

# Jack Concludes Tour...

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Vietnam is a conscientious objector working for the International Voluntary Service killed in his classroom when an artillery round falls short. Vietnam is a student who has fled to Cambodia in lieu of killing any of his countrymen. Vietnam is a crowded Lambretta van blown up by an anonymous mine in the road. Vietnam

is a child seriously wounded in a battle without transportation to a hospital. Vietnam is teaching a seventh grade class that mass murder is presently in America's self-interest.

No law, no ideology, and no personalities can ever justify what is happening to these people. A Vietnamese student ballad expresses the essence of the tragedy:

The rain on the leaves is the tears of joy  
Of a girl whose boy returns from the war.  
The rain on the leaves is the bitter tears  
When the mothers hears her son is no more.  
The rain on the leaves is the cry that is torn  
From a baby just born as life is begun.  
The rain on the leaves is an old couple's love  
Much greater now than when they were young.  
The rain on the leaves is a passionate voice  
In a final choice when last love is near.  
The rain on the leaves is a voice surprised  
As it realized its first love is here.  
The rain on the leaves is a hearty distress  
And a loveliness as life passes by.  
The rain on the leaves is a last caress  
And a tenderness before love can die.

Whether one's inspiration is the U.S. Declaration of Independence, Marx, Toynbee, Russell, Fanon, or Papal Encyclicals, history and justice vindicate North Vietnam, the NLF, the Buddhists, and other repressed democratic elements in the South in their life and death struggle against American escalation and the betrayal of Diem and his successors.

But at the human level — the only one that ultimately counts — war dehumanizes all its participants. The drama of a poor country defending itself with little more than rifles against 600 daily air strikes by the most powerful nation in the world is undeniably noble. But the thousands of victims caught in the middle by terrorism on all sides are a silent but no less eloquent witness that the greatest enemy of an estranged mankind is not any single nation, ideology, or people, but the will-

ingness to rationalize the loss of even one innocent life as inevitable, the lesser of two evils, or in the national or party interest.

How does an American tell Do, whose countenance has been destroyed by U.S. bombs and chemicals, that his nation cannot withdraw from Vietnam without "losing face?" If he responds in any conceivable manner, he has sacrificed Do for Penny and thereby lost his humanity. There is nothing more to be said. For if individual American consciences continue to ignore the lessons of Kurukshetra, Gethsemane, Nuremberg, and Hiroshima, the bombings and defoliations by their government will continue. Today in Vietnam, tomorrow in Bolivia, South Africa, and Thailand. And one day there will be no one left to sing, and no leaves on which the rain can fall.

# 1973 Spiritual Relationship to the Land

Hollis L. White  
November 30, 1973

As one Native American at Oberlin, I wish to take issue with some of the points raised by Warren White in his perspective on Stokely Carmichael's Nationalism, which appeared in the Nov. 13th *Review*.

One of the main points he uses against Mr. Carmichael's description of a people's relationship to the land and nation is out of context — "Because they had exclusive use of the land for centuries, is no particular reason why Indians deserve exclusive use of the land today." This ominous statement was echoed throughout history, in America's self-righteousness documents, as a justification for stealing Indian land, and is still being used today. These were the words of America's democratic legislators and spokesmen.

Indians never did or never will say we have "exclusive use of land because we had exclusive use for centuries," nor would Stokely Carmichael. What Indians understand, and what Carmichael was hinting at, is a more profound relationship to the land, which I will attempt to explain later.

## Slave Exploitation

Another point raised was that, "America as it exists today was developed with the labor of Black slaves and White wage slaves..." This is a shabby representation of the historic reality. America was not developed, it was exploited, and Black slaves and White wage slaves were not the developers but the tools of the White Capitalist oppressors.

I do not believe that Carmichael's "analysis was slightly distorted by an unconscious adoption of a bourgeois definition of property." However, I do believe that he was hinting at the more

profound spiritual rather than objective definition of a people's relationship to the land. This relationship, based not on use, labor, or development, is best defined in the words of Chief Seattle, as he signed documents ceding lands in the Northwest Coast and confining his people to a small reservation.

## ... in the blazing morning sun

"The ashes of our ancestors are sacred, and their resting place is hallowed ground, while you wander away from the tombs of your fathers seemingly without regret. Your dead cease to love you and the homes of their nativity as soon as they pass the portals of the tomb. They wander far off beyond the stars, are soon forgotten, and never return.

"Our dead never forget the beautiful world that gave them being. They still love its winding rivers, its great mountains and its sequestered vales, and they ever yearn in tenderest affection over the lonely-hearted living, and often return to visit and comfort them. Day and night cannot dwell together. The red man has ever fled the approach of the white man. As the changing mists on the mountainside flee before the blazing morning sun.

"But why should I mourn the untimely fate of my people? Tribe follows tribe, and nation follows nation like the waves of the sea. It is the order of nations, and regret is useless. Your time of decay may be distant, but it will surely come.

## ... on sacred land

"Every part of this country is sacred to my people. Every hillside, every valley every plain and grove has been hallowed by some fond memory or some sad experience of my tribe. Even the rocks that seem to lie dumb as

they swelter in the sun along the silent seashore in solemn grandeur thrill with the memories of past events connected with the fate of my people. The very dust under your feet responds more lovingly to our footsteps than to yours, because it is the ashes of our ancestors, and your bare feet are conscious of the sympathetic touch, for the soil is rich with the life of our kindred.

