
Eduardo Galeano, present at Cochabamba

Letter from Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano, read at the opening ceremony of the World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth:

The World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth starts today in Cochabamba, Bolivia, convened by Bolivia's President Evo Morales.

Unfortunately, I shall not be able to be with you. Something has come up that prevents me from traveling. But I'd like to be, in some way, part of this meeting of yours, this meeting of mine, since I have no choice but to do the little that I can rather than the much that I want to do.

And, to be there without being there, at least I am sending these words.

I'd like to say to you: may all that is possible, and impossible too, be done, so that the Summit of the Mother Earth will be the first step toward the collective expression of the peoples who do not lead, but suffer from, global politics.

I hope that we will be able to advance these two initiatives of compañero Evo's, the Climate Justice Tribunal and the Global Referendum against a system of power founded on war and waste, which holds human life in contempt and hangs an auction flag over our earthly goods.

I hope that we will be able to speak little and do a lot. Serious damage has been done, and is being done, to us by discursive inflation, which in Latin America is more dangerous than monetary inflation. Besides, we are, above all, fed up with the hypocrisy of rich countries, which are leaving us without a habitable planet while making pompous speeches to cover up their heist.

Some say that hypocrisy is the tribute that vice pays virtue. Others say that hypocrisy is the only proof of the existence of the infinite. And the logorrhea of the so-called 'international community,' the club of bankers and warriors, does prove that these two definitions are correct.

I'd like to celebrate, in contrast, the force of truth that radiates from the words and silences born in the human communion with nature. And it is no accident that this Mother Earth Summit is being held in Bolivia, this nation of nations, which is discovering itself after two centuries of living a lie.

Bolivia has just celebrated the tenth anniversary of the people's victory in the war of water, won by the people of Cochabamba, who were capable of defeating an all-powerful corporation from California, the owner of the water of Bolivia thanks to a government which claimed to be Bolivian but was very generous to other people.

This water war was one of the battles which this land keeps fighting in defense of its natural resources — in other words, in defense of its identity with nature.

There are voices from the past that speak to the future.

Bolivia is one of the American nations where indigenous cultures have managed to survive, and their voices are now ringing with more force than ever before, despite the scorn and persecution they suffered for a long time.

The entire world, stunned as it is, is wandering about like a blind man in the middle of a crossfire, having to listen to those voices. They teach us that we, tiny beings called humans, are part of nature, relatives to all those who have legs, paws, wings, or roots. The European conquest condemned the indigenous, who lived in that communion with nature, for idolatry, and for believing in that communion they were flogged, their throats were slit, or they were burned alive.

From the times of the European Renaissance, nature has been turned into a commodity or an obstacle to human progress. And, to this day, this divorce between us and her has persisted, so much so that there still are people of good will who are moved by poor nature, so abused, so wounded, but are seeing her only from outside.

Indigenous cultures see her from inside. Seeing her, I see myself. What is done against her is done against me. In her I find myself, my legs are also the road on which they walk.

Let us celebrate, then, this Summit of the Mother Earth. And may the deaf listen: the rights of human beings and the rights of nature are two names of the same dignity.

With hugs sent on wings, from Montevideo.

Eduardo Galeano, 21 April, 2010