

500 Years of Resistance.....Through Women's Eyes
Bay Area International Women's Day Demonstration 1992

Welcome. The Year 1992 marks the 500th anniversary of the European invasion of this hemisphere. As women we know that there is very little to celebrate. We are marching as part of the *counter-quincentennial* mobilizations called for by Indigenous peoples throughout the Western Hemisphere. We are marching as women against colonialism, racism, and patriarchy because we believe that they are intrinsically tied together.

Cristobal Colon (Christopher Columbus) arrived in the "Americas" and the "Caribbean" and set out to "colon-ize" its people and lands. He and other European invaders established a new world order based on military might and white supremacy. They organized systematic campaigns to destroy Indigenous peoples by ripping them from their land and terrorizing them with rape, murder, and the spread of disease.

We're not only gazing backwards at an unparalleled period of history. We are marching in resistance to today's attacks on Indigenous peoples. Nations all over the world are spending millions of dollars to celebrate the quincentennial and San Francisco has been chosen as the "jubilee city" for the October culmination of these events. As women we are angered and disgusted by these arrogant celebrations occurring in the face of devastating budget cuts, poverty stricken schools, a complete lack of health care, and ever-increasing homelessness. Today we raise our voices as women saying NO MORE!

Today we celebrate five centuries of Indigenous women's resistance to treaty violations and militarism, toxic waste dumping, and environmental destruction. We honor their work to end forced sterilization and forced adoption, alcoholism and fetal alcohol syndrome, unemployment and lack of opportunity in their communities. Today we celebrate the strength and courage of Indigenous women and Black, Chicana, Latina and Asian women against the relentless racism of white America.

We march as women in opposition to this patriarchal and woman-hating society. We demand the immediate release of all women political prisoners and prisoners of war. We demand control of our bodies and we demand quality health care, childcare, education, and housing. We refuse to be terrorized by male violence and the sexual objectification and exploitation of our bodies. We won't put up with lesbian bashing or the backlash on feminism. Women say 500 YEARS OF GREED AND HATE — THAT'S NOT WHAT WE CELEBRATE!

The following is a "Tour Guide".. As we march, we will be pointing out local monuments and institutions that are significant in the history of the European invasion of this region and the present day systems of oppression practiced by the US government against Indigenous peoples and other communities of color.

Justin Herman Plaza: The statues of King Carlos III of Spain and Don Juan Bautista (Spanish missionary) in Justin Herman Plaza typify the US government's arrogant exaltation of westward expansionism with no mention of the subjugation of Indigenous Peoples. These two men built missions here, on Ohlone land, during the 1700's with the purpose of taking the land and enslaving the people.

California Department of Corrections (CDC), Ferry Building: We know that the U.S. incarcerates more than one million people—more per capita than any other nation in the world. The women caught in this brutal prison system are most often women of color who ended up there because of the ongoing criminalization of poverty. Welfare fraud, bad checks, prostitution, and petty theft —women often commit these acts to keep themselves and their children alive. Of the women incarcerated for violent crimes, most are convicted for defending themselves and/or their children from male violence. There are also many lesbians and other women in prisons for acting on their political beliefs against racism and colonialism. We embrace our sisters in prison and demand immediate release of all women political prisoners and prisoners of war.

INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service), 555 Battery: The INS functions more to serve George Bush's foreign policy politics than it does to protect safety and lives of people requesting entry to the country. For instance, 75 percent of the people from the former USSR are granted asylum by the INS versus only one percent of Haitians fleeing military dictatorship.

The borders that the INS "protects" were created through military conquest. The indigenous peoples, whose land was stolen, are now labeled "aliens" by border patrol and racist vigilantes. Only when it suits the needs of US companies will they allow these peoples into the country, as beasts of burden. But US big business freely crosses these borders to exploit other nations of people and their lands, as exemplified by the US "free trade" deals.

Women who do successfully cross the border are met with an atmosphere of racism, sexual exploitation and harassment, and violence.

We protest the racist and inhuman policies of the INS and we protest the INS contracts with Bay Area Jails to imprison INS detainees.

Columbus Avenue / Washington Square Park: Columbus has been presented to all of us in a false light, a brave-hearted and loyal hero who brought "civilization" to a "savage" land. We know this is a lie. Columbus typifies the European invaders who came to conquer and exploit the people and the land of the Western hemisphere.

George Washington is yet another false American hero. During the Revolutionary War he wrote these orders to General Sullivan: "The expedition...is to be directed against the tribes of Six Nations of Indians...The immediate object is their total destruction and devastation...Parties should be detached to lay waste all settlements around. The country may not be merely overrun, but destroyed..." At his death he held 317 black slaves and he owned 40,000 acres of Native land.

We defy the misrepresentation of the major conquerors and patriarchs of history as well intentioned heroes.

Gold Rush: San Francisco is proud of its Gold Rush district, but as we walk past these historic buildings we see blood. We see the armed troops riding through this Ohlone village bayoneting its inhabitants. The original mineral miners in this area were Mexican, Chilean and Chinese. White miners soon ran off "foreign" miners, utilizing their "laws" and vigilante violence.. Contrary to the myth of the lone forty-niner panning for gold, the real winners of the gold rush were the US government, the rail roads, and big monopolists. Wells Fargo Bank, Levi Strauss, and the City of San Francisco were born in a boom, and 1000's of indigenous people were slaughtered in its explosion.

The Gold Rush years and the Anglo invasion of the West set the stage for Americans to continue their "Manifest Destiny" and rule lands even beyond the continental shores, for instance, The Philippines, Cuba and Puerto Rico.

Alcatraz: Alcatraz ("Hell-Hole") Prison was notorious as the first maximum security prison to develop the 24-hour lock-down (confinement to a cell with no exercise or fresh air). Alcatraz was closed in 1963 but was replaced by Marion Federal Penitentiary, where the lockdown has been made *permanent* since 1983.

We remember the Lexington "control unit" for women, where absolute physical and psychological control was maintained over prisoners. It was shut down in 1988, after two years of operation, by public pressure. Today the maximum security prison in Marianna, Florida serves as the place to psychologically punish women political prisoners and women who fight back against the brutal prison system. Although these women are not under constant lockdown, as was true at Lexington, they have no work or educational programs and contact with the outside world is severely limited.

In November 1969, members of the American Indian Movement (AIM) liberated the island of Alcatraz, refusing the orders of government officials to leave. They said about the location, "It would be fitting and symbolic that ships from all over the world, entering the Golden Gate, would first see Indian land...." The occupation drew public attention to the fact that Native Americans were forced to live on reservations without basic human rights such as healthcare, running water, employment and education They were forcibly evicted from their land nineteen months later in June 1971.

Streets and Homes of San Francisco: Despite the gains we've made, the streets and homes of San Francisco are still daily scenes of rape, incest, battery, harassment and murder of women and girls. More and more women are homeless, and find little security whether we are in shelter or on the streets.