weapons in underground explosions that leaked radiation into the atmosphere in at least half of the tests, according to the DOE's records.

Yet DOE officials insist that earthquakes do not disqualify the site according to their criteria. DOE claims they will design facilities that can withstand 6.7 to 7.0 earthquakes without releasing deadly radiation into the atmosphere. But Nevadans and environmental groups say those rosy projections are unrealistic.

In late spring, DOE's chief scientist for the project, Jerry Szymanski, quit his post saying that he would not be part of DOE's propaganda which borders on "scientific fraud." Szymanski, a geologist, authored a DOE report that

***A little known provision in the law requires MRS recipients to waive their right to sue the U.S. government in the event of an accident or unforeseen circumstances which prevent the nuclear waste from being removed at the end of the contract period,***

Shortly after his report was issued, DOE assembled a panel of other government scientists which dismissed Szymanski's theory and maintained the project was safe. The public remains skeptical.

As opposition to the Yucca Mountain project continues to grow, it appears unlikely that the repository will ever be built. The project is already 12 years behind schedule (slated to open in 2010) and the \$32.5 billion cost to taxpayers continues to swell.

If the project is scrapped, then those tribes or states that have opted to "temporarily" store nuclear waste rods in "Monitored Retrievable Storage"

>> see NUCLEAR WASTE, page 8

# Status of MRS Grants

## Phase One Grants

Applicant		Status
1. Mescalero Apache Tribe, Mescalero, NM	Oct. 11, 1991	Grant awarded Oct. 17, 1991
2. Grant County, ND <i>Commissioners defeated in recall election, Mar. 10, 1992 — Phase I studies completed.</i>	Nov. 18, 1991	Grant awarded Nov. 25, 1991
3. Chickasaw Nation, Ada, OK <i>Application withdrawn, Mar. 31, 1992 — Funds deobligated.</i>	Dec. 26, 1991	Grant awarded Feb. 14, 1992
4. Sac and Fox Nation, Stroud, OK <i>Application withdrawn, Mar. 4, 1992 — Funds deobligated.</i>	Dec. 30, 1991	Grant awarded Feb. 19, 1992
5. Prairie Island Indian Nation, Welch, MN	Dec. 30, 1991	Grant awarded Mar. 18, 1992
6. Yakima Indian Nation, Toppenish, WA	Dec. 30, 1991	Grant awarded Mar. 18, 1992
7. Fremont County, WY	Dec. 30, 1991	Grant awarded Jan. 23, 1992
8. Fifield Development Corp., Fifield, WI <i>Applicant was not an eligible unit of government.</i>	March 1991	Rejected
9. Skull Valley Goshute, Grantsville, UT	Mar. 19, 1992	Grant awarded Apr. 17, 1992
10. Apache County, AZ <i>Governor's office issued an objection on April 3, 1992 in telephone conversation.</i>	Mar. 18, 1992	Under review
11. Alabama Quassarte, Eufala, OK	Mar. 26, 1992	Under review
12. Tetlin Village, Tok, AK	Mar. 30, 1992	Rejected
13. Eastern Shawnee Tribe, Ottawa County, OK	Mar. 30, 1992	Under review -- Request: \$41,962
14. Lower Brule Sioux, Lower Brule, SD	Mar. 31, 1992	Under review
15. Akhiok-Kaguyak/Akhiok Traditional Council, Anchorage, AK	Mar. 31, 1992	Rejected
16. Apache Development Authority, Anadarko, OK	Mar. 31, 1992	Under review
17. Absentee Shawnee, OK <i>Application withdrawn by letter dated June 9, 1992.</i>	Mar. 31, 1992	Withdrawn
18. San Juan County, UT	Apr. 3, 1992	Grant awarded May 4, 1992
19. Ponca Tribe, Kay County, OK	Apr. 6, 1992	Under review
20. Caddo Tribe, Binger, OK	Apr. 17, 1992	Under review
21. Ft. McDermitt Paiute-Shoshone, Humboldt Cty., NV	May 27, 1992	Grant awarded July 15, 1992

## Phase 2 Grants

1. Mescalero Apache Tribe, Mescalero, NM <i>Tribe has requested additional phase 2A funding of \$300,000.</i>	Mar. 13, 1992	\$200,000 awarded Apr. 21, 1992
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<< from *NUCLEAR WASTE*, page 6

(MRS) sites will be left holding the nation's nuclear waste for lack of any other option.

A little known provision in the Nuclear Waste Policy Amendments Act, which established the MRS idea and the office of the Nuclear Waste Negotiator, requires MRS recipients to waive their right to sue the U.S. government in the event of an accident or unforeseen circumstances which prevent the nuclear waste from being removed at the end of the contract period.

History reflects that the U.S. Government's record of failing to live up to its "contracts" with Indian Nations is both tragic and criminal. The U.S. has failed to uphold *even one* of more than 800 treaties it negotiated with Indian Nations in this country, 370 of which were ratified by Congress and then violated.

The nuclear industry, the military weapons production complex, and DOE also have weak track records on public health and safety issues, especially where Native Nations are concerned. Thousands of Native people in the U.S. and Canada have died or suffered health consequences from the mining, processing and enriching of uranium for nuclear fuels and weapons.

Hundreds of Indian families who lost loved ones who were used as "guinea pigs" in the early days of uranium mining have applied for compensation under the 1990 Radiation Exposure Compensation Act which Congress passed with an apology to radiation victims. In addition, millions of citizens have been contaminated by atmospheric and underground nuclear weapons testing that carried radioactive particles downwind to Western states. And in most cases, the government has denied accountability for creating disease and death among the very citizens that the weapons were designed to protect in the name of "the national defense."

A prime example is the 250,000-member Alliance of Atomic Veterans who decry the fact that 98 percent of their radiation-related medical claims have been denied by the Veterans Administration and the government that sent them marching into mushroom

## Oklahoma Tribal Response to MRS by Grace Thorpe

In January 1992, I was shocked to read in the *Daily Oklahoman* that my tribe, the Sac and Fox of Stroud, Oklahoma, had applied for a \$100,000 grant from the Department of Energy's Monitored Retrievable Storage (MRS) program, which would study the placement of nuclear waste on our land.

Such an unlikely alliance, I thought, when I recalled that the Sac and Fox were the last tribe of Indians who fought for their lands east of the Mississippi River. During the Black Hawk War of 1832, 250 of our men, women and children died in the defense of their land at Saukenuk, now Rock Island, Illinois. Today, the spirit of Chief Black Hawk must wonder if his fight and the deaths of his followers were in vain, I thought.

So, after reading the newspaper article, I started researching the nuclear waste industry so I would know what our tribe was getting involved with.

And I didn't like what I was reading. Balancing the short- and long-term health dangers involved in the storage of nuclear waste with the monetary advantages, I realized that our tribe had to withdraw its application. Also, I didn't feel that our proud Sac and Fox name should ever be associated with nuclear waste, even though no strings were attached to the money, they said.

During the time that I was studying the nuclear waste issue, some other tribal members were unhappy about recent actions taken by the Sac and Fox elected tribal officials. Sandra

McClelland, from Shawnee, was circulating a petition requesting a special meeting of the tribe. According to the Sac and Fox constitution, in order to call a special meeting, 50 tribal members must sign a petition requesting

a meeting. The Sac and Fox tribal officials must then call a meeting within 30 days and a quorum of 60 members must be present.

I then attended several meetings with the McClelland group, and we agreed to place the MRS nuclear waste issue on the agenda along with other complaints. The special meeting was set for February 29, 1992. In the meantime, I spoke to tribal members at the Elder's meetings, the Black Hawk Health Clinic, tribal headquarters, Pow Wows, and so on. When I asked what they thought about involving our tribe with nuclear waste, they said they opposed it, just as I did.

Shortly before the meeting I asked our tribal administrator, Paula Gomez, about the parliamentary procedure to follow in order to stop the application. All that was needed, she said, was a motion from the floor to withdraw the application.

So, on February 29, 1992, the governing council (the general membership) of the Sac and Fox Tribe instructed the elected officials to withdraw from the MRS program. I made the motion, and it was second by June Stevens. The 70-5 vote was overwhelmingly in favor of withdrawal.

I am proud to write that the Sac and Fox people became the first to force their elected officials to withdraw from the MRS nuclear waste program. Other Oklahoma tribes that have withdrawn are the Chickasaws, the Absentee Shawnee, and the Caddo.

*A long-time advocate for Indian Rights, Ms. Thorpe is 71 years old and serves as a part-time District Court Judge for the Sac and Fox Nation. This is reprinted with the author's permission from The Workbook, Fall 1992.*

clouds in early nuclear weapons tests.

"The U.S. government took 250,000 atomic veterans — like they were sacrificial lambs — and laid them on the altar of the nuclear age," said AAV director Anthony Guarisco, who

recently organized a Veterans Day memorial in the foothills of the Nevada Test Site's rugged terrain.

"Over this hill is our monument, the example of man's inhumanity to man,"

>> see *NUCLEAR WASTE*, page 9

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Guarisco said, noting that those veterans who are still alive today say that "the government can't be trusted."

