A REFLECTION: SITTING STONE MAN KNOWS

I

And so, we walked past lines of traffic and

multiple flashing red, white, and blue lighted police cars,

blocking roads and

protecting hundreds of diverse ponderers and workers,

coming from north, south, east and west,

going in and out of Chesed Shel Emeth Cemetery

(Act of True Loving Kindness) gates.

Through the gate we went,

along the tomb-stoned path

where yarmulked old men, hijabed young women,

uniformed school children, habited nuns,

taqiyahed imams, collared and crossed religious,

blue-jeaned, sweat-shirted seculars

with plastic garbage bags and rags

were raking leaves, dead grass, and sweet gum balls and

polishing grave markers and

watching as hundreds of gravestones were up-righted

after a previous night’s vandalism, violation,

desecration—hate crime?

Whose family, ancestors,

descendants of Abraham and the Promised Land,

are buried here,

in this sacred space, this holy ground,

finally at rest after premature deaths or

long lives of fulfillment or perhaps survivors

of the ashes of Auschwitz and

holocaust on distant lands

(directed by dictators using

the American First Nations slaughter and reservations

as a model) or

endurers of fear, hatred and prejudice

within these home shores?

II

And so, we followed the path to the stone building

where gathered the multi-faceted crowd in a prayer vigil,

becoming community,

mutually supported in common sadness and hope.

Afternoon brilliant sunlight filtered through the clouds,

mysterious ephiphanal blaze,

on this unusually warm February 22 day when

daffodils were already blooming and

weeping willows were greening against

still bare skeletons of nearby trees

and foxes were coming out of their holes

to find food for their kits.

In the midst of the dead, I recalled

the birthday of George Washington,

revolutionary leader and war general,

one of the founders of this nation

proponent of the Constitution and first President

of this new Promised Land

“discovered” by Divine Right,

carved out of conquered lands

already discovered, explored, founded,

inhabited for thousands of years by Original Nations,

with their rich economic, political, cultural and

religious traditions,

who welcomed this reincarnated Trojan Horse,

these wolves in sheep clothing,

invaders who considered

these Citizens of Earth and

Children of the Great Spirit

heathen, barbarians, pagans, sub-human and

imposters who possessed, controlled,

dislocated, relocated into reservations,

assimilated, slaughtered, executed—

The Dakota 38, in the largest US execution,

walked proudly to the gallows singing

the Dakota Hymn, an indigenous Kaddish,

a Victory’s Cry—

land and humanity and four-leggeds plundered

in the name of G-O-D, Gold and Glory,

another holocaust, a genocide as these newcomers

attempted to “Christianize and “civilize” this

Terra Nullus, and proclaim

this New Israel, This Shining City on the Hill

as theirs in perpetuity to their progeny—

liberty and justice for all,

*government of the people, by the people, for the people,*

new nation prospering from

stolen land and stolen labor,

intruders who, having decimated the First Nations,

then welcomed other strangers to their shores—

past the Mouth of the Hudson’s Regina,

*give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses*

*yearning to be free…*

*I lift my lamp beside the golden door*.

*Salve Regina*

III

Through the muted microphone,

Jews, Muslims, Christians offered words of

gratitude, peace, and resolve of solidarity—

words floating into soundwaves bouncing off

the whirling noise of the overhead police and media helicopters.

Ah, the ubiquitous helicopters, the same ones

hovering over Ferguson for weeks

during the August and November unrest and protests after

the fatal shooting by a white police officer

of a black teenager—

by day, intrusive by sound and sight,

by night, haunting by spotlight beams

lazering below through clouded star and moonlight

to unsettled crowds calling for justice,

to multitudes of armored police atop

monster surplus armored vehicles, and

to plundered and burning buildings—

smoldering ashes, evidence of centuries’ long

pent-up fear and hatred and anger,

born of the genocide of millions from

kidnapping in Africa,

enchained middle passage crossing dangerous seas,

brutal slavery, plantation containment and

harsh sun-up to sun-down labor,

rape, separated families, emancipation—

*let my people go*—

reconstruction, Jim Crow, lynchings, KKK,

segregation, degradation, red-lined real-estate,

urban renewal—communities and culture destroyed,

urban ghettos, Civil Rights, Voter Rights,

white privilege, pipelines to prisons…

now in Ferguson destruction by

a few renegades more media focused than

the long months of boisterous but peaceful

Black Lives Matter vigils and demonstrations

that ultimately became another watershed

moment in this land of

*life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness*.

