

Clean Up the Mess Now!

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(Robert Francis) May 2019

Signs of the Times

In the Cherokee language, our word for eagle is uwohali. There are regional variations in pronunciation, but that is how we Chickamauga Cherokees in Missouri tend to pronounce it. I recall Elmer Kingfisher, one of my mentors, years ago, explaining that the word uwohali refers only to the golden eagle. "The golden eagle, the pretty-feathered eagle, that's the prayer-carrier," Elmer said. "The bald eagle, that wasn't called an eagle, not by the Cherokees. The bald eagle is the fisherman." In the Cherokee language, that would be asunidohi. Elmer was talking about a tendency among modern American Indian artists, including Cherokees, to depict the bald eagle (asunidohi or fisherman) in their paintings where uwohali, the golden eagle, the prayer carrier and special guardian of the Indian people would be more appropriately depicted. Elmer speculated the reason for the substitution to be that asunidohi is more common, more often seen, except for way out west. More likely, it has to do with American patriotism, since the bald eagle is an adopted symbol of the United States, and with American Indian artists pandering to the tastes of white Americans. Please don't misunderstand. The bald eagle or asunidohi is a special bird. Everything and everyone is special in their own right. Even so, asunidohi is not the same as uwohali.

We Chickamauga Cherokees have stories in our oral tradition featuring tlanuwa, the great hawk. This was a hawk large enough to carry off an occasional human being. Cherokees used to have two warrior societies, the names of which were generally translated into English as the Panther Society and the Eagle Society. I always assumed the Eagle Society was named in reference to uwohali or the golden eagle. However, I recently found evidence, in a hand-written manuscript passed down through the generations, that the "War Eagle" for which the Eagle Society was named was actually the tlanuwa or great hawk. Some say the tlanuwa died out or became extinct more than 10,000 years ago. Others say the tlanuwa reduced its size, as so many animals did, becoming but a shadow of what it once was. These say the tlanuwa remains in the earth as tawodi, the painted hawk or red-tailed hawk.

Now, the red-tailed hawk or tawodi comes in several color variations. I have seen very light phase tawodi and very dark phase tawodi. The majority are somewhere in between. In the winter time, these hawks will stake out territory, often along highways where they scout for road-kill. This past winter, here in Bates County, Missouri, where we live, and also in Vernon County to the south, we noticed a color-phase of tawodi we had never seen before. I observed five different hawks that were black, completely black, black as a crow, black as a raven, black all over their bodies, except for, in most cases, a brick red tail. One of these hung out all winter along Highway V between the Marais des Cygnes River and the village of Virginia and was seen several times flying across the daksi gatiyo where I live with my wife Janet and our eldest son nyva. Two of these black hawks were seen along Highway A between the towns of Hume and Rich Hill. One was seen by the Osage River along Highway M in Vernon County, and the last sighting of a black hawk was along Highway D east of Passaic. This last one flew right at the car as we were driving east and caught the updraft no more than two feet in front of the windshield. Janet and I both saw that one, it was totally black. Both nyva and I saw the others. They were black hawks, not seen in previous years.

On December 20, the evening before the winter solstice, we were experiencing a spectacular red sunset at the daksi gatiyo. Standing near the barn, I saw asunidohi (a bald eagle) flying low, in slow circles, proceeding from North to South. As he passed overhead, the red sunlight illuminated his feathers in such a way that his white hackles and tail feathers appeared drenched in blood. Our son nyva observed the same effect as asunidohi passed over him before reaching me.

On December 22, the day after the winter solstice, I came out of the house in time to see uwohali (a golden eagle) flying from East to West across the daksi gatiyo. This is a rare occurrence. We see bald eagles pretty often, but this is only the second time a golden eagle or uwohali has been seen flying over the daksi gatiyo.

This winter solstice, December 21, 2018, marked the beginning of the year 0006 gvji, which is to say, we are now in the seventh year of the Epoch of the Sunflower. As aniywiyi or indigenous people, when we see uncommon sights, especially in connection with auspicious dates, we ponder their significance.