Many tribal leaders agree and have labelled the MRS proposals "economic blackmail" because the government is offering huge economic incentives for the storage of deadly radioactive waste.

"In the old days, they gave us smallpox-infested blankets," says Oklahoma Sac and Fox elder Grace Thorpe. "Today, they're giving us nuclear waste. We can't look at this for short-term monetary gains. It's an issue of survival for Native people."

DOE provides \$100,000 for Phase I grants to conduct feasibility studies on socio-economic impacts, \$200,000 for Phase II-A grants to continue the process, and Phase II-B grants of up to \$3,000,000 to actually identify a site for an MRS and enter into an agreement with the Nuclear Waste Negotiator. Any state or tribe that accepts an MRS can receive up to \$5 million per year.

While some tribes have turned back DOE checks under pressure from tribal members (see Status of MRS Grants, page 7), others, including Minnesota's Prairie Island Indian Nation, the Skull Valley Goshute of Utah and the Lower Brule Sioux of South Dakota, have said they applied for the funds to conduct studies that will prove that the MRS option is unsafe for their communities.

Northwest tribes who live along the Columbia River — downstream from DOE's Hanford Nuclear Reservation that polluted the region for 40 years — warn others about living with the legacy of nuclear waste that is causing mutations in the salmon they depend on spiritually, socially and economically.

"I think (the MRS strategy) is genocide aimed at Indian people," said traditional Chief Johnny Jackson of the Klickitat Nation. "We'll suffer the consequences of poisoning our rivers, our traditional foods and our land with nuclear waste."

"Even if tribes say they just want to study it, the U.S. government intends to hook tribes with the money. I know from experience that the government never gives you money for nothing."

### Resolution of the Third Annual Indigenous Environmental Network Gathering, Celilo Village, Oregon, June 6, 1992

## No Nuclear Waste on Indian Lands

Whereas, our land may be the most important legacy that we leave our children, and;

Whereas, we care about our land and do not wish to poison it, and;

Whereas, we wish to protect our Mother Earth from just such poison as nuclear waste, and;

Whereas, power companies make money as they generate more high-level radioactive waste, and;

Whereas, there is no safe method to dispose of nuclear waste, and;

Whereas, the federal government has stolen and ruined enough of our land, and;

Whereas, nuclear waste is deadly and will rake thousands of years to decay and lose its radioactivity, and;

Whereas, radioactivity has been known to increase the risk of cancer, to cause leukemia in the blood cells and affect genetic changes which could cause deformities in our children and future generations, as well as endanger plant and animal life, and;

Whereas, mbal officials are not to hide behind the veil of tribal sovereignty in order to bypass environmental and safety regulations prepared by state and county governments, and;

Whereas, no amount of money can replace a clean environment, and;

Whereas, the storage of nuclear waste on Indian land is too important an issue not to be fully understood by all people living on or near the affected area, Tribal constitutions should require the doctrine of informed consent to tribal members, so that major decisions are made by an informed constituency, and;

Whereas, tribal members have a right to know of all the possible risks and benefits that affect their lands or resources, and;

Whereas, radioactive ionization

presents a threat to the process of future human existence:

Therefore, no Indian designated lands, including Indian Country, trust, ceded, contiguous, or otherwise, should be used to store any form of toxic or nuclear waste, now or in the future, and;

Therefore, the people assembled here today demand that public hearings be required to give tribal members and other interested parties an opportunity to learn about the advantages and disadvantages of storing nuclear waste on Indian lands, and;

Therefore, be it resolved that nuclear waste trains and trucks will not be allowed to pass through Indian lands, and;

Therefore, the people assembled here today beseech and implore the 16 different tribes that applied for the MRS to reconsider and request that their applications be withdrawn, and;

Therefore, be it resolved that as a pre-condition for developing the radioactive waste management strategy, electric utilities first change their rate design structure to reward conservation, not wasteful consumption of electricity; and second, electric utilities be required to pay a fair rate for electricity produced by independent producers using renewable energy resources, and that the fair rate include appropriate avoided capital and environmental costs, and;

Therefore, be it resolved that the people assembled here call for an end to uranium mining, milling, testing, reprocessing, and storage and disposal which are all currently on Indian lands, and call for an end to the production of nuclear waste, and the development of safe renewable energy services.

And whereas the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) and the Council of Energy Resource Tribes (CERT) were organized to benefit Native Americans, and sponsoring MRS conferences presenting only the views of the Department of Energy does not further that goal;

Therefore, be it resolved that we request that NCAI and CERT cease sponsoring or funding MRS conferences.

# The Western Shoshone

by  
Joe  
Sanchez

or countless genera-

ions have inhabited the eastern half of what is now known as the Great Basin of North America. We are one of several hundred indigenous nations on the North American continent that are involved in a wide range of efforts to protect the lands we have lived in for thousands of years. Our work to maintain or regain environmental quality within our homelands is a facet of a wider, more complex effort to maintain our jurisdiction over our territories and lives, and to protect our indigenous rights.

As a nation, our rights are not derived from the U.S. Constitution or granted by any treaties; they existed prior to the United States' creation. Treaties — mechanisms of mutual agreement between nations — gave rights to the U.S. as agreed to by the

Indians. The Indians possess their rights by virtue of their existence as nations, despite the U.S.'s assertions that it ultimately oversees the indigenous nations within its borders. This, of course leads to some very serious conflicts between the U.S. and any Indian nation that asserts, or merely seeks to protect, its rights.

As with other North American indigenous nations, the Western Shoshone's identity, purpose, and strength is based on our relationship to our homeland. The whole of our land is known to us as "Newah Sogo Bea," or "Shoshone's Earth Mother."

Our name for ourselves is **Newah** and our history tells how we were first created and placed within our particular bioregion and provided with instructions on how best to live, allowing for our descendants as well. A critically important basis of all instruction given

## Following Earth Mother's Instructions

is that for us to be able to continue as a people we must pay attention to our relationship to everything around us, animate and inanimate. Shortly after the **Newah** were created, parts of creation spoke to the **Newah**. Water, Air, Wind, and many others told us in unequivocal terms: "Take care of us, and we will take care of you."

For thousands of years we have put conscious effort into keeping this relationship healthy. But in more recent times several factors have been brought into our world that have drastically affected our ability to simply carry out our original instructions. We now must

address the problems created by the new boom of gold mines within our territories, the increasing militarization of our airspace and land, and the Nevada Test Site, and underground testing facility for nuclear weapons.

To comprehend the present issues and the strategies we are utilizing to address them, the first thing that must be understood is our view of ourselves within the world. We were created as **Newah**, and have always existed in our territory. One of the most fundamental principles of our culture is that we are responsible for maintaining a healthy relationship with **Newah Sogo Bea**, since it is the basis of our life.

Secondly, our right to determine our own future, on our own terms as a distinct people (i.e., our sovereignty), is based on our continued habitation of our defined homelands within our own governing, education, economic, language, and cultural/spiritual systems.

### Yesterday's Predators

From our initial major contact with non-Indians, the issue of environmental destruction has been a critical one. In the early 1800s, a large group of English fur trappers seeking beaver pelts traveled

into the northcentral region of **Newah** territory. Because

the English foresaw their expedition as the one and only access into the area, they carried out what has been described as a "scorched river" procedure. In the sweep along the Humboldt River and its tributaries, they sought to trap all the beavers they possibly could, purposefully ignoring the need to allow sufficient numbers to remain to reproduce: the trappers did not foresee themselves or any other British subjects seeking furs in the region again.

With the discovery of gold in California, in the mid-nineteenth century, more and more non-Indians

>> see SHOSHONE, page 11

<< from *SHOSHONE*, page 10

entered **Newah** lands; most sought only to cross it and reach the gold fields west of **Newah** country. A major route was established across the northern portion of **Newah Sogo** Bea, creating settlements, farms, and mines. **Newah** became increasingly distraught. Some attempted to resist the mounting invasion by military and guerrilla

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## Water, Air, Wind told us: "Take care of us, and we will take care of you."

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actions, thus hampering American movement across Shoshone lands.

The outbreak of the U.S. Civil War in 1860 created an intensified effort by American leaders to get the gold from California, in order to finance the war. The U.S. appointed military men to meet with **Newah** leaders and create a treaty that would ensure Americans safe passage through Shoshone lands and grant them the right to establish settlements along the route. Finally, a treaty that called for "peace and friendship" between the Western Shoshone and the Americans was mutually agreed upon. In contrast to other treaties between the U.S. and some indigenous nations, this treaty in no way conveyed ownership of the land to the U.S.; it recognized the existence of the Western Shoshone nation and Shoshone rights over their lands.

But the increasing movement of people from east to west, and their settlement along the way, was having a devastating impact on Shoshone territory. In forty years, food and medicine gathering sites were destroyed by the invaders' newly introduced horses and cattle; access to springs and creeks (an absolute necessity for survival in the high, semi-arid climate of the Great Basin) was stopped as ranchers and miners assumed ownership

and control over them. It was not unusual for the Euro-Americans' diseases to kill up to 70 percent of a **Newah** community, or for cavalry or cowboys to attack our homes and families in their effort to gain control over our homeland's resources. Gold, silver, and other minerals were discovered in **Newah** land.

