

Reflections on the Bridge of Peace Crossing

Linda Lucero Nishikawa and George Augustus Stallings, Jr.
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Rev. Dr. Linda Lucero Nishikawa with Archbishop George Augustus Stallings

Native American spirituality is a religion unto itself and thrived for thousands of years before the Europeans arrived on the shores of "Turtle Island." The First Peoples' spirituality was not acknowledged by those who came; and genocide occurred. Over 300 nations no longer exist.

The genocide was perpetrated mainly as a result of Pope (1431-1503) Alexander VI's, Demarcation bull, granting Spain possession of the lands discovered by Columbus. This resulted in the Doctrine of Discovery, basically giving right of "ownership" to European Christian monarchs through expeditions finding lands that were not inhabited by Christians. (See www.doctrineofdiscovery.org for more information.)

It is important to realize that the First People of America's spirituality contains many solutions and answers for world peace and guardianship of Mother Earth.

Taking Care Of Our Ancestors

Linda Lucero Nishikawa



Bowing in repentance and forgiveness

In our many efforts to comfort God's painful heart, one way is to reflect and act on hereditary transgression which is transgressions inherited from one's ancestors through the blood lineage, as mentioned in the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:5. In addition, there is a collective violation of Divine Law that one is partially responsible for in other specific groups' historical trauma. The Bridge of Peace Ceremony allows individuals and groups who represent specific racial, religious, political, and regional backgrounds to actively confront the historical, hereditary, and collective painful sufferings endured in history to give birth to individual and ancestral healing, and hope for the future.

The atrocities that the Catholic Church brought to the First Peoples in North, Central, and South America are too painful to recall. This Bridge of Peace for me was very meaningful because I crossed the Bridge with Archbishop George Augustus Stallings representing Catholicism. I cried because there is so much enmity and pain; and there are 300 or more tribes that are extinct because of the religious strife between Catholicism and Native Spirituality which was never acknowledged. We are so fortunate to try to emulate repentance and forgiveness that really reflect we are all children under God no matter how we look, no matter what race, no matter what color.



Crossing the Bridge of Peace hand in hand

This Bridge of Peace was a formal national ceremony held in the beautiful Washington Times ballroom. May it never cease until the Kingdom of Heaven is accomplished on Earth. Every day we have opportunities to cross a spiritual bridge of peace in our lives that can relieve the painful heart of the Creator, our Heavenly Parent, who endures the discords of humanity. We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, and we can comfort our ancestors. It is a victorious feeling when we know we have overcome our personal limitations. Also it is a powerful prayerful life, when we can accomplish this reconciliation within ourselves and multiply it by helping others cross a bridge to peace in their lives.

United In A Common Struggle

Archbishop George Augustus Stallings, Jr.

The WFWP Bridge Crossing Ceremony that recently took place between a Native American, Rev. Dr. Linda Lucero Nishikawa and an African-American Catholic, Archbishop George Augustus Stallings, Jr., symbolized a heartfelt desire on the part of two persons to represent their respective people as united in a common struggle for recognition and appreciation in a country built on the principle of "liberty and justice for all." In addition, to heal and reconcile centuries of animosity and division perpetrated by Catholics towards Native Americans in the early conquest of America.

During the stirring ceremony, I was visibly and emotionally touched as my beloved Sister, Linda, and I

met at the center of the Bridge, bowed in mutual reverence and respect, shared gifts, and embraced one another. In that brief moment, I knew that our simple gesture of love and unity was the beginning of a concerted effort towards strengthening the bonds of fraternal friendship between Native Americans and African-Americans as well as building bridges of reconciliation, healing and understanding between Native Americans and Catholics.



Rev. Dr. Linda Lucero Nishikawa with Archbishop George Augustus Stallings

Representing the ancestors of over 500 Native American nations, Rev. Dr. Linda Lucero Nishikawa, Pojoaque Pueblo and CEO of United Native American Council; walked the Bridge of Peace.

Representing the Roman Catholic Church was Archbishop George Augustus Stallings, National Co-Chairman of the American Clergy Leadership Conference (AACL), and spiritual leader of the Imani Temple African American Catholic Congregation, headquartered in Suitland, Maryland.