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Keywords:

American Indian, African American, Indigenous, Black, Solidarity, Healing, Art, Protest

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We Come from the Stars: Genealogies of Black and Indigenous Co-Resistance in Mni Sota Makoce

By Zoe Allen

Abstract

For Indigenous People’s Day on October 12th, 2020, Anishinaabe Midewiwin elder Mary Lyons spoke at George Floyd Square (GFS)¹. In her offering to GFS, Lyons talked about the connection between humans and stars—how we are born from them and how we return to them after our time on earth. Lyons' words reverberated throughout the space and continue to guide my work in mapping Black and Indigenous relationality in Mni Sota Makoce and how it manifests in shared spaces of protest and art. In this paper, I reflect on my experiences as an Anishinaabekwe, Sicangu Oyate queer woman organizing at Macalester College and beyond—that have shaped my major research interests on the convergences of Indigenous intergenerational healing, art, and youth-organizing.

From the fight to assert Anishinaabe sovereignty against the Line 3 oil pipeline in Northern Minnesota to honoring the lives of Black relatives who were stolen by Minnesotan police forces, 2020-2021 have been years of massive social upheaval. What does Black and Indigenous solidarity/co-resistance look like today, in the past and how can it continue here in Mni Sota Makoce? How is this work limited at a predominantly white institution such as Macalester College? Building on the work of Macalester Alum Guy Chinang '20 how do institutions that practice neoliberal multiculturalism² constrain radically emancipatory futures? What are the possibilities opened through intergenerational healing, art and youth organizing?

¹ GFS is an autonomous zone run by community members on 38th and Chicago and is also the site where Floyd was murdered by Derek Chauvin on May 25th, 2020.

² Neoliberal Multiculturalism is the commodification of multicultural identities by institutions of neoliberalism.

I argue that the collaborative community space opened through Powwow X: Expanded Cinema here at Macalester College—presented by Missy Whiteman and organized by P.I.P.E.³ and the DML⁴ on November 19th, 2021—models the abilities of art, activism, and ceremony to help Black and Indigenous peoples heal and generate new worlds. The beauty of Black and Indigenous solidarity work needs to be recognized and celebrated, while also practicing truth-telling and accountability. As a multi-sited and interdisciplinary methodological research project, this engages with comparative analysis of radicalizing spaces, theorizing from lived experience or “grounded theory,” and queer-decolonial methods. Led by my love for Black and Indigenous peoples, I make this offering to aid in continuing the revered work of solidarity building. Situating the experiences of Black and Indigenous kinship in protest and art space provides insights for future solidarity building. These sacred spaces continue to generate their own special ceremonies that help us find our way back to the cosmologies that we come from.

Biography:

Zoe Allen is an Anishinaabe, Lakota citizen of the Rosebud Sioux Nation. She has lived in Minnesota her whole life and calls the White Earth Nation home.

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³ PIPE stands for Proud Indigenous peoples for education and is the Indigenous student organization at Macalester College.

⁴ DML stands for the Macalester Department of Multicultural Life

Further Reading

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