"The braves, fond mothers, glad hearted maidens, and even the little children, who lived here and rejoiced here and whose very names are now forgotten, still love these solitudes. Their deep fastnesses at eventide grow shadowy with the presence of dusky spirits.

## ... but never alone

"When the last red man shall have perished from the earth and his memory among white shall have become a myth, these shores shall swarm with the invisible dead of my tribe. When your children's children shall think themselves alone in a field, the store, the ship, upon the highway or in the silence of the woods, they will not be alone.

"In all the world there is no place dedicated to solitude. At night when the streets of your cities and villages shall be silent, and you think them deserted, they will throng with the returning hosts that once filled and still love this beautiful land. The white man will never be alone. Let him be just and deal kindly with my people, for the dead are not altogether powerless."

It is this spiritual relationship which binds Indians to this land, whether it be our physical bodies or spiritual essence. We do not own the land, it owns and embraces us. Capitalist America's time of decay has grown closer in the 119 years since Seattle spoke his words. And as he said, it will surely come.

2018

# Whose Land Are We On?

Editorial Board  
October 12, 2018

The City of Oberlin celebrated Indigenous Peoples' Day for the second time ever this Monday, after officially changing the holiday's name from Columbus Day in 2017. Oberlin joins a growing number of cities around the country in rejecting dominant narratives of colonial expansion, instead choosing to recognize and remember the violence that Columbus and other settlers inflicted — and continue to inflict — on Indigenous peoples across North and South America.

We stand behind the City of Oberlin in changing the holiday's name. We also view the change as an opportunity to further consider the histories of Indigenous communities who lived here before us.

A land acknowledgement is a conscious, historically-grounded statement about the histories of lands, peoples, and how they connect. There are many important moments for reflection on who lived on this land prior to our arrival — the week of Indigenous Peoples' Day is particularly timely, so we now take the opportunity to acknowledge the history of the land now known

as Oberlin.

Interestingly, while different historical clues have led scholars to some conclusions about the history of Ohio's Indigenous communities, much remains unknown about the area's inhabitants prior to European contact.

*Living in the Vermilion River Watershed*, edited by Professor of Biology Mary Garvin and John C. Reid Associate Professor of Rhetoric and Composition and English Jan Cooper, provides some insight. Specifically, this issue is covered in the chapter, "The First Settlers: Native Peoples of the Vermilion Watershed," written by Brian Redmond, curator and John Otis Hower Chair of Archaeology at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History.

Redmond broadly lays out Ohio's population history, dating back about 13,000 years. He leans heavily on the findings of Ohio archaeologists who, over the past nearly 100 years, have discovered spear points distinctive to the area, indicating an early society largely dependent on hunting mammoths and mastodons. Later, fragments of clay cooking pots dating back about 3,000 years were found along the Vermillion River, in-

dicating a transforming social lifestyle.

For thousands of years, communities lived in relative prosperity in northern Ohio. However, historical evidence suggests that most Indigenous populations had left the region by about 400 years ago. Scholars hypothesize that these departures were at least partially due to conflict with Iroquoian-speaking groups to the northeast, who sought to gain dominance over competitors in the growing trade of beaver pelts with the Europeans.

Because this departure came prior to significant European presence in Ohio, not much is known about the communities who left. For about 100 years, beginning in the mid-17th century, northern Ohio is believed to have been relatively devoid of human presence. Then, in the mid-18th century, Indigenous communities returned to the Vermilion Watershed — most notably the Wyandotte and Ottawa tribes, according to Redmond.

Similarly to Ohio's original Native populations, the Wyandotte and Ottawa had been driven from their homes at Lake Huron's basin due to mid-17th century conflict, arriving in north-

ern Ohio roughly a century later — around the same time Europeans had arrived to the area. By the early 19th century, however, both tribes had largely left the area.

While Redmond doesn't provide much detail about why the tribes left, it's important to recognize that they did so around the same time Rev. John J. Shipherd and Philo P. Stewart founded the Oberlin Collegiate Institute, now known as Oberlin College and Conservatory.

Shipherd and Stewart were both disaffected by dominant culture on the Western frontier. They sought a new space in which to bring their vision of learning, labor, and religious commitment — inspired by pastor John F. Oberlin — to life. They settled in Oberlin, the land recently vacated by the Wyandotte and the Ottawa, which had previously been occupied by Native peoples for more than 100 centuries.

By all accounts, Oberlin is a place that has done much to uphold and promote social justice and equity. Why, then, is it important to acknowledge that this land — like all land in the United States — is not originally ours, and that we, its current resi-

dents, unfairly benefit from the histories of those who we displaced? What bearing does this have on our lives today?

In short, thinking about these things is important because, without doing so, we don't have a shot at making things better going forward. Ignoring our history means ignoring the impacts of colonization and how that process paved the way for Oberlin College, the institution we all care so deeply about.

So, this week and in the weeks to come, consider the traditional caretakers of this land — particularly in the context of the latest UN climate report, which further illuminates the extent to which our social and economic ideals have created an unsustainable world.

It's a small gesture, especially in scale of the violence committed against Indigenous communities in this country. But it is an important one nonetheless — and one that makes good on Oberlin's historical and present commitment to social justice. As we celebrate all that Oberlin has to offer, we must do so with those who we displaced in mind, or we risk remembering only part of our history.