Pretentious Legality for Pretentious People

The Doctrine of Christian Discover is the "legal" basis by which Christian European nations claimed ownership of lands occupied by non-Christian peoples or people who were non-Christian upon first encounter with Christian Europeans. It continues to be used as legal precedent in the United States and other countries to deny indigenous peoples' rights of free self-determination as peoples. Steven T. Newcomb is a foremost scholar on the subject of the Doctrine of Christian Discovery. I recommend his book *Pagans in the Promised Land*, Fulcrum Publishing 2008, to those wanting an in-depth understanding of how this insidious legal fiction has unbalanced the world and continues to affect our lives. For those wanting a brief overview of the subject, I recommend the scholarly paper, "Five Hundred Years of Injustice: The Legacy of Fifteenth Century Religious Prejudice" by Steve Newcomb http://ili.nativeweb.org/sdrm_art.html.

The Doctrine of Christian Discovery is based in papal bulls issued in the 15th Century CE. The Bull Romanus Pontifex 1455 was issued specifically to give direction to Portuguese adventurers exploring the coast of Africa, searching for a sea route to the "Indies." The bull had immediate and long-term devastating effects for Africans as well as broader, worldwide implications. What follows is an excerpt from Bull Romanus Pontifex:

.... to invade, search out, capture, vanquish, and subdue all Saracens and pagans whatsoever, and other enemies of Christ wheresoever placed, and the kingdoms, dukedoms, principalities, dominions, possessions, and all movable and immovable goods whatsoever held and possessed by them and to reduce their persons to perpetual slavery, and to apply and appropriate to himself and his successors the kingdoms, dukedoms, counties, principalities, dominions, possessions, and goods, and to convert them to his and their use and profit

You may find an English translation of the entire Bull Romanus Pontifex here <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/nichol05/romanus-pontifex.htm>.

The Bull Inter Cetera was issued by Pope Alexander VI in 1493 to divide the "New World" and the peoples of the "New World" between the Spanish and Portuguese monarchs – including all "to be discovered" lands from North Pole to the South Pole. If you would like to read the Bull Inter Cetera, you may find it at <http://www.let.rug.nl/usa/D/1400-1500/columbus/papal.htm>.

To be truthful, these papal bulls are not the origin of the Doctrine of Christian Discovery. To be truthful, to be real, we must also acknowledge that the Christian Bible contains many passages that have been and continue to be interpreted as mandates for dominion and even for genocide of non-Christian peoples.

As I see it, the Creator of the Universe is not some aged and bearded white man sitting on a cloud. The Creator of the Universe does not center on nor give preeminence to any religion, "race" or even species. The Creator of the Universe and the Universe are one. The Creator of the Universe does not inspire domination or the building of empires, whether religious, economic or military. The Creator of the Universe allows such to be, for awhile, but if any spirit inspires such pretension, rest assured, it is not the Creator of the Universe. This is how I understand it. Others think differently.

In 1513, the Spanish invaders began reading a document called The Requirement or Requerimiento to every newly encountered indigenous people group. The document required or rather demanded that the people submit to the presumed authority and right of conquest of

the Pope, the King and Queen of Spain and the Roman Catholic Church or face the direst of consequences. Keep in mind that the Requerimiento was read in Castilian or Spanish to people who had no understanding of that language. Here is an excerpt:

Wherefore, as best we can, we ask and require you that you consider what we have said to you, and that you take the time that shall be necessary to understand and deliberate upon it, and that you acknowledge the Church as the Ruler and Superior of the whole world, and the high priest called Pope, and in his name the King and Queen Doña Juana our lords, in his place, as superiors and lords and kings of these islands and this Tierra-firme by virtue of the said donation, and that you consent and give place that these religious fathers should declare and preach to you the aforesaid. If you do so, you will do well, and that which you are obliged to do to their Highnesses, and we in their name shall receive you in all love and charity, and shall leave you, your wives, and your children, and your lands, free without servitude, that you may do with them and with yourselves freely that which you like and think best, and they shall not compel you to turn Christians, unless you yourselves, when informed of the truth, should wish to be converted to our Holy Catholic Faith, as almost all the inhabitants of the rest of the islands have done. And, besides this, their Highnesses award you many privileges and exemptions and will grant you many benefits.