More water was needed for the mines and the boom-towns that rapidly sprang up. Acres and acres of pinyon pines, traditionally a major food source for Shoshones, were cut and made into charcoal to run mines' smelters. The destruction of the environment directly resulted in the destabilization of **Newah** systems of economics and governance. Our people suddenly found themselves facing problems we'd never known before.

Still, despite the invasion of **Newah** territory by people with a worldview that allowed and encouraged incredible destruction of the environment, and the pervading impact the invaders' actions had on the **Newah** way of life, we Western Shoshone have continued to maintain our rights to our territory and our jurisdiction over it, as based on our original instructions and principles.

Presently eight Western Shoshone communities are located within the 43,000 square miles of **Newah Sogo** Bea. The U.S. argues that the vast majority of that land was taken from the Western Shoshone through "gradual encroachment," sidestepping all questions regarding whether that is legal under American or international law, or morally justifiable. Also, since the late 1940s, the U.S., through the Indian Claims Commission and the U.S. court or Claims, has attempted to pressure Western Shoshone citizens to relinquish land title in exchange for a little over a dollar an acre, the value of the land at 1872 prices. But in the 127 years since the U.S. and the Western Shoshone entered into the treaty, it has never been abrogated. Title to the land has never been given by the **Newah** to the U.S.

### Today's Perpetrators

Given the size of our homelands, the minerals in the region, and the general

view by many Americans of the land as "useless" or "sacrificeable," we Western Shoshone face many challenges in protecting the bioregion in which we were placed.

The fur trappers of the 19th century are no longer around Shoshone country. But their "scorched river" methodology is still being employed in an updated version by agencies of the Federal Government and by huge mining corporations.

In recent years, in Nevada, with the development of ore extraction methods that utilize cyanide and other toxic chemicals, a new gold mining boom has occurred within **Newah Sogo** Bea borders. Huge open ponds containing thousands of gallons of deadly chemicals are commonplace around the mines. **Newah**, under the coordination of the Western Shoshone National Council (WSNC), have begun researching the full extent of the impact of mining practices on both personal health and the environment, and are in the initial stages of creating a community education campaign on these issues.

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## Since 1963, nearly 700 nuclear weapons and "devices" have been exploded under- ground in Western Shoshone lands, within the U.S. Nuclear Test Site.

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The Departments of Energy and Defense are also perpetrators of "scorched river" tactics. Since 1963, nearly 700 nuclear weapons and "devices" have been exploded underground in southern **Newah** homelands, within the U.S. Nuclear Test Site. No agreement, formal or informal, exists that gives the U.S. permission to detonate nuclear weapons or devices

>> see *SHOSHONE*, page 19

# Declaration of Quito

July 1990

## Indigenous Alliance of the Americas on 500 Years of Resistance

The Continental Gathering "500 Years of Indian Resistance," with representatives from 120 Indian Nations, International Organizations and Fraternal Organizations, meeting in Quito, Ecuador, July 17-20, 1990, declare before the world the following:

We Indians of America have never abandoned our constant struggle against the conditions of oppression, discrimination and exploitation which were imposed upon us as a result of the European invasion of our ancestral territories.

Our struggle is not a mere conjunctural reflection of the memory of 500 years of oppression which the invaders, in complicity with the "democratic" governments of our countries, want to turn into events of jubilation and celebration. Our Indian People, Nations and nationalities are basing our struggle on our identity, which shall lead us to true liberation. We are responding aggressively, and commit ourselves to reject this "celebration."

The struggle of our People has acquired a new quality in recent times. This struggle is less isolated and more organized. We are now completely conscious that our total liberation can only be expressed through complete exercise of our self-determination. Our unity is based in this fundamental right. Our self-determination is not just a simple declaration.

We must guarantee the necessary conditions that permit the complete exercise of our self-determination; and this in turn must be expressed as complete autonomy for our Peoples. Without Indian self-government and without control of our territories there can be no autonomy.

To achieve this objective is a principal task of the Indian Peoples. However, through our struggles we have learned that our problems are not different, in many respects, from those of other popular sectors. We are convinced that we must march alongside the peasants, the workers, the marginalized sectors, together with the intellectuals committed to our cause, in order to destroy the dominant system of oppression and construct a new society, pluralistic, democratic and humane, in which peace is guaranteed.

The existing nation-states of the Americas, their constitutions and fundamental laws are judicial/political expressions that negate our socio-economic, cultural and political rights.

From this point in our general strategy of struggle, we consider it to be a priority that we demand complete structural change; change which recognizes the inherent right to self-determination through the Indian People's own governments and through the control of our territories.

Our problems will not be resolved through the self-serving politics of governmental entities which seek integration and ethno-development.

It is necessary to have an integral transformation at the level of the State and national society; that is to say, the creation of a new nation.

In this Gathering it has been clear that territorial rights are a fundamental demand of the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas.

Based on these aforementioned reflections, the organizations united in the First Continental Gathering of Indigenous Peoples reaffirm:

1. Our emphatic rejection of the Quincentennial celebration, and the firm promise that we will turn that date into an occasion to strengthen our process of continental unity and

struggle towards our liberation.

2. Ratify our resolute political project of self-determination and conquest of our autonomy, in the framework of nation states, under a new popular order, respecting the appellation which each People

determines for their struggle and project.

3. Affirm our decision to defend our culture, education, and religion as fundamental to our identity as Peoples, reclaiming and maintaining our own forms of spiritual life and community coexistence, in an intimate relationship with our Mother Nature.

4. We reject the manipulation of organizations which are linked to the dominant sectors of society and have no indigenous representation, who usurp our name for (their own)

>> see QUITO, page 13

***The struggle of our People has acquired a new quality in recent times. This struggle is less isolated and more organized. We are now completely conscious that our total liberation can only be expressed through complete exercise of our self-determination.***

<< from QUITO, page 12

imperialist interests. At the same time we affirm our choice to strengthen our own organizations, without excluding or isolating ourselves from other popular struggles.

5. We recognize the important role that the indigenous woman plays in the struggles of our Peoples. We understand the necessity to expand women's participation in our organizations and we reaffirm that it is one struggle, men and women together, in our liberation process, a key question in our political practices.

6. The Indian Peoples consider it vital to defend and conserve our natural resources, which right now are being attacked by the transnational corporations. We are convinced that this defense will be realized if it is the Indian Peoples who administer and control the **territories** where we live, according to our own principles of organization and communal life.

7. We oppose national judicial structures which are the result of the process of colonization and neo-colonization. We seek a New Social Order that embraces our traditional exercise of Common Law, an expression of our culture and forms of organization. We demand that we be recognized as Peoples under International Law, and that this recognition be incorporated into the respective Nation States.

8. We denounce the victimization of our Indian Peoples through violence and persecution, which constitutes a flagrant violation of human rights. We demand respect for our right to life, to land, to free organization and expression of our culture. At the same time we demand the release of our leaders who are held as political prisoners, an end to repression, and restitution for the harms caused us.

The Indian Nations and Indigenous Organizations which have participated in the First Continental Gathering of Indian Peoples want to show our acknowledgement and thanks to our sister organizations of Ecuador for their efforts towards the success of this event. We want to express our solidarity with the struggle of the Ecuadorian Indigenous People for liberty and democracy.

Our actions should be geared towards strengthening our grassroots organizations and towards achieving greater levels of coordination and communication with all popular sectors.

The continental campaign for 500 years of Indigenous and popular Resistance should be empowered by the participation of all Indian Nations and organizations, so that we become a true alternative force. The response to 1992 should be Mobilization and Unity.

The articulation of our Campaign should be governed by the principle of solidarity with all People's struggles for liberation, and by realizing multilateral relations at the international level.

Quito, 21 Julio de 1990.

*Reprinted with permission from Border/Lines (Winter 1991/1992).*

# The Off-Again, On-Again Garbage Dump

**Los Coyotes Update**  
by Marina Ortega

In Southern California the battle over the Los Coyotes dump project — a proposed 1,500 acre dump on the Los Coyotes reservation in northern San Diego County to take much of the County's trash — is continuing on into the new year. Despite an initial defeat of the project in June 1991 by the Los Coyotes Band (see *RPE* Summer 1991), Chambers Company of Pittsburgh, PA gained approval in February 1992 to continue environmental studies for the dump.

Chambers Company had supplied rental cars for pro-dump Band members and flew in members who reside in other states to attend the February 1992 tribal meeting. Promises of additional monthly payments to the Band during the study period completed the package, and the Band authorized a resolution to continue "studies only." An Authorization Agreement was drawn up by Chambers Company and signed by the tribal council members without final approval of the Band; the agreement was approved by the Bureau of Indian Affairs on August 18, 1992. This approval came despite protests of Band members regarding a Confidentiality Clause in the Agreement, which would restrict the participation of Band members in their own environmental review process.