And afterwards, the diaspora gathered from

north, south, east and west with brooms and rakes

and shovels to clean up debris-laden streets and sidewalks

and hammer and nails and lumber to board up

broken windows and doors. But there’s more!

Former strangers, now partners, collaborated

in a painting vigil of peace,

newly-formed, resolved community,

transforming blank wall board into

mural symbols and inscriptions of hope and resilience

for a broken city in the valley of death—

“They thought they had buried us,

but they didn’t know we were seeds.”

Buildings lovingly blanketed with brilliant murals

lined the main streets transfigured into

vibrant galleries proclaiming

*We shall rise,*

*we shall overcome—*

phoenix from the ashes?

As the top soil on the teenager grave settled,

the stuffed animal, flower, candle,

photo, hats memorial grew larger as it

straddled the middle of the road, trying to mask

the long blood streak where he was shot.

IV

A helicopter circled and returned overhead

as the Chesed speakers and prayers continued…

and the standing crowd solemnly listened…

Today, February 22, also the day of North Dakota’s

eviction deadline for Water Protectors camps at

Standing Rock—named for the water-immersed

Sacred Rock, an image of mother and child,

*Salve Regina*—

the Oceti Sakowin Prayer Camp (Seven Councils Fire)—

renamed Oceti Oyate—People’s Camp—

on Sioux Treaty Territory—

The Forced Indian Removal Act of 2017—

now claimed and managed by the U.S Government

Army Corps of Engineers.

According to First Nation Peoples—

Peoples of the Land, of Creation, of

The Connectedness of All Beings—

the land was now being raided,

infiltrated by the Black Snake,

the oil pipeline, already dug through,

violating, desecrating, destroying

sacred ceremonial and burial grounds,

now threatening their water source as

it slinks under Lake Oahe.

On this cold, snowy freezing day on the Plains,

the Water Protectors—

*WATER IS LIFE ~ MNI WICONI*—

once gathered in prayer around

the sacred center campfire

that had been ceremonially extinguished,

its embers carried to the four directions—

to prevent further desecration by outsiders

who had previously dishonored their habitat,

they ceremonially set fire to tents and yurts

and straw-bed and wood frame buildings,

their home through months of

summer’s sun and heat and

harsh winter’s snow storms and sub-zero temperatures,

when Water Protectors came from

north and south and east and west,

swelling from handfuls to thousands-fold—

including 534 religious responding

to a call to gather in prayer and solidarity

around the sacred fire to repudiate

ceremonially burn the Doctrine of Discovery—

strangers becoming friends,

a model of sustainable community,

an off grid cultural eco-center with

renewable energy—

solar panels, wind turbines, compost toilets—

a growing movement—

across the country, around the world—

now lingering ashes blown by the wind.

V

As the Chesed vigil continued and

comforted and encouraged the listeners,

miles away,

their camp surrounded by

hundreds of Humvees, El-Rads,

camouflaged vehicles,

militarized police, national guard,

SWAT teams, BIA Officials, FBI,

Conservation, Fish and Wildlife,

National Parks Police, Border Patrol,

undercover cops, ATF,

Dakota Access Pipeline Security Guards,

the remnant of the Water Protectors gathered

on this holy ground for a final prayer vigil,

singing and praying peacefully as

they walked together,

carrying an upside down American Flag,

a signal of distress, not disrespect,

leaving Oceti for the last time,

as overhead the Homeland Security helicopter

projected a counterpoint cacophony

to the steady, reassuring, life-giving

heartbeat of a drum.

VI

Still standing in league

around the Chesed stone house,

as people applauded speakers,

I imaginarily beat my drum in affirmation and also

in solidarity with the Water Protectors and

all those who long to live in sync

with the heartbeat of life, and

in reverence for Earth, our Common Home,

and joined with the others as

we prayed for healing and

and to maintain a commitment to

Tikkun Olam, Repair of the World,

by pursuing righteousness and compassion,

justice and mercy,

peace and understanding,

love and friendship—

only lofty ideals?

The vigil closed with the Kaddish,

the prayer for the living, praising G-O-D while

mourning the dead. Amen.

And so, as the early evening sunlight was mellowing,

we dispersed under

the watchful gaze of the still circling helicopter,

past police officers still guarding the vicinity,

each to our own place, our families,

our communities.

And so, on this February day

in this month of African History,

we returned to our Ferguson area home

to be repairers of the breach,

builders of the Beloved Community.

VII

As Earth turned and

the sun dawned on new days,

verbal and financial support,

$50,000 from the Muslim Community

for the Chesed Community,

continued the process of Tikkun Olam.

