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AFTER COLUMBUS: RACE RELATIONS IN THE AMERICAS SINCE 1492

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Columbian Quincentenary Events: Commemoration, Not Celebration

Published by THE URBAN ALLIANCE ON RACE RELATIONS

Volume 7, No. 3

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CURRENTS: Readings in Race Relations is the quarterly magazine of the Urban Alliance on Race Relations.

The Urban Alliance on Race Relations, formed in July 1975 to promote a stable and healthy multiracial environment in the community, is a non-profit organization made up of volunteers from all sectors of the community.

The Urban Alliance on Race Relations is an educational agency and an advocate and intermediary for visible minorities. It works towards encouraging better race relations, increased understanding and awareness among our multicultural, multiracial population through programs of education directed at both the private and public sectors of the community. It focuses its efforts on the institutions of our society including educational systems, employment, government, media, legislation, police, social service agencies, and human services, in order to reduce patterns of discrimination and inequality of opportunity which may exist within these institutions.

The work of the organization is carried out through committees such as:
Education; Employment; Media; and Judicial.

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Membership fees to join the Urban Alliance on Race Relations are:

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Articles offered for publication are welcome. It is preferred that articles be submitted both on DOS compatible computer disk and typewritten copy, double-spaced, with adequate margins for notation.

All enquiries about advertising should be directed to the Editor.

The Urban Alliance on Race Relations wishes to acknowledge the financial support of Multiculturalism Canada.

ISSN 0715-7045

2nd Class Mail Registration Number 5972

Return Postage Guaranteed

October 1991

Layout by Through the Looking Glass

EDITORIAL

Five-Hundred Years Later: Still Searching For A New World

Next year, high above the martial din of the music of the parades and the festive crackling of the fireworks, a chorus of somber voices will be raised in dissent. To the Natives of the Americas and the descendants of the African slaves, 1992, the quincentenary of the arrival of Christopher Columbus and the Europeans on this continent, does not call for celebrations but, rather, for sober reflection.

This most significant anniversary is indeed an eminently opportune occasion for assessing the American experience and gauging the import of the momentous historic event that gave birth to the typically multiracial and multicultural societies of the New World. Such a demarche is particularly pertinent now as friction between Blacks and Whites increasingly perturbs the North American social landscape and indigenous peoples from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego wage the last battles for their survival as communities.

So what hath Columbus wrought? What kinds of human societies have emerged on this continent since the caravels sighted Guanahani? What is the legacy of the history that has unfolded since that fateful day in 1492?

The history of the Americas is the history of the conquest, ethnocide, and displacement of the "witness peoples," as Brazilian historian Darcy Ribeiro calls the original inhabitants of the land. The history of the Americas is the history of the enslavement of millions of Africans brought to the New World to produce wealth for the Old World and the European diaspora. The continent hosts some thirty national entities of unequal social, economic, and technological development, presenting a disquieting contrast between a rich, powerful, overwhelmingly "white" North and a much poorer, backward even, overwhelmingly "colored" South. And within the borders of these nations, disconcerting patterns of inequality persist along racial, ethnic, and cultural lines.

Yet, throughout this horrific history the Americas have always held and still hold the promise of something better. The continent has long loomed large in the European imagination as Eldorado, the land of untold riches, of spices and gold.

To millions of immigrants from around the world, the continent still represents the hope for a better material life. But the Americas also stand for a more transcendent promise, the promise of Thomas More's Utopia, the promise of a society of free men and women living in harmony and equality.

How has the promise fared? Certainly between the dream and reality the gap remains large, larger in some societies than in others. In the Americas, racial tolerance and respect of the other are not yet universal virtues, political freedom is not necessarily an inalienable right, and economic justice is not a sacred principle. Still, there is hope in the continuing, relentless struggle of millions of men and women, North and South, to make the dream of a new and better world come true. There is hope in the fact that the ideal is ensconced in the laws and constitutions of so many different countries. There is hope in the incessant efforts of so many dedicated souls to reduce the gap between the ideal and the actual.

The late Cuban novelist Alejo Carpentier has defined the Americas as a unique continent with a singular historical vocation. Standing at the crossroads of the world, the Americas have been and still are the meeting place of all the races of the world, of all the civilizations ever created by humanity. As such, the continent is pregnant with possibilities. Out of the fruitful encounter between East and West, North and South, brought about by what is after all a fluke of history, through the unfathomable sufferings and occasional triumphs of individuals and collectivities, may we continue to strive to create in the Americas not Utopia perhaps, but a new, more humane, more human, *oecumene*.

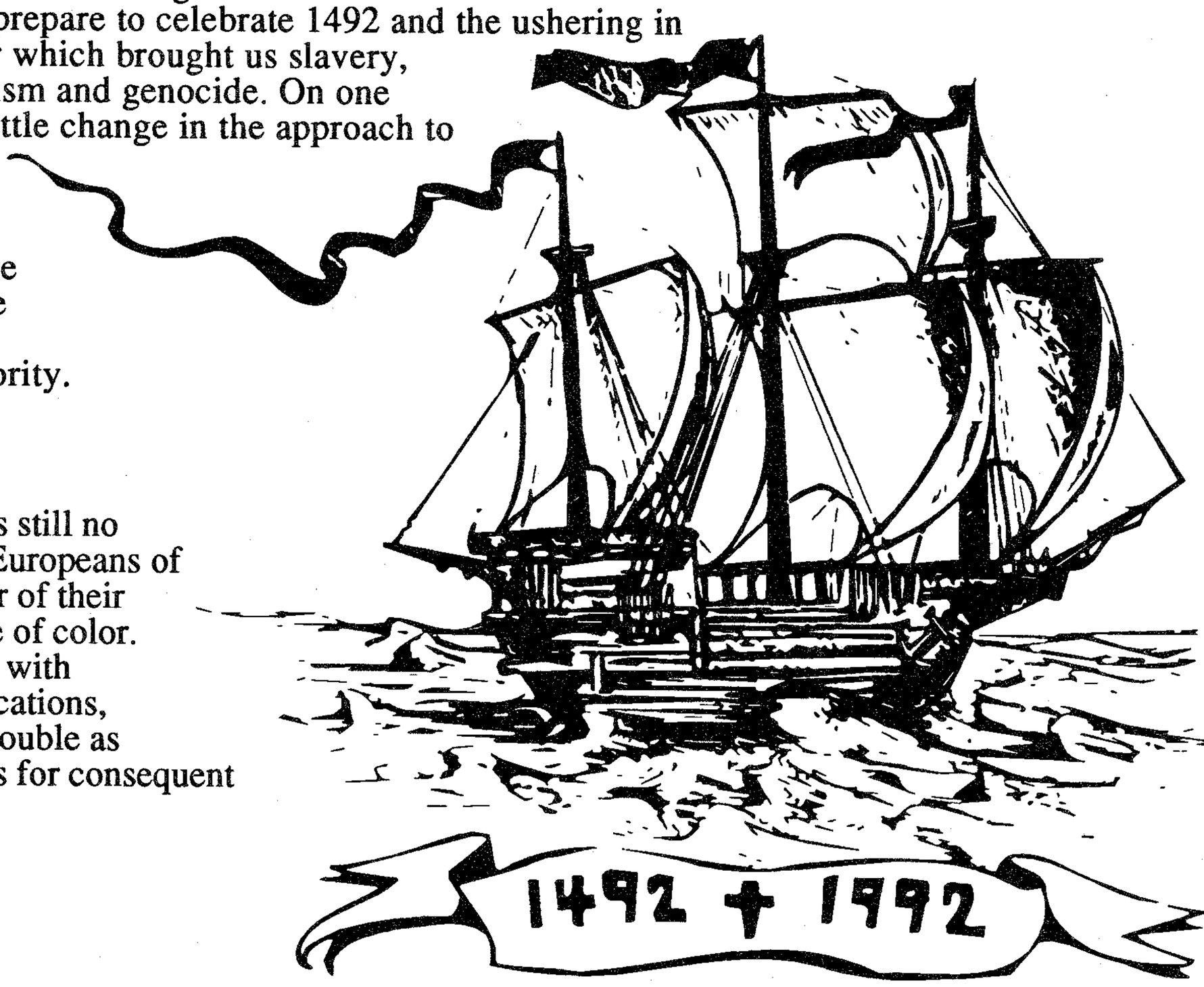
Asselin Charles

PERSPECTIVES

COLUMBUS AND THE NEW WORLD ORDER

by Cynthia Hamilton

It is more than ironic that we are faced with the ominous possibilities of an American-designed "New World Order"as Europe and America prepare to celebrate 1492 and the ushering in of the old world order which brought us slavery, colonialism, imperialism and genocide. On one level there has been little change in the approach to foreign policy: relations between European and non European countries are still understood by the former in terms of superiority and inferiority.



After 500 years there is still no acknowledgement by Europeans of the disruptive character of their encounters with people of color. Instead we are flooded with rationalizations, justifications, excuses, all of which double as explanations or reasons for consequent death and destruction.

