

FREE VICTOR

"I AM A SUNDANCER, AN INDIGENOUS PERSON, A BROTHER, A SON, A HUMAN BEING IN COMMUNITY WITH THE EARTH AND ALL OF THE BEINGS THAT CALL THIS PLACE HOME."

-VICTOR

LA PASIÓN POR LA LIBERTAD ES MAS FUERTE QUE TODAS LAS JAULAS!



FREEVICTOR.ORG

JULY 25 2023

“No Justice, No Future: A collection of prose regarding Victor Puertas”

Below is a feature assembled by journal collective members and submitted by Victor Puertas in October of 2023, right before Indigenous Peoples Day. EF! Journal has not altered this in