To date, however, no studies have been done and no payments have been made to the Band. A front page article in the Wall Street Journal on October 21 revealed why: Chambers Company is scrambling for cash and trying to sell off assets after a phony accounting scheme was disclosed and the company admitted losing \$16 million in 1989, \$41 million in 1990 and \$72 million in 1991. This discovery resulted in a slew of shareholder suits and an investigation by the Securities and Exchange Commission and the American Stock Exchange. Besides the questionable state of their financial stability, Chambers' ethical practices are also in question, regarding the wining and dining of officials, the recruitment of local politicians to assist with permits, and the hiring of two Virginia state legislators to lobby citizens' groups opposed to Chambers' dumps in that state.

Yes, folks, it looks like the Bureau of Indian Affairs is backing a real winner in this one. Meanwhile, life goes on for the members of the Los Coyotes Band in the high mountains of Southern California — Chambers Company has recently informed them that they will continue environmental studies "in the Spring sometime."

# Partial listing of those did not survive the

ABANE  
ABISHIRA  
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AGUSTAYA  
AGUERECOTO  
AIPATSE  
AIRICO  
ALSEA  
AMARIZANE  
AMNIAPE  
AMOPIRA  
ANABALI  
ANACE ANAJA  
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APALACHEE  
APANIEEKRA  
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ATSAHUACA  
ATSUGEMI  
ATTIGNEENONG-  
NALIAC  
AVVAGMIUT  
AYANARE  
AZURE  
BACIROA  
BAENA  
BAENAN  
BAKAIRI  
BAMINGUO  
BARRAGUA  
BARRIA  
BEAR RIVER

BEOTHUK  
BETOYE  
BITURNA  
BOCALO  
BORRADO  
CABEME  
CACATIO  
CACHIBE  
CACHOPOSTAL  
CAHOKIA  
CAHUARANO  
CAIQUETIOS  
CALUSA  
CAMACUA  
CAMAUIROS  
CAMMURI  
CANAUNCACK  
CAPE ESPENBERG  
ESKIMO  
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ESKIMO  
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CAPUENI  
CARACA  
CARIGUANO  
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CATTACHIPTI-  
COCAUYA  
CHAIMA  
CHAKCHIUMA  
CHARCAS  
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CHOPTANK  
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COACA

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COLUMBIA  
CONCHO  
CONDORI  
CONE  
CONESTOGA  
CONICARI  
CONOY  
COSTANO  
COUROPO  
COWICHAN  
CUACHICHIL  
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CUMANAGOTO  
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CUTTATAWOMEN  
DIHAI KUTCHIN  
EASTERN PUEBLO  
EHWAE  
ERIE  
ESOPUS  
ESPINHOS  
ESSELEN  
EYAK  
FISH RIVER  
ESKIMO  
GAMELLA  
GARAYA  
GEYER  
GINGASKINS  
GOIA  
GUACEU  
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GUENGUEU  
GUICURU

GUIRE  
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HALCHIDHOMA  
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1980: 28,264,1

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1519: 30,000,1  
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**North**  
1492: 18,000,1  
1980: 2,000,0

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1492:  
1910  
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1973

From Robert Venables,  
"There a Holocaust?"  
(Fall 1990); reprinted

KUYANAWA  
KWALHIOQUA  
LAGUNERO  
LARICAJAS  
LASSIK  
LAYANA  
LITTLE DIOMEDE  
LOLACA  
LORETTE HURON  
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# The Native Nations that Invasion 1492-1992.

TOBAJAN  
TOBOSO  
TORA  
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MARAWA  
MARICHE  
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MASSAPEGUA  
MATANAWI  
MATCHOTIC  
MATINECOCK  
MEHERRIN

NEGRITO  
NEUSIOK  
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NOMLAKI  
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NOTTOWAY  
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PAVIOTSO  
PAYANKATANK  
PAYAYA  
PYAGUAN  
PENACOOK  
PIRATININGA  
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PISSASEC  
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SANAQUE  
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SARACUAM  
SECACAWONI  
SEEDGE ISLAND  
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OTI  
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PARACONOSKO  
PARAWA  
PARECA  
PARIAS  
PASPAHEGH  
PASTALOCA  
PASTIA  
PATALAC  
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POCOMOKE  
POCUMTUCK  
PORT CLARENCE  
ESKIMO  
POTAUNK  
POTCHAYICK  
POTEESKEIT  
POTIGWAR  
POTOMAC  
PTOPACO  
POTUARA  
PUIJUITENE  
PULACUAM  
PUROKOTO  
PURUPURU  
QAVVIARAGMIUT  
QUACOHAMAOCK  
QUAQUA  
QUEM  
QUIRIGUIRE  
QUIYONGHCO-  
HANNOCK  
RAMA-RAMA  
ROANOKE  
ROTI  
SACUACHE  
SAINT LAWRENCE  
SAKUYA  
SAMAMPAC  
SAMPANAL  
SANAMAIIKA

SUSQUEHANNOCK  
TACAME  
TACAYUMA  
TECUNYAPE  
TAGARE  
TAKELMA  
TAKUATEP  
TAMANACO  
TAMORO  
TAPARITA  
TAPE  
TAPGAAMIUT  
TAPUIUCU  
TARUMA  
TATAVIAM  
TAUXENENT  
TEHUECO  
TEMISKAMING  
TEMORE  
TEPACUACHE  
TEPAHUE  
TEPEHUAN  
TEQUE  
THOMPSON  
TIKIGAGMIUT  
TILIJAS  
TILLAMOOK  
TILPACOPAL  
TIMUCUA  
TISEPMA

Compiled by the Morning Star Foundation

*The following is from an interview with Chief Bill Redwing Tayac of the Piscataway people, conducted by Phil Tajitsu Nash. In it, Chief Tayac stresses the unity of native peoples throughout the Americas and outlines some of their many struggles, in particular the fight to maintain their land.*

Spanish or Portuguese, Indians are all one people stretching from the tip of North America to the tip of South America.

The dominant society has divided us, cutting up our land into slices they call countries. But we are still a people. And not a small group of people. There are tens of millions of Indian people in the Western Hemisphere. With modern

uranium, and timber. Families like the Hearsts in California made a fortune by taking gold out of there, but the people still living there are among the poorest in the United States.

This is where the massacre of Indian people known as Wounded Knee took place 100 years ago, and where the American Indian Movement made a stand in 1973 that helped to spark the modern Indian movement for dignity and self-government.

# Struggles Unite Native Peoples

## An Interview with Chief Tayac

My name is Billy Redwing Tayac. I am the hereditary chief of the Piscataway people, who are indigenous to Maryland, Washington, D.C., and northern Virginia. Our present ceremonial ground and spiritual and political center is located in what is called Port Tobacco, in Maryland. Over the years, I have worked for the reclamation of Indian people. We have so many people who have lost their way, who don't know anything about their traditions or religion. This work involves "de-Angloization," or bringing our people back to the earth, back to being Indian people. It is hard to be an Indian in any city because we are separated from the earth by concrete. We can't feel the power of the earth, the wind, the trees.

All people, regardless of color, were at one time tied to the earth. Even the Europeans had tribes tied to the earth. The earth is everything to everybody.

My father, Chief Turkey Tayac, was a traditional chief, but I was much more interested in joining with other Indians in groups such as the American Indian Movement. Through AIM, I came to realize that to be an Indian today, one must transcend tribalism. We are a race of people. In the terminology of the movement, we are "Many Nations, One People." Whether we speak English,

technology we can be in instant communication with our relatives in El Salvador, in the Brazilian rainforest.

### Europeans Tried to Destroy Us

The Europeans invaded all our land, not just the United States, Panama, or Brazil. They invaded an entire hemisphere and tried their best to destroy a race of people and their cultures and religions. It is a holocaust that cannot be compared to anything else in the history of humanity. Even today, in the 20th Century, Indian people are not considered a part of mankind. An example of this is that in the United Nations, all other races of people — black, white and yellow — are represented. Red people have no voice. If atrocities occur against us, we as Indian people have to go to the oppressor government, whether Brazil, El Salvador or the United States, to voice our concerns. This parallel would be like a Jew going to Hitler to express his concerns about the horrible extermination policies directed towards his people in the 1940s.

One of the major areas where Indian people are fighting back is in the Black Hills area of South Dakota. The Lakota and other people consider this sacred ground. But it is also one of the richest 100 square miles on earth, with gold,

This reminds me of an important lesson I have learned over the years about the use of terminology. When the Nazis occupied France during World War II, those who opposed them were called "freedom fighters." When Indian people have fought back against the taking of our land, we have been called "hostiles" or "communists." Likewise, when Sioux warriors defeated United States warriors at Little Big Horn in 1876, the popular press called it a "massacre." However, when the United States cavalry machine-gunned unarmed men, women and children at Wounded Knee in 1890, it was called a "battle" by the popular press. It took over 70 years for the record to be set straight and for the events to be referred to by the names they deserve: the Battle of Little Big Horn and The Massacre at Wounded Knee.