But, if you do not do this, and maliciously make delay in it, I certify to you that, with the help of God, we shall powerfully enter into your country, and shall make war against you in all ways and manners that we can, and shall subject you to the yoke and obedience of the Church and of their Highnesses; we shall take you and your wives and your children, and shall make slaves of them, and as such shall sell and dispose of them as their Highnesses may command; and we shall take away your goods, and shall do you all the mischief and damage that we can, as to vassals who do not obey, and refuse to receive their lord, and resist and contradict him; and we protest that the deaths and losses which shall accrue from this are your fault, and not that of their Highnesses, or ours, nor of these cavaliers who come with us. And that we have said this to you and made this Requisition, we request the notary here present to give us his testimony in writing, and we ask the rest who are present that they should be witnesses of this Requisition.

This is where blaming the victims of white, Christian supremacy began. You may read the Requerimiento in its entirety or, at least, an English translation, at <https://press.rebus.community/openamlit/chapter/the-requerimiento/>.

Of course, other Catholics, namely the French, slipped in to this “New World,” divinely divided between the Spanish and Portuguese, making use of the Doctrine of Christian Discovery to assert their own claims. Non-Catholic nations: The Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark, England, Russia and finally the United States also made use of the legal precedent of the Doctrine of Christian Discovery as articulated in the papal bulls of the 15th Century.

In the Johnson vs. McIntosh ruling of 1823, the United States Supreme Court upheld the legality of the Doctrine of Christian Discovery. Expanding on the doctrine while writing for the Supreme Court in 1823, Chief Justice John Marshall articulated what Steven T. Newcomb, on page 100 of his book *Pagans in the Promised Land*, calls “Marshall’s new rule of conquest.” The Chief Justice writes,

However extravagant the pretension of converting the discovery of an inhabited country into conquest may appear; if the principle has been asserted in the first instance, and afterwards sustained; if a country has been acquired and held under it; if the property of the great mass of the community originates in it, it [that principle] becomes the law of the land, and cannot be questioned.

Chief Justice John Marshall’s rule is a rule of pretension. We Chickamauga Cherokees refer to ourselves as *aniyywiya* (real people / common people / plain people / *unpretentious people*), and we extend that name to other indigenous peoples. Chief Justice John Marshall, admitting that the law of the land in the United States is based on pretension, was also admitting that imperialistic or empire-building peoples are pretentious peoples.

Our *aniyywiya* or Chickamauga Cherokee Prophet *isga gua* or Clear Sky was born around 1760 and was still living at the time of the Johnson vs. McIntosh ruling. During his lifetime, he foretold the New Madrid Earthquake, the Louisiana Purchase, the Civil War, the Dust-bowl and even Americans going to the Moon. Here is what he had to say about claims of land ownership:

We cannot make a river nor a mountain or valley. We cannot cause it to rain or storm. Only the Creator causes the wind to blow or the Sun to shine. No one person has made even enough ground to stand on. So, we know that we cannot own this land nor that. The white man can do many strange things, but neither can he make a place to live on. No one has made the places where we were set down. Yet, the white man measures out land and says that a piece of paper or a fence makes the land his – that he owns it. No, no! He didn’t make it, so he cannot own it. He only found his way to this land where we were already set down! The whites are invaders and thieves. Do not believe his lie of ownership.

- isga gua

The Importance of Cleaning Up Our Own Mess

While I can’t say that emptying and cleaning composting toilet buckets is a fun job, I do draw satisfaction from the process. To clarify, our composting toilets are not the ones advertised in the back-to-the-land magazines. Those disgustingly overpriced fecal incinerators only pretend to be composting toilets. Ours are the real thing, each involving a five-gallon plastic bucket in a homemade wooden cabinet, sawdust and outdoor composting bins, enabling the transformation of human waste into something not only harmless but beneficial. I draw satisfaction from emptying and cleaning the buckets, because, at the most basic level, I am cleaning up my own mess rather than flushing my mess into the bloodstream of the Earth. If you want to learn more about real composting toilets, read *The Humanure Handbook* by Joseph Jenkins; here’s the homepage: <https://humanurehandbook.com/>.

