

Resisting Extinction: Standing Rock, Eco-Genocide, and Survival

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“The Air is not the same any more. The Water is not the same any more. The Earth is not the same any more.”

—Indigenous Elders and Medicine Peoples Council, letter dated 2015

Modernity has its forms, its laws, its fatal fantasies.¹ Extinction is their logical drift. For five hundred years, ecocide and genocide have belonged to the dynamics, the very energetics, of modernity. The terminal sum of modernist accumulations, we're learning today, is an accelerating reduction of life. Whatever its other aftermaths may be, the Sixth Mass Extinction will prove to be modernity's suicide. The evidence that supports this is public knowledge.² But is it public experience? Have we made contact yet with extinction? Climate chaos, planetary toxification: these have become elements of everyday life. But how many of us are living the disappearance of wildlife, the destruction of ecological assemblages, the loss of evolutionary horizons and possible futures? How does all this become real and actual, from within modernity? Can one avow and respond to this violence and still remain modern? Is there a social tipping point? In certain circumstances, we have been told, ideas and emotions can become material forces in history. If enough people engage with this catastrophe, will their embodied efforts to share and cope this knowledge then become a material and political force? In the endgame, conflicting values and visions struggle to emerge and survive. The lines, now, are being redrawn with impressive clarity. Stiff-necked, the keepers of dying fantasies lash out, roar defiance, wheel on in viciously recursive circles. But the skies, lands, and waters fill with a billowing absence. Modernity has reached its limits and has no future. What values and relations, what arts and skills and cultures, will awakening people revive, craft, and nourish, to replace it?

Today, life itself is the ultimate stake, and extinction the ultimate context, of all ethical and political feeling, thinking, and doing. Interpreted symptomatically, every document of culture today is a document of eco-genocide and extinction, if only as disavowal. This news has not yet penetrated mainstream political discourse, and critical theory has so far only poorly understood it. But many people evidently do get it, as grassroots resistance to modernity's war against life is spreading. The Indigenous peoples who, around the world, are leading the struggles to resist eco-genocide, have long been explaining it in eloquent terms and actions.³ Their statements, addresses and enactments: are they not offerings in urgency? Do they not tell us: no

rescue, no refuge, no survival, without more-than-human mutuality?⁴ Do we not already have what we need, to transform the dominant logic of death? We wait in vain, I feel, for a new leap of saving techno-power or some new silver bullet of theory or engineering. Those, anyway, are modernist conceits. To disarm and power down modernity is a terrible task, but there it is.

In the signals behind the signals, the news resonates against itself. To speak of extinction, after all, is to raise the question of survival. The social processes of eco-genocide are the link between the mass extinction of species and ongoing attacks on Indigenous peoples and cultures. The struggle of the water protectors at Standing Rock, North Dakota, was an important event of contemporary Indigenous resurgence and resistance that illuminates the processes of eco-genocide in modernity. What happened in Standing Rock last year, as well as the continuing aftermath, is of urgent concern to all of us because this assertion of Indigenous peoples to their right to exist in relations of mutuality with their ancestral lands and waters compels recognition, response and support. The prayers, commemorations, and dispositions organized there also enact a powerful refusal of modernist dogmas, and perhaps are above all a repudiation of human species supremacism. A confrontation with these dogmas and this supremacism has become a survival imperative in the Sixth Mass Extinction and the endgame of modernity. Standing Rock has opened the cultural and political space for what, after Donna Haraway, can be called “terrapolitics.”⁶ It is up to all of us to ensure that this space continues to open, that it produces effects and further events. We do that by thinking Indigenous resurgence and resistance together with the deep logics of modernity’s war on life; we do it by reflecting together on extinction, survival and the urgent needs of human and more-than-human life in the future. And we do it by feeling and performing the conclusions, in ways that install and activate other logics of everyday life.

Elegy for an Albatross

In 2009, the American artist Chris Jordan began a photographic series called “Midway: Message from the Gyre.” The image that has hit me hardest offers the death scene and carcass of a nestling Laysan albatross.⁷ The photograph captures a double movement in time: as the carcass breaks down, the indestructibility of the plastic flotsam that filled its stomach emerges with lurid pronouncement.

Plastic is an exemplary material marker of modernity. As Heather Davis notes, “Plastic represents the promises of modernity: the promise of sealed, perfected, clean, smooth abundance.”⁸ Chemistry and consumption, hand in hand. But the candy-colored dream material turns out to be a toxic gift. Eight percent of all oil production

goes into making plastics.⁹ A typical plastic product contains one or more of 80,000 chemical additives; it leaches and off-gases toxins into whatever it comes in contact with: air, water, land, bodies.¹⁰ These toxins, linked to infertility and a slew of other maladies, accumulate in bodily tissues and climb up food chains. The meat of the large pelagic fishes that so many of us top predators have developed a taste for—tuna, salmon, swordfish, shark—is full of these chemicals. Plastics also absorb and accumulate whatever persistent organochlorine pollutants, like DDT and PCBs, which they touch, adding to their toxicity.¹¹ And they do not biodegrade. As they break up slowly into smaller and smaller pieces, their molecules remain intact and active.

“At the present moment,” Davis writes, “nowhere on Earth can be considered free of plastic. And no one in Canada, the United States, and many other countries who has been tested has been found to be free of plastic chemicals.”¹² The problem, of course, is that plastic production is profitable. And the law of accumulation is: no possible profit shall go unrepaid. In 2012, the petrochemical industry was producing 280 million tons of plastic. Production is projected to jump to 33 *billion* tons per year by 2050.¹³ As with the fossil economy generally, the accumulation drive cannot restrain itself. Profit grows, but so does death, in the very tissues and organs of life.

Invisible agencies of toxicity shadow the so-called Great Acceleration of post-1945 modernity.¹⁴ Those agencies are there, in Jordan’s photograph—negatively, sublimely. What his image of this particular Laysan albatross conveys positively is a much cruder form of ecocide: the plastic flotsam does its death-work most directly as mechanical obstruction, as a stress factor that injures, starves, dehydrates, and weakens young birds, making them more vulnerable to every other threat to their lives. Today, albatrosses—which eat more plastic than any other seabird—are “the most endangered family of birds on the planet.”¹⁵ Yet, at present, the greatest threat to their survival is the global longline fishing industry. Bycatch mortality estimates for Laysan albatrosses are between 6000 and 10,000 birds, every year for the last fifty years.¹⁶ Laysans lay just one egg a year, and most birds do not begin breeding until they are almost ten years of age.¹⁷ Nearly all Laysans in the world breed on just two remote islands, Midway Atoll and Laysan, in the Leeward Hawaiian Islands, which, in any given year, host between 500,000 and 600,000 breeding pairs.¹⁸ So their bycatch mortality rate is devastating. But plastic and toxicity also contribute to declining albatross populations. Studies of Black-footed albatrosses on Midway have found PCB and DDT contamination at levels known to cause eggshell thinning and embryo mortality in other fish-eating birds.¹⁹ Just north of the Hawaiian archipelago, where the albatrosses forage, is the Subtropical Convergence Zone, or North Pacific Gyre. All the plastic dumped, blown, or washed into the North Pacific rides the currents to this area and adds its bits to the plastic soup of the North Pacific Garbage

Patch. Today every albatross carries a gutload of plastic. While this plastic weakens them and gouges their digestive tracts, it evidently does not starve each one to death. But they are struggling to survive, as Thom van Dooren puts it, “in the thick of a perilous and toxic space.”²⁰

How does a modern person come to care about the albatross’ struggle against extinction? One would have to take the trouble to learn about it. To immerse and entangle, to awaken and open yourself to the plight of any species threatened by ecocide, is to let yourself be changed. To begin with, urbanized humans need inspired human guides to gather and tell these stories: biologists, filmmakers, artists, writers. Jordan’s work led me to two books that have moved me greatly: biologist and ocean activist Carl Safina’s *Eye of the Albatross* (2002) and anthropologist and environmental philosopher Thom van Dooren’s *Flight Ways* (2014). Safina draws a portrait in depth of one Laysan albatross, named Amelia by the biologists on Midway, as she routinely clocks thousands of kilometers foraging food for her nestling. High-speed, long-distance gliders who spend almost all of their lives at sea, albatrosses have evolved bodies “exquisite at mining energy from the weather.”²¹ These are huge birds, with a wingspan of two meters. “Theirs,” Safina writes, “is a fluid world of wind and wild waters, everything in perpetual motion.”²² The distances they cover are astonishing: “A fifty-year-old albatross has flown, at minimum, 3.7 million miles.”²³ Laysans visit land only to dance their courtship dance, and to bring new birds into the world.