There are Indian Wars continuing today — yes, today — in Guatemala and El Salvador. The slaughter of Indian people by a dominant European society continues. For example, Guatemala is a country with 85% Indian people, but the Indian people don't rule Guatemala. The standing army rules.

### Mestizos are Really Indians

Governments don't like to classify

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these people as Indians. What some call mestizos, Hispanics or Chicanos are really Indians. They are not classified that way because of paper genocide. They would prefer to kill them, as with the 38,000 killed in the 1930s in El Salvador. Everyone who looked a certain way or who wore certain clothing was shot and killed indiscriminately. Mexicans today with dark complexions and black hair will deny they are Indians. They will say, "I am a Mexican." They have been brainwashed, because the lowest people on the ladder are the Indians. Who wants to be part of that group?

The rise of the American Indian Movement in the late 1960s helped to restore a sense of pride. People were no longer ashamed to be Indian. They demanded that treaties be upheld. They demanded to be treated as human beings. AIM brought back the traditions, customs and religions to thousands, maybe millions, of Indian people.

When someone committed a murder of an Indian person anywhere around the country, AIM people went there to ask why that murder resulted in only a manslaughter charge if the defendant was European American and the dead man was an Indian. When Indian people were med by all-white juries, they were more often than not found guilty. Despite being only half of one percent of the United States population, we have the highest rate of imprisonment of any group.

I would like it if every American would take a history book and look at the picture of Chief Big Foot frozen in his grave at Wounded Knee. These people were only seeking food to exist, and the United States exerted military might against them. Today, this military might still exists on the Indian reservations. They use their "legal bullets," the FBI and BIA (Bureau of Indian Affairs) to come onto reservations and investigate and imprison the Indian people. We stood up and exposed the BIA's corruption in our occupation of BIA headquarters in 1972, and stood up and showed the

world that Indian people were still alive in our stand at Wounded Knee in 1973.

I had the fortune in the early 1970s of meeting a survivor of the 1890 Wounded Knee massacre. It seemed so impossible that it could have occurred, until you think about the My Lai massacre and the other horrible incidents in Vietnam. Many Indians, like AIM leader Bill Means, served in Vietnam, and recognized that, as soldiers, they were oppressors. Then at Wounded Knee in 1973, he was being shot at by the same soldiers he had served with. The important lesson is that the Indians serving in Vietnam felt a kinship with the Vietnamese.

### We Are a Sovereign Peoples

This feeling of being outside the American government has its roots in the fact that we are sovereign people who were here thousands of years before Columbus. However, despite referendums in 1920 and 1922 where we said we did not want to be made United States citizens, we were forced [to be citizens] by the American Indian Citizenship Act of 1924. Then, compounding our problems was the Wheeler-Howard Act of 1934, which set up mbal corporations on Indian lands. Some sell-out Indian person would be made chairman of the local branch of this federal agency, and then he could sign away our rights to land or minerals. These tribal chairmen also tried to take power away from our traditional chiefs, using the lure of federal education or housing benefits. Fortunately, many of the Indian people did not fall for this trap.

There are other issues in Indian country. At Big Mountain in the Southwest, the Hopi and Navajo are being relocated because minerals were found under the land. Once people are relocated and given a small settlement, they have no skills for living in a town. Six months later, they are broke, homeless, and wanting to go home again.

In Western Minnesota, thousands of acres of land have been taken at the White Earth Reservation. Indian people who had legitimate claims were not

told, and the government sold the lands to whites.

### Indian Wars Continue

In Canada last summer, the Indian Wars continued. The Canadian government brought tanks to Indian reservations and held a siege at Oka. Less than 150 Mohawks protesting the proposed use of an ancestral burial ground for a golf course were surrounded by 5,000 federal troops.

These Indian Wars will never be over until the Indian people get their land back. Would the Jews accept money for the Wailing Wall? The Pope accept money for the Vatican? Would a Moslem accept money for the sale of Mecca? No, we can never accept the loss, the theft of ancestral lands. And because Indian people are all one people, we can never forget Wounded Knee, just like the Japanese American people can never forget the internment their people suffered [during World war II].

Even today in the United States, there are Native American political prisoners such as Leonard Peltier, who has served 15 years of two consecutive lifetime sentences for murders he did not commit.

We all need to band together today to save Mother Earth. We should be making food so that no one is hungry. Every person should have shelter and health care. There should be no dominant class based on color of skin or gender. There should be no dominant country because of the amount of money they have or the power they wield. All human beings should come together for the good of the earth.

The elders once told me that the Indian people were spared so that we can be the driving force to save Mother Earth. The ashes of our ancestors have been intermingled with the earth on this continent for millennia. In this 500th anniversary of the coming together with Europeans, it is a good time to remember this.

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were producing over \$1 billion worth of uranium annually for foreign multinationals. An area the size of France in northern Quebec has been devastated by hydroelectric development, the huge James Bay project which is the largest manipulation of a subarctic ecosystem in history. The lands flooded **are** those of Cree and Inuit — two peoples who have lived there for 10,000 years or more, in a carefully balanced way of life. Today, thousands more face relocation, as new dams are proposed for European aluminum interests (who will locate in Quebec to secure cheap electricity) and American consumers. The devastation of the ecosystems and the people is relentless. In short, the problem or challenge posed by 1992 is the invasion, and the reality that continues.

We understand that "to get the rainforest, you must first **kill** the people," and that is why since 1900, one-third of all indigenous nations in the Amazon have been decimated, while during the same time one-quarter of the forest has disappeared. There is a direct relationship between how industrial society consumes land and resources, to how it consumes peoples. In the past 150 years, we have seen the extinction of more species than since the ice age. And, since 1492, we have witnessed the extinction of more than 2,000 indigenous peoples from the western hemisphere. Where are the Wappo, the Takelma, the Natchez and the Massachuset?

Most disgraceful of all is the self-congratulatory hoopla underway in most colonial and neo-colonial states. In 1992, the governments of Spain, Italy, the US and 30 other countries are hosting the largest public celebration of this century, to mark the 500th year anniversary of the arrival of "western civilization" in the hemisphere. As planned it will outstrip the bicentennials of the Declaration of Independence, the US Constitution and the French Revolution in scale and cost, and in the same callous rewriting of history. The multi-billion dollar official extravaganza featured:

ganza featured:

- A space ship race to Mars between three solar powered space ships named after Columbus's ships the Nina, Pinta and Santa Maria;
- A Tall Ships regatta, featuring replicas of Columbus's original vessels which left Spain in the spring of 1992 for a tour of the Americas;
- Expo '92 in Seville, involving over 100 countries, and emphasizing Spain's contributions to world culture.

(Fidel Castro has been the only leader of a western hemispheric country to condemn the celebrations of Columbus. In an address to a trade union conference in Cuba (in 1985), Castro frightened his audience by saying, "I feel Indian. I feel aboriginal. I feel equal to you all." He labelled "ill-fated" this October 12 date, after which "our peoples have been raped and reduced to slavery by the conquerors." According to Castro, this so called discovery "opened" one of the most shameful pages of world history.)

It is in the face of this "celebration of genocide," that thousands of indigenous peoples are organizing to commemorate their resistance, and to bring to a close the 500-year-long chapter of the invasion. Indigenous organizations like CONAIE (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador), SAIIC (South and Central American Indian Information Center), and Indigenous Women's Network, Seventh Generation Fund, the Indian Treaty Council, UNI (from the Brazilian Amazon), and other groups have worked to bring forth the indigenous outlook on 500 years.

For several years, indigenous people appealed to the United Nations to designate 1992 as the "year of the indigenous peoples." They faced stiff opposition from Spain, the US and other "pro-Columbus" nations. Instead, 1993 has been designated as such. However, a number of indigenous nations are actively **working** on the United Nations Environment Program Conference in 1992 in Brazil, demanding among other things, full participation of indigenous peoples in the "nation state" agenda.

CONAIE and other groups hosted an

intercontinental meeting of indigenous peoples in Quito, Ecuador, in July of 1990. The meeting brought together hundreds of people from throughout the Americas, to share in common histories, strategies to mark 1992, and to plan for the next 500 years. The meeting was hailed by the Native people in attendance as a fulfillment of a traditional prophecy of the Runa people of Mexico. The prophecy reports that many years ago, the indigenous peoples of the Americas were divided into two groups, the people of the Eagle (those from the north) and the people of the Condor (those from the south). According to the prophecy, when the tears of the Eagle and the Condor are joined, a new era of life and spirit will begin for Native people. As the delegates joined in work, prayer and ceremony, they felt a joining of the vision and the people. According to the CONAIE, "the basic objectives of a mobilization are to recover the dignity of the peoples and reject all forms of submission, colonial practices and neo-colonialism."