It was at least 18 years ago, maybe 20, when we saw the apparition. On a moonlit night, I awoke with a start to find an old white man lying on his back atop the sheets in the middle of our bed. leaping up, I stood there staring. The old man was very thin, clothed in a long, white nightshirt, with long, scraggly white hair and a white goatee. He looked like George Armstrong Custer may have looked had he lived to grow old. Or, he looked like Buffalo Bill Cody. Or, he looked like Uncle Sam. Of a truth, I think, in some sense, these three are one. The old man’s eyes were open and staring straight up, as if looking through the ceiling, past time, into eternity. His bony right hand was raised high, his emaciated arm held rigid, and from that hand dripped blood, lots of blood, splattering all over the bed-sheets. There was no wound on the hand from which the blood flowed. It was not *his* blood but the blood of others. My wife Janet stood, wide eyed, on the other side of the bed. “Do something about the blood!” she whispered.

Running to the bathroom, I opened the cupboard, took out a bath towel, threw it into the sink and turned on the water. This was back in the day when we *had* running water, and I was thinking—Water, cold water will take out the blood, cleanse the sheets, clean up the white man’s mess. Running back into the moonlit bedroom, the dripping towel in my hands, I saw Janet, asleep in the bed, breathing quietly. The old man was gone.

Janet stirred, looked up, saw me standing there, the wet, dripping towel in my hands. “What in the world are you doing?” she asked.

Now, I want to make it clear that from the time I leaped out of bed that night, I was wide awake. I have no doubt about that. I am also quite sure that Janet was awake. We both saw the apparition, yet she retains no memory of it. When the old white man disappeared that night, along with every trace of his mess—the mess he failed to clean up, it was as if he had never been. Even the wretched memory was gone, at least for Janet, and that, itself, is part of the lesson of the apparition.

Following the Indigenous Peoples March in Washington DC, January 18, 2019, Omaha Elder Nathan Phillips, along with the small group of American Indians he was with, observed a group of four Black Hebrew Israelites and a group of some 200+ white teenage boys taunting each other. The white teens were students from Covington Catholic High School in Park Hills, Kentucky, brought to Washington DC to participate in the March for Life protest which had also occurred that day. As the taunting continued, the Covington Schoolboys grew more and more

animated, throwing bottles of water at the Black Hebrew Israelites and working themselves into a frenzy with what may best be described as a mock Maori haka. In an attempt to diffuse the situation which looked on the verge of becoming dangerous, Nathan Phillips, playing a hand-drum and singing, and accompanied by those with him, walked between the Black Hebrew Israelites and the Covington Schoolboys. Nathan Phillips was singing the Raymond Yellow Thunder Song, also called the American Indian Movement or AIM song. It is a prayer-song made in honor of a murdered elder, a song without words but sung with great feeling, a song of remembrance and resistance. Continuing to sing, Mr. Phillips and the small group with him found themselves surrounded by the 200+ Covington Schoolboys whose focus had shifted from the Black Hebrew Israelites to this small group of American Indians. The boys were dancing around, whoo-whooping, mock singing, giving the "tomahawk chop" and hurling insults. As Mr. Phillips made a clear attempt to extricate himself and his small group from the crowd of schoolboys, one boy placed himself directly in front of Mr. Phillips, barring his way. He stood there, staring at Mr. Phillips, a mocking smirk on his face, as the Omaha Elder continued to sing his prayer-song.

In this age of smart-phones, of course, most of the encounter was recorded. A short clip soon went viral on social media, resulting in the Catholic Conference of Kentucky making this statement concerning the actions of the boys: "This behavior is opposed to the Church's teachings on the dignity and respect of the human person." But wait, the parents of one of the boys quickly hired an expensive public relations firm to spin the incident in their son's and the other boys' favor. The PR firm put together a longer, although highly edited video of the encounter along with their own explanation of what the viewer is seeing, and the young man with the mocking smirk went on an interview circuit explaining that Mr. Phillips got in *his* face, accosted *him*, instead of the other way around, and that the smirk was, in fact, a reassuring and non-threatening smile. This explanation, along with the PR firm's attempts to undermine the integrity of Nathan Phillips, is very much in keeping with the Christian white supremacist tradition of blaming the victims of violence, whether it be harassment, theft, rape or murder, in order to shift focus and excuse the perpetrators. It is a tired old tactic.

