

Tiempo de Florecer

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TO SEE 3 HOURS OF VIDEO ABOUT THIS EVENT VISIT OUR VIMEO ACCOUNT:

<http://vimeo.com/user1907834/videos>



www.tiempodefloreecer.org

This is a “small” report of what I perceived and experienced in Pasto, Colombia during the Tiempo de Florecer festival . This was an event organized by the Pasto government in order to reunite shamans from all over Colombia and Latin America. We; my husband Jaun and I went with the idea of covering the event in video and audio. We arrived in Pasto the day the event begun...Pasto being a small city in the southern part of Colombia, in the department of Narino – only 45 minutes from Ecuador...It is high in the Andes mountains, perhaps 2500 meters, yet this department is also very close to the Putumayo department, where the Andes mountains meet the Amazon jungle. It is amazing in the variety of cultures and natural micro systems that it encompasses do to the geographical location. The people of Pasto speak a soft Spanish that has indigenous intonations and are very sweet and friendly people. It is cold , very green and full of flowers and strange plants that only exist very high in the mountains.... the volcano Galeras hovers over the city.



The first day of the festival was kicked off by a parade in the streets of Pasto and a huge event in a soccer stadium which included a spiritual ceremony organized by the shamans plus different dances and concerts from several Latin American countries, I was amazed to see that half of the stadium was full. The following two weeks included conferences by scholars, elders and medicine men and women, round table discussions, an elaborate latin american film festival, concerts, traditional indigenous dance and music, different indigenous ceremonies including Inipies, yage ceremonies and other ceremonies for peace or curing the earth...There was also a market with healing herbs for sale, constant spiritual cleansing going on in the gardens of the museum where most of the activities took place. A market was set up where different indigenous and regional arts and crafts were presented and offered for sale. One of the principal objectives of the festival was for the indigenous elders to reunite at the end of the first week in private in order to write up a document for the Colombian government and the world. Looking at this heavy schedule, Juan and I decided we were going to concentrate on the conferences, round table discussions and basically what was going to go on with the elders and medicine men and women. Arriving at the museum on the second day and the start of the conferences, we ran into Chuco and Nora, friends of ours, who were the accompanist to the delegation of Kogi, Arahuaco and Wiwa indigenous leaders from the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. They explained that they had not been able to bring their indigenous camera crew and could we please record in video and audio what the indigenous needed ...Starting with a private mambe (coca chewing) reunion / talk planned for the evening somewhere outside of Pasto. Wow what a beautiful opportunity. ...that evening we packed up baby and our friends and drove 30 minutes into the night to Chachagui, a small village outside of Pasto where one of the local shamans/anthropologist – William Torres has his Maloca (ceremonial house – the name comes from the amazonian region but is adopted to define most ceremonial houses in Colombia) – We arrived a bit late – about 8 pm – to find a fire burning in the middle of a beautiful completely dark Maloca constructed with a combination of styles from the Amazonian traditional malocas to the ceremonial nuhues of the Sierra Nevada...Around, in a circle were sitting that part of the indigenous guests and elders which use traditionally chew coca – Kogi / Wiwa/ Arahuaco – from the Sierra Nevada (independent mountain range on the colombian caribbean coast) as well as three Guambianos from the Cauca colombian department in the southern Andes of Colombia and four Huitotos from the Colombian Amazonian basin, William Torres was hosting the evening and a Lakota elder from the USA was also present as well as three other white observers like ourselves.... These indigenous people had never met and hardly recognized each other's respective cultures, the conversation was slow coming and very peculiar to me as I lurked around the circle feeling a bit guilty with my big camera. All of the guests were chewing coca leaves and each taking turn speaking, the indigenous from the Sierra Nevada started off, some of them do not speak spanish so there were long speeches no one