A number of other meetings and convenings have been held, including a huge First Peoples Gathering held this past June in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and attended by over 500 representatives from the Americas. Other work continues between indigenous nations, internally in the communities, and in coalition with other groups. A series of tribunals on colonialism are proposed in several locations in North America, as **are** educational and cultural events. A number of Native writers, including Gerald Vizenor, M. Scott Momaday, Louise Erdrich, Joy Harjo and others are completing books and anthologies on the 500 years. And a great number of indigenous peoples **are** calling on other groups — nationally and internationally — to mobilize on 1992 as a year to Protect the Earth and People of the Earth.

Indeed, the ecological agenda is what many indigenous people believe can, and must, unite all people around 1992. That agenda calls for everyone to take aggressive action to stop the

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destruction of the Earth, essentially to end the biological, technological and ecological invasion/conquest which began with that ill-fated voyage 500 years past.

In a meeting in Iquitos, Peru, held in May of 1990, Indians of the Amazon called on ecologists from around the world to join a campaign against the 1992 celebrations by moving boycotts and protests against countries and companies furthering destruction of the rain forest and other indigenous homelands. The Native delegates asked groups like Greenpeace, the World Wildlife Fund, and others to pressure South American governments and companies to respect Indian rights and back Native demands for autonomy over their landbase. "We **are** a part of nature," said the Indians, insisting that the best way to stop devastation of the environment is to support the rights of indigenous people who live there to continued self determination, and a way of life. These groups also point to thousands of years of sustainable development" based on an indigenous model, as one crucial piece for the future. Thus far there has been some interest in this coalition with indigenous groups, but the response has been limited, at best. (A recent example of the conflict surfaced this past June in Ecuador, when several North American environmental groups essentially cut a deal with CONOCO over the opposition of indigenous peoples.) There is, needless to say, a great deal of work to do.

Through it all, indigenous people will continue to struggle. It is this legacy to resistance that, perhaps more than any other single activity, denotes the essence of 1992. After all the hoopla and celebration by the colonial governments is done, the Native voice prevails. It is like a constant rumble of distant thunder, and it says through the wind: "we are alive. We **are** still here."

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A memory cannot hold her child or protect his family.

The price of survival was and continues to be very high for Native Nations. Many of us are descendants of prisoners of war, living on small islands of what was once our homelands. We must continually fight for water and land rights, for religious freedom, for equitable treatment in the courts, and for dignity as a people.

In our homeland, we now have the highest rate of infant mortality, the highest rates of teen suicide, of alcoholism, of unemployment, and poverty. These conditions were caused by the unjust and inhumane treatment Native people have had to endure for 500 years.

If anything, we are survivors. Our spiritual ties to our Mother, the Earth, have kept us strong in times of great hardship.

The words of our grandmothers and grandfathers have taught us respect for the web of life and the interdependence of all things in the universe. The stories passed down through the oral tradition remind us that we are all connected.

At this turning point in history, the elders remind us that the paths we choose today are critical to sustaining the Native Nations of tomorrow. We **all** bear the responsibility of making choices that will affect the generations to come.

As we look toward the next 500 years, we can be encouraged by the increasing number of strong Native voices that are surfacing **from** the pervasive oppression of the past to help enlighten our journeys.

In this issue of RPE, we have collected the insightful words of some of **Native America's** most **clear** and **articulate thinkers** — **writers whose words educate, anger and inspire us.**

Their words help to bring clarity and vision to some of the critical issues facing today's Native Nations.

As you will see, it is long past time for Native people to hold the pen.

— **Valerie Taliman, Guest Editor**

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gloss over the history of the excesses of Western civilization, especially when those excesses are the root cause of deplorable conditions today. Both church and state would do well to commit some small pots of gold, gained in ways the world **knows**, to bringing some relief to the suffering and some measure of justice to all.

The United States could start by upholding its treaty promises — as it is bound to do by the Constitution that calls treaties the "Supreme law of the Land." Churches could start by dedicating money to the eradication of those diseases that Native people still die from in such disproportionately high numbers — hepatitis, influenza, pneumonia, tuberculosis.

Church and state could start defending our religious freedom and stop further destruction of our holy places. The general society could help more of our children grow into healthy adults just by eliminating dehumanizing images of Native people in popular culture. Stereotypes of us as sports mascots or names on leisure vans cannot be worth the low self-esteem they cause.

Native people are few in number — under two million in the United States, where there are, even with recent law changes, more dead Indians in museums and educational institutions than there are live ones today. Most of us are in economic survival mode on a daily basis, and many of us are bobbing about in the middle of the mainstream just treading water. This leaves precious few against great odds to do our part to change the world.

It is necessary and well past time for others to amplify our voices and find their own to tell their neighbors and institutions that 500 years of this history is more than enough and must come to an end.

This year, Native people will memorialize those who did not survive the invasion of 1492. It is fitting for others to join us at this time to begin an era of respect and rediscovery, to find a new world beyond 1992.

*Suzan Shown Harjo, who is Cheyenne and Muskogee, is the national coordinator of the 1992 Alliance, a coalition of Native groups. This essay first appeared in Newsweek.*

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things I have inside.

I unzip the bag and remove a brush or a comb, maybe a pair of dark glasses. A tube of lipstick works best. "This is my lipstick," I say. "There, that proves it *is* my purse." They don't buy it and, in fact, are mildly outraged that I would pry into someone's possessions with such utter disregard for her privacy. (I've alerted the student to the demonstration before the class, but no one else knows that.)

It's time to move on: "OK, if it's Nikki's purse, how do you know? Why are you all so positive it's not my purse?" Different answers: We saw you take it; that's her lipstick, we know you don't wear lipstick; there is stuff in there with her name on it. To get the point across, I even offer to help in their effort to prove Nikki's possession: "If we had a test on the contents of the purse, who would do better, Nikki or I?" "Whose labor earned the money that bought the things in the purse, mine or Nikki's?" Obvious questions, obvious answers.

I make one last try to keep Nikki's purse: "What if I said I *discovered* this purse, then would it be mine?" A little laughter is my reward, but I don't get any takers; they still think the purse is rightfully Nikki's.

"So," I ask, "Why do we say that Columbus discovered America?"

### Was it Discovery?

Now they begin to see what I've been leading up to. I ask a series of questions which implicitly link Nikki's purse and the Indians' land: Were there people on the land before Columbus arrived? Who had been on the land longer, Columbus or the Indians? Who knew the land better? Who put their labor into making the land produce? The students see where I'm going — it would be hard not to. "And yet," I continue, "What is the first thing that Columbus did when he arrived in the New World?" Right: he took possession of it. After all, he had discovered the place.

We talk about phrases other than "discovery" that textbooks could use to

describe what Columbus did. Students start with phrases they used to describe what I did to Nikki's purse: He stole it; he took it; he ripped it off. And others: He invaded it; he conquered it.

I want students to see that the word "discovery" is loaded. The word itself carries a perspective; a bias. "Discovery" is the phrase of the supposed discoverers. It's the invaders masking their theft. And when the word gets repeated in textbooks, those textbooks become, in the phrase of one historian, "the propaganda of the winners."

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To prepare students to examine textbooks critically, we begin with alternative, and rather un-sentimental, explorations of Columbus's "enterprise," as he called it. The Admiral-to-be was not sailing for mere adventure and to prove the world was round, as I learned in fourth grade, but to secure the tremendous profits that were to be made by reaching the Indies.

Mostly I want the class to think about the human beings Columbus was to "discover" — and then destroy. I read from a letter Columbus wrote to Lord Raphael Sanchez, treasurer of Aragón, and one of his patrons, dated March 14, 1493, following his return from the first voyage. He reports being enormously impressed by the indigenous people:

*As soon... as they see that they are safe and have laid aside all fear, they are very simple and honest and exceedingly liberal with all they have; none of*

*them refusing anything he [sic] may possess when he is asked for it, but, on the contrary, inviting us to ask them. They also give objects of great value for trifles, and content themselves with very little or nothing in return... I did not find, as some of us had expected, any cannibals among them, but, on the contrary, men of great deference and kindness.*<sup>1</sup>

But, on an ominous note, Columbus writes in his log, "...*should your Majesties command it, all the inhabitants could be taken away to Castile [Spain], or made slaves on the island. With 50 men we could subjugate them all and make them do whatever we want.*"<sup>2</sup>

I ask students if they remember from elementary school days what Columbus brought back from the New World. Students recall that he returned with parrots, plants, some gold, and a few of the people Columbus had taken to calling "Indians." This was Columbus's first expedition and it is also where most school textbook accounts of Columbus end — conveniently. What about his second voyage?

I read to them a passage from Hans Koning's fine book, *Columbus: His Enterprise*:

*We are now in February 1495. Time was short for sending back a good 'dividend' on the supply ships getting ready for the return to Spain. Columbus therefore turned to a massive slave raid as a means for filling up these ships. The [Columbus] brothers rounded up 1,500 Arawaks — men, women, and children — and imprisoned them in pens in Isabela, guarded by men and dogs. The ships had room for no more than five hundred, and thus only the best specimens were loaded aboard. The Admiral then told the Spaniards they could help themselves from the remainder to as many slaves as they wanted. Those whom no one chose were simply kicked out of their pens. Such had been the terror of these prisoners that (in the description by Michele de Cuneo, one of the colonists) 'they rushed in all directions like lunatics, women dropping and aban-*

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doning infants in the rush, running for miles without stopping, fleeing across mountains and rivers.'