In Philadelphia, another Jewish Cemetery

was vandalized—one more of the recent

long string of threats and attacks on

Jewish Community Centers, schools, and other places

while the government remained mostly silent and

content not to extend the welcome mat

to immigrants, migrants, refugees,

intent to deport, deport, deport…

In Oceti, the last few peaceful prayer resisters,

including the brave and wise

grandmother elder Regina,

*Salve Regina*,

and Veterans Respond—

feeling called to Standing Rock

to own their oath to protect the people of this land,

protecting her and others—

were rounded up and arrested—

total arrests: more than 750 needing legal defense.

Others escaped across the frozen Cannonball River

(where, before upriver dams flooded Indian land,

it merged with the Missouri in whirlpools creating

large round stones, considered sacred,

weaponized nomenclature renaming “cannonballs”)

as police laughed and jeered “go to your safe place”,

*Run, Eliza, Run*…

to the Rosebud Prayer Camp which soon was also

evacuated and eviscerated.

VIII

Done waiting, with tactical precision,

the Humvees and militarized vehicles and troops

swept through camp like an army of locusts,

and, like the troops who centuries ago,

killed or forcefully removed Indians

and then killed their horses,

they consumed and devoured

everything else that was left in the camp,

under the auspices that the camp had to be cleared

before spring flooding for which

the Water Protectors had already been packing

but were out of time against a fake hour glass.

They destroyed and dumpstered

the remaining tents, tee pees,

yurts, wooden structures, medical centers,

kitchens, buses, cars, campers, snow mobiles,

generators, propane tanks,

donated food, medical supplies, clothes,

all kinds of equipment and materials

that could have benefitted Cannonball and

other Standing Rock communities.

They crushed ceremonial sweat lodges and other sacred places

they had promised to preserve—

just one more lie and betrayal in a 500 years’ long

history of broken promises and Treaties:

*…all Treaties made, or which shall be made,*

*under the Authority of the United States,*

*shall be the supreme Law of the Land; and*

*the Judges in every State shall be bound thereby,*

*any Thing in the Constitution or Laws of any*

*State to the Contrary notwithstanding*—

 -Article VI, The Constitution of

The United States of America.

just one more example of Empire’s

Doctrine of Discovery’s

political oppression, economic exploitation,

and religious legitimation.

So now—where a beautiful prayer camp used to be with

its six-foot diameter dream catcher entrance,

welcoming the stranger

(including us during our brief pilgrimage of solidarity),

and the center road lined by hundreds of

tribal and other tall-poled flags,

waving boldly and proudly

with the strong plains winds,

representing the largest gathering of

indigenous peoples for 150 years,

since the Battle of Greasy Grass

(Custer’s Last Stand)—

with its multi-national and

multi-generational residents,

its “no weapons”, “no drugs”

“no alcohol” allowed,

self-organizing, generously

sharing and helping and risking,

peaceful and prayerful hub

of passive resistance and protection—

now, there is only barren earth,

guarded by a vigil of

Humvees, troops with assault rifles,

occasionally freeing hands to high-five

and congratulate themselves on their conquest,

the ubiquitous helicopter still dueling

with Digital Smoke Signals camera drone,

First Nation’s “Eye in the Sky”

to monitor and record for all posterity

everything that has happened.

IX

And so, as the Chesed stone grave monuments

bore witness to the invasions of violation

and invitations of healing balms of Gilead

and hold vigil over its sacred ground,

SITTING STONE MAN—“Not Afraid to Look”—

drops of melting snow falling

from his eye, to his cheekbone to the frozen ground,

watching from the hilltop of Sacred Stones Prayer Camp—

the April 1 originator of the Water Protector Movement,

no April Fool’s joke—rather Fools for the Earth—

witnesses a final forced evacuation,

and BMI’s and FBI’s raiding

Black Hoop Camp and Cheyenne Gathering—

a wrenching letting go,

of homes and belongings,

of reservation lands,

of Beloved Community,

of the sacred fire circle and

of the wocekiya prayer pole by the river—

and sits in silent vigil on behalf of

ancestors past and

seven generations to come…

knowing that,

while DAPL continues to drill

to quench our unquenchable thirst

for consuming earth’s resources;

while Water Protectors work together

to dismantle this pioneering camp

saying last goodbyes and

carrying embers of hope to the four directions;

while hundreds of Water Protectors

wait for justice in court;

while a Federal Judge still weighs

whether to halt DAPL;

while changing seasons come and go;

while Ordinary time morphs into Lent

as shofars sound under

a new moon and bright Venus

and ashes reformulate on Ash Wednesday foreheads—

*ashes to ashes, dust to dust;*

while warm and frigid airstreams collide and

changing climate brews deathly storms and destruction,

fires and famine, drought and deluge;