So, the hired public relations firm led a chorus of those proclaiming the Covington Schoolboys were dis-served in a "rush to condemn." I would agree that the Covington Schoolboys have been dis-served. They have been dis-served by parents, school and church. They have been schooled in ignorance. With Christopher Columbus and other cannibals held up as heroes and saints, these boys never had much of a chance. And then, when faced with a situation which may have resulted in some real education, in their perhaps learning a real lesson, they were further dis-served, not by a "rush to condemn" but by a rush to excuse. And, because of the rush to excuse, the only lesson they will likely learn from this experience is that white privilege knows no bounds, especially for those wealthy enough to hire lawyers and an expensive PR firm. Perhaps the boys missed their only chance to get real. Ultimately, the Covington Schoolboys were not given room or opportunity to clean up their own mess. And, to clean up ones own mess is not just a responsibility, it's the greatest real privilege of all.

Educate yourself on what happened in January. Here's a link to a PBS Democracy Now interview with Nathan Phillips: <https://www.colorlines.com/articles/skip-today-show-watch-interview-nathan-phillips-instead>. Here's a link to Indian Country Today's series of four videos of the encounter. This link will take you to the first video: <https://vimeo.com/312330750> The other videos will follow.

Ultimately, it could not be admitted that the Covington Schoolboys did anything wrong, because, making fun of Indians is as American as apple pie. That's basically what Kiowa-Comanche university professor Dr. Cornel Pewewardy writes in his paper "Why Educators Can't Ignore Indian Mascots," <https://aistm.org/cornel.why.educators.htm>. While "racial," ethnic or cultural mockery or harassment should be understood as a form of violence, generally it is not. Even so, every form of violence against Indians is as American as apple pie. According to the National Congress of American Indians Policy Insights Brief, American Indians and Alaskan Natives are 2.5 times more likely to be on the receiving end of violent crime and twice as likely to experience rape or other sexual assault as compared to all other "races" in the United States, and when violent acts are committed against Native Americans, the perpetrators are most usually white. You may read the entire brief at http://www.ncai.org/attachments/PolicyPaper_tWAjznFslemhAfZgNGzHUqIWMRPkCDjPftxeKEUVKjubxfpGYK_Policy%20Insights%20Brief_VAV.

Making fun of Indians as well as other forms of violence against Indians would seem to be the presumed right and privilege of every white Christian American, just like bearing arms. Indeed, these two rights are closely entwined, since, as Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz points out on page 53 of *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*, the first order of business for those "well regulated militias" was the extermination of American Indians. So long as the Doctrine of Christian Discovery is the law of the land and the basis of Indian Law in the United States, Indian lives will be valued less than the lives of others, and Indians will be a laughingstock, mocked by ball teams, boy scouts, schoolboys and everyone else.

Recently, the subject of "black-face" misrepresentation by white people has become a hot topic of discussion. It is very good that this is being discussed. I am waiting for the discussion to include Indian mascots and mock Indian themed organizations such as the Tribe of Mic-O-Say within the Boy Scouts of America, founded by "Chief Lone Bear" Bartle, the same rich white man / pretend Indian for whom the Kansas City Chiefs football team was named. Indian mascots and mock Indian organizations are the SAME THING as black-face! Along with black-face posturing, Indian mascots and mock Indian organizations are flagrant, in-your-face, displays of white power and white privilege. If a college-years photo of the Governor of Missouri doing the "tomahawk chop" at a Kansas City Chief's game, wearing face paint and a war-bonnet, suddenly went public, would anyone call for his resignation? Certainly not. What's more, the legislators of the State of Missouri are presently considering naming the Kansas City Chiefs the Official Missouri Football Team <https://themissouritimes.com/56875/lawmakers-consider-designating-the-chiefs-as-missouris-official-nfl-team/>. As I watched the disrespectful behavior of the Covington School Boys, with the tomahawk chop and whoo-who-who mock Indian singing and dancing, I was thinking – They are doing very little that would not also be seen in the stands during a Chiefs game.