Of the 500 slaves, 300 arrived alive in Spain, where they were put up for sale in *Seville* by Don Juan de Fonseca, the archdeacon of the town. 'As naked as the day they were born,' the report of this excellent churchman says, 'but with no more embarrassment than animals...'

This slave trade immediately turned out to be '**unprofitable**, for the slaves mostly died.' Columbus decided to concentrate on gold, although he writes, 'Let us in the name of the Holy Trinity go on sending all the slaves that can be sold.'<sup>3</sup> (Emphasis in Koning)

Certainly Columbus's fame should not be limited to the discovery of America: he also deserves credit for initiating the trans-Atlantic slave trade, albeit in the opposite direction than we're used to thinking of it.

### Looking Through Different Eyes

Students and I role play a scene from Columbus's second voyage. Slavery is not producing the profits Columbus is seeking. He believes there is gold in them thar hills and the Indians are selfishly holding out on him.

Students play Columbus; I play the Indians: "Chris, we don't have any gold, honest. Can we go back to living our lives now and you can go back to wherever you came from?"

I call on several students to respond to the Indians' plea. Columbus thinks the Indians are lying. Student responses range from sympathetic to ruthless: OK, we'll go home; *please* bring us your gold; we'll lock you up in prison if you don't bring us your gold; we'll torture you if you don't fork it over, etc.

After I've pleaded for awhile and the students-as-Columbus have threatened, I read aloud another passage from Koning's book describing Columbus's system for extracting gold from the Indians:

*Every man and woman, every boy or girl of fourteen or older, in the province of Cibao... had to collect gold for the Spaniards. As their measure, the*

*Spaniards used... hawks' bells... Every three months, every Indian had to bring to one of the forts a hawks' bell filled with gold dust. The chiefs had to bring in about ten times that amount. In the other provinces of Hispaniola, twenty five pounds of spun cotton took the place of gold.*

*Copper tokens were manufactured, and when an Indian had brought his or her tribute to an armed post, he or she received such a token, stamped with the month, to be hung around the neck. With that they were safe for another*

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*three months while collecting more gold.*

*Whoever was caught without a token was killed by having his or her hands cut of...*

*There were no goldfields, and thus, once the Indians had handed in whatever they still had in gold ornaments, their only hope was to work all day in the streams, washing out gold dust from the pebbles. It was an impossible task, but those Indians who tried to flee into the mountains were systematically hunted down with dogs and killed, to set an example for the others to keep trying...*

*During those two years of the administration of the brothers Columbus, an estimated one half of the entire population of Hispaniola was killed or killed themselves. The estimates run*

*from one hundred and twenty-five thousand to one-half million.<sup>4</sup>*

The goal is not to titillate or stun, but to force the question: Why wasn't I told this before?

### Re-examining Basic Truths

I ask students to find a textbook, preferably one they used in elementary school, and critique the book's treatment of Columbus and the Indians. I distribute the following handout and review the questions aloud. I don't want them to merely answer the questions, but to consider them as guidelines.

- How factually accurate was the account?
- What was omitted — left out — that in your judgment would be important for a full understanding of Columbus? (for example, his treatment of the Indians; slave taking; his method of getting gold; the overall effect on the Indians.)
- What motives does the book give to Columbus? Compare those with his real motives.
- Who does the book get you to root for, and how do they accomplish that? (for example, are the books homified at the treatment of Indians or thrilled that Columbus makes it to the New World?)
- How do the publishers use illustrations? What do they communicate about Columbus and his "enterprise"?
- In your opinion, *why* does the book **portray** the Columbus/Indian encounter the way it does?
- Can you think of any groups in our society who might have an interest in people having an inaccurate view of history?

I tell students that this last question is tough but crucial. Is the continual distortion of Columbus simply an accident, or are there social groups who benefit from children developing a false or limited understanding of the past?

The assignment's **subtext** is to teach students that text material, indeed all written material, should be read skeptically. I want students to explore the politics of print — that perspectives on history and social reality underlie the

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written word, and that to read is both to comprehend what is written, but also to question *why* it is written. My intention is not to encourage an 'I-don't-believe-anything' cynicism? but rather to equip students to analyze a writer's assumptions and determine what is and isn't useful in any particular work.

For practice, we look at excerpts from a California textbook that belonged to my brother in the fourth grade, *The Story of American Freedom*, published by Macmillan in 1964. We read aloud and analyze several paragraphs. The arrival of Columbus and crew is especially revealing — and obnoxious. As is true in every book on the "discovery" that I've ever encountered, the reader watches events from the Spaniard's point of view. We are told how Columbus and his men "fell upon their knees and gave thanks to God," a passage included in virtually all elementary school accounts of Columbus. "He then took possession of it [the island] in the name of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain."<sup>6</sup> No question is raised of Columbus's right to assume control over a land which was already occupied. The account is so respectful of the Admiral that students can't help but sense it approves of what is, quite simply, an act of naked imperialism.

The book keeps us close to God and the Church throughout its narrative. Upon returning from the New World, Columbus shows off his parrots and Indians. Immediately following the show, "the king and queen lead the way to a near-by church. There a song of praise and thanksgiving is sung."<sup>7</sup> Intended or not, linking church and Columbus removes him still further from criticism.

### Students' Conclusions

I give students a week before I ask them to bring in their written critiques. Students share their papers with one another in small groups. They take notes towards what my co-teacher, Linda Christensen, and I call the "collective text": What themes recur in the papers and what important differences emerge? What did they discover

about textbook treatments of Columbus? Here are some excerpts:

Matthew wrote:

*As people read their evaluations the same situations in these textbooks came out. Things were conveniently left out so that you sided with Columbus's quest. to 'boldly go where no man has gone before' ... None of the harsh violent reality is confronted in these so called true accounts.*

Gina tried to explain why the books were so consistently rosy:

*It seemed to me as if the publishers had just printed up some 'glory story' that was supposed to make us feel more patriotic about our country. In our group, we talked about the possibility of the government trying to protect young students from such violence. We soon decided that that was probably one of the farthest things from their minds. They want us to look at our country as great, and powerful, and forever right. They want us to believe Columbus was a real hero. We're being fed lies. We don't question the facts, we just absorb information that is handed to us because we trust the role models that are handing them out.*

Rebecca's collective text reflected the general tone of disillusion with the textbooks:

*Of course, the writers of the books probably think it's harmless enough — what does it matter who discovered America, really; and besides, it makes them feel good about America. But the thought that I have been lied to all my life about this, and who knows what else, really makes me angry.*

### Why Do We Do This?

The reflections on the collective text became the basis for a class discussion. Repeatedly, students blasted their textbooks for giving readers inadequate, and ultimately untruthful, understandings. While we didn't press to arrive at definitive explanations for the omissions and distortions, we tried to underscore the contemporary abuses of historical ignorance. If the books wax romantic about Columbus planting the flag on island beaches and taking possession of land occupied by naked red-skinned Indians, what do young

readers learn from this about today's world? That might — or wealth — makes right? That it's justified to take people's land if you are more "civilized" or have a "better" religion?

Whatever the answers, the textbooks condition students to accept inequality; nowhere do they suggest that the Indians were sovereign peoples with a right to control their own lands. And, if Columbus's motives are mystified or ignored, then students are less apt to question U.S. involvements in say, Central America or the Middle East. As Bobby, approaching his registration day for the military draft, pointed out in class: "If people thought they were going off to war to fight for profits, maybe they wouldn't fight as well, or maybe they wouldn't go."

It's important to note that some students are troubled by these myth-popping discussions. One student wrote that she was "left not knowing who to believe." Josh was the most articulate in his skepticism. He had begun to "read" our class from the same critical distance from which we hoped students would approach textbooks:

*I still wonder...If we can't believe what our first grade teachers told us, why should we believe you? IF they lied to us, why wouldn't you? If one book is wrong, why isn't another? What is your purpose in telling us about how awful Chris was? What interest do you have in telling us the truth? What is it you want from us?*

They were wonderful questions. Linda and I responded by reading them (anonymously) to the entire class. We asked students to take a few minutes to write additional questions and comments on the Columbus activities or to imagine our response as teachers — what *was* the point of our lessons?

We hoped students would see that the intent was to present a new way of reading, and ultimately, of experiencing the world. Textbooks fill students with information masquerading as final truth and then ask students to parrot back the information in end of chapter "check-ups." The Brazilian educator Paulo Freire calls it the "banking method": students are treated as empty vessels

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waiting for deposits of wisdom from textbooks and teachers? We wanted to tell students that they shouldn't necessarily trust the "authorities," but instead need to participate in their learning, probing for unstated assumptions and unasked questions.