while the poor get poorer and the Dow breaks 21,000;

while governments fail and try to silence,

the Stones cry out and

***We the People*** still

rise from the ashes and gather

from north, south, east, and west—

joining hands and lighting candles in vigils,

marching, demonstrating, advocating,

engaging in participatory decision-making,

visioning and creating and implementing strategies,

divesting from hatred, fear, despair and anger,

investing in Hope beyond hope,

Peace surpassing, Joy and Thanksgiving unceasing,

and Love unconditioning,

growing a resilient grass-roots democracy—

*This is what democracy looks like!*

for the well-being of all Creation.

STONE MAN intimately knows

that ultimately the meek shall prevail,

not by the might and violence of war but

by the power of prayer and peace, and

*malice toward none and justice for all*

shall inherit Mother Earth,

*Salve Regina.*

Blessings to ALL the Relatives in

Four Directions…

Lakota Prayer

Aho, Mitakuye Oyasin … All my relations, I honor you in this circle of life with me today. I am grateful for this opportunity to acknowledge you in this prayer….

To the Creator, for the ultimate gift of life, I thank you.

To the mineral nation that has built and maintained my bones and all foundations of life experience, I thank you.

To the plant nation that sustains my organs and body and gives me healing herbs for sickness, I thank you.

To the animal nation that feeds me from your own flesh and offers your loyal companionship in this walk of life, I thank you.

To the human nation that shares my

paths a soul upon the sacred wheel of Earthly life, I thank you.

To the Spirit nation that guides me invisibly through the ups and downs of life and for carrying the torch of light through the Ages, I thank you.

To the Four Winds of Change and Growth, I thank you.

You are all my relations, my relatives, without whom I would not live. We are in the circle of life together, co-existing, co-dependent, co-creating our destiny. One, not more important than the other. One nation evolving from the other, and yet each dependent upon the one above and the one below. All of us a part of the Great Mystery.

Thank you for this Life.

**Peace** to ALL the Relatives in Four Directions:

Salaamata~ (Āxšti)~Vrede~Emirembe~Hálá~Asmomdwoe~(Salmu)~Okikiamgenoka, Kamignokawôgan~Wâki Ijiwebis-I~Anachemowegan~E'tokmite'k~Cohqwaivwh~ሰላም (salām)~Patz~ᚠᚱᛁᚦ (friþ), Frið~**سلام (salām)**~عسلامة (esslama)~ܫܠܡܐ (shlamaa)~Uvchin, Tügkülen~শান্তি (śānti)~Paz~Lapè~Erray~Yatanpa~Nyimbur-ma~Iawa-nyinami~

Рекъел (reqel)~Hacaña~Sülh~Mbwɛ´né~SàN~Pakajan~Sanpakā, Pakā~Pardamean~

Мір (mir), Пакой (pakoj)~Mutenden, Ukwikala mu~Мир (mir)~Pís~Innaihtsi'iyi~Here,

Errébé~ন্তি (śānti)~NyiEe~Chibanda~Koosi~Nye~ཞི་བདེ (zhi-bde)~Peoc'h, pèc'h~Mir, Мир (mir)~Pau~Ñʌch'chocoya~Darangilaü~Kupia Kumi Laka~Maxu~Amikekia~Mosojej~

Машар (mashar)~Kalinaw, Kahusayan~Minaggen~Achukma~Kunammwey~ᏙᎯᏱ (dohiyi)~Nanomonsetôtse~Pace~Ϩιρηνη (hirīnī)~**Peace**~Satta~Gutpela taim~Pé~

Wetaskiwin, Papayatik~Kutula~Ми́ръ (mírə)~Heddwch, Tangnefedd~Fred~

Friede, Frieden~Achwangundowagan~Musango~(âsûdaî)~ސުޅަ (sulha)~གཞི་བདེ (gzhi-bde)~

Ŋutifafa~Emem~Ειρήνη (iríni)~Filìa~Pes, Pise, Pees~Paco~Rahu~Baké~صلح (solh)~

Jam~Rauha~Rauhu, Vienosti~Venošti~Vakaçegu~Friður~Fifâ~Paix~Pais~Pâs~Frede~

Síocháin~Sìth~Fréda~Fridn~Bride, Vride~Fridde~Fräd~ሰላም (salām)~Apĭrĭvé, Ñerane'i, Py'aguapy~Fridu~*(gsesitpi)*~Εἰρήνη (eirḗnē)~શાંતિ (śānti)~Shee~Lùmaanàà, Salamàà~