understood....One of the Arahucao Mamo Sewkukwuy spoke in his language at length and every 15 minutes or so would say in Spanish “3600 million years ago”.....we wondered what he was talking about....I was very tired, I had had a long day and still dealing with the change of altitude and I was not chewing coca (which keeps you awake and makes you talk and think very clearly) – but since coca is traditionally for men and not women (because coca is feminine) I was not participating in this way – the night was looking long, cold, slow and dark, yet the energy from the coca that the men were chewing was strong enough and kept me awake and attentive as the slow conversation developed – each one of the indigenous took turns speaking for 30 minutes or more, then a long silence would fall until another person spoke. They spoke from the heart, letting all of their thoughts flow, telling each other of the hardships that they live in their respective territories, confessing personal weaknesses, telling of how each culture uses the coca leaf, storytelling myths and initiation experiences...What I found amazing is the dynamics of the encounter, how each person spoke so slowly and lengthily and how time had stopped, at 3am we had to leave – our baby was crying...but the others remained a few hours more.

During the day time, the conferences in their majority, I found very interesting and the auditoriums full, there were perhaps 300 people in the big auditoriums and minimum 20 people for the round table discussions. There were conferences by anthropologists about a wide range of subjects, one that I particularly appreciated was by Roberto Restrepo’s on indigenous semantics and world views, one point he explained was the difference of perception of time between western culture and indigenous culture – we perceive the past as being behind us and the future ahead, while in the indigenous world view this is opposed with the ancestors ahead and the present coming behind. I also very much like the talk given by the Mayan shaman from Mexico , he explained the Mayan calendar and gave his thoughts on the prediction for 2012. William Torres who I mentioned earlier also very inspiring talk about a return to the feminine as an option for a a more peaceful sustainable world society. William was in a way the host shaman, being that he lives in Pasto and is an anthropologist turned shaman after a training of some 14 years in the amazon and 8 in the Putumayo + initiation by a Kogi mamo (sage man). Also there was a great conference given by an Arahucao women about indigenous human rights issues. There were several conferences and round table discussions dedicated strictly to plant medicine and curing techniques as well as several indoor and outdoor encounters of women leaders discussing gender issues and their position in western and indigenous society. The presence of a Lakota (US) elder women Barbara Three Crow was key here as she was more accustomed to public speaking and the dynamics of these sort of festivals while the elder women from the Latin American indigenous tribes for the most part had not had previous opportunities to participate in such an event, many of them also did not speak Spanish so it was difficult to establish good dialog. One of the better female speakers was Eleonora of the Wayuu tribe who told us of the massacre of 12 of her family members which took place 4 years ago in Portete, Guajira...A place I happened to visit one month before, so as she spoke I could picture the abandoned town I drove through not long ago. She cried as she spoke and there were other women who also cried as they spoke but sometimes it was in languages we did not understand so all we could grasp were the tears.



We decided to go to the first yage ceremony organized for the event – We figured it was better to purify ourselves as soon as possible....This was a ceremony organized by the well respected Kofan leader and elder Taita (term utilised in the Putumayo to signify the sage men or women) – Querubin in the maloca he has established outside of Pasto. There were about 80 people participating in this ceremony as guests and a “team” of about 10 Kofan men attending the 80 guests....It was very cold and there were no fires, just two places with coal burning. The ceremony was minimal and to my surprise included at its beginning, a catholic prayer – which everyone knew except us it seemed....Strange bit, but all too common in today’s indigenous cultures....Juan did not enjoy the ceremony because it was true there were too many people (several patients were making all sorts of noises and shouting obscenities) – He also found it too impersonal and the yage had little effect on him, but I was less critical and just went with the flow, the yage was very colorful and full of visions for me and it answered my question right away...so I ended up drinking a second cup. There were several indigenous elders and youngsters from the other tribes invited to the festival participating in this ceremony and it was interesting to see how they assimilated yage; a medicine from another indigenous culture from theirs...I was impressed to see two elders from the Amazon sit way off in the coldest, darkest corner of the maloca, completely motionless throughout the night...watching. There was also a Taita friend and his wife Domingo and Pastora with us and at one point I asked him to tell us a story (hoping to hear the mythology of the putumayo) and he started to tell me something from the bible with Jesus christ as the main character – this troubled me and since I have known him for a while I interrupted him and said that I was from where the bible came and that it was really horrible for me to hear him tell me a story from the bible etc..He understood and said; Ok don’t worry and listen...and proceeded to changing the story radically around sending Jesus Christ from his fields of potatoes right into the amazon jungle and eventually converting him into a porcupine....that was better. Ouff...I wondered if he was telling a story from the bible to please me or because he really was Cristian or was this just one story more in his catalog of stories to tell around fire places while in yage ceremonies....Funny that the bible in this indigenous context goes back to orality.... As the very charged all night program developed I was finally invited for my purifying session – a women with a flashlight called names out from a list in a very organized manner – I was baffled and impressed to see such organization – A very strict affair who’s purpose in the end is to cure and to create visions for the guests..... The cleansing was for large groups of guests and a team of shamans attending us all at once...the guests all lined up, men in front of the women receiving about a half an hour of music, song, blowing etc etc..... Of course it was a bit strange because purifying sessions are usually individual, but as it happened I remembered the history of the Kofan people which 10 years prior had been displaced from their territories