The Old World Order and the New World

The mere mention of a "new world order" demands that we take stock of the "old world order." What better place to begin than the Columbus voyage? The mythology of discovery, conquest, and civilization has been the basis of all modern European history. The "discovery" was coupled with slavery - the introduction of bondage as a means of civilization for Indians and Africans alike. The European created an identity and meaning for himself as conqueror, triumphant in his "manifest destiny" over infidels and inferiors, protector of the new found subjects, graciously assuming the "white man's burden." The idea of America as global policeman is really an old idea, an adaptation of the European equivalent which was introduced with travel to the New World.

Europe's economy desperately needed the new resources, markets and labor which "the conquest" produced. Today's conquest must be understood in the context of new realities; the

world's largest military power is also the world's largest debtor nation, but military power will ensure a place for the U.S. alongside countries like Germany and Japan which are ascending economically but still militarily dependent; land and resources are being rapidly depleted in the U.S. and Europe as a consequence of industrial abuse; poisoned water, polluted land and air, destruction of species of plants and animals make the lands of the Third World more valuable. There is no clearer example than the National Wilderness Federation's "debt for nature" program, in which Third World countries with large debts are invited to sign over unspoiled lands (for safekeeping) in exchange for renegotiated terms of repayment. Ironically, the "new world order" may help to circumvent the battles over global spoils which plagued European powers in earlier centuries by granting U.S. hegemony by fiat.

The Gulf War left us with a new lexicon for international relations. The war, after all, was designed to consolidate the "new world order." Therefore what could have been dismissed as yet another example of overzealous use of military force by the U.S. became an international, United Nation sponsored campaign. But this campaign and subsequent "new world order" conceived to ensure "a world where the rule of law, not the law of the jungle, governs the conduct of nations" is not designed in the interest of Africans or Latin Americans or even residents of the Middle East. This "new world order" is being created at their expense as the struggle for control in the post-Cold War era proceeds. Much like the world decrees of centuries past, the Papal Bulls of 1493 which divided the world for Spain and Portugal, the Berlin Conference which gave secular meaning to the division by redrawing the map of the African continent, current European summits and agendas reflect a similar intent, and have proceeded by excluding participation and consideration of "the South." The proposed "commemoration" of the Columbus voyage, popularly known as the "discovery of America," by European nations and the U.S. underscores the disregard for the peoples of the Third World. We cannot afford to wait 500 years to deconstruct the "new world order." We can learn from analyses of the past. Many writers have pointed out that America was not discovered, rather it was "invented to meet the psychological and commercial needs of an expanding Europe." The "new world order" is a similar construction, a psychological response to the objective limitations which have been reached by European commercial interests.

The New World and the New World Order

Like the "new world" created 500 years ago President Bush's "new world order" also rests on conquest. European systems disrupted social and economic life 500 years ago. Today as struggles emerge internationally to reintroduce more indigenous and harmonious ways of life, the response has been increased militarism. "Desert Storm" was preceded by "Operation Just Cause" in Panama the " invasion by invitation" of Grenada, and the creation and financing of Contra operation around the world (starting with UNITA in Angola in 1975).

As the Europeans invented America they reinvented its inhabitants by turning them into Indians and Negroes. The "new world order" has invented its " other" as well. When *glasnost* eliminated the old communist bogey, America reinvented another enemy, this time in the Third World — terrorists and drug cartels. As media attention becomes focused on these new targets the United States began to reorient its defense initiatives. As negotiations proceeded to withdraw troops and weapons from Europe, the U. S. began to redeploy them in the Third World. In 1988 the Commission on Integrated Long Term Strategy released its report "Discriminate Deterrence" to the Secretary of Defense and the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. The report addressed new concerns in the Third World and the need for a long term military strategy which includes destabilization in the form of support for anti-Communist insurgencies.

1992 must not be allowed to pass with out response. The "new world order" must be challenged as a resurrection of the old. People of color must use this 500th year to reflect and shed all of the trappings which resulted from conquest. We must develop new meaning through a revived consideration of history, stripped of mythology.

Cynthia Hamilton is Professor of Pan-African Studies at California State University (Los Angeles).

IMAGES OF RACE RELATIONS IN NEW WORLD LITERATURE

by Earl Fitz

Racially oriented issues have, from the outset, been a constant feature of New World literature. Given the nature of the European conquest of the Americas, it could hardly have been otherwise. Integrally related to the issue of race relations, however, inter-racial sexual activity also began early on to further complicate what was already a divisive matter. Given the problematic place sex has had within Western culture, it comes as no surprise that, reinforced by legalistic, socio-political, and moralistic hypocrisies, the twin maladies of sexism and racism have been with us in the Americas from at least 1492 onward. As the imaginative record not only of how our societies are but of how they might be, New World literature has thus provided us with a steady stream of novels, poems, and dramas that focus, directly or indirectly, on the always volatile subject of race relations, a subject inextricably bound up in problems of class, gender, and human sexuality.

But while the issue of race cannot be considered at all unique to the New World, a closely related issue — miscegenation — can be. Indeed, one can argue that racial mixing is so pandemic to the literature of Canada (English and French), the United States, Spanish America, and Brazil that it can be regarded as a defining characteristic. Spanish American literature, for example, is often said to have begun with the work of a mestizo, Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, the son of a Spanish Conquistador and an Incan princess. In his masterpiece, *The Royal Commentaries* (Vol. I, 1609; Vol. II, 1617), Inca Garcilaso takes pains to praise both his Incan and his Spanish heritage. Such a positive approach to the issue, sadly, would come to be more the exception than the rule.

In works as distant in time and place as Georges Bugnet's *Nipsya* (1924), Helen Hunt Jackson's *Ramona* (1884), Robert Kroetsch's *Gone Indian* (1973), Darcy Ribeiro's *Maíra* (1978), John Richardson's *Wacousta* (1832), and Esteban Echeverría's "La Cautiva" (1837), however, the figure of the Indian comes in for diverse treatments. In "La Cautiva," and *Wacousta*, for example, the Native American is cast as a blood-thirsty savage while in *Ramona*, a novel that its author hoped would win sympathy for the Indian's plight in the same way that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had won sympathy for the abolitionist cause, a thoroughly admirable Indian boy (but one disdained, exploited, and eventually murdered by white privateers), falls in love with a young woman, Ramona, who is herself of racially mixed (Indian and white) blood. An interesting twist to *Ramona*'s plot structure is that Ramona's step-mother, a Mexican woman who is herself the object of racial prejudice and economic exploitation, views Ramona's Indian heritage with loathing and disgust.

This pattern has a parallel in French Canada with Bugnet's *Nipsya*, a novel in which the main character (Nipsya) is, like Ramona, a young woman of Indian and white heritage. Representing the tradition of the Métis in Canada, Nipsya (who feels herself somehow "tainted" by what white society makes her believe is her "illicit" engendering) eventually marries neither her full-blooded Indian suitor (who desires her in a powerfully sexual way) nor the white Hudson's Bay man, but a Métis like herself.

The Noble Savage and the Bad Indian

Because of the interest generated in the Americas by such eighteenth and nineteenth century French writers as Chateaubriand (who, in 1791, came to experience the New World first-hand) and Rousseau (whose concept of the "Bon Sauvage" would be tremendously influential in both North and South America), the figure of the Indian, portrayed both positively and negatively, became a virtual fixture in much nineteenth century literature. Five works that typify the radically different American approaches to the idea of the "Noble Savage" are Major John Richardson's *Wacousta*, James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), José de Alencar's *O Guaraní (1857; The Guarani)* and *Iracema* (1865), and Juan León de Mera's *Cumandá* (1879). Probably the best known of this group, Cooper's romance, *The Last of the Mohicans*, present, in Chingachgook and his son, Uncas, the epitomes of the "Bon Sauvage." And while there is no problem with the close friendship and comradeship that bind these two utterly "noble savages" to the intrepid white scout, Hawkeye, there is a problem — as the text suggests — in the more than platonic interest that Uncas comes to show for Cora, one of the daughters of the English officer, Colonel Munro. Although Cooper apparently wanted to titillate his reader with the rather thinly veiled prospect of a budding inter-racial love affair between Cora and Uncas, in the end he could not bring himself to countenance such a union. He has both Cora and Uncas die, dispatched — in stark contrast to the idealized Uncas — by utterly "savage" Indian warriors. Cooper's final pronouncement on this issue comes in the concluding chapter when Hawkeye, who upholds the attitudes and mores of his time (and of Cooper's class), surmises that it is better to have Uncas and Cora die before they could consummate their love, which, he feels, would have been a terrible sin. That a leading U.S. writer would thus suggest that it is better to be knifed to death than to engage in an inter-racial love affair indeed speaks volumes about the state of racial and sexual attitudes in the nineteenth-century United States.

