2010

The Land Does Not Belong to Us We Belong to the Land!

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Available at: https://via.library.depaul.edu/dialogo/vol13/iss1/1

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Cover Page Footnote
This article is from an earlier iteration of Diálogo which had the subtitle "A Bilingual Journal." The publication is now titled "Diálogo: An Interdisciplinary Studies Journal."

This article is available in Diálogo: https://via.library.depaul.edu/dialogo/vol13/iss1/1
THE LAND DOES NOT BELONG TO US
WE BELONG TO THE LAND!

Indigenous Peoples of the world have a lot to teach us. Diálogo 13 is an invitation to our readers to learn about the Indigenous Peoples and nationalities of Abya Yala (Kuna name for the Americas). The rich compilation of essays and images gathered here offers diverse perspectives on the topic of indigeneity from exceptionally engaging scholars, activists, and artists. Through analytic essays, reports from the field, personal reflections, and striking artwork and photography, this issue offers a sample of the innovative and powerful responses that indigenous people from across the Americas (and their allies) have had to destructive political, economic and environmental policies that continue to wreak havoc on our planet. As I read the essays and viewed the images now before you, I was impressed by the degree to which the multifaceted strategies and approaches of the numerous local and transnational organizing efforts of Indigenous People across the hemisphere are so deeply rooted in an ongoing struggle for self-determination, and an unwavering respect for humanity and the earth. The stories of the historic and present day challenges faced by indigenous men, women and children, both in their homelands and as migrants forced from their lands due to globalization, are awe inspiring but so is the resilience of indigenous populations who respond to these threats through dynamic resistance movements that operate both at the local and transnational levels. The pieces also convey the profound impact that indigenous struggles have on those who behold indigenous ways of life and movements and are inspired to become allies and express their solidarity though a range of academic and/or activist means. The Center for Latino Research is grateful to Sylvia Escárcega Zamarrón for proposing the critically important topic of this issue and for bringing together such an impressive collection of contributors to begin our long overdue dialog on indigeneity across the Americas.

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NOTES
1 From the Lake Titikaka Declaration. See article by Marc Becker.

About art by MIKI’ALA CATALFANO from ‘Pedagogy of Hope’, PAULO FREIRE:
Indeed, one of the serious problems of the man or woman in exile is how to wrestle, tooth and nail, with feelings, desire, reason, recall, accumulated knowledge, worldviews, with the tension between a today being lived in a reality on loan and a yesterday, in their content of origin, whose fundamental marks they come here charged with. At bottom, the problem is how to preserve one’s identity in the relationship between an indispensable occupation in the new context, and a preoccupation in which the original context has to be reconstituted. How to wrestle with the yearning without allowing it to turn into nostalgia. How to invent new ways of living, and living with others, thereby overcoming or redirecting an understandable tendency on the part of the exiled woman or man always to regard the context of origin (as it cannot be got rid of as a reference, at least not over the long haul) as better than the one on loan. Sometimes it is actually better; not always, however.

MIKI’ALA CATALFANO’S VOICE:
In 1998, I was down on my luck. My immediate family had moved, one by one to California, to Colorado, to Seattle, so I moved to be closer to them. When the drama and the fog of my life lifted a little I became painfully aware that this land in all its beauty was not my home. In great distress I walked in the forest and asked my ‘aumakua (ancestor gods) if they could hear me here. Despondent, thinking I was now closed off from my ‘aumakua, I walked back to the car. On my path was a single hawk feather.