Josh asked what our "interest" was in this approach. It's a vital question. Linda and I see teaching as political action: we want to equip students to build a truly democratic society. As Freire writes, to be an actor for social change one must "read the word and the world."<sup>9</sup> We hope that if a student maintains a critical distance from the written word, then it's possible to maintain that same distance from one's society: to stand back, look hard and ask, "Why is it like this? How can I make it better?"

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup>The *Annals of America*, Volume 1: 1493-1754, *Discovering a New World, Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1968, pp. 2, 4.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted in Hans Koning, *Columbus: His Enterprise*, Monthly Review Press, 1976, pp. 53-54. As Koning points out, none of the information included in his book is new. It is available in Columbus's own journals and letters and the writings of the Spanish priest, Bartolomé de las Casas.

<sup>3</sup>Koning, pp. 84-85.

<sup>4</sup>Koning, pp. 85-87.

<sup>5</sup>It's useful to keep in mind the distinction between cynicism and skepticism. As Norman Diamond writes. "In an important respect, the two are not even commensurable. Skepticism says, 'you'll have to show me, otherwise I'm dubious'; it is open to engagement and persuasion...Cynicism is a removed perspective, a renunciation of any responsibility." See Norman Diamond, "Against Cynicism in Politics and Culture," in *Monthly Review*, v. 28, June 1976, p. 40.

<sup>6</sup>Edna McGuire, *The Story of American Freedom*, Macmillan Co, 1964, p. 24.

<sup>7</sup>McGuire, p. 26.

<sup>8</sup>See Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Continuum, New York, 1970.

<sup>9</sup>Paulo Freire and Donaldo Macedo, *Literacy: Reading the Word and the World*, Bergin and Garvey, 1987.

# Resources

## Publications

Oren R. Lyons. John C. Mohawk. Vine Deloria, Jr. and others, *Exiled in the Land of the Free: Democracy, Indian Nations and the U.S. Constitution*, 1992. Available from Clear Light Publishers. 823 Don Diego, Santa Fe, NM 87501. 505/989-9590.

Three excellent publications are available from the American Indian Program, Cornell University. 300 Caldwell Hall, Ithaca, NY 14853.

- *The Indian Roots of American Democracy*, an examination of the Iroquois' influence on the development of American democracy, Special Constitution Bicentennial Edition. 1988.

- *View From the Shore*. American Indian perspectives on the Quincentenary, Columbus Quincentenary Edition. 1990.

- *Northeast Indian Quarterly*, a magazine dedicated to the proposition that "there exists an American Indian World." The quarterly seeks to promote a better understanding of Native communities.

*Soldiers Falling Into Camp*, written by Native authors and historians who documented the Crow and Lakota oral traditions of the Battle of Little Big Horn. Published in 1992 by Affiliated Writers of America, W Box 343. Encampment, WY 82325.

Andrew Maier, "Beating the MRS." A step-by-step how-to manual on stopping Monitored Retrievable Storage nuclear waste sites in your community or reservation. Mountaineer Policy Institute, 264 High St, Morgantown, WV 26505. 304-296-8611.

*Slop Radiating Native Lands: End 500 Years of Injustice, Healing Global Wounds Participants Handbook* published by the Western Shoshone Nation and the Global Anti-Nuclear Alliance. An excellent and informative resource on nuclear waste and Indian lands. Healing Global Wounds, Box 4082, Las Vegas, NV 89127. 702/386-8696.

*Rethinking Columbus*, a special issue of *Rethinking Schools* focusing on education. offers 96 pages of resources and teaching ideas for kindergarten through college. Available for \$6 from 1001 E. Keefe Avenue, Milwaukee, WI 53212; 414/964-9646.

*Indigenous Environmental Perspectives: A North America Primer*. A discussion and series of case studies of North American Indigenous environmental issues. 56 pp. Available for \$6 Box 174, Lake Elmo, MN 55042; 612/777-3629.

Bradley Angel, *The Toxic Threat to Indian Lands: A Greenpeace Report* (1991). Details the toxic assault on Native America. Available from Greenpeace, 139 Townsend, San Francisco, CA 94109.

## Periodicals

*Indigenous Woman*, a publication of the Indigenous Women's Network. Comes with \$15 voting membership or \$25 supporting membership in the IWN. Write IWN, PO Box 174. Lake Elmo, MN 55042; 612/777-3629.

*News from Indian Country*, a twice-monthly newspaper of national Indian news. \$24/year. Route 2, Box 2900-A, Hayward, WI 54843. 715/634-5226.

*Native Peoples*, a quarterly dedicated to the sensitive portrayal of the arts and lifeways of native peoples of the Americas. \$18/year. Order from Media Concepts Group, P.O. Box 36820. Phoenix, AZ 85067-6820; 602/252-2236.

*NACE News from the Grassroots*, published by Native Americans for a Clean Environment \$6/year. NACE. PO Box 1671, Tahlequah, OK 74465.

*South and Meso American Indian Information Center Newsletter*, brings extensive news of indigenous struggles in Central and South America. Published 2-4 times/year, \$15 from SAJIC, PO Box 28703, Oakland, CA 94604; 510/834-4263.

*California Indian Basketweavers Association Newsletter*, monitors environmental issues that touch on basketweaving, such as herbicide use in forestry. 16894 China Flats Road. Nevada City, CA 95959.

*Native American News*, a publication of the Citizen Alert Native American Program. Major focus on nuclear issues. PO Box 5391. Reno, NV 89513; 702/827-4200.

## Groups

Indigenous Environmental Network. A national coalition of Indigenous groups that provides support and expertise in local struggles. IEN, 19 Ellicott Boulevard, Tonawanda, NY 14150. Midwest Region, PO Box 485, Bemidji, MN 56601.

Native Americans for a Clean Environment. Provides technical assistance and support in Native environmental struggles nationwide. NACE, PO Box 1671, Tahlequah, OK 74465; 918/458-4322.

California Indians for Cultural and Environmental Protection. Provide technical assistance in local struggles throughout Southern California and the Southwest. PO Box 324, Warner Springs, CA 92086; 619/782-3703.

Alaska Indigenous Council for the Environment. An organization of grassroots indigenous people who are concerned about protecting Alaska Native environment. Alaska ICE. PO Box 100454, Anchorage, AK 99510.

Seventh Generation Fund. A national Native American intermediate grantmaking foundation dedicated to maintaining and promoting the uniqueness of Native people and nations. P.O. Box 2550, McKinleyville, CA 95521; 707/839-1178.

International Indian Treaty Council. Advocates for treaty rights before the United Nations and other international tribunals. 710 Clayton Street #1, San Francisco, CA 94117.

# I Didn't Celebrate Columbus Day

by *Suzan Shown Harjo*

Columbus Day, never on Native America's list of favorite holidays, became somewhat tolerable as its significance diminished to little more than a good shopping day. But this long year of Columbus hoopla will be tough to take amid the spending sprees and horn blowing to tout a five-century feeding frenzy that has left Native people and this red quarter of Mother Earth in a state of emergency. For Native people, this half millennium of land grabs and one-cent treaty sales has been no bargain.

An obscene amount of money will be lavished this year on parades, statutes and festivals. The Christopher Columbus Quincentenary Jubilee Commission planned to spend megabucks to stage what it delicately called "maritime activities" in Boston, San Francisco and other cities with no connection to the original *rub-a-dub-dub* lurch across the sea in search of India and gold. Funny hats will be worn and new myths born. Little kids will be told big lies in the name of education.

**For Native people, it is time for 500 years of suffering to come to an end.**

The pressure is on for Native people to be window dressing for the Quincentennial events, to celebrate the evangelization of the Americas and to denounce the "Columbus-bashers." We will be asked to buy into the thinking that we cannot change history, and that genocide and ecocide are offset by the benefits of horses, cut-glass beads, pick-up trucks and microwave ovens.

The participation of some Native people will be its own best evidence of the effectiveness of 500 years of colonization, and should surprise no one. But at the same time, neither should anyone be surprised by Native people who mark the occasion by splashing blood-red paint on a Columbus statute here or there. Columbus will be hanged in effigy as a symbol of the European invasion, and tried in tribunals.

It would be great to fast-forward to 1993, which the United Nations has declared the "Year of the Indigenous

People." Perhaps then we can begin to tell our own stories outside the context of confrontation — begin to celebrate the miracle of **survival** of those remaining Native people, religions, cultures, languages, legal systems, medicine and values. In the meantime, it should be understood that, even in polite society, voices will be raised just to be heard at all over the din of the celebrators.

In 1991, Native people marked the 500th anniversary of 1491, the good old days in our old countries. There was life here before 1492 — although that period of our history is called "pre-history" in the European and American educational systems — and there is life after 1992.

We would like to turn our attention to making the next 500 years different from the past ones; to enter into a time of grace and healing. In order to do so, we must first involve ourselves in educating the colonizing nations, which **are** investing a lot not only in silly plans but in serious efforts to further revise history, to justify the bloodshed and destruction, to deny that genocide was committed here and to revive failed policies of assimilation as the answer to progress.

These societies must come to grips with the past, acknowledge responsibility for the present and do something about the future. It does no good to

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