Often compared to Cooper's Leatherstocking saga, Richardson's *Wacousta*, a compelling (if, at times, awkwardly written) gothic romance set in the time of Pontiac's 1763 rebellion, structures itself around the wilderness (filled with frightful savages) and civilization, symbolized by the English fort. Although the novel's main character (Wacousta is actually an Englishman, Sir Reginald Morton, who has "gone Indian" because of a wrong done to him in Europe by the very man, Charles de Haldimar, who is now the garrison commander) is, in some ways, a kind of tainted "Noble Savage," the remainder of the Indians in *Wacousta* are more terrifyingly real than the idealized types Cooper presents in his work. Richardson's treatment of the Indian as a literary figure is thus considerably more complex than Cooper's typically is, and the difference makes for more interesting reading.

While the issue of race cannot be considered at all unique to the New World, a closely related issue — miscegenation — is.

Two other New World writers who took very different approaches to this issue are Brazil's José de Alencar and, also from the United States, Lydia Maria Child, whose 1824 novel, Hobomok, with its feminist approach to the miscegenation theme, may have actually inspired Cooper to write his work as he did. It is Alencar, however, who provides us with a truly unique handling of this theme. Brazil, a society renowned for its cultural flexibility and for its history of racial and cultural mixing, was, in the early nineteenth century, also a nation that was coming, literarily at least, to revere its Indian populations. Widely celebrated in poems, narratives and dramas of the time, Brazil's native peoples were given permanent mythic status by Alencar in his two most famous works, *The Guarani*, the tale of a "noble savage" who first saves a white woman from destruction and then seems poised to become her lover, and *Iracema*, a mythopoetic tale that, reversing the sex roles (an Indian princess — Iracema — and a Portuguese soldier), actually sees a child born, a child who, through his mixed Indian/white heritage, symbolizes the newly emergent Brazilian race.

Juan Leon de Mera's *Cumanda*, by way of contrast, is closer to Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* than to either of Alencar's works (or to Child's *Hobomok*) since the main character, Cumanda (a beautiful half-Indian, half-white girl reminiscent of Nipsya) dies tragically, a victim of hypocrisies and moral double-standards beyond he control.

Black-White Relations

If the nineteenth century was, in terms of racially oriented literature, dominated by images of whites and Indians, the twentieth century has seen a great variety of race related images, prominent among which, however, is the issue of black-white relations. In Spanish America (with writers like Alejo Carpentier, Nicolás Guillén, Luis Palés Matos and Candelario Obeso), in Brazil (with writers like Solano Trindade, Abdias do Nascimento, João da Cruz e Sousa, and Jorge Amado), in the Caribbean (with V. S. Naipaul, and Aimé Césaire) and in the United States (with writers like Langston Hughes, Ralph Ellison, Eldridge Cleaver, Alice Walker,

and Toni Morrison), but in Canada, too, with writers like Morley Callaghan, Sonny Ladoo, Dionne Brand, Alix Renaud, Dany Laferrière, and Bharati Mukherjee, the complexities, tensions, and conflicts of black-white race relations have been dealt with by a great many writers. And although outsiders do not automatically think of Black Canadian writers and poetics, we should, this being a point Harold Head elaborates on in his *Canada in Us Now*.

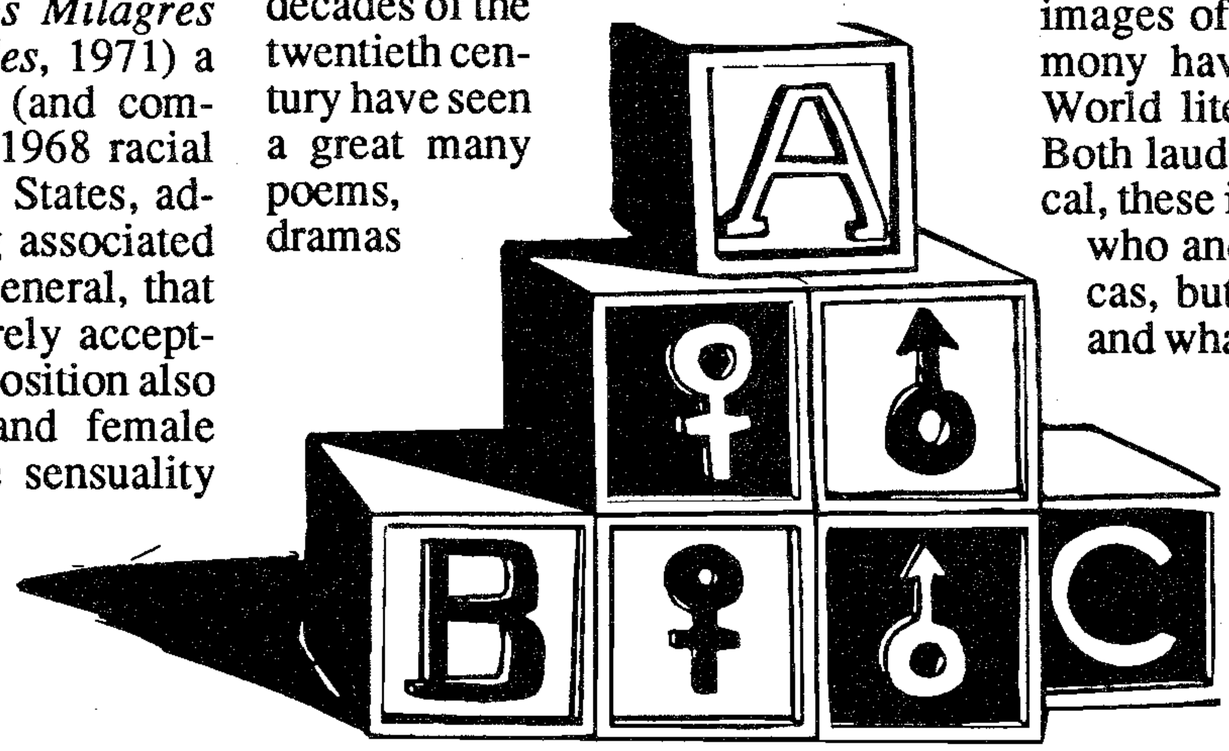
An interesting 1950s work that deals with black-white relations in English Canada (and a work by a major English Canadian novelist) is Callaghan's *The Loved and the Lost*, a 1951 novel that tells the tragic story of one Peggy Sanderson, a mysterious and Eurydice-like young white woman who, after becoming enthralled with Montreal's black community, ends up a victim, rejected as a turncoat by her white culture but never really accepted by her black culture either. Her eventual rape and murder (the perpetrator's identity is withheld from the reader) would seem to suggest that the black and white communities of 1951 Montreal were sharply segregated (by economics and class as much as by race, however), and prone to hatred and violence. The novel thus portends an ominous future for Canada's racial situation.

A work that might be taken as the antithesis of *The Loved and the Lost* is Jorge Amado's *Tenda dos Milagres* (1969; *The Tent of Miracles*, 1971) a thesis novel that, closely (and comparatively) attuned to the 1968 racial disturbances in the United States, advances the argument, long associated with Brazilian culture in general, that racial mixing was not merely acceptable but desirable. Such a position also seemed, for both male and female characters, to endorse the sensuality that Brazilian culture (which has recently given us the "Lambada") has become famous for. Though recalling *Hobomok* in certain ways, *Tent of Miracles* stands alone in the Americas as the most unmitigated proponent of racial harmony achieved through racial mixing.

Another of the New World's most powerful literary accomplishments, Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners* (1974), also treats the issue of race relations, this time, as with *Nipsya*, in terms of the Métis, the people of French and Indian ancestry whose place in Canadian history is inextricably linked to the charismatic figure of Louis Riel. More adroitly than most of the other works that deal with the issue of race relations, *The Diviners*, a superbly crafted novel, shows the natural connection between this always volatile issue and the larger theme of identity, which can be taken as the most fundamental of all New World literary themes. By allowing the problems of the Métis to attain truly universal proportions, Laurence succeeds, in *The Diviners*, in creating a work of art that speaks eloquently and movingly to people everywhere who desire a social order based on principles of love, honesty, equality and harmony.

A Literary Mosaic

But in addition to the many works that have treated black-white race relations, the later decades of the twentieth century have seen a great many poems, dramas and narratives that deal with other, sometimes numerically smaller, ethnic minorities. Works like Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* deals with the vicissitudes of being Chinese-American while writers like Joy Kogawa (Canada), Wakako Yamuachi (the United States), and Eiko Suzuki (Brazil) transform Japanese ancestry into other New World identities. Additional cultural minorities are being heard from as well, including Jewish-American (Mordecai Richler in Canada, Saul Bellow in the United States, Clarice Lispector in Brazil, and Jacobo Timmerman in Spanish America, for example), Ukrainian (especially important in Canada), Hispanic-Americans (like Lorna Dee Cervantes, Richard Rodriguez, and Luis Valdez), and Native Americans (like Canada's Pauline Johnson, Grey Owl, and Yves Thériault — who is of Montagnais ancestry — and Carter Revard, Paula Gunn Allen, Louise Erdrich, and Leslie Marmon Silko, from the United States).