by right wing paramilitary groups who installed fear by killing several of their leaders obliging them to leave the land. They were also fumigated by the government because they grew coca, but the government did not only fumigate the coca crop but all the food crop, medicinal gardens and fish farms. Growing coca was not unusual, it has been for many years the best option for peasants who cannot survive selling food crop due to its low value on the Colombian and international market. Yet the Kofan people knowing that coca was not a good option, had elaborated a very well organized written project to eradicate their coca crop manually, replacing it slowly with legal crop. This project had been presented to the Colombian government and ignored, their territory fumigated and the flora destroyed for many years. I learned during the Tiempo de Florecer encounter that a few years ago, once again, the crop of Taita Querubin had been fumigated, including his yage crop and medicinal garden...Now here they were, living in a cold place instead of their warm jungle, far from their homeland cleansing us / curing us / giving us visions – the white people, we, the bearer of their ills...So there was no room for me to criticize whatever went on that evening that might of seemed too commercial, I don't really know what their purpose is by doing this for us, but I perceived not a trace of ill will ...In the morning I felt very good, the medicine had worked. We drove back to Pasto and Taita Domingo who got a lift with us said – Hey its important to drink yage once in a while – We see white people, they change the oil in their cars every six months, but they forget to change the oil in their bodies! We just changed our oil!

There were other yage ceremonies organized by other taitas but I did not attend them, I am sure there were many different scenarios.



The rest of the week we continued to attend the conferences and interview people, I remember vividly the stories of the Mayan guest who told us the of his stay with te Huitoto Indians in the Colombian amazon, he said, one evening he was sitting in a mambe (coca chewing) reunion in a maloca late at night when three of the Huitotos said “ We have to go do something in the jungle” they got up and went into a dark corner where they made a lot of noise, a few minutes later three tigers were seen exiting the village...many hours later loud stumps were heard on the roof of the maloca and a few minutes later the three men entered, one of them sat next to him and he said that he smelled like a lion and in his face was the stare of the tiger.....Then he went on to tell us of the time he himself transformed into an eagle in a dream and woke up to find his entire body covered by little red dots – where the feathers had been – Unbelievable to us and even the indigenous say its very difficult to turn into animals, that this skill has been lost, yet ALL American indigenous cultures tell of men and women changing into animals.....

At the end of the week all of the shamans and elders were put on three buses and taken to La Cocha where it was planned they would discuss what message to send to humanity. La Cocha is one of the biggest natural lakes in Colombia at about 3500 meters (sorry I don't have all the exact figures), very cold, very sacred and very beautiful...The organizers weren't too happy about us going to this private meeting but our friends insisted saying we had to gather all the information for the records of the mamos... so we sort of sneaked on the bus, when we got to the nice Swiss style chalet hotel and had to define in which room we were going to stay in, a confusion occurred which a phone call to the (very very wonderful) governor Navaro Wolf had to be made, then they finally gave us a room and accepted us...My friend kept saying they have their camera people, we got to have our camera people too....So here we were once again grateful to participate and serve. The talks opened with a sacred pipe ceremony by the Lakota elder Iktomi Cha from the USA, then everybody, there were perhaps 40 elders present spoke of their different problems and desires.