In an astonishing textual performance of trans-species empathy, Safina vividly evokes the fisheries that today are the primary threat to albatross existence:

Amelia has picked baits off longlines in the past. She knows the hook’s hardness in soft bait, has felt hooks scrape her bill. But for all the things she has experienced, never has she felt the hook suddenly catching, the line pulling taut, stretching her neck, pulling her under; never has she felt herself biting the stiff ring of the hook, resisting with feet splaying, wings not working in the push of submerging water as the tight line begins slowly sinking; the rapid doubling and doubling again of pressure, the water squeezing all the internal air, the pain in the ears and pain in the hollow bones; the need for breath and how for the first time air is not granted; the light dimming; the twisting and jerking of the head, the pounding heart and the whole body using oxygen rapidly, vision closing in until the slide into unconsciousness and the motion of automatic breathing returns, the rib cage expanding, drawing cold water into the lungs until all is stiff, except that the trip to the bottom will take a long while.²⁴

Such words, images, and stories enable us to approach and abide with the traumatic violence of extinction. Perhaps from hit of the trauma, we can feel as well as understand the offshore machinery and effects of our modernist appetites. Van Dooren, Deborah Bird Rose, and other scholars of the Extinction Studies Working Group have produced a body of searching and impactful reflections on modernity's ruination of the biosphere.²⁵ Van Dooren devotes one chapter of *Flight Ways* to the Laysans. His profoundly important point is that every species is a collective accomplishment, not to be taken for granted. "Species," he writes, "do not just happen, but must be achieved in each new generation, held in the world through the labor, skill, and determination of individual organisms in real relationships of procreation, nourishment, and care."²⁶ Albatrosses species, he notes:

appear both as vast evolutionary lineages and as a collection of fleeting and fragile individual birds, doing the mundane work of knotting together generations. In some sense, millions of years of evolution are 'in' each of these albatross bodies: inheritances, histories, relationships, carried in the flesh.²⁷

Van Dooren calls these achievements "flight ways," but the implication is clear: they are cultures, as much as ours are. They include highly developed skills for making a living, but also singular forms of expression and communication, songs and dances of joy and mourning. The culture-nature binary (hierarchy) is another human supremacist construction. Van Dooren:

Empathy, consideration, care, even various forms of ethics have never been the privileged possessions of humanity.... Rather, these kinds of affective engagements... are products of a long and complex inheritance that undermines any simple distinction between the 'biological' and the 'social'.²⁸

When a species goes extinct, then, a whole culture disappears with it, irreparably, and a whole ecological assemblage suffers the loss of that subtraction. Along with many others, including Indigenous scholars and elders, Van Dooren challenges us to recognize our responsibility to a larger community of life. The life and cultures of species are embedded in local ecological assemblages open to time, change, disruption, and damage. To think, and feel, these assemblages as *communities* is to expand ethical and political concern beyond the limits of modernist human supremacism. Communities, in this sense, are sustaining entanglements of beings and cultures sharing commons of waters, air, and lands. The *munus* of *communitas* implies a gift that requires a response and must be returned, in a movement of mutuality that exceeds the interest of any individual or species.²⁹ Understood and felt deeply enough, ecological entanglement becomes a bond of care, a need to protect. Van Dooren reminds us that our

own evolution has also produced our capacity to feel and care for both human and more-than-human others.

We humans are the newcomers in the great reorganization of life that followed the last mass extinction event 66 million years ago. The asteroid strike of the Cretaceous-Tertiary or K-T event filled the atmosphere with smoke and dust, killing off the dinosaurs and 75 percent of all species then existing. “Some birds,” van Dooren writes,

made it through that dark time. Alongside them, some mammals, some reptiles, plants, bacteria, and others also survived, and it is from these individuals that the incredible diversity of present-day life on the planet evolved. This is the community of life that produced our own species, the community to which we belong.³⁰

The planetary community and relational bonds that evolutionary biology brings into view would hardly be news to many Indigenous peoples. In their cultures and traditions, this more-than-human ethic of mutual flourishing is simply called “kinship.” For Carl Safina, the exposures and entanglements of fieldwork awakened this sense of connection in time:

It’s difficult to comprehend the long lineages that have put us all here, what elder beings we all are upon Earth. But this atoll, this wildlife, these remarkable albatrosses, all provide a visceral sense of continuity from deep, deep time. Here you can feel that our intertwined stories began far into the distant past, and that—as Coleridge’s ancient Mariner implied—we are kin.³¹

Writing from Midway, in direct contact with the Laysans’ struggle to keep their place in the world, this biologist ponders evolution and finds kinship—the felt bond of concern and care that grounds the ancient ethic of mutuality. Would this be an instance of re-enchantment, forbidden by one of modernism’s founding taboos?

February, 2017. I am writing from so-called Florida, camped on land’s end near Flamingo, in Everglades National Park. As the waves from Florida Bay gently slap the limestone shore, brown pelicans, ibises and herons return to their roosts in red mangrove. To the west, clouds roll slowly on a red and orange sky. Behind me, an osprey calls from her nest on a remnant telephone pole. In all my years living in the south of this peninsula, I had never seen the elusive saltwater crocodile. Today I saw three, one swimming and two, tan and eerily prehistoric, sleeping on the muddy banks near Flamingo marina. At the ranger station, I saw photos of the Everglades’ new top predator: exotic pythons abandoned by their humans, which routinely kill and eat alligators, among many other creatures. I light a driftwood campfire as darkness falls, and

wonder about the nets of fate modernity is weaving, in which some will find places while many others are pushed out of this world for good.

Tomorrow, I will pack and drive to Miami, to pick up my friend, the artist and activist Rozalinda Borcilă. We agreed to meet here to document a new fracked gas pipeline that is ripping into fragile wetlands and putting further at risk the already damaged watersheds and underground rivers of the greater Everglades. There is resistance to the so-called Sabal Trail Pipeline. But unlike Standing Rock, this resistance is nearly invisible, taking place in tiny camps unknown to the public and on remote rural roadsides far from cities and towns. We want to record the voices of this resistance and to offer our skills and time. In two days, we will meet Bobby C. Billie, a spiritual leader and one of the clan leaders of an independent Indigenous community. We will listen and try to learn from him how we can help, and what we should do. I came some days earlier, needing to quiet the noise in my head, to make a break with the pressures of my daily life in Europe, and to try, at least, to reconnect with this land I grew up in. Beyond that, I don't know what will happen here, or where this will go.

Time of the New Dying

Environmental historian Justin McBrien wants to rename the anthropocene the Necrocene, the time of new dying.³² The reduction of life in the endgame of modernity is shocking. A 2016 assessment by the World Wildlife Fund concludes that wild bird, mammal, reptile, amphibian, and fish populations have dropped 58% in the last four decades; this loss will likely reach 67% just three years from now.³³ 90% of the sharks and big fish are already gone.³⁴ The rate of anthropogenic species extinction, meanwhile, is estimated to be about 100 species a day.³⁵ We are living the Sixth Mass Extinction. Or are we? The spectacle of modernity, that sees everything and claims to make visible everything that matters, has not opened our eyes or our hearts to the ongoing immensity of the current extinction. Yet, the catastrophe is here, and we are implicated in it. In a formal statement to COP21, the 2015 UN Convention on Climate Change, the Indigenous Elders and Medicine Peoples Council write:

The Air is not the same any more. The Water is not the same any more. The Earth is not the same any more. The Clouds are not the same any more. The Rain is not the same any more. The Trees, the Plants, the Animals, Birds, Fish, Insects and all the others are not the same any more. All that is Sacred in Life is vanishing because of our actions. The truth is we have moved beyond climate change to survival.³⁶

Van Dooren agrees:

If we abandon the seeming objectivity and impartiality of a “view from nowhere,” and affirm our place as mammals, as beings “ecologically embedded” and woven into patterns of mutual sustenance and co-evolution with other species, then the current period of mass extinction can be regarded only as an assault on life. While the future of our own species is surely at stake, our response to the ethical claims of mass extinction cannot be understood through the lens of a simplistic anthropocentrism.³⁷

Would the embodied knowledge of the affects and effects of extinction, then, become a pressure that can lead or call us beyond modernist human supremacism? To rethink everything, and to re-feel everything, through this urgency, to recover our sense of membership in a planetary community of more-than-human cultural diversity accomplished over millions of years—this is how we arrive at new paradigms of care and mutuality. Or rather, old-new paradigms, for as already noted, many Indigenous peoples already enact such an ethics in their cultures and traditions. It is no accident that Indigenous leadership is energizing so many of the struggles against eco-genocide today. Their messages of place-based *buen vivir* or “good living” should not be ignored. Of course, we urbanized modern people, from our very different histories and positions, cannot simply mimic the cultures and ceremonies of Indigenous peoples. To do so would be both false and disrespectful. We have to work out our own ways of living such precepts of kinship and mutuality. There are many paths to hybrid cultures and social forms. But they necessitate shedding the modernist demand for ceaseless novelty. Practically, the needed hybridity and bricolage are already being modeled in emerging grassroots cultures of food, water, and energy sovereignty. And their supporting intellectual analogues can be found in the transdisciplinary convergences of science, environmental humanities, animal studies, art, and Indigenous knowledge. Think of the entanglement lessons of evolutionary theorist Lynne Margulis, as read by Donna Haraway and Anna Tsing: we are all, each of us, already multispecies communities.³⁸ Our bodies are, right down to our cells and DNA, endosymbiotic assemblages of bacteria, retroviruses, and genes. In other words, “commoning” is what we *are*, and not just what we do. “All flourishing is mutual,” writes Potawatami botanist Robin Wall Kimmerer.³⁹

It remains, however, to politicize and terrapoliticize these ethical reflections on extinction. I would like to hold onto the concept of community and its cognates—commons, commoners, commoning and communing—but, in political terms, these are goals and visions to struggle for, not already-achieved givens of unity. Before we can reclaim what we share, we have to work through the divisions that separate us. There are human agencies organized within modernity that are actively destroying the air, waters, and lands, the ecological assemblages that support human and more-than-human life.