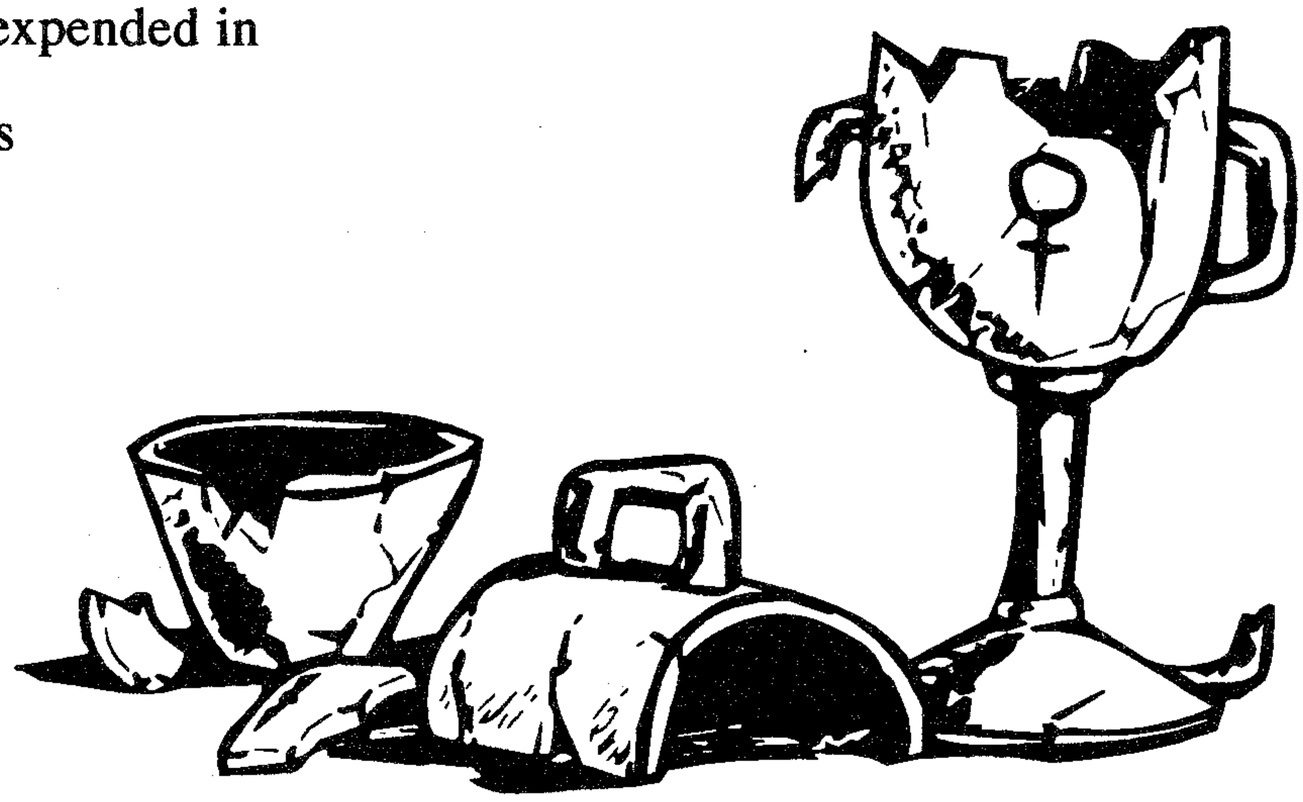
Given the violent clash of cultures that characterized the invasion of the New World by the Old in 1492, and considering the continuing flow of immigrants to the New World, it seems safe to say that race relations will remain a basic feature of Inter-American literature for generations to come. Closely linked to questions of social, political, and economic opportunity — and therefore to the larger theme of identity (both public and private) — images of racial harmony and disharmony have been prominent in New World literature from the beginning. Both laudatory and (more often) critical, these images remind us not only of who and what we are in the Americas, but, more importantly, or who and what we should want to become.

Earl Fitz is Professor of Comparative Literature at the Pennsylvania State University.

MENDING OUR CUPS: WOMEN, CULTURE AND SURVIVAL IN THE AMERICAS

by Joy Gleason Carew, Ph.D

"All peoples have the right to share the waters from the river of life and to drink from their own cups, but our cups have been broken," lamented an anonymous AfroCarib woman. She speaks for the dispossessed in our Hemisphere — the poor, the victims of racism, sexism and cultural chauvinism. The fiction of the "discovery" that is about to be celebrated with vast national resources expended in fleeting displays has deliberately omitted a chronicle of genocide, slavery and religious persecution.



And what exactly will the governments of these Americas be celebrating? We cannot celebrate the genocide which Columbus unleashed in the first twenty years of the Columbian era because this would mean celebrating the death of between 12 and 20 million people. And we cannot celebrate the enslavement of African and Native Americans which Columbus himself initiated, inaugurating, through the Atlantic slave trade, a new day of race relations. Indeed, differently from the Portuguese, who had been involved in an African slave trade for over 40 years prior to 1492, Columbus decided that the enslavement of both men and women made the whole process more manageable and profitable. What we should celebrate, then, is the survival of those who fought and those who gave their lives to affirm their humanity and the humanity of all peoples.

Women in Europe and in Moorish Spain

The conventional history books cite Columbus's voyages to this Hemisphere as the event that gave momentum to the Renaissance. It would be well to remember, however, that the Renaissance was , in fact, a time of growth and enlightenment for European men, driven by a lust for gold and self-aggrandizement. As the European manhood expanded out to discover their new worlds, women became increasingly glorified chattels and romanticized untouchables.

Eight hundred years of Moorish rule ended on January 2, 1492 and then, ten months later, the Columbian era began. With the fall of Granada, the Reconquista was completed and the Moorish enlightenment ended. The Moors, who had successfully ruled

Spain for eight-hundred years and whose enlightenment reached well beyond the Pyrénées, had a more realistic appreciation of women. Unlike in the Muslim world of the East, women moved freely in public and were not restricted to the cloistered life of the harems. They had ready access to education and training. Women were teachers, school directors, medical doctors, historians, philosophers and poets. The Reconquista was, in fact, a serious setback for women.

Our histories in this Hemisphere did not begin with Columbus, but they were reshaped by his presence and that of those who followed in his wake. Our multiracial and multicultural societies stem from the European proclivity for moving peoples around the globe to satisfy an insatiable appetite for exploiting both resources and the people who would grow, gather, and mine those resources. The arrival of Columbus in this Hemisphere was not the first contact with peoples from over the seas. Long before Columbus, African seafarers to the south and Nordic seafarers to the north had found their way here, not to speak of others who had come from Asia. But where the Columbus era was one of dramatic transformations, these early voyagers did not seek to destroy the host cultures. Instead, for instance, there is ample evidence that the African arrivals resulted in significant cultural infusions and blends stretching from the importation of plants and animals to the growth of prominent societies, such as that which produced the massive Olmec sculptures in Mexico, and to the inclusion of black gods in the Native Mexican religious and mythopoetic traditions.

Women in the Columbian Era

Women have stood at the nexus of this chronicle of persecution inaugurated by Columbus – all women, be they among the ranks of the colonizer or that or the colonized – as this "equal opportunity" oppression has been consistent for some five centuries. The women of the Americas have historically worked alongside the men, shoulder-to-shoulder in their common oppression and exploitation. However, women do not feature prominently in our history books, in spite of the fact that if it were not for them, none of us would exist.

Our histories in this Hemisphere did not begin with Columbus, but they were reshaped by his presence.

Some five hundred years ago, a Genoese wool carder's son, representing himself as an experienced navigator and explorer, precipitated the dissolution and destruction of whole societies under the aegis of his "Enterprise of the Indies." Much has been written about Christopher Columbus, albeit much misinformation, but little has been written about him within the context of his family. Though the men in his life, a father, brothers and two sons, appear in his journals, there is virtually nothing about his mother or the women, a wife and a mistress, who provided him with his sons. Interestingly, while he could not write about them, he did manage to write long, craven passages attesting to his devotion to Queen Isabella of Castile. As for the Native American women, he discusses them as some kind of newfound exotica.

Christopher Columbus was a rootless man. He conscientiously expunged his own personal history. And, perhaps, in so doing, he became the archetype of a new and ruthless epoch of discovery and conquest. He refashioned himself into a being more in keeping with the broadened horizons he was encompassing. But, in so doing, he and his brethren lost not only old baggage, but vital essences of themselves.

The Columbian worldview spreading across the colonies of imperial Spain was that of a patriarchical Church in which the male dominated all aspects of life, both biological and legal. Women were accorded very little freedom of movement, few legal rights, and certainly little or no recognition as partners in the formation and maintenance of the society at large. Well into the Renaissance, when Shakespeare penned that famous line, "frailty, thy name is woman," women were regarded as dumb and docile appendages.

Women Against Slavery and Colonialism

The women of this Hemisphere whose names do appear in the historical records have survived in our collective memory largely through an enduring oral tradition. We owe our survival over these last five hundred years in part to such famous women as Harriet Tubman, Nanny, Anacoana, Gamay, Chantoba, and the many anonymous women who gave their lives so that their children and their children's children could live.

We remember Anacoana, queen of Xaragua, one of the five kingdoms of Espanola, who fought against the Spaniards and was captured by treachery and hanged. We also remember Chantoba, the astute Carib warrior queen who, in the 18th century, tricked Governor Hillhouse of British Guiana into signing a treaty with her by threatening him with a non-existent massive army. Then there was Nanny, a political leader and priestess revered even today, who headed one of the most

successful Maroon communities in mid-18th-century Jamaica, eventually forcing the British to sign two peace treaties with her and to cede land to her and her people. And in the United States, there was, in the 19th century, the famous Harriet Tubman, leader of the Underground Railroad. After escaping from the plantation, she was never recaptured and personally saw to the successful escapes of over 300 slaves. Finally in Suriname, Maroon women of the Saramacca, Paramacca, Djuka and Boni peoples carried rice seeds in their kinky hair as they escaped deep into the forests. In their rainforest fastness, they were able to restart their culture as they shook the rice unto the fertile riverbank soil.

After decimating the Native American population, the European zeal turned to the African, both male and female, as an endless pool of labor. And as long as the importation of fresh supplies was readily forthcoming, all laborers were worked to death, irrespective of sex. It is only when that supply was cut off that the status of the woman changed and she became doubly exploitable: for her labor in the fields and mines, and her labor in producing children. So concerned were the slave tenders about the woman's abilities to bear children that they commonly buried recalcitrant women in sand up to their shoulders to that their upper bodies could be whipped without hurting the children they were carrying. Is it any wonder, then, that it was African women who often took the lead in marronage?

A Chinese proverb says that women hold up half the sky, but with the advent of the Columbian era, women were called upon to hold up at least two-thirds of it. For, the uprooting and dispersal of peoples across continents and oceans took place on a heretofore unprecedented scale. Women were a vital and indispensable link in the survival of slaves, indentured laborers and indigenous peoples who faced ethnocide and extinction. Columbus's 1492 voyage marked the beginning of a calvary for both men and women of color, but it was the women who bore the brunt of the torments. They walked many trails of tears, carrying babies in their wombs and with young children clinging to them. Even on the slave ships, they were raped and persecuted by officers and ordinary sailors alike and these torments continued as they worked side-by-side with the men in the mines and on plantations. But women fought back. Male Eurocentric historians are always ready to create romantic illusions about the "mother instinct" which can transform women into tigresses to protect their young, but they seldom accord these fierce instincts to women of color or even to those from the white working classes.

Native American women and enslaved African women did possess that fierce mother instinct. They fought with arms, guile, cunning, intelligence and unbelievable courage in order to preserve their humanity and to pass on the lessons of survival to their children and their children's children. "Mending our cups" speaks not only to the drinking of the waters form the River of Life, but also to the rewriting of our history.

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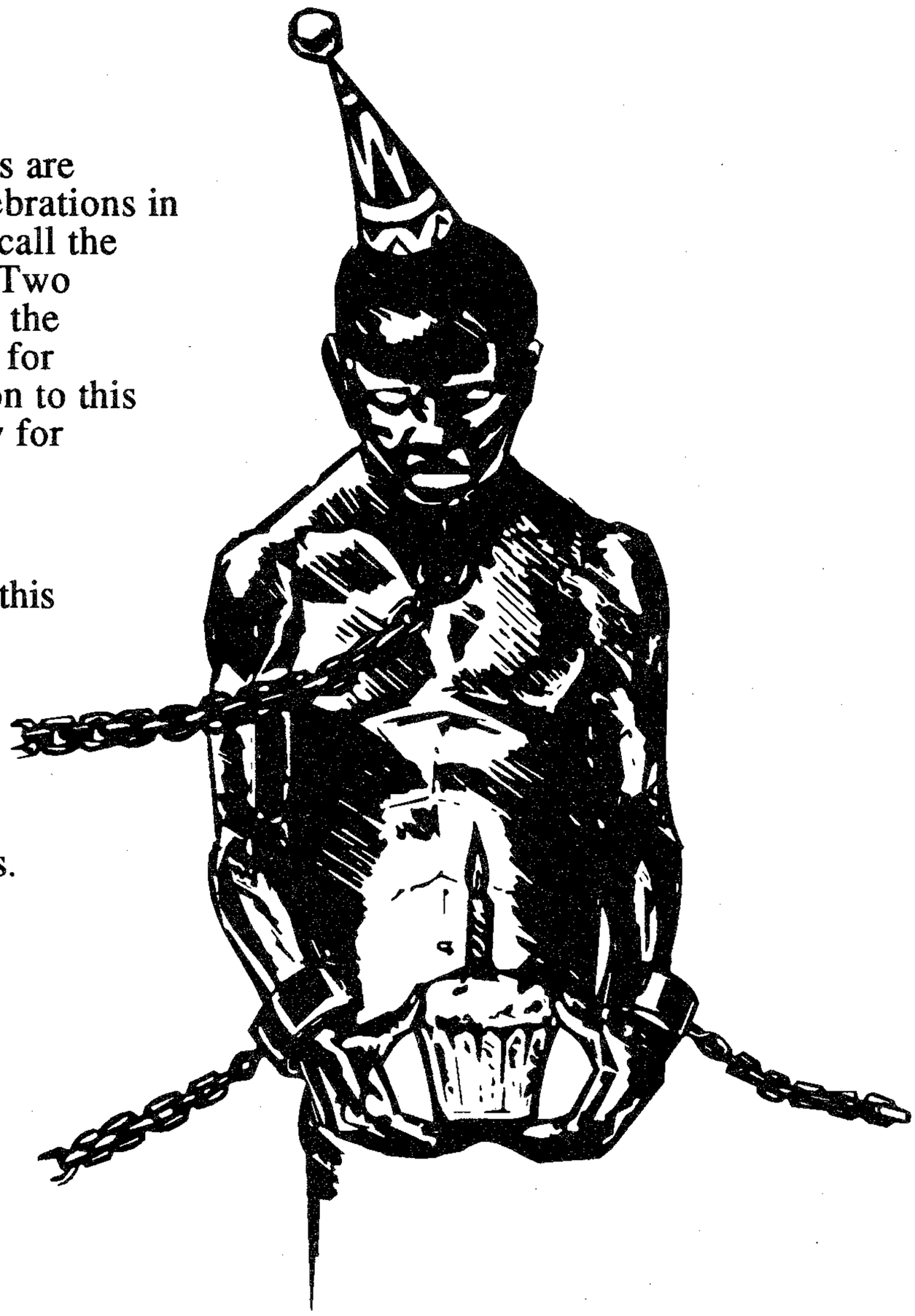
1992 - THE YEAR OF THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

by Odessa Ramirez

Spain, Italy, the Vatican, the United States, various European and Latin American governments, and other colonial governments are spending billions of dollars to plan huge celebrations in 1992 for the 500th anniversary of what they call the "Discovery of America," the "Encounter of Two Worlds," the "Columbus Quincentenary," or the "Conquest of America." The U.S. Congress, for example, as of 1990, appropriated $87 million to this extravaganza and has scheduled more money for this purpose.



Indigenous peoples are obviously outraged by this racist vision of history, by the offense to their dignity which the lies and insensitivity underlying the attitudes and actions of these governments constitute. In response to this situation, representatives of indigenous peoples throughout the Americas have organized and are planning several events. The following is an outline of some of those meetings and planned events.

November 1986, Quito, Ecuador — First Congress of the Indian People of Ecuador

At this meeting it was recognized that more than a conquest, Columbus's arrival in the Americas was the beginning of a colonial invasion that brought with it oppression, exploitation, racism and the removal of natural resources from the lands of indigenous peoples.

The First Congress of the Indian People of Ecuador consequently resolved to condemn the planned celebration of the 500th Anniversary of the Discovery of America promoted by the Spanish government and those governments linked to the capitalist system by colonial ties. The First Congress of the Indian People of Ecuador submitted that the planned Columbian quincentenary events reaffirm the policies of neocolonialism, demonstrate the dependency of Third World countries on the interests of the powerful capitalist economies, violate all principles of free self-determination, and are contrary to all norms of international law. The Congress also called on the Spanish government to suspend the promotion of these celebrations, for 1992 is the anniversary of the genocide and ethnocide of the Indian peoples of the Americas. Delegates moved that the Spanish government should, instead of investing $5 billion in the activities surrounding the 500th anniversary of the invasion, provide compensation to the indigenous peoples of the Americas, as a matter of moral principle.

April 1989, Quito, Ecuador — Meeting of Representatives of Indigenous Organizations

At this meeting a call was made to indigenous peoples of North, Central and South America to organize a unified response to the planned 1992 quincentenary celebrations. It was recognized that there had been no "encounter" but, rather, an armed invasion resulting in the genocide of indigenous peoples throughout the Americas. In fact, 1492 also marked the beginning of indigenous resistance and struggles for land and self-determination. it was further recognized that "Manifest Destiny" still prevails in modern society and that consequently indigenous peoples continue to suffer from military abuses and the plundering of natural resources by the multinational corporations.

July 1990, Quito, Ecuador — First Continental Conference of Indigenous Peoples — 500 Years of Resistance

This meeting was attended by over 300 delegates of indigenous peoples from throughout the Americas to coordinate efforts towards a coherent response to the 1992 events. Some of the goals of this meeting included developing a unified plan of action for coordinating national and international events, to communicate indigenous perspectives and to encourage the public's participation in the "500 Years of Resistance" campaign. A call was made for the United Nations to declare the right to self-determination of all indigenous peoples by 1992. It was resolved that 1992 be declared the "Year of Indigenous Peoples."

August 1990, Geneva, Switzerland — United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Peoples

Representatives of indigenous peoples from around the world attended these U.N. Working Group meetings. The indigenous peoples held meetings among themselves to discuss the 1992 plans and formed an international network of indigenous personalities and organizations working on quincentenary issues. It was resolved that in support of the July 1990 meeting in Ecuador, the First Continental Conference of Indigenous Peoples, 1992 be declared the "Year of the Indigenous Peoples", and that there be a proposal that the U.N. adopt and declare 1992 as the "Year of the Indigenous Peoples."

June 1991, Near the Black Hills, South Dakota — Protecting Mother Earth Conference

At this conference, 1992 was declared to be the beginning of the "Decade of Indigenous Peoples." There was also a call for a national boycott of all events planned as part of the celebration of Columbus Day on October 12, 1991.

The Struggle Continues

Conscious or unconscious, there are racist and imperialistic impulses underlying the planned celebrations of the Columbian quincentenary. It is important that children are taught the truth and that adults are re-educated as to the true history of post Columbian America. We need to challenge those who would have us believe that the "Discovery of America" was a good thing and an event to be celebrated. On the contrary, the arrival of Columbus signalled the beginning of a genocide that is still ongoing. For the indigenous peoples of the Americas and for everyone with a clear understanding of history, 1992 can only be a year of continued resistance.

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JONESTOWN REVISITED

by Jan Carew

On November 18, 1978, the world awoke to one more incomprehensible horror. In Jonestown, a religious agricultural commune in Guyana, the Reverend James Warren Jones, a.k.a. Jim Jones, American pastor of the Christian Fundamentalist People's Temple, and more than nine-hundred of his followers had committed suicide by ingesting a concoction of Kool-Aid and cyanide (Editor's Note).

Kalinyas, the Carib Kaseek, was my great-uncle, and he had agreed to take me to the Jonestown site long after the tragic events there had shocked the world. We stood on a hilltop above the Kaituma River and while waiting for Trios, Kalinyas' grandson to join us, we looked up at the sky and saw a convention of harpy eagles circling high above us. The cloudless sky was a hard, icy blue that absorbed and diffused some of the sun's fury.

"They're usually solitary birds, those great eagles, and we should know, because they're our relatives," the old man explained matter-of-factly, shading his eyes with a gnarled hand that was networked with veins like shallow roots, "but since the event," he continued, and he invariably referred to the mass suicides at Jonestown as "the event," "they gather every year to contemplate the thousand spirits that cannot find a resting place."

He meant "commemorate" but the old man had his own original way of what he called "mashing up the English language" and if I tried to correct him, he simply ignored me. I did not try this time. But I thought that perhaps, more than any peoples on earth, the Caribs understood the business of mass suicides. The curving chain of emerald islands that separates the Sea of the Caribs (the Caribbean) from the Atlantic, has many sites where, faced with the choice of slavery or death, the Caribs had chosen the latter. There is Morne Sauteur in Dominica, Carib's Leap in Grenada, Mount Pelé in Martinique, Manzanilla in Trinidad. All of these sites bore silent witness to Carib mass suicides. The women suffocated their babies against their bosoms, and men, women and children sang their death songs before leaping over the cliffs. The Caribs died singing that new generations of fighters would arise from the blood-seeds of their sacrifice.

"The spirits of the thousand strangers who died on our sacred Carib land are still very much alive. They roam uneasily inside a circle of pain. That's why the great eagles gather once every year to contemplate the event. Those were homeless folk living in an age of homelessness. They came here hoping to island themselves in a house of peace. But now their tormented spirits are doing an endless walk-about. They couldn't find a resting place here on earth, and they thought Heaven would open its doors to them, because that's

what their lying leader told them," Kalinyas said.

He had a dark brown face that was webbed with lines like a contour map of a land of many rivers. I never knew how old Kalinyas was, but he reminded me of one of those ancient trees that become stronger and more indestructible with age. He had wide shoulders, a barrel chest and legs like tree trunks. And from wearing sandals all of his life, his toes had spread out so comfortably that none of them touched the other.

The great harpy eagles soared lazily on tides of the wind, and as if the Sky God had shot an arrow from the sky, one of them plummeted towards the earth. At the last minute it levelled off and skimming a grassy knoll, rose skywards again with a bushmaster snake in its talons. When it was halfway between its companions and the ground, it released the shining serpent. Another eagle, which had already detached itself from the winged gathering, dived towards the bushmaster, struck it a blow to the head, retrieved it in its talons and the two flew away screaming their triumph like lost souls in a firmament of hell. An updraft lifted them higher until banking sharply, they displayed the full splendour of their sun-silvered wings, and then they winged their way towards a distant nesting place to share the meal with a brood of young eaglets. Rooted to the spot, I felt a flicker of anxiety in my heart. The other eagles flew towards the sun until they became specks of dust against its incandescent orb of fire.

"It's a sign," Kalinyas declared. I waited for him to continue, but he didn't choose to enlighten me any further.

When I was a youth, and my parents had sent me to Aquero for summer holidays, Kalinyas had told me many times that our human souls were tied to harpy eagles by a spirit-knot and I had believed him unquestioningly. But I had gone overseas for many years since that time, and now I had returned with an ingrained habit of disbelief. But the piercing scream of the eagles continued to echo and re-echo in my brain, and suddenly, it was as though fresh spring water had washed away the cobwebs of my disbelief.

When I was a youth, Kalinyas had told me many times that our human souls were tied to harpy eagles by a spirit-knot.

Trios joined us in the mid-afternoon. His moon-face was wreathed in welcoming smiles when he saw me. The last time I'd seen him he was a babe-in-arms, and now he was a teenager attending college in Georgetown.

"So you, too, are being trained in the science of disbelief," I teased him.

"They say he's bright," Grandfather Kalinyas said deprecatingly, "but all they've taught him in those Georgetown schools can fit into the bottom of a thimble, and still leave plenty of room for my middle finger."

I want you to see Jonestown with Carib eyes

We were subjected to a ritual of purification when the sun fell like a stone behind the treetops. Our bodies were bathed in smoke from burning aromatic herbs, and we spent the night in a House of Silence. The hiss and crackle of burning logs grew fainter and fainter as the hours went by. The rustle of thoughts walking softly inside my head and the whisper of falling dew took me on journeys into the innermost sanctums of myself.

When morning came, my eyes looked outwards again and greeted the sunrise. Kalinyas asked,

"Are you ready, Manaharva?" "Manaharva" was my secret Carib name.

"I am ready, Kalinyas."

"Are you ready, Trios?"

"I am ready, Grandfather."

We went down to the river, washed ourselves, had breakfast and set out for Jonestown.

"I want you to see Jonestown with Carib eyes, and to feel it with a Carib heart," Kalinyas said.

"That's why I came, Kalinyas."

"Grandfather alone saw everything and lived to tell the tale," Trios said soberly.

"Without your coming, Manaharva, I would have gone to walk amongst the stars, shackled by my secret forever," Kalinyas said.

"Uncle will write about it," Trios reassured the old man, "he's a writer. We study his books in school."

He had the old man's burning anthracite eyes and his massive and slightly stooped shoulders. Kalinyas had travelled from the distant Barima hills, the last sanctuary of the True Caribs, to rendezvous with us. I had taken that journey by river with him many years ago. But I still remembered the

rhythms of the sun dance as our long canoe parted the dark, mirror-like waters of a network of rivers and creeks. Sometimes the sun appeared before us, but as the river meandered through green fastnesses, it would jump behind us. And it continued this hide-and-seek dance day after day.

We reached the Jonestown site after taking a shortcut. We paddled along a canal that bypassed some of Kaituma's meanderings.

"Through many seasons of the moon, our Carib rainmakers brought heavy showers to redeem Jonestown from its shame and horror," Kalinyas explained as we followed a trail through the swelling waves of undergrowth. It was clear that looters, vandals and souvenir hunters had inadvertently hastened a natural rhythm of decay and regeneration. Boardwalks between dormitories, cottages and community centers had rotted or had been thrust aside by the sprouting natural growths. There were only a few patches where the pink earth was still exposed and these looked like open sores. All of the buildings had been cannibalized for plumbing fixtures, roofing material, boards and furniture. But heaps of mildewed clothes, toys, shoes and hats had remained untouched. Abandoned shoes littering the area where the communal suicides had taken place were somehow the most poignant and vivid reminders of that apocalyptic tragedy.

As if to underline the point that Kalinyas had made earlier about what the Carib rainmakers had done, a sudden downpour forced us to seek shelter under a tree with bright russet leaves. The rain ceased as suddenly as it had started. The wind gathered threatening rainclouds and herded them over an azure-rimmed horizon. The heat and humidity became more intense in the wake of the passing shower.

We continued until we came to the building that stood in what used to be the center of the community. Apparently, when the chanting worshippers gathered around this building, their shoes had fallen off when the final spasms of death had convulsed their bodies. Close to where the Reverend Jones and his wife had been found sprawled across steps leading to his private altar, a circle of shoes had been occupied by wild flowers and bromeliads that glittered like amethysts and rubies. In the center of the circle, a sapling had lifted a child's patent leather shoe several feet above the ground and it hung like a strange fruit that some rare and exotic plant had produced.

This is a holy place for us, and no strangers have ever been able to stay here for long without making peace with our ancestors.

"You must write our truth," Kalinyas said fiercely.

I did not reply because I knew that he was ready to speak about THE EVENT. But another downpour drove us to seek shelter in a building with large jagged holes in the roof. For a while the atmosphere was suffocating, and then the rain stopped falling. Billions of drops of water dripping from wet leaves sounded like distant surf as the old man continued.

"They wrote so many words about Jonestown! Those Yankee-people are strange. When they travel they want to carry the whole of their country on their backs. But look around you. Can you see how everything they left behind them is vanishing. This sacred land will be ours as long as a green skin covers the living world. When strangers tear away the green skin, the earth will be nothing more or less than a coffin for the dead. They came without knowing or wanting to know about the history of this Kaituma heartland of the Caribs. This is a holy place for us, and no strangers have ever been able to stay here for long without making peace with our ancestors. The Spanish came in long time past days, and their colony vanished; then the Dutch came, and all that's left of them are the itabus that slaves dug to link up rivers and creeks; then the British came. For a while, it looked as if they'd leave us alone. But during a long and terrible drought, somebody found gold in a dry riverbed. He shouted the news of his find at the top of his lungs, and a storm of city folk descended on us. They picked up nuggets in the riverbed like shells on a beach. Unknown to them, though, the rains came up country and deluged the far hills for weeks... and one fine morning a wall of water fell on those miners and drowned them all. When the bodies floated up, some of the dead were still clutching nuggets in their fists. I know the spot where that disaster happened, but I'll die with the secret... They wrote so many words about Jonestown," Kalinyas repeated, "but they wrote about themselves. For them, we were invisible, and yet, for the short season they were here I saw them without being seen. I was there the afternoon when death surprised them just as the sun was going down. They chanted and clapped their hands for a while, and then there was a terrible silence. With candleflies in bottles to light my way I walked amongst their dead. They'd died in circles like worshippers around invisible altars. The children were buried under the flesh of their mothers. All alone I sang the Carib death-songs and afterwards, I called upon their spirits either to reconcile themselves with the spirits of our ancestral dead or go back to the land of their ancestors.' I told them, 'No one among you bothered to ask the living Caribs and the spirits of their ancestors for permission

to share their sacred land' and I shouted under the stars, *'Don't you know that this place we call Kaituma, means the Land of Everlasting Dreamers?"*

Trios said somewhat tritely,

"The President couldn't give our land to Jim Jones, because he didn't own it in the first place."

"They wrote about their folk living and dying here," Kalinyas continued, "We, the Keepers of the Land, the Everlasting Dreamers, were invisible to them. We are the Keepers of the Dreams of the living and the dead, and yet they never said a word to us. What could they ever know about the smell of our sacred earth or the dreams of our people? You must write our truth, Manaharva!"

Jan Carew is a Guyanese historian and novelist. He teaches at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia.

DIVERSITY AND MEANING: A CONVERSATION

by Ron Hamm and Jim Norwine

Jim Norwine: At every scale, you and I find ourselves participating in an ongoing, ad hoc experiment into the nature of the relationship between the manifoldness of the human experience and meaning. Operas of dissonance play themselves out daily on the stages of our university, our community, and our region as the newest Columbian hybrid — scion this time of the First World and of the Third — claims her birthright. Moreover, the anthem of the *particular* — rather than the universal – human experience is everywhere swelling. It throbs already in Kingsville, Texas, and will shortly even in Kyoto. The paradox of the 21st — and first truly postmodern — century is that as we lose our faith in the very idea of centers, and of reality (all realities being "socially created"), difference will ascend to de facto central, assumed reality. Thus we South Texans are subjects in a profound, truly cybernetic (that is, automatic, self-regulating and unconscious) experiment. You and I are guinea pigs, whose experiences will be harbingers of things to come. Here, at the edge of the known universe, we find ourselves riding the crest of a gathering nova. It must have felt like this in Europe three or four centuries ago when the shock waves of the explosion of scientific knowledge began to resonate through daily lives in intoxicating and frightening ways. In any case, that is my experience of this transition.

Ron Hamm: Intoxicating and frightening?

JN: Yes, very much so.

RH: The "intoxicating" part seems pretty obvious to me, but why "frightening?"

JN: You must let me speak to the intoxication first, please. At its best, a postmodern celebration of difference owes entirely to a willingness to embrace randomness and inconstancy and to a suspension of assumptions of certainty — that is, to an intellectual spirit of acceptance and openness. Such a brave and humble naivete *is* intoxicating in its possibilities. We have every reason to hope that it will open the secrets of existence or lead to a new, improved Frisbee or (my personal guess) something in between.

Say, longer and more harmonious lives.

RH: Why, then, is this also a "frightening" age?

JN: Because the disruptions of a major "paradigm-shift" are difficult for even the most mature and contemplative of us. I recall how my dear father-in-law, one of the wisest men I've known, sank into depression for a month when his son returned home from college sporting a prophet's beard. For others, the truly unprepared, such a transition can wreak absolute havoc. Consider Haiti.

When the impulses of tradition and modernity collide, two quite different postmodern vectors are possible. The first, which I think of as upward, represents a harmonious complementarity of the primacy of individual *and* of community. Although, as Mr. Spock might say, the interests of the community generally outweigh those of any individual (e.g., planet Earth is worth more than my life and even those of Einstein or Gandhi), the community will fall if it is unwilling to sacrifice, sometimes heroically, for the contingent and ephemeral but absolutely unique individual. This is a key point. A celebration of difference in which particularities themselves are inconsequential is at best grotesque, at worst demonic.

This brings us to the second, downward, postmodern vector. It is a dark combination of the worst of modernity, solipsism ("I am the only reality") and of tradition (machismo is an excellent example).

We see examples of each such "merger" today. Western Europe and California, for instance, on the one hand (complementarity), and Liberia and Yugoslavia on the other. As to South Texas — which of these vectors we shall follow — I don't know. It's a worrying question, but just now a worse-case scenario seems not unlikely. When our students are our age they might be able to answer. What do you think?

RH: I am frightened, too, but for a different reason perhaps. My concern stems from the fact that the movement we are now seeing in the United States, particularly on university campuses, toward a position of so-called "political correctness" even the term sounds Orwellian somehow) carries with it the latent dangers of all such movements of rectification in that its adherents, in my view, tend to go too far and to over-correct, if you will. Proponents, in promoting this position, I fear, verge on destroying the very values they sought to protect and preserve in the first place. This rush towards separatism is laden with ironies, especially since the proponents of P.C. are usually seen as ultra-liberal. First a working definition of political correctness lest there be any among us who just sailed into town on the Nina, the Pinta, or the Santa Maria still unfamiliar with the term. The concept has gone through several permutations beginning with its use by Marxists as an expression of self-criticism. Now it is most often applied to a set of beliefs, usually about race, gender, sexual proclivities, and the like. If you happen to agree with the views expressed, you're politically correct. Otherwise ... well, you know the answer.

The paradox of the 21st — and first truly postmodern — century is that as we lose our faith in the very idea of centers and of reality, difference will ascend to de facto central, assumed reality.

But I alluded a moment ago to what I saw as a potential problem in this movement in inadvertently throwing the baby out with the bath water in the advocates' zeal to set things straight. Let me give you two examples from recent media reports which might serve to illustrate my contention. Incidentally, a recent literature survey would show treatment of this subject ranging from Dinesh D'Souza's new book, *Illiberal Education*, to major spreads in such national U.S. magazines as *TIME*, *Newsweek*, *The Atlantic Monthly* and others as well as articles by most major U.S. columnists. What are the implications of all this attention? If nothing else, it tells me that political correctness and its associated issues do constitute a national agenda in the United States, one that concerned people are thinking and worrying about. The first example I wish to cite is from the May 27, 1991, issue of *TIME*. A brief item entitled, "It's Hard to Be Perfectly P.C.," on the National Lesbian Conference reported that "even when it comes to sensitivity (one of the touchstones of P.C.) you can have too much of a good thing." The article reported the guidelines discussed for participation in the conference, including one on "parity." Half of all committee members were required to be "lesbians of color," 20 percent had to be lesbians with disabilities, and at least 5 percent "old lesbians," meaning those over 50 with a history of ageism activism.

The second example is from an article by Fred Siegel, entitled "The Cult of Multiculturalism," in the February 18, 1991, issue of *The New Republic*. In writing about one of the household names of this movement, Stanley Fish of Duke University's English Department, Siegel observes that, for Fish, texts are "nothing but manipulation and power." Asked if the First Amendment (to the U.S. Constitution) does not represent something more than an

expression of power, Fish responds: "Free speech? Yeah, tell me another one."

Not long ago most humanists and social scientists believed the world was shrinking, that multiple views of it were being telescoped into a common outlook celebrating blue jeans and Big Macs. The concept fell short of the mark because today the stress is on cultural differences, certainly not commonalities. Although difference offers potentialities that sameness lacks it still is not always superior or even desirable. Consider, for example, an advertisement in a higher education newspaper seeking a vice-president for diversity. The university seeking to fill that position, by the way, is just an hour and a half from Ottawa and two hours from Montreal, so a little detail might be of interest to Canadian readers. The ad stressed that a key function of the position is the management and encouragement of systemic programs supportive of underrepresented populations to include students of differing cultural, racial, gender, and sexual orientations and backgrounds. Note the use of the adjective "systemic" and its implications for programmatic impact on the entire university.

It used to be in the United States that group rights had predominance over individual rights and that certain freedoms were inviolate. Now I'm not so sure. Multiculturalism might once have been a worthwhile goal. But are we celebrating diversity or heading toward division on a grand scale? Now it seems we are consumed with recognizing, affirming, and institutionalizing differences. A regional accrediting agency in the States recently attempted to coerce some member institutions into complying with what it deemed to be appropriate racial, ethnic, and sexual balances on their faculties and governing boards in order to receive accreditation and thus be eligible for certain public funds. There is ample evidence that some university campuses in the U.S. are heading toward parallel societies. Vassar's Commencement this spring saw two separate ceremonies: one for black students and another for everyone else. Separate dormitories for racial, ethnic, and gender-different students are already common with a move toward separate student unions elsewhere. If this is happening on college campuses in the States (and it is), then when does the movement transcend campus boundaries and spill over into your neighborhood? These are some of the reasons why I am frightened.

Multiculturalism might once have been a worthwhile goal. But are we celebrating diversity or heading toward division?

The lurking postmodern danger is that of a cynical, ersatz egalitarianism.

JN: It is essential that we ask ourselves why in fact we do celebrate difference. Is it because heterogeneity is somehow superior to homogeneity? The answer is not so obvious as we sometimes presume. For example, are several wives better than one? I think not, for the attempt to construct one true bridge to another is more, far more, than a lifetime's challenge.

I concur that the lurking postmodern danger with which we must continually struggle is that of a cynical, ersatz egalitarianism which commands that, having lost the authority of simple-minded coherencies we once trusted, from clocklike universe to women's intuition, "anything goes."

In a metaphysical sense diversity must offer something which sameness does not. If the Perfection were so perfect, why this universe of particularities? Truth, as Krisnamurti said, is a "pathless land." Here lies the meaning we seek in our celebration of difference. We are each of us touchstones, lighthouses for one another as we grope our way through this pathless land toward Truth (hence the beauty of polylingualism). Diversity, like freedom and justice, while not Virtue, is virtuous, for it is a means by which we may sail towards the ultimate ends: fulfillment, harmony, understanding, and identity. Like freedom and justice, it is not "the Works." But, given the humility of a recognition of both the absurdity and significance of each individual experience, it works.

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Jim Norwine, Ph.D., is a professor of geography at Texas A&I and editor of The Third World: States of Mind and Being, among other works.

Each has travelled extensively, a pursuit that has exposed them to a multiplicity of cultures.

AGENDA

COLUMBIAN QUINCENTENARY EVENTS: COMMEMORATION, NOT CELEBRATION

A Calendar Compiled by Odessa Ramirez

The calendar of official events and activities planned for the 1992 Columbian Quincentenary is rather impressive. Scheduled events vary from the spectacular Seville World Exhibition to the adventurous recreation of the Admiral's first voyage and the modest patriotic parade in the town square. Joyous and laudatory, these events reflect of course a certain outlook on 1492. Consciously or unconsciously, these official rites celebrate the actions of the conquistadors and reaffirm the claims of the European diaspora in the Americas to the heritage of these adventurers.

But the conquered, the historic victims of the appropriation of the Americas by the Europeans, that is, the indigenous peoples, the Africans and their descendants, and other peoples of color, obviously have a different perspective on the significance of 1492. Consequently, they will commemorate the Columbian Quincentenary in ways that are more consistent with their objective history. The following is a list of alternative, popular activities planned for 1992 by various organizations.

The South and Meso-American Indian Information Center (SAIIC), headquartered in Berkeley, California, is calling on all people to create alternatives to the Columbus Day celebrations, to demand a truer interpretation of history in school curriculums, and to attend and sponsor Indian organizations and events. For more information contact: SAIIC, P.O. Box 7550, Berkeley, CA 94707, Tel.: (415) 834-4263.

Marches and other mass activities are being planned in Central and South America. For more information contact: **Confederación de Nacionalidades Indigenas de Ecuador (CONAIE)**, Casilla Postal No. 92-C, Sucursal 15, Los Granados 2553 y de Diciembre (Batan), Quito, Ecuador.

Columbus in Context is a group of concerned professionals working with people of color, specifically Native Americans, in opposition to the official "Quincentenary Jubilee." which they claim to be the largest corporate-sponsored festival of its kind in this century. For more information contact: Columbus in Context, c/o Clergy and Laity Concerned, 198 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10028, Tel.: (212) 964-6730.

The Alliance for Cultural Democracy, a multicultural organization, publishes a quarterly newspaper opposing what it considers "a celebration of colonialism and genocide." Contact: The Alliance for Cultural Democracy, P.O. Box 7591, Minneapolis, MN 55407, Tel.: (612) 721-5491.

Major events are being planned to take place at the Nevada Test Site in October 1992. The site is located on Western Shoshone lands, in violation of the 1863 Treaty of Ruby Valley and in the absence of any formal agreement giving the U.S. permissions to test nuclear weapons within Western Shoshone territory. For more information contact:

— Western Shoshone National Council
P.O. Box 68
Duckwater, Nevada 89314

— Citizen Alert Native American Program
P.O. Box 5339
Reno, NV 89513
Tel.: (702) 827-4200

— American Peace Test
P.O. Box 26725
Las Vegas, Nevada 89126
Tel.: (702) 386-9834

A European organization is planning a **"Walk Across America"** or **"European Peace Pilgrimage 1992."** This event is intended to show opposition to nuclear testing and the production of nuclear weapons. A spokesperson for the organization also states that "we feel guilty about what our ancestors did to the Indians, but also we wish to acknowledge our responsibility for what is happening to the Shoshone today." The planned march is over 2600 miles and is to last some seven or eight months, ending at the Nevada Test Site, in time for the October 1992 events. For more information contact: Hans Horeman, c/o Vrienden Van EPP '92, A Sniederslaan 14, 5615 GE Eindhoven, The Netherlands.

The Toronah Support Group, a grassroots organization headquartered in Toronto, has sponsored a number of lectures and workshops on the theme of "Recovery, not Discovery" since the beginning of the year. More activities concerning the Columbian Quincentenary from a Third World perspective are planned for 1992. For more information contact the organization at this interim address: 67 Secroft Cres., Toronto, Ontario M3N 1R5.

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REPORTS AND STUDIES

Recent Publications

Blondin, Denis.
Les Fondements cognitifs du Racisme chez les Etudiants québécois.
Québec: CEGEP François-Xavier-Garneau, 1990.

This report presents the findings of a study conducted among a scientifically selected sample of Québec students in different communities and at different educational levels (secondary school, college, university). The study was designed to identify the essential features of the students' worldview and to flesh out the system of representation of the world that underlies the racist ideology they often hold, regardless of the values and attitudes held at any given moment. The study concludes that this system of representation is pervasive and transmitted by consensus, so that its advocates, particularly in the educational system, are not even aware of its racist dimension.

Canadian Council for Social Development.
Social Policy in the 1990s.
Ottawa: C. C. S. D., 1990.

This is a summary of the proceedings of a conference of volunteer organizations held in Ottawa at the end of 1990. In papers and workshops delegates from around Canada endeavoured to define a new approach to current social questions (youth, family, children, immigration, minorities, women, housing, etc.), to identify the role of volunteer organizations in dealing with these issues, and to describe the types of volunteers needed in the new decade.

Gouvernement du Québec.
Au Québec pour Bâtir ensemble.
Québec: Ministère des Communautés culturelles et de l'Immigration, 1990.

This is a policy statement issued by the Québec government on matters regarding immigration. The statemen stresses the government's concern about the proper integration of immigrants into Québec society, the province's intention to increase the percentage of French-speaking immigrants, its desire to have greater control over immigration matters, and its recognition of the favorable economic balance sheet of immigration. The government's paper also expresses a refreshing will to recognize the pluralistic nature of Québec's society and the province's racial, ethnic and cultural diversity.