Those who engage in such behaviors think they own the land, and they think they own us. They have pretended this is so for such a long time that they believe the lie; many of our own people believe the lie too. And, it would seem, the greatest sin today is speaking truth to power by pointing out or illuminating white racism and white supremacist attitudes – worse than lying, theft, enslavement, rape, murder, genocide – worse even than the poisoning of air, water and earth and far worse than disrespecting an old man, treating him as an unwanted alien in his own land.

Racism is the foundation upon which American society was built. Everyone who has grown up in America is to some degree affected by racism and infected with racist thinking and attitudes. It does not matter whether a person is white, African American, American Indian or of some other supposed "race;" racism affects and infects all. By racism, I mean white racism – the system that promotes and privileges white people above people of color. This is the *only* form of racism that exists. The practice of racism is dependent on an established power structure enabling one group to hold down or subject other groups in order to effect their own supposed advancement. While *prejudice* against white people in America is possible, racism against white people is not possible, as there is no established power structure to enable it. The idea of "racism against white people" is a projected fiction concocted and promoted by the white power movement – the same old blaming of victims. Certainly people of color in America are infected by racist thinking and attitudes right along with white people. However, it is not "racism against white people" infecting us but internalized racism against ourselves, against our own people and other peoples of color, self hatred, a deeply inset belief in the lies of white superiority and the "normalcy" of white supremacy. The prevalence of internalized racism is the reason why even the most blatant white supremacists are always able to find a few allies among people of color, to parade around as proof they are not racist. This is nothing new; even Custer had his Indian scouts. As with any other disease, denial allows the infection of racism to continue festering, untreated and unabated. Honest awareness and recognition is the first step toward combating racism and racist attitudes in ourselves, in our communities, in our peoples and in society at large.

Average powers of observation are all one needs to discern that white nationalism is currently on the rise in the United States even as the white power / white supremacy movement is on the rise worldwide with leaders of these movements currently occupying high seats within the United States government. Those who declare these movements to be "no problem" are either involved themselves, sympathetic to the movements or perhaps, having sand in their eyes, they are simply fast asleep.

As a start toward cleaning up the mess of racism and white Christian supremacy, the Episcopal Church, the Unitarian Universalists, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the World Council of Churches, the United Methodists and various branches or orders of Friends and Mennonites have repudiated the Doctrine of Christian Discovery. However, according to Vinnie Rotondaro, in the article "Doctrine of Discovery:

A scandal in plain sight," published September 5, 2015 in the National Catholic Reporter, the Vatican refuses to publicly acknowledge a role in formulating the Doctrine of Christian Discovery or to revoke the papal bulls in which it was articulated. This, in spite of Steven T. Newcomb's direct discussion of the issues with Vatican officials in 2007 and the petitioning of Pope Francis by the Loretto community of sisters in 2013. Rotondaro's article may be accessed at <https://www.ncronline.org/news/justice/doctrine-discovery-scandal-plain-sight>. Conservative evangelical Christians have largely remained silent on the issue of the Doctrine of Christian Discovery even as they tend to be silent or in denial on many of the most important issues and crises of our times, such as water and air pollution, global warming, unjust wars, etc. Many evangelical Christians, say "We are living in the last days" and seem to consider cleaning up messes in the Earth wasted effort as they look for their God to clean up the mess with a global conflagration, corporeally removing Christians, or at least those adhering to "right beliefs," away to his heaven. Will the mess making continue there? Many traditional, tribal indigenous people understand that we are now living in a time of beginning, at the dawn of a new epoch, a time of new creation, in which all imperialistic and hegemonic orders or disorders, be they religious, governmental, military or economic are passing away and will shortly disappear entirely, making room for the Earth in all her aspects to re-balance and heal.