Claiming or reclaiming these supports – water, the atmosphere, the rainforests or coral reefs – as commons entails an active separation and subtraction from this system and its relations of power, dependency and addiction. Drawing and holding political lines is uncomfortable but necessary work. I’ve been speaking of modernity, its eco-genocidal energetics, its drift toward extinction. But who is modernity? Although we are all called and enlisted into modernity, we are not equally positioned, we do not equally bear its costs or enjoy its benefits; we are not equally responsible for its crimes. There is a neocolonial mainstream, sometimes called the global north, that inherits the benefits of eco-genocide and bears greater responsibility for planetary meltdown. And there are ruling classes, a global oligarchy that dominates and directs the course of modernity, within the parameters of its logics.⁴¹

It’s these dominant logics themselves that have to be changed. These are known, they have been named and their workings exposed by a multitude of critics: capital accumulation and imperialism, settler colonialism and extractive colonialism, white supremacism, male supremacism, heterosexual supremacism, and human species supremacism. I believe it is clarifying to put it like this, with this emphasis on the drive to supremacy.⁴⁴ These are deep logics of domination. They are thoroughly violent, in no way neutral or benign. This awful brew of rules, dogmas, and fantasies developed into the value and identity system that powers the global social process and generates the pressures that terrorize us. The work of liberating ourselves from modernity’s headlock is ongoing. I’ve been focusing here on human species supremacism, because it is the operative justification for ecocide and extinction, and because wherever its hold is broken a way is opened to alternative logics of more-than-human mutuality. But in truth, all these dominant logics and fantasies of modernity have to be thought and opposed together. This whole cultural system needs to be disarmed and dismantled, or “somehow be engaged and repatterned,” as multispecies theorist and story entangler Donna Haraway puts it.⁴⁵

Bobby has asked us to meet him at the camp of Leroy Osceola, on Tamiami Trail, in the Big Cypress. It’s been nineteen years since I last saw him. As he did then, he radiates a calm, gentle, and very centered energy. We all sit at a table in a large chickee; a campfire burns close by. The Indigenous people to which Bobby and Leroy belong is the Original People of this land. Bobby and Leroy are members of the Council of this People, in English translated as the Original Miccosukee Simanolee Nation Aboriginal People. Rozalinda and I are trying to understand the history and position of this community. It will take many days before we begin to comprehend what we are told today.

The energy of these two men is very different. When Bobby, the spiritual leader of his community, speaks, I feel his words are like soft offerings, reaching out in invitation. His eyes are shy but sparkle. He smiles and laughs often. His stories loop and bank like birds, refusing straight lines. When Leroy, an artist and woodcarver, speaks his words hit me more directly. His statements are clear and strong, his energy cuts away the shells of English, and lets the violence of history be heard and seen. Both men wear traditional patchwork shirts.

Also around the table are Leroy's sons and family members, and Shannon Larsen, a trusted ally who has worked with Bobby for decades. Bobby and Leroy are telling us, I realize, exactly how ecogenocide is perpetrated today, in so-called Florida. Some of it seems familiar: the disruption of the natural water flow by countless canals, by the massive dike around Lake Okeechobee, and by the roads and highways driven violently through the Greater Everglades; the poisoning of the water by toxic industrial agriculture – the sugar cane fields, the citrus groves and the massive vegetable operations. Infrastructure expansion: powerlines, oil wells, new pipelines. Other parts of the story come as a surprise: Everglades National Park and Big Cypress National Preserve were established to conserve endangered lands and species. But these federal agencies do not allow the Original People to gather their herbs and medicine plants, or to grow their low-impact gardens on their ancestral village sites. These administrative fiat have had devastating effects on Indigenous culture. Moreover, Bobby tells us, the so-called Park and Preserve cannot protect the life within their artificial boundaries, since that life depends on a water system that begins far away, in the springs and rivers of the northern peninsula. The water is no longer allowed to carry the generative energies south to the Everglades, and until that is addressed conservation and restoration schemes are doomed. Digging all these canals, Bobby tells us, is like cutting the veins of your own arm. Obvious as this seems, the speculators, developers, technocrats and engineers all failed to grasp it. Bobby and the Original People could have explained it to them, but no one bothered to ask.

The most difficult thing for us to understand does not really register at first. It will take Rozalinda and I many more days of discussing and thinking together, of returning again to Bobby with questions, before the words we are hearing begin to make sense. The tribal and reservation system itself, Bobby and Leroy are telling us, is undermining the culture of the independent Original People. The federally recognized tribes, fully integrated into a settler colonial system, are themselves one more factor threatening the survival of this small community. As we listen to this news, still mostly unable to comprehend it, the roar of high-speed traffic passing on the highway next to us is continuous and disturbingly violent. This morning, before leaving Miami, Rozalinda and I learned that yesterday an activist named James Leroy Marker was gunned down by police in Marion County. Marker used his hunting rifle to disable some

construction equipment where the Sabal Trail Pipeline is gouging through fragile wetlands. For this act of defensive sabotage, he was summarily murdered by the state on a roadside in broad daylight, as if he were an existential threat to the whole fossil fuel regime. He was never allowed to tell anyone his reasons. The 66-year old father was a resident of Everglades City, where several days later we arrive with Bobby and Shannon. Marker, we have learned by then, was known to his community as a gentle and generous soul.

It is an urgent project of critical mourning, to understand the history of modernity for what is: more than five hundred years of ecocide and genocide.⁴⁶ We live in the result: a vastly unequal and over-armed world still in the grip of bankrupt dogmas. In this context, again, Indigenous knowledge offers a living critique of modernity and its destructive logics. In a beautiful and important essay for *The documenta 14 Reader*, Carcross/Tagish First Nation curator Candice Hopkins invokes Anishinaabe scholar Gerald Vizenor's notion of "survivance." Survivance goes beyond mere survival:

For Vizenor, survivance denotes active resistance; it is "repudiation of dominance, obtrusive themes of tragedy, nihilism, and victimry." The continued resistance (and very existence) of Indigenous peoples works against the machine of empire, the apparatus that first desires territory, then exploits its resources, then eventually turns everything – even people – into commodities. The figure of the survivant – as opposed to the mere survivor – might offer "a way to think, in a destabilizing, defamiliarizing, that is, in a queer way, about Indigenous modes of contemplation and habitation."⁴⁷

Three years ago, historian and activist Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz published *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*.⁴⁸ With this stunning work, we now have a powerful and comprehensive account of Indigenous dispossession, resistance, and survivance that analyzes the operations of white supremacist settler colonialism and modernist eco-genocide in North America. But its lessons illuminate the methods and aims of contemporary Indigenous struggles to defend the life of their places throughout the world. These struggles have inspired and energized social movements against neoliberal globalization since the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas in 1994. Today, notions of environmental justice and climate justice make eco-genocide visible and opposable in an anti-capitalist, anti-colonial framework. I believe that the "movement of movements" will have to go even further and articulate a clear refusal of human species supremacism. Coalescing positive visions are already pushing in this direction: hybrid biophilic cultures of survival are emerging under the banners of water, food, and energy sovereignty.⁴⁹ And all of this converges at Standing Rock.