There were several members of the United Nations present as well as representatives of the government of Narino which were there to help to reunite all that was spoken (they were typing away night and day) in order to formulate the final document. As the elders said themselves the whole thing was a bit confusing because there were only about 12 hours to work and they were just meeting for the first time in a strange situation...but the intention was good so everybody did their best.... The government officials asked the elders to formulate a document to give them advice on how to better govern. In response the Arahuco leader Bienvenidos said If you want us to help you, you must help us ...In the end a document was made which you can find in Spanish below...In a few words it said that the indigenous elders from the different tribes perceived themselves as one, and were sending a message to the world in order that their knowledge and cultures be recognized, respected and invited to participate in the construction of a world society which would think of not only the present but also protect the interests of the future generations and of mother earth...

The governor Navaró Wolf, received the document and promised to send it to as many governments as he could, the United Nations also promised to do the same. The event closed at dusk with a ceremony by an Ecuadorian women shaman out in the field near the lake.

One comment made by some of the indigenous elders that had already had the experience of writing up documents and even presenting them to organizations like the UN, was that in the end they had not served for much and what was most important was that the event repeat itself so that the networking process between the tribes could continue...All agreed and the governor, which had originally thought of organizing this event every 2 years promised publicly to organize it every year. Another flaw in this first encounter that was spoken and that I think will be corrected by next year was that it was important for not only elders from the communities to be invited but also the young indigenous people, which are the future.....The Guambianos were the exception as two of the tribe leaders came, one woman and one man, accompanied by a young adolescent woman who was being trained as a nurse, they told me they had brought her so she could also learn about indigenous medicine from other cultures. (and this first did have many activities organized for LOCAL indigenous and non indigenous youths already)

After this event we left Pasto, what I have sent you is just a bit of information on what I perceived there, it is just my experience and there were many others, also other film crews, notably Martha Rodríguez, a Colombian filmmaker who has made documentaries about Colombian indigenous people and which was there to gather footage and information for her new project – a documentary about the genocide of indigenous people in Colombia, I think this work will be important.



But hey there is still a bit more info from this end...as I said we left Pasto and headed out to San Lorenzo to see Don Miguel's medicinal garden...He was one of the invited campesino (peasant) healers, during the festival I asked him to give me some herbs for my son who had a little cold and he and his grandson seemed very sweet to me, so on a hunch, we decided we would go out and visit them...So off to San Lorenzo...Two hours driving north of Pasto – we stopped to eat the local delicacy – grilled guinea pig then up and down green mountains until these suddenly turned very dry and yellow, an immensely deep canon opening up on the right side of the road with several mountain fires, flames could be seen at one point coming up to the road. After a while we saw San Lorenzo painted on a cement curve and an arrow pointing to a dirt road that was winding all the way down the dry cannon...We took the road even if it seemed strange that somewhere out there there was a village...We ended up driving all the way down the canon, crossing a river and driving all the way up, it took us about an hour, we passed the peak and continued down the dirt road, slowly the landscape was turning green again and electric posts appeared, we were amazed to arrive after another hour in a completely lush area with a relatively big village...In the main square Yorman, Don Miguel's grandson and assistant was waiting for us, we drove with him another 15 minutes and arrived in a beautiful little farm up on a hill in the middle of a circle of mountains. We ended up staying over for the night because we arrived at about 4 pm and visiting the herbal garden in the morning. I had never seen such an herbal garden. Don Miguel is 75 years old and has been a traditional medicine man since he was about 20, when he started learning how to use plants to cure because there was no other option in this remote area. His garden had over 50 different species of plants that are used as medicine and that he has cultivated himself – some are native to his area and others he imported from other hotter or colder micro climates, having had to pamper the plants until they become accustomed to their new living habitat. He showed and explained to us the properties of about 20 plants and also specified many times that he did not cure if not the plants themselves, that he was only a facilitator. Don Miguel has lost 60% of his hearing, therefore it was very difficult to speak to him, we had to shout...then we figured out we could give him a pair of headphones and a microphone to speak to him, and this helped a lot. Don Miguel said that in one month he was going to receive his hearing aid that he was finally able to purchase (cost him 500 US about)....We were baffled by the humility of this immensely knowledgeable man lost in the middle of the Andes and forgotten by society. We did what we could which is to invite Don Miguel and his grandson to Bogota to give workshop in a high school about plant medicine and start an herbal garden for this school.