Maluhia~**שלום (shalom)**~शांति (śānti)~Paghidait~Kev tiaj tus~Taim billong sikan~Béke~

Խաղաղություն (xałałowt‘yown)~Kedamaian~Udo~ꄮꐽ (te-njo)~Kiñuiñak, Tutqiun~

Kappia~Машар (mashar)~صلح (sulh)~سلام (salām)~Skn'~Chkenon~Scan-o-nie~

Friðr~Friður~ᓴᐃᒻᒪᓯᒪᓂᖅ (saimmasimaniq)~平和 (heiwa)~Rukun~მშვიდობა (mšvidoba)~

Lahna~Kikœndi~Thayu~Бейбітшілік (beybitšilik)~Irqigsiniq, Erĸigsineĸ~

សន្តិភាព (santiphap)~ಶಾಂತಿ (shaamti)~평화 (pyonghwa)~Mihs~امن (amn)~Hasîtî, Һашити (hasiti), ھاسیتی (hasītī)~Cres~Тынчтык (tınçtık)~Pax~Pas, פאש~Fridd, Fridden~

Vreij~Kímía~ສມຕິພາປ (santiphap)~Bóoto~Nala~Taika~Miers~Kayiroo~Kalinaw~

Gunnammwey~Onpek~Melelilei~Huag Totoka~Magogoso~Däilama~Rô~Gumund~

Fandriampahalemana~Ainemon~Rangima'arie, Nohopuku, Rongo~Wôntôkóde~

アプンノ, あぷんの (apunno)~(pas)~(cütü)~Мир (mir)~സമാധാനം (samaadhaanam)~

Энх тайван (ènx tajvan)~Linew~Pace, Паче (pace)~Lâfí~शांतता (śāntātā), शांती (śāntī)~

Keamanan, Damai~Paċi~Ittimokla~(Nrim-khyam-ye)~Tuktuquil usilal~Iow~Tlamatcanemiliztli, Mocehuia~Nanna Ayya~Aylobaha Gafuleya~Tsumukikiatu~Sipala~Ilifayka~'Éyewi~

Dodolimdag~Miisax ihom siijoz~Mina~Friðu~शान्ति (shanti)~Makonakon~Lumana, Salama~

Goom-jigi~Vrede~Fred~ᚠᚱᛁᚦᚱ, Friðr~K'é, Hozo~M'tendere~Patz, Pas, Sarra~Bangan, Bisaniwewin~Nwebin~Nagaya, ነገየ (nagaya)~Hmetho~ਸ਼ਾਂਤੀ (śānti)~Muka-Muka~Kareenan~

Kapayapan~Pas~Búdech~Saychid~Kali lintad~Diakatra~Sāma, Santi~Pokój~صوله (sola)~

Anka Kay, Qasikay, Aligu, Sonqo Tiaykuy~Kiba-kiba, Pava~Pasch~Amahoro~Pêš, Pêsc~

Paxe~Pás~Pès, Pas, Pèsa~Paci~Pase~Smirom~Nimuhóre, Amahoro~शान्तिः (śāntiḥ)~

Prî Lâni~Tecócatú~Va'i jaha~Pache~Paxi~Paghe~Pace~शांति, شانت (śanti)~А̄ййв (ājjv)~

Ráfi~සාමය (samaya)~**Wolakota~Wo'okeyeh~**Mier~Filemū, To'a~Runyaro, Dendemaro~

Nabáda~Paqe~Pakjy~Kuthála~Kgotso,Khotso~Amani, Salama~அமைதி (amaithi)~శాంతి (śānti)~Ашти (āšti), Сулх (sulh)~สันติภาพ (santipap)~ሰላም (salām)~

Парахатчылык (parahatçylyk)~Kapayapáan, Katahimikan, Mabuhay~

Li-k'ei~Khotso, Kagiso~Malino, Melin~Barış~Тынычлык (tınıçlık)~Asomdwee~

Hau~تىنچلىق (tinçlik)~صلح (sulh, sulah), امن (amn)~Тинглик (tinçlik)~

Hòa Bình, 和平 (hoà bình)~Püd~Påye~Pokoj~Jàmm~Uxolo~שלום (sholim), פרידן (fridn)~

Alaáfía~Kiñuiñak~Layeni, Binlo~和平 (hépíng)~Isithangami, Ukuthula

*SITTING STONE MAN*

*SACRED STONES PRAYER CAMP*

*STANDING ROCK SIOUX RESERVATION*

*NORTH DAKOTA*



 ejhs

 3/03/17