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Indigenous Peoples Day demonstration at Malcolm X Park in Washington

written by Lev Koufax
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On Oct. 17, a coalition of Indigenous peoples and their allies held an Indigenous Peoples Day demonstration at Malcolm X Park in Washington, D.C.

The host organizations and activists included Chief Billy Tyac of the Piscataway Indian Nation and Tyac Territory, the American Indian Movement (Mid-Atlantic Region), the American Indian Support Project, the National Council of Arab Americans, the Hiroshima Nagasaki Peace Committee of the National Capital Region, the All-African People's Revolutionary Party and Pan African Roots.

Approximately a hundred people attended the celebration, which included a series of cultural performances and speeches. The program opened with Chief Billy Tyac of the Piscataway Indian Nation. Chief Tyac discussed the fact that all land in the

United States and Canada is, in fact, land stolen from Indigenous people. Further, the chief denounced the myth that “Columbus discovered America.” This was a position emphasized throughout the day.

Columbus is often touted as an important and positive figure in American history. One of the core missions of Indigenous Peoples Day is to shed light on the truth about Columbus: he was a violent genocidal colonizer. Multiple speakers discussed the atrocities perpetrated by Columbus and his crew. These speakers called for the end of “Columbus Day” as a holiday and the removal of all statues honoring him.

Another core issue at the celebration was the importance of recognizing the current crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women. A panel of three Native women at the celebration discussed their personal experiences with the epidemic of violence towards Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people.

Toward the end of the program, Peoples Power Assembly activist Andre Powell read a solidarity statement. Powell denounced the past and present state violence Indigenous peoples have faced in the United States and Canada. In both countries, Indigenous peoples have protested against proposed pipelines that would go through sacred land. In both countries, the government responded with violence and terror.

The message of the day was clear: all working class and oppressed people must stand with the Indigenous struggles across the globe. The Indigenous community will not rest in their struggle to regain their stolen ancestral lands and preserve their way of life. Solidarity with Indigenous peoples! Reparations for Native peoples now!

SLL photos: Lev Koufax