The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in September 2007 with 144 member countries voting in favor. Four countries voted against the declaration, these being Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States of America. Eleven countries abstained from the vote. All four countries that originally opposed the declaration now officially support it. You may read the declaration at <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples.html>. Since 2007, the United Nations has issued reaffirmations of the rights of indigenous peoples on a regular basis <https://undocs.org/A/C.3/73/L.24/Rev.1>. While most countries now give lip service to the rights of indigenous peoples, as far as I know, Bolivia is the only country to make the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples the law of the land with a new constitution officially recognizing themselves as a plurinational state <https://www.iwgia.org/en/bolivia>. So, The Plurinational State of Bolivia is trying, at least, making a start toward cleaning up the mess. By contrast, the United States has never exhibited much of a willingness to clean up its own messes or even to acknowledge that it makes messes. As with everything else, messes are politicized in the United States, so that even if one party should develop some limited awareness of a particular mess and make a start toward cleaning it up, as soon as the opposing party regains power, any progress made may be reversed. In the grand arc of American thought and action, the United States pretends exceptionalism; it pretends there is no mess of its own making. And so, it continues making the same messes time and time again.

I've watched the videos of the encounter between Nathan Phillips and the Covington Schoolboys, not just the short version that went viral and definitely not the cut-and-paste version put together by the expensive PR firm hired by the parents of one of the boys. I've carefully watched all the videos available. And, in my opinion, the one mistake Mr. Phillips, the Ottawa Elder, may have made was in offering something sacred to those lacking the capacity to receive it in a good or respectful way. And so, that which is sacred was trampled underfoot and Mr. Phillips, those with him and, by proxy, all indigenous people everywhere, were attacked. I have made the same mistake myself on many occasions; it's called giving people the benefit of the doubt.

Honest ignorance recognizes itself and tries to remedy itself. A person with honest ignorance is forever learning and forever more and more aware of ignorance. Obstinate ignorance denies itself while clinging to itself, unwilling to change or develop. I see no remedy for obstinate ignorance. It is passed along from one generation to the next as a deep-set infection that may violently erupt at any time.

Peaceful coexistence with boundaries – not walls erected to exclude indigenous peoples while guarding stolen land and maintaining the pretense of ownership – not walls but boundaries, intangible boundaries of decency, empathy and respect – peaceful coexistence with boundaries: This is the way disparate peoples may live in the same land, dwell in the same Earth as equals, as siblings. This is the indigenous way, the normal way, the way peoples lived with and interacted with one another for tens of thousands of years before the malignant disease of empire began some 5,000 years ago. And, if humans are to continue in the Earth for even one or two more generations, peaceful coexistence with boundaries must become *the way* again.

As I have written in previous papers, to be indigenous is to be connected in respectful, reciprocal, cooperative relationship with the land and the peoples of the land where one is. By "peoples of the land," I mean animals, birds, plants and waterways as well as indigenous human beings. To be indigenous is to live as a true and integral part of the land as opposed to living as proud flesh or cancer in the land which is what we become when we treat the land as inert matter for extraction, exploitation and destruction. Being indigenous means leaving light footprints in the Earth, living with regard to all creation and to the needs of our children's children's children of the seventh generation, rather than grabbing all we can now as if there is no tomorrow. That is how I see it. When Europeans first came to this land, there was an open door to becoming indigenous in this place, for those with ears to hear and eyes to see, for those willing to change, there was an open door to being real people rather than pretentious people. Centuries later, most European descendants behave as though they still have one foot in the boat. Now, the time is short, the door to becoming indigenous, to becoming real people is closing. The door is closing, because another door has opened. In fulfillment of prophecies, indigenous ancestors (warriors) are coming back to restore the balance, to clean up the mess. Now is the time to start cleaning up our own messes or to disappear.

Yes, I tell you, the days of the white man are swiftly coming. They are as numerous as are the snowflakes of winter. Like the snow of winter, they will come upon us as a blizzard to cover up this land. Cold, hard times are upon us. Yet, the native people are the stars in the sky. For a time, the blizzard eclipses the starry sky, but my people will endure! Like the stars, we will yet shine forth when the storm has passed and snow has melted. Take courage – the winter of the invaders will in time pass away.

- isga gua (Clear Sky), aniywiywa or Chickamauga Cherokee Prophet