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Dear Patricio:

The text is below, best.

Vasif

La Reconquista: A Post-Columbian New World

1992 marks the 500 year anniversary of the European invasion of the Americas. Columbus remains a national hero in U.S., and U.S. school children continue to be taught that Columbus "discovered" America to legitimize a violent history of conquest and domination. (What has become of the peoples who were there a short 500 years ago?) the legacy of the initial voyages of the Europeans to the "New World" has remained the hemispheric catalyst for an inherited dichotomy, full of the contradictions of contemporary life in the U.S. as Che Guevara pointed out in the phrase, "living in the belly of the beast."

As the Berlin wall came down, The wall between U.S. and Mexico was reinforced. At the San Diego/Tijuana border (the most traversed international border in the world) a reinforced 1/4" steel wall separates the two countries. Attacks on migrant workers by the U.S. Border Patrol and "citizen activist" groups increase. African-American and Latino people rebel in Los Angeles neglect,

poverty and isolation. The world watches a global irony as the U.S. continues to practice exclusion in the guise of inclusion. the clock of hypocrisy as the self-imposed champion of freedom and democracy has worn thin.

La reconquista seeks to address and give voice to those people who were born of the violence and genocide which began 500 years ago. These voices represent the counter-colonial view of the New/Old World Order. Continued efforts rise in the U.S. silence these voices through obstruction of the political process and limitation of educational and economic opportunities. There are many examples, such as the constriction of the National Endowment for the Arts, attacks on African-American rap groups, and censorship in films, radio and television. "Political correctness" is a term used against progressive thought, as is the term "revisionist", used when attacking people who are writing their own collective experience/history. These are labels used to deflect attention from the real issues of inequity and the imperative of wholesale change of U.S. institutions.

The international dysfunctionality of the colonial powers is painfully evident. A truly new world paradigm is necessary for the planet and the human family to flourish, one not based on world orders or hierarchies but on mutual respect, collaboration and relinquishing of privilege.

The following essays are the direct voices of each of the four artists/teams who have created the environments/installations. Each installation addresses areas which are being redefined in the Post-Columbian New World, whether or not those attempting to impose a New World Order accept it or not. These artists represent a collective voice which is growing louder by the day.

Amelia Mesa Baines speaks to the "knowledge of the past for reflection of the present" by using emblematic structures in her installation "EMBLEMS OF THE DECADE: BORDERS." Her installation speaks to the reclamation of to the past and recovery of the present through "memory and ceremony." To be an "American" and a person of color in the U.S. has meant loss, loss of history, loss of ancestry and ultimately loss of self. Many contemporary artists/writers/people of color are regaining their sense of self and community through language--visual, written and spoken.

Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie uses her own background as a Navajo/Dine to create a "traditional/contemporary" peace/piece, a sand painting, video installation entitled HEADCOUNT. The combination of the video and a so-called traditional art form reveals the dichotomy and complexity of living in several worlds at once. Hulleah's voice is that of healer, artist, woman and a person indigenous to what is now called the United States of America. The relationship of the Chicano and the Native American is complex--it goes back 500 years. The Chicano Movement is provided a framework for looking at the Indegeneous roots of the Mexican American. Currently in the U.S. government "to protect native people/artists from exploitation". Non Native artists have historically produced so-called "Native American Art" or acted as middlemen to make huge profits and exploit the native people whose work it is. However this law has created internal conflict because it is being used against native people who do not need nor care for "official U.S. sanctioning" by having a Tribal ID #. HEADCOUNT addresses this situation.

Richard Lou and Robert Sanchez, in their installation entitled ENTRANCE IS NOT ACCEPTANCE, address the reality for many people of color in the U.S. The invisible existence for many that have been marginalized through economic and social barriers. Whatever acknowledgements does take place is a negative portrayal--criminals, drug dealers, poor and uneducated, violent and always less than. The border they address is not only the international border between the U.S. and Mexico, but the borders within the U.S. How sophisticated contemporary colonization has become when it exists within the mind. Then, little external pressure is necessary because the policing is done internally--within the self. What role do the colonized play in their own victimization at that point and how do we break out of it? Thus, the importance of the repeated subtext of reclamation and recovery in all of these installations.

Miscege NATION by David Avalos and Deborah Small also focuses on the reality of people of color in the U.S. Their focus is external, and looks purity. For many, depending on how dark your skin is and what language you speak, there exists a daily struggle to negotiate within U.S. society. What is taken for granted by many white people such a home, job and health care is difficult or impossible to attain for many people of color. A parallel between race, class and gender determines ones status economically and socially in U.S. society. This installation addresses difficult subjects with humor and wit, subjects that had everything to do with current discourse in the U.S. on multiculturalism, racism, mixed marriage and institutional racism.

The reclamation, liberation and recovery of our personal and ancestral histories is the future. We celebrate the resistance and the survival of our people in the face of 500 years of oppression and genocide.