After leaving San Lorenzo in a restaurant we saw the news on the tv and found out that the day we had left Pasto an entire indigenous Awa family (about 12 people) had been killed in the middle of the night, half of them children between 8 months and 17 years of age This occurred near Pasto.....

I have no words, I feel impunity

MENSAJE DE LOS PUEBLOS ORIGINARIOS DE AMÉRICA DESDE LA COCHA, GUAMUÉS, PASTO, NARIÑO

Nosotros, abuelas y abuelos, mamos y mamas, médicos y médicas tradicionales, taitas, sabedores de la cultura ancestral y guías espirituales representantes de los pueblos originarios, convocados en Nariño, Colombia, para el Primer Encuentro Internacional de Culturas Andinas, tenemos una palabra para compartir, un mensaje para sembrar en los corazones de quienes nos quieran escuchar.

Agradecemos al Gran Espíritu la oportunidad que nos brinda de vivir este histórico encuentro “TIEMPO DE FLORECER”, y al pueblo de Nariño por convocar a través de éste, la unión y el saber de los pueblos originarios de América.

Pertenece a pueblos y culturas diferentes, pero reconocemos que desde el sentir de la unidad y la ley de origen, la esencia de nuestro pensamiento y acción es la misma. Para nosotros la diferencia nos complementa, no nos divide.

Nosotros, quienes cuidamos la vida, amamos a nuestra madre tierra, respetamos a nuestros mayores, resguardamos la memoria de nuestras raíces y semillas, la sabiduría ancestral.

Nosotros, quienes preservamos la unidad de la humanidad, quienes ofrendamos lo mejor de nosotros al gran espíritu, a nuestra sagrada Madre y a nuestro Padre Sol, tenemos una visión clara de cómo hacer las cosas.

Es importante que reconozcamos más que nunca que cualquier decisión que tomemos hoy, va a tener consecuencias para las generaciones futuras, para nuestros hijos y los hijos de nuestras hijas. Somos responsables del porvenir.

Históricamente, desde la conquista, hemos sido atropellados y engañados por las miradas del mundo que nos han excluido. Denunciamos el abuso y saqueo indiscriminado a nuestra Madre Tierra, el despojo de nuestros territorios y nuestra cultura, el atentado constante contra la vida de nuestros líderes y nuestros pueblos. Somos conscientes que no es suficiente denunciar ante el mundo nuestros problemas, sino también, que se universalice nuestro saber como camino de solución.

Hay quienes nos ven como analfabetas porque no aplicamos los parámetros de sus ciencias, pero conocemos y practicamos los secretos y el alfabeto de la Madre y de la naturaleza, nuestra ciencia tradicional.

Nuestro pensamiento y palabra es nuestra propia vida, por eso es importante este mensaje. Decimos que la Madre Tierra es una sola. Somos hijos que nos calentamos y nos sentimos acariciados por el mismo Padre Sol, pisamos la misma tierra, respiramos el mismo aire y nos bañamos con la misma agua. Nosotros somos hermanos, como los dedos de una misma mano. Nosotros no hablamos del color de la piel, debajo de ella todos somos iguales, por lo tanto debemos trabajar unidos rojos, negros, blancos y amarillos. Respetando el pensamiento de todos, pedimos que nuestro pensamiento sea respetado en la práctica de la reciprocidad. Evocamos la solidaridad de los pueblos del mundo y la justicia. Así como nosotros facilitamos el fluir de la vida, demandamos poder seguir viviendo de acuerdo a nuestras visiones del mundo y modos de ser propios.

Hemos sido responsables y guardianes de la memoria de la humanidad, y aunque muchas veces intentaron destruirnos, la memoria sigue viva. Esta memoria preservada por nuestros ancestros, que hoy cuidamos y compartimos, es ante todo, la memoria de la vida. Invitamos a todos los pueblos de la Tierra a compartir esta memoria, y renacer desde la semilla de la misma.

Hablamos del derecho a la vida. Respetamos el cambio natural de las cosas, el equilibrio de la vida; entender que en el universo todo tiene su proceso y su tiempo.

La invitación a la Minga del Pensamiento que nos ha hecho el Gobierno de Nariño, las Naciones Unidas en Colombia, y otras instituciones es una señal de la disposición a escuchar la palabra de la sabiduría ancestral por parte de los que ahora tienen la responsabilidad de tomar decisiones. Invitamos al resto de gobiernos del mundo a seguir el ejemplo, dialogar y construir con nosotros un futuro común.

Proponemos la unión de los pueblos originarios y de éstos con los demás pueblos acogidos por nuestra única madre, la Madre Tierra.

Invitamos a comprender y asumir que:

- El agua no es solo un símbolo de vida, sino la vida misma, la sangre de nuestra tierra. Demandamos que el agua se considere un patrimonio de la vida y la humanidad tanto en nuestros territorios ancestrales como en el resto del mundo.

- Continuaremos siendo los protectores de la naturaleza como parte del equilibrio entre el ser humano y la madre tierra.

- Se gesten procesos de integración de las formas de medicina occidental con la medicina ancestral, se reconozca, proteja y promueva como patrimonio cultural de nuestros pueblos las prácticas de curación propias así como sus medios: plantas medicinales, rituales, conocimientos ancestrales.

- Se valore el lugar de la mujer como garante de la vida, transmisora de la cultura y cuidadora de la sabiduría y salud de nuestros pueblos.

- Los pueblos indígenas se rigen por la ley de origen y la ley natural con autonomía, gobierno y cosmovisión propia. Es necesario y un derecho que se nos reconozca como autoridades de nuestro territorio y se consulte con nosotros todas las decisiones que afectan nuestras vidas.

Estas palabras y conocimientos que hemos heredado de nuestros ancestros son nuestro legado a las futuras generaciones, a nuestros hijos e hijas. Con ello garantizamos la permanencia de nuestros propios pueblos indígenas y lo consideramos un aporte y un regalo para la humanidad.

En nombre de la reciprocidad, la justicia y el respeto que nos debe unir, demandamos que se proteja a nuestros pueblos, nuestro saber ancestral como patrimonio espiritual, material e inmaterial de la humanidad.

Cuenten con nosotros para preservar la existencia de la humanidad y de todas las formas de vida en el planeta tierra.

Nuestro conocimiento ancestral puede ser acogido como un camino de sanación ante las diversas crisis y violencias que afligen a los seres humanos, la familia, la sociedad, los Estados, la naturaleza.

Nos comprometemos a trabajar y

promover desde nuestra fuerza espiritual y cultural para que los gobernantes de la tierra trabajen más con el espíritu y con el corazón, respeten más la naturaleza y se conviertan en preservadores de la vida.

Firmado en La Cocha, Guamués, Pasto, Nariño, el 23 de agosto 200

KOGI, WIWA, ARHUACOS, INGAS, CAMENTSÁ, SIONA, HUITOTO, MAYA KICHÉ, KOFÁN,
LAKOTA, GUANANO, DESANA, SICUANI, MAPUCHE, MAYA MAM, KICHUA INCA,
KALLAWAYA, PIAPOCO, MÉXICA, WAYUU.