Standing Rock, Resistance, and Survivance

In April 2016, LaDonna Brave Bull Allard, a Standing Rock Sioux tribal historian and elder, established a prayer camp on her family's land. From this first camp, a movement to resist the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) was born. Indeed, this resistance would bring together Indigenous peoples in North America and far beyond, would catalyze numerous new alliances with non-Indigenous groups and movements, and would capture the attention and imagination of much of the world. "Water is Life" (*Mni Wiconi*) became the movement's slogan. But as LaDonna Brave Bull Allard explains, there is a long history behind both this slogan and the history and movement it describes:

Where the Cannonball River joins the Missouri River, at the site of our camp today to stop the Dakota Access Pipeline, there used to be a whirlpool that created large, spherical sandstone formations. The river's true name is Inyan Wakangapi Wakpa, River that Makes the Sacred Stones, and we have named the site of our resistance on my family's land the Sacred Stone Camp. The stones are not created any more, ever since the US Army Corps of Engineers dredged the mouth of the Cannonball River and flooded the area in the late 1950s as they finished the Oahe dam. They killed a portion of our sacred river. I was a young girl when the floods came and desecrated our burial sites and Sundance grounds. Our people are in that water.⁵³

"Water is Life" reclaims water as a more-than-human commons in a time understood well by Indigenous peoples to be a time of eco-genocide and extinction, an urgent time of decision and action. But as LaDonna Brave Bull Allard eloquently makes clear, this slogan first of all invokes US settler colonialism and Indigenous resistance and survivance:

Of the 380 archeological sites that face desecration along the entire pipeline route, from North Dakota to Illinois, 26 of them are right here at the confluence of these two rivers. It is a historic trading ground, a place held sacred not only by the Sioux Nations, but also the Arikara, the Mandan, and the Northern Cheyenne. Again, it is the Army Corps that is allowing these sites to be destroyed. The U.S. government is wiping out our most important cultural and spiritual areas. And as it erases our footprint from the world, it erases us as a people. These sites must be protected, or our world will end, it is that simple. Our young people have a right to know who they are. They have a right to language, to culture, to tradition. The way they learn these things is connection to our lands and our history. If we allow an oil company to dig through and destroy our histories,

our ancestors, our hearts and souls as a people, is that not genocide? Today, on this same sacred land, over 100 tribes have come to stand together in prayer and solidarity in defiance of the black snake. And more keep coming. This is the first gathering of Oceti Sakowin (Sioux tribes) since the Battle of the Greasy Grass ([also called the] Battle of Little Bighorn) 140 years ago. When we first established the Sacred Stone Camp on April 1 to stop the pipeline through prayer and non-violent direct action, I did not know what would happen. But our prayers were answered. We must remember we are part of a larger story. We are still here. We are still fighting for our lives, 153 years after my great-great-grandmother Mary watched as our people were senselessly murdered [by US troops at the Whitestone Hill Massacre][...] We are the river, and the river is us.⁵⁴

The life and meaning of Lakota culture, then, is not separable from the life and history of the land and water. To acknowledge and respect this relationship is to comprehend the violence and sacrilege of the bulldozer. To damage this land and water, or to remove this people from it, is eco-genocide. This is the open wound, the physical harm and spiritual trauma, perpetrated on so many Indigenous peoples, which the agents of modernity, too, would need to mourn and work-through.⁵⁵

Over the course of the spring and summer of 2016, the number of water protectors gathered at Standing Rock swelled from a first handful to hundreds and then thousands. The main camps grew from one to three. The courage demonstrated there, as well as the repressive violence and terror perpetrated against the water protectors, is by this time well known to the world.⁵⁶ The epic runs organized by the Lakota youth group Rezspect Our Water, the call from Sacred Stone camp, the response, the resurgence: all this has opened and changed us, I feel - all of us who watched it, amazed and engaged, across the planet. The violence of the modern settler nation-state was also again on display, infamously: the freezing night of November 20, the armored personnel carriers, rubber bullets, water cannons, riot sticks, tear gas, mace, tasers, sonic weapons, and concussion grenades.⁵⁷ And then came the first eviction orders to Oceti Sakowin, the largest camp on so-called public land, with a deadline of December 5.⁵⁸

The winter showdown was apparently inevitable. But violence does not always beget violence—sometimes the vicious cycle is broken. As the eviction deadline approached, unexpected support from US veterans for the Standing Rock resistance contributed to a shift in the balance of forces. Outraged by the news and images flowing out of the Standing Rock camps, US Army veteran Wesley Clark Jr. and former Marine Michael Wood Jr. put out a call to other veterans. Their idea was to organize a force of human shields to protect the water

protectors from militarized law enforcement.⁶⁹ The response, slow at first, took off as the eviction deadline approached. In the event, an estimated 4,000 US veterans arrived at the camps, which had swelled to around 10,000 people.⁷⁰ On the day before the deadline, the Army Corps intervened, announcing it would not grant DAPL the needed easement to drill the pipeline under Lake Oahe, effectively halting the project for the time being.⁷¹ Donald Trump would restart it, breaking the camps, and the inevitable first oil leaks would quickly follow. Nevertheless the struggle is not over: the victory, momentum, and lessons learned have energized the resistance to other pipelines and new extreme energy infrastructure across the continent.⁷²

And there is more to this story, as the interactions between the veterans and the Standing Rock elders reveal. As Clark later explained in an interview, he expected to be either in jail or the hospital by end of the day on December 5. But when the Army Corps made its announcement on December 4, Clark noted:

the elders said, Listen, we know you have all this stuff planned but we want just peace and prayer.... The directives from the elders were pretty clear. There were paid infiltrators, we believe, both in the camp and that had come into our own group that were managed by the private security firms that worked for DAPL. The view I got from the elders was that what [the infiltrators] wanted was violence at the bridge and on the front line, which they could then call a riot. We believed they had a financial incentive to make it violent, so the best thing to do was peace and prayer and keep distance from the security forces.⁷³

Thus the elders organized a forgiveness ceremony, in which historical crimes were remembered, apologies expressed, and emotions shared. Clark made this improbable and public apology:

We came. We fought you. We took your land. We signed treaties that we broke. We stole minerals from your sacred hills. We blasted the faces of our presidents onto your sacred mountains. Then we took still more land and then we took your children a then we tried to make [sic] (take) your language, and we tried to eliminate your language that God gave you, and the Creator gave you. We didn't respect you, we polluted your Earth. We hurt you in so many ways but we've come to say that we are sorry. We are at your service and we beg for your forgiveness.⁷⁴

As the photo documentation shows, this carefully staged and highly mediatized event was organized by the elders and veterans as a political challenge to the dominant dogmas of settler power. Yet, the emotions released there and conveyed were, and remain, stronger than mere political statement or strategy.

Rozalinda and I have learned, in our discussions with Bobby over five days in February, that there are many aspects of Indigenous knowledge that cannot be translated into the settler-colonial language of English. Our own language, we learned, is far too implicated in the harm and trauma of eco-genocidal violence, in the conceptual abstractions that support enclosure, extraction and extermination. To use terms such as “Florida,” “property,” “law,” or “tribe” already reproduces and echoes a whole system of violence that the Council people refuse. In our discussions, Bobby intervened several times to correct us and call our attention to this problem. He instructed us to stop using the term “Florida,” and he taught the Indigenous name for the peninsula. More, he taught us exactly how we should convey this information:

You could say, we visited with the Original People from this land, and they told us the name of this land is Echabonmic. That’s what we heard from them. So that’s what they told us, from now on to use this name. Because the ‘state of Florida’ is killing life.

The full plight and public invisibility of the Council people have taken a while to sink into us. In our discussions, we agreed that our work would not be to produce some new representation of Bobby and the Council people. We never intended to speak for them, and we never conceived our collaboration as any kind of art work or project. We realize, and do not allow ourselves to forget, that any account we give of this People remains a representation shaped through and from a settler outside. We are not experts on, and never will be insiders of, this community. We went back to Echabonmic as committed people, not as social scientists.

However, over the course of our time there, we began to understand that the Council people were asking for help in some specific ways. We were told again and again that they were seeking allies, from groups, and especially Indigenous groups, outside the USA – “from anyone,” as Bobby put it, “who is not the United States.” While invisibility to the dominant culture may have been a useful survival strategy well into the twentieth century, it seems the Council people have decided that their continued survival now depends on visibility and organized outside recognition. In this way, they hope to bring international law and pressure to bear on the US government. We agreed to see how we might help them in this aim, through the activist, academic and cultural networks accessible to us. We also offered to work with them in shaping some video documents into “messages” in which they can introduce themselves and their struggles.

But we also learned that things are not so simple. The culture of the Council people is oral: “eye to eye and breath to breath.” Bobby’s transmission is slow and non-linear, and is not easily summarized or reorganized into a linear synthesis. And Rozalinda and I work with images and words – English words. The language problem continues to

haunt us. Bobby, whose Indigenous name we learned is Ishagape, told us the problem is not just the colonial freight of words in the invaders' language. There is also a different energetics. When he uses the Indigenous words for things, he told us, those words are alive and carry energy. Any Indigenous person feeling these energies will "understand right away," even if they speak another Indigenous language. But when he uses the English words for those same things, the liveliness and energy are gone, and are not understood. We have not solved this problem, but we are at least aware of it now. Presenting or relaying Ishagape's messages recorded in English is a compromise that acknowledges the actual power of the dominant neo-colonial global language, but that power is, precisely, at the heart of the problem. The energies of resistance, resilience and survivance have their life outside the dominant language and modernist culture, and yet sometimes must be expressed, imperfectly, within them.

Unsettling Forgiveness

Commenting on the inaugural addresses of Barack Obama, Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz writes, "The affirmation of democracy requires the denial of colonialism, but denying it does not make it go away."⁷⁵ The European invasion of North America released waves of land-hungry settlers into a continent already inhabited by hundreds of distinct Indigenous peoples. The white supremacist colonial project, and later the birth and building of the US nation, required the dispossession and violent removal of these communities, as well as the importation of enslaved African peoples and countless other indentured and displaced peoples doomed to forced labor.⁷⁶ "Kill the Indian, save the man" was the formula for cultural genocide, recoded endlessly into the origin myths of the US nation. These myths, which US politicians invariably invoke to this day, re-describe foundational theft and terror as manifest destiny, the divine entitlements of a new and exceptional democracy.⁷⁷ The myths of modernity do the same on a global scale: they insistently misconstrue genocide and ecocide as progress in freedom and happiness. These fantasies of supremacy are given continuous coded cultural expression. As social facts, these cultural expressions can be exposed and interpreted symptomatically. This is decolonizing critical work, a necessary labor of mourning, working-through, and counter-memory.

On July 12, 2007, two helicopter gunships from the US Army 1st Cavalry Division opened fire on civilians in New Baghdad, Iraq, leaving nine dead, including two Reuters journalists, and wounding two children. In 2010, Wikileaks published 17 minutes of classified gunsight video of the massacre under the title "Collateral Murder."⁷⁹ The international scandal that followed erupted from the merger between high-tech killing and entertainment, evident in both the interpellating imagery and the recorded conversations of the pilots

and gunners. The AH-64 attack helicopters, made by Boeing, the 76th largest corporation in the world, are called “Apaches.”⁸⁰ The Apaches replaced the previous generation of Army helicopter gunships, called “Cheyennes”.⁸¹ Like the Lakota Sioux, these Indigenous peoples—the actual Apaches and Cheyennes—were the target of the US Army 7th Cavalry Regiment during the last phase of the so-called Indian Wars of the nineteenth century. The 7th Cavalry was a main instrument of genocidal pacification on the Great Plains of the United States. The Regiment still exists, and was active in the US invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. The two gunships involved in the 2007 massacre were codenamed Crazyhorse 1/8 and Crazyhorse 1/9. Crazy Horse was an Oglala Lakota war leader who rallied Indigenous resistance to US settler colonialism. He and Sitting Bull led the defeat of Custer’s 7th Cavalry at Little Big Horn in 1876. After his surrender the following year, Crazy Horse was assassinated by US Army guards. Sitting Bull was gunned down by Indian police sent to arrest him in 1890.⁸² Once Indigenous peoples and fighters are eliminated or neutralized, their names are appropriated as trophies and symbols of settler-colonial power.

Twenty-three years after the end of the Indian Wars, the US Treasury introduced the Indian Head Nickel, also known as the Buffalo Nickel. The targets of genocide and ecocide now become decoration for coinage, the medium of indifferent equivalence and limitless accumulation. As Dunbar-Ortiz notes, the US Navy SEAL hit-team that assassinated Osama bin Laden, in May 2011, code-named its target “Geronimo.”⁸³ Who is the terrorist here? The victors attempt to control the discourse but their own contradictions undo them. At Standing Rock, militarized local law enforcement mimicked the postures and violence of occupying military forces. In the slang of US soldiers and generals, hostile occupied territory is called “Indian Country.”⁸⁴ The continuities are evident, as is their logic. But despite Trump’s recent election, this dominant logic is in crisis in the endgame of modernity. It is a dangerous moment. Still, awareness grows, the learning curve accelerates. Evidently, many veterans have worked through this history deeply enough to have publicly shifted their allegiance. In the forgiveness ceremony at Standing Rock, Wesley Clark Jr. wore the uniform of the 7th Cavalry.

A widely disseminated image from the forgiveness ceremony at Standing Rock on December 5, 2016 shows a Lakota Sioux elder accepting Wesley Clark Jr.’s apology.⁸⁵ That elder, it was reported, was Leonard Crow Dog, a highly-regarded Sicangu Lakota spiritual leader long associated with the American Indian Movement, or AIM. He was one of the organizers of the 1972 Trail of Broken Treaties march on Washington DC. Led by AIM and a coalition of Indigenous groups, the marchers occupied the offices of the Bureau of Indian Affairs for six days. A “20-Point Position Paper” prepared for the march was presented to the United Nations and years later became

the basis for the 2007 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.⁸⁶ In February 1973, a caravan of AIM members arrived at the village of Wounded Knee, on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota, four hours south of Standing Rock. They had been invited to protect traditionalist tribal members from the increasingly violent rule of US-backed tribal chairman Richard Wilson. During Wilson's tenure, his private paramilitary, the so-called GOON squad, terrorized traditionalists and AIM supporters. More than fifty people opposed to his regime were murdered in the 1970s, including Pedro Bissonette, director of the Oglala Sioux Civil Rights Organization, the group that, along with elders, invited AIM to Pine Ridge.⁸⁷ The AIM activists and their Oglala Sioux hosts were surrounded by federal Marshalls, FBI agents, snipers, helicopters, and 15 armored personnel carriers.⁸⁸ During the 71-day siege, Leonard Crow Dog led sunrise prayers and revived the Ghost Dance on the site of the 1890 Wounded Knee massacre.⁸⁹ In that atrocity, soldiers of the US Army 7th Cavalry killed 300 peacefully encamped Miniconjou Lakota and Hunkpapa Lakota men, women, and children.⁹⁰ The soldiers and settler bureaucrats had been in near-panic over the spread of the Ghost Dance movement. A ceremony of cultural mourning that honored lost ancestors and their slaughtered buffalo kin, the Lakota Ghost Dance "promised to restore the Indigenous world as it was before colonialism, making the invaders disappear and the buffalo return."⁹¹ Leonard Crow Dog's great grandfather, Jerome Crow Dog, had been a leader of the Ghost Dance in 1889.⁹² In 1973, for the first time in more than 80 years, the circle was closed again and the Ghost Dance brought back to life on sacred ground.⁹³ "We do not own the land," Leonard Crow Dog said at the forgiveness ceremony at Standing Rock last December, "the land owns us."⁹⁴

There are more tensions in and behind this image of offering and contrition that cannot be ignored. Despite Clark's public apology, the veteran, as a politicized identity formation, has largely escaped critical deconstruction. Since its inception, the US military has been an agency of white supremacist settler colonialism. The experience of perpetrating genocide against Indigenous peoples in North America has shaped its institutional cultures and continues to shape the methods of its imperialist invasions and enforcements all over the world. It is disavowal, if this history is acknowledged while, at the same time, the veteran, as a group subject position, is not decolonized. When the military veteran is invoked and granted public admiration, a whole deep culture of violence is legitimized.⁹⁵ And thus consent for the whole apparatus of the modern nation-state is enacted: consent for its fictions of democracy; its assertions of law, order, and the obligations of citizenship; and its constructions and exclusions of membership. To some, it seemed that the US state had arrived at Standing Rock, along with these new veterans.⁹⁶ Hundreds of Indigenous vets, after all, had already been at the camps, working, praying, and participating in ceremonies for many months. For

reasons entangled with the legacies of settler colonialism, Indigenous peoples have served in the US military at a higher rate than any other group; indeed, they have been systematically targeted for recruitment.⁹⁷ With the sudden arrival of Clark's 4,000 vets, the American flag reappeared in all its claim to glory, and not, as had been the case until then, as a symbol flown upside down, in a gesture of refusal.⁹⁸ The figure of the military veteran is multiple and ambivalent; it means different things to different groups.⁹⁹ The problem is what it connotes uncritically in mainstream settler culture. In all these respects, the reconciliation so emotionally enacted in the forgiveness ceremony would seem to have been premature.

It is extremely generous, obviously, for Indigenous elders to hear and accept the apologies of settler veterans. And there is, no doubt, a strong desire to be forgiven, shared by many members of perpetrating nations. But so long as the US military veteran, as identity formation, survives within such enactments then what Dunbar-Ortiz calls "unconscious manifest destiny" lives on unbroken.¹⁰⁰ These are the wrong forms of survival. These modernist cultures should die, need to die, and reflection on what may be necessary to bring about that passing is bound to be painful and uncomfortable. For settler colonialism to die, settlers have to *leave*, have to give up title to what they have stolen, have to make more than token efforts to repair the intergenerational trauma their violence has inflicted. Unsettling? The restoration of a much larger land base, adequate for the more-than-human flourishing of Indigenous cultures and traditions; reparations sufficient to attain full and sustainable sovereignty; and the deep transformation of national and international law to extend legal protection to lands, waters, and ecological communities held sacred: all these require more than an apology or even a show of great courage on a brief visit. Yet, nothing less would establish even the minimal conditions for reconciliation. I'm not disrespecting or belittling the commitment these vets have shown or the steps they've taken, which are certainly impressive. But the way is long. Decolonization requires disarming neocolonial power, at home and abroad; that end is not compatible with a mainstream nationalism that continues to serve and venerate US military cultures of "full spectrum dominance." This problem has featured too little in the public discussion. Its absence is itself a reflection of how far the militarization of US society has been normalized under the politics of fear and security. As compelling as it is, and perhaps as effective as it was as political theater and intervention, this image of forgiveness at Standing Rock remains too easy.

An Invisible People¹⁰¹

In the shadows of the tourist meccas of so-called Florida, in the damaged wetlands hemmed in by agricultural empires, cement

factories and failed engineering projects, an Indigenous people struggles for survival. The world knows about the wealthy Seminole Tribe of Florida, Inc., and those more informed may also know of the smaller and less powerful Miccosukee Tribe of Florida. But these two groups were formed and brought into the federal tribal and reservation system in the 1950s and 60s as a way of extinguishing aboriginal land title and subordinating an older and more traditional Indigenous community. Hardly anyone knows that this traditional community, called in English the Council of the Original Miccosukee Simanolee Nation Aboriginal Peoples, refused to enter into this colonial system, choosing instead to retain their culture, language, clans and ceremonies, according to the instructions given to them by the Creator. Since the Original People of the Council already know who they are and how they should live, they have not sought the so-called recognition that comes with the federal tribal and reservation system. Since they know that they belong to the land and cannot be separated from it, and that the land is not property and cannot be owned, they have not accepted any so-called land claims settlement with the US government. To this day, the Original People are the only Indigenous people of so-called Florida who still live by the traditional clans and ceremonies and who have never surrendered their right to do so on the land they have lived on since long before the so-called State of Florida arrived there. Today the threats to their existence have become dire.

The People of the Council are the original caretakers of the peninsula, and they have maintained this traditional relationship to those lands. Today, however, they live without any secure land base and indeed without “papers” or other administrative markers of a legal existence. For forty years, from 1818 to 1858, the US government waged an episodic war of removal and genocide against them; today the intergenerational trauma they bear as a result of this violence has still hardly been acknowledged. As settler- and industry-driven ecocide continues to ruin the peninsula’s wetlands and watersheds, the fish and animals the Council people depended on for food have disappeared or become too toxic to eat. The establishment of the Everglades National Park and Big Cypress National Preserve displaced the Original People from lands they have lived on and taken care of for many generations; today these same entities of so-called conservation deny them permission to gather their medicinal herbs and grow their small gardens. Their traditional vegetable seeds were lost, because they had lost the places to grow them. And now they are also threatened by the federal tribal and reservation system itself. In the nineteenth century, the US government imposed an alien system of political organization upon resistant Indigenous peoples through terror and coercion; the so-called tribes and reservations were a system of settler colonial division and control. In the mid-twentieth century, this system was established in so-called Florida through the seductions of money and the promises of economic development. The

Seminole Tribe claims to be the unconquered people, this is how they market themselves. But it is the Original People who were never conquered despite the genocidal wars, who refused the federal tribal and reservation system, and who continue to exist outside and in defiance of this new system of war and removal. Canals, roads and pipelines; parks and preserves; industrial chemical agriculture; and the federal tribal and reservation system: these are actual agencies of eco-genocide in *Echabonmic* today.

Against these agencies, the Original People hold resolutely to their cultural traditions and struggle fiercely against the ecocidal ruination of the peninsula. For decades, Council spiritual leader and clan leader Ishagape (also known as Bobby C. Billie) has organized opposition to the “slow violence” of eco-genocide. He and his collaborators have worked tirelessly to defend the lands and waters from destructive new roads, canals, powerlines, destructive conservation and restoration schemes, and, in recent years, so-called green infrastructure and a massive natural gas pipeline now under construction. In March 2017, he led an arduous four-day spirit walk to block plans for a new road disguised as a bike-way for urban nature tourists. As climate chaos, extinction and other signs of planetary meltdown have become impossible to ignore, Ishagape has joined many other Indigenous elders and medicine people in directly addressing non-Indigenous people about the destructiveness of modernity. It is no longer just about climate change, he has said clearly in many statements in many forums, including a letter to the Paris Climate Summit (COP21): for all of us, it is now a matter of survival. And he has fought the destruction of burial grounds and other traditional sites held sacred, and has performed the ceremonies to heal these atrocities. As so-called Florida officially celebrated the 500th anniversary of invaders such as Juan Ponce de León, Bobby reminded newcomers of the State’s genocidal history and called for the Castillo de San Marcos, the colonial Spanish fortress in St. Augustine, to be torn down. The People of the Council consider themselves the original caretakers of the land they call *Echabonmic*, and they take that responsibility seriously.

The New Terrapolitics

“Modern Indigenous nations and communities ,” writes Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, “are societies formed by their resistance to colonialism, through which they have carried their practices and histories. It is breathtaking, but no miracle, that they have survived as peoples.” Moreover, she notes, “Surviving genocide, by any means, is resistance.”¹⁰² In the Sixth Mass Extinction, it is no longer permissible to think genocide apart from ecocide; in the endgame of modernity, these processes are knotted and unfold from the same supremacist logics and fantasies. The offering that opposes this violence appears

today as the *munus*, “the gift that one gives, not the gift that one receives”: the expansion of community and the reclaiming of commons that reaches for a more-than-human mutuality.¹⁰³ Resistance to ecogenocide requires the refusal of supremacism, including human species supremacism. In Standing Rock, *Echabonmic*, and innumerable other places across the planet, Indigenous peoples are organizing and leading this resistance. Standing Rock was violently evicted after Trump reaffirmed the US state’s support for extreme energy extraction. However, the energies, intentions and dispositions nurtured at Standing Rock have not been contained or silenced. They only continue to spread and amplify. While the international divestment campaign goes from victory to new victory, those whose courage animated Standing Rock are now showing their resilience by carrying their experience to all those places across so-called North America where new pipelines are under construction. In late March 2017, the fires were lit at a new prayer and spirit camp established by Standing Rock veterans in *Echabonmic*; Ishagape conducted the ceremonies.

– Athens, January-May 2017

This essay began as a talk given at HEAD-Genève/Geneva University of Art and Design on 16 January 2017. It has benefited from responses and insights shared by many people, including Gabriella Calchi Novati, Marisa Cornejo, and Quinn Latimer. I would like to express special gratitude to Ishagape, Leroy Osceola, Shannon Larsen, and Rozalinda Borcilă.

¹ This essay can be read as a companion piece to my “Writing the Ecocide-Genocide Knot,” in the previous issue of *South*; there I end by reflecting on my relation to the life and violent history of so-called Florida. Here, I continue that reflection and narrate my attempt to actualize it as ethical and political practice in the present. “So-called Florida,” because, as will be made clear later in this text, I have been instructed by Original Miccosukee Simanolee Nation elder and spiritual leader Ishagape (Bobby C. Billie) to use the Indigenous name for that peninsula rather than the settler-colonial term. See Gene Ray, “Writing the Ecocide-Genocide Knot: Indigenous Knowledge and Critical Theory in the Endgame,” *South as a State of Mind* #8 [documenta 14 #3], online at http://www.documenta14.de/en/south/895_writing_the_ecocide_genocide_knot_indigenous_knowledge_and_critical_theory_in_the_endgame (accessed June 1, 2017).

² The consensus among biologists continues to strengthen, that anthropogenic extinction of species is reaching levels comparable to the five previous mass extinction events legible in the geological record; hence, the term Sixth Mass Extinction has gained traction among scientists, if not the mainstream public. See Edward O. Wilson, *The Future of Life* (London: Little, Brown, 2002); Franz J. Bromwimmer, *Ecocide: A Short History of the Mass Extinction of Species* (London: Pluto Press, 2002); Elizabeth Kolbert, *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014); Ashley Dawson, *Extinction: A Radical History* (New York: OR Press, 2016); and Edward O. Wilson, *Half-Earth: Our Planet's Fight for Life* (New York: Liveright Publishing, 2016).

³ I use the term “eco-genocide” to indicate that ecocide and genocide are knotted processes and tendencies in modernity. The most incisive discussion of this knotting to date that I am aware of is Damien Short, *Redefining Genocide: Settler Colonialism, Social Death and Ecocide* (London: Zed, 2016). In trying to think beyond human species supremacism, it is also important to refuse implicit hierarchies between the terms “genocide” and “ecocide.” “Eco-genocide” thus also signals that human groupings do not *come before* or *have priority over* ecological assemblages, and that the defense of humans is not more urgent than the defense of other species and communities of species. See also Donald A. Grinde and Bruce E. Johansen, *Ecocide of Native America: Environmental Destruction of Indian Lands and Peoples* (Santa Fe, New Mexico: Clear Light Publishers, 1995).

⁴ I borrow the wonderful phrase “more-than-human” from David Abram and heartily endorse its rebuke to human species supremacism. Abram uses the even more resonant phrase “more-than-human matrix” in *Becoming Animal: An Earthly Cosmology* (New York: Vintage, 2010), p. 7.

⁶ See Donna J. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), pp. 11=12.

⁷ The photograph is one of many documenting dead birds filled with plastic on Chris Jordan’s online gallery. The whole series is online at <http://chrisjordan.com/gallery/midway/#CF000478%2019x25> (accessed on 20 January 2017).

⁸ Heather Davis, “Life & Death in the Anthropocene: A Short History of Plastic,” in Heather Davis and Etienne Turpin (eds.), *Art in the Anthropocene: Encounters Among Aesthetics, Politics, Environments and Epistemologies* (London: Open Humanities Press, 2015), p. 349.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 350.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 351.

¹² Ibid., p. 350.

¹³ Ibid., p. 349.

¹⁴ The Great Acceleration refers to the rapid expansion of global social processes and technologies since 1945. See J.R. McNeill and Peter Engelke, *The Great Acceleration: An Environmental History of the Anthropocene* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014).

¹⁵ Thom van Dooren, *Flight Ways: Life and Loss at the Edge of Extinction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), p. 29, 22. See also Julie Decker, *Gyre: The Plastic Ocean* (London: Booth-Clibborn Editions and Anchorage Museum, 2014), p. 34.

¹⁶ Van Dooren, *Flight Ways*, p. 29. See also the discussion of long-line fisheries and albatross survival in Carl Safina, *Eye of the Albatross: Visions of Hope and Survival* (Henry Holt and Company, 2002), pp. 177-198.

¹⁷ Van Dooren, *Flight Ways*, p. 24.

¹⁸ Safina, *Eye of the Albatross*, pp. 21-22.

¹⁹ Van Dooren, *Flight Ways*, p. 31.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 32.

²¹ Safina, *Eye of the Albatross*, p. 4.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 177.

²⁵ See online <http://extinctionstudies.org/> (accessed 20 January 2017). See also Deborah Bird Rose, *Wild Dog Dreaming: Love and Extinction* (Charlottesville, Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 2011).

²⁶ Van Dooren, *Flight Ways*, p. 37.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 34.

²⁸ Van Dooren, *Flight Ways*, p. 40.

²⁹ On the *munus* as gift that gathers together *onus* (obligation), *officium* (office) and *donum* (a gift that requires an exchange in return), see Roberto Esposito, *Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy*, trans. Timothy Campbell (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2008 [2004]). “Once one has accepted the *munus*, then one is obliged to return the *onus* in the form of either goods or services (*officium*)” (p. xiii). Many thanks to Gabriella Calchi Novati for calling my attention to this rich elaboration of mutuality.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

³¹ Safina, *Eye of the Albatross*, pp. 36-37.

³² Justin McBrien, “Accumulating Extinction: Planetary Catastrophism in the Necrocene,” in Jason W. Moore (ed.), *Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism* (Oakland, California: PM Press, 2016), pp. 116-137.

³³ World Wildlife Fund, *Living Planet Report 2016: Risk and resilience in a new era* (Gland, Switzerland: WWF, 2016), p. 12. Online at http://awsassets.panda.org/downloads/lpr_living_planet_report_2016.pdf (accessed 20 January 2017).

³⁴ Jeremy B.C. Jackson, “Ecological Extinction and Evolution in the Brave New Ocean,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science of the United States of America*, vol. 105, Supplement 1 (12 August 2008): 11458-11465. Online at http://www.pnas.org/content/105/Supplement_1/11458.full (accessed 20 January 2017).

³⁵ Since science is still far from having described all of the planet’s life, estimates of extinction rates are based on estimates of the total number of species – and these vary greatly. The 100 species per day figure, reproduced in Dawson, *Extinction*, p. 9, and Broszmitter, *Ecocide*, p. 1, seems to have derived from Edward O. Wilson’s *The Diversity of Life* (New York: Norton, 1992); it should be considered no more than a rough tool for wrapping the mind around an unimaginable scale of loss. In his latest book on extinction, Wilson sums up his discussion of estimates and how they are derived in two unequivocal assertions: “It is difficult to make comparisons of origin and extinction rates across different kinds of plants and animals in different parts of the world. But all of the available evidence points to the same two conclusions. First, that the Sixth Extinction is under way; and second, human activity is its driving force.” Wilson, *Half-Earth*, p. 55.

³⁶ Indigenous Elders and Medicine Peoples' Council, "Beyond Climate Change to Survival on Sacred Mother Earth," Addendum to the Statement to the United Nations on Fukushima, 21 September 2014. Online at http://spiret.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/COUNCIL_FORMAL_STATEMENT_UN_CLIMATE_SUMMIT.pdf (accessed 20 January 2017).

³⁷ Van Dooren, *Flight Ways*, p. 42. The works cited in the quoted passage are: Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991); and Val Plumwood, "Animals and Ecology: Towards a Better Integration," Australian National University, Open Research Library, online at <https://openresearch-repository.anu.edu.au/handle/1885/41767> (accessed 20 January 2017).

³⁸ See Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*; and Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

³⁹ Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2014), pp. 15 and 20.

⁴¹ A new report by Oxfam found that, as of January 2017, the eight wealthiest men in the world own as much wealth as the 3.6 billion people comprising the poorest half of humanity. Oxfam, *An Economy for the 99%*, January 2017; online at https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/bp-economy-for-99-percent-160117-en.pdf (accessed 20 January 2017).

⁴⁴ Readers of Jacques Derrida may prefer the estranging terminology he developed over decades to expose and unsettle the knotted logics of domination in the western (modernist) philosophical tradition. What he eventually called "*carnopallologocentrism*" has provided crucial cultural support and cover for "the waging of a kind of species war," an anthropocentric "war without mercy against the animal in the form of a *pax humana*." See Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, ed. Marie-Louise Mallet and ed. David Wills (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), pp. 104, 101 and 102. In deconstructing and culturally abolishing these supremacist logics, what we call things matters, of course; if anyone is more inspired and empowered to change everyday life by another description or vocabulary, I am glad to get out of the way. The point is to put such estrangements to work, in thinking, doing, and feeling.

⁴⁵ Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, p. 35.

⁴⁶ See Gene Ray, “Loss, Love, and Mourning in the Time of Eco-Genocide,” online at http://www.academia.edu/30435761/Loss_Love_and_Mourning_in_the_Time_of_Eco-Genocide (accessed June 1, 2017).

⁴⁷ Candice Hopkins, “The Gilded Gaze: Wealth and Economies on the Colonial Frontier,” in Quinn Latimer and Adam Szymczyk (eds.), *The documenta 14 Reader* (Kassel: documenta and Museum Fridericianum, 2017), pp. 235-236.

⁴⁸ Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2014).

⁴⁹ From permaculture to Transition Towns to seed savers, many grassroots movements are working out their own understandings of commons, “earth care,” sustainability, and resilience. See online, for example, <http://www.resilience.org/> (accessed 20 January 2017). Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, Lorraine Le Camp, and Jodi Byrd meanwhile register important critiques of some discourses of the commons. If they do not ground their projects in knowledge of settler colonial terror and land grabs, well-meaning efforts to “reclaim the commons” and “indigenize” on stolen land can slip into a new “terranullism.” Support for local Indigenous struggles should be an integral part of the politics of commoning, as many commoners do recognize. See Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States*, pp. 230-231. “Food sovereignty” is a notion developed by La Via Campesina, among other groups and networks, that rejects the “food security” discourse pushed by corporate controlled industrial monoculture and its state and UN supporters. Food sovereignty activists call instead for localized, community-based and grassroots directed food production grounded in traditional practices of sustainable agroecology. See online <https://viacampesina.org/en/index.php/main-issues-mainmenu-27/food-sovereignty-and-trade-mainmenu-38> (accessed 20 January 2017). Challenging modernist dogmas of growth and happiness, the paradigm shift from security to sovereignty extends to water use and energy production and opens local pathways out of the fossil economy. Emerging biophilic cultures require this grounding focus on the ways in which the basic human metabolism with the planet is locally organized.

⁵³ LaDonna Brave Bull Allard, “Why the Founder of Standing Rock Sioux Camp Can’t Forget the Whitestone Massacre,” *YES! Magazine*, 3 September 2016. Online at <http://www.yesmagazine.org/people-power/why-the-founder-of-standing-rock-sioux-camp-cant-forget-the-whitestone-massacre-20160903> (accessed 20 January 2017).

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ In her report from Standing Rock, Chickasaw poet and novelist Linda Hogan makes similar points with her usual power and eloquence. Linda Hogan, “Why We Are Singing for Water – in front of Men with Guns and Surveillance Helicopters,” *YES! Magazine*, 4 October 2016. Online at <http://www.yesmagazine.org/people-power/to-the-standing-rock-sioux-who-are-singing-for-water-20161004> (accessed 20 January 2017). See also Grind and Johansen, *Ecocide of Native America*; and Sara van Gelder, “The Big Difference at Standing Rock Is Native Leadership All Around,” 11 September 2016, *YES! Magazine*, online at <http://www.yesmagazine.org/people-power/the-big-difference-at-standing-rock-native-leadership-all-around-20160911> (accessed 20 January 2017).

⁵⁶ See the excellent documentary film made by by Michelle Latimer (Métis and Algonquin) and [Sarain Fox](#) (Anishinaabe) for their series *Rise* on Viceland. Online at https://www.viceland.com/en_us/show/rise (accessed 30 May 2017).

⁵⁷ “Standing Rock Special: Dallas Goldtooth on Police Violence and Repression of Movement against DAPL,” *Democracy Now!*, 24 November 2016. Online at https://www.democracynow.org/2016/11/24/standing_rock_special_dallas_goldtooth_on (accessed 20 January 2017).

⁵⁸ Jenni Monet, “Army Corps Issues Eviction Notice to Standing Rock Sioux Tribe,” *YES! Magazine*, 26 November 2016. Online at <https://indiancountrymedianetwork.com/news/native-news/army-corps-issues-eviction-notice-to-standing-rock-sioux-tribe/> (accessed 20 January 2017).

⁶⁹ Four Arrows, “The Loving Contagion of Courage: Veterans Standing for Standing Rock,” *Truthout*, 1 December 2016. Online at <http://www.truth-out.org/opinion/item/38558-the-loving-contagion-of-courage-veterans-standing-for-standing-rock> (accessed 20 January 2017).

⁷⁰ Phil McKenna, “2016: How Dakota Pipeline Protest Became a Native American Cry for Justice,” *InsideClimateNews*, 27 December 2016. Online at <https://insideclimatenews.org/news/22122016/standing-rock-dakota-access-pipeline-native-american-protest-environmental-justice> (accessed 20 January 2017).

⁷¹ Julia Carrie Wong, “Dakota Access Pipeline: US Denies Key Permit, a Win for Standing Rock Protesters,” *The Guardian*, 5 December 2016. Online at <https://www.theguardian.com/us->

[news/2016/dec/04/dakota-access-pipeline-permit-denied-standing-rock](http://www.yesmagazine.org/news/2016/dec/04/dakota-access-pipeline-permit-denied-standing-rock) (accessed 20 January 2017).

⁷² Sarah van Gelder, “How Standing Rock Has Changed Us,” *YES! Magazine*, 7 December 2016. Online at <http://www.yesmagazine.org/people-power/how-standing-rock-has-changed-us-20161207> (accessed 20 January 2017).

⁷³ Sarah van Gelder, “Why I Kneeled before Standing Rock Elders and Asked for Forgiveness,” *YES! Magazine*, 21 December 2016. Online at <http://www.yesmagazine.org/people-power/why-i-kneeled-before-standing-rock-elders-and-asked-for-forgiveness-20161221> (accessed 20 January 2017).

⁷⁴ Valerie Taliman, “Veterans Ask for Forgiveness and Healing in Standing Rock,” *Indian Country Media Network*, 7 December 2006. Online at <https://indiancountrymedianetwork.com/news/veterans/veterans-ask-forgiveness-and-healing-standing-rock/> (accessed 20 January 2017).

⁷⁵ Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States*, p. 116.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 2: “The history of the United States is a history of settler colonialism – the founding of a state based on the ideology of white supremacy, the widespread practice of African slavery, and a policy of genocide and land theft.”

⁷⁷ Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz reads the invocation of these myths in Barack Obama’s 2009 inaugural address. *Ibid.*, p. 115. As she caustically notes elsewhere, “All the presidents after [Andrew] Jackson march in his footsteps.” *Ibid.*, p. 108.

⁷⁹ WikiLeaks, “Collateral Murder,” 5 April 2010. Online at <https://collateralmurder.wikileaks.org/> (accessed 20 January 2017).

⁸⁰ See online <http://www.boeing.com/defense/ah-64-apache/> (accessed 20 January 2017).

⁸¹ The Lockheed AH-56 Cheyenne attack helicopter was discontinued in 1972. See online <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/systems/aircraft/ah-56.htm> (accessed 20 January 2017).

⁸² Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States*, p. 154.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 56. Geronimo was an Apache war leader who organized Indigenous resistance to settler colonialism along the US-Mexican border in the 1880s.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 57.

⁸⁵ The photograph by Josh Morgan was published online by *The Huffington Post*. See Jenna Amatulli, "Forgiveness Ceremony Unites Veterans And Natives At Standing Rock Casino," *The Huffington Post*, 5 December 2016. Online at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/forgiveness-ceremony-unites-veterans-and-natives-at-standing-rock-casino_us_5845cdbbe4b055b31398b199 (accessed 20 January 2017).

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 185.

⁸⁷ For context and details, see Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *Agents of Repression: The FBI's Secret Wars Against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement* (Boston: South End Press, 2001).

⁸⁸ Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*, pp. 185-191. See also Peter Matthiessen, *In the Spirit of Crazy Horse* (London: Harvill, 1992), pp. 58-102.

⁸⁹ Leonard Crow Dog and Richard Erdoes, *Crow Dog: Four Generations of Sioux Medicine Men* (New York: HarperCollins, 1995).

⁹⁰ Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*, pp. 153-157.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 153.

⁹² Crow Dog and Erdoes, *Crow Dog*.

⁹³ Ibid. See also Mary Crow Dog with Richard Erdoes, *Lakota Woman* (New York: Grove, 2011).

⁹⁴ Valerie Taliman, "Veterans Ask for Forgiveness and Healing in Standing Rock," *Indian Country Media Network*, 7 December 2016. Online at <https://indiancountrymedianetwork.com/news/veterans/veterans-ask-forgiveness-and-healing-standing-rock/> (accessed 20 January 2017).

⁹⁵ Recall, for example, that the American Legion and other veterans groups led the attacks on the planned Enola Gay exhibition at the Smithsonian Institution's National Air and Space Museum in

Washington DC in 1995. The exhibition was censored and eviscerated because it would have introduced US citizens to critical historical scholarship about the decision to use nuclear weapons of mass destruction on two Japanese cities in 1945 and because “the emotional vortex of the exhibition, known as ‘Unit 4: Ground Zero’ would have exposed many Americans for the first time to devastating photographs and relics documenting in depth the suffering of civilian victims of the bombing.” Gene Ray, *Terror and the Sublime in Art and Critical Theory: From Auschwitz to Hiroshima to September 11* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 55.

⁹⁶ Rozalinda Borcilă, personal email correspondence, 12 January 2017.

⁹⁷ See Kevin Gover, “American Indians Serve in the U.S. Military in Greater Numbers than any Ethnic Group and Have Since the Revolution,” *The Huffington Post*, 22 May 2015; online at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/national-museum-of-the-american-indian/american-indians-serve-in-the-us-military_b_7417854.html (accessed 20 January 2017). And see Winona LaDuke with Sean Aaron Cruz, *The Militarization of Indian Country* (East Lansing, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2012).

⁹⁸ Four Arrows, AKA Don Trent Jacobs, a member of Veterans for Peace, published these remarks regarding the status of the US flag at the Standing Rock camps in early November: “When I was asked by Rick Two Dogs to raise the four American flags around the Sun Dance grounds for my first Sun Dance, I nervously told him of my own reservations about honoring a government/nation that continued to conduct illegal wars and continued to practice genocide on our people, he spoke with the spirits who told him we could raise them upside down. All the flags throughout the Standing Rock camps are upside down in recognition of this universal indication of distress.” Four Arrows, “A Veteran’s Day Dispatch from Standing Rock,” *Truthout*, 11 November 2016. Online at <http://www.truth-out.org/speakout/item/38350-a-veteran-s-day-dispatch-from-standing-rock> (accessed on 20 January 2017). Historically, the US flag flown upside is also associated with the American Indian Movement, See Matthiessen, *In the Spirit of Crazy Horse*, pp. 36-37.

⁹⁹ See for example: Four Arrows, “A Veteran’s Day Dispatch from Standing Rock,” *Truthout*, 11 November 2016; online at <http://www.truth-out.org/speakout/item/38350-a-veteran-s-day-dispatch-from-standing-rock> (accessed on 20 January 2017). See also Four Arrows, “The Loving Contagion of Courage: Veterans Standing for Standing Rock,” *Truthout*, 1 December 2016; online at <http://www.truth-out.org/opinion/item/38558-the-loving-contagion-of-courage-veterans-standing-for-standing-rock> (accessed 20 January

2017). Finally, consider Louise Erdrich's reflections on the veterans in "Holy Rage: Lessons from Standing Rock," *The New Yorker*, 22 December 2016; online at <http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/holy-rage-lessons-from-standing-rock> (accessed 20 January 2016).

¹⁰⁰ Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*, p.3.

¹⁰¹ In my attempts to summarize what I have been told and seen and believe I have learned in *Echabonmic*, I have tried to keep closely to the actual words and statements of Ishagape. Nevertheless, this summary remains an outsider representation. As Ishagape has related, the stories of his people have still never been told from their experience and perspectives, except in fragments. I hope this repression of history will soon be addressed and remedied. In the meantime, this is an attempt to relay the essentials of the situation: what the world does not know but needs to know, about this small Indigenous community fighting for survivance in 2017. This section was written with the collaboration of Rozalinda Borcilă. Ishagape has reviewed it, and approved it for publication here.

¹⁰² Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*,, p. 7 and xiii.

¹⁰³ Esposito, *Bios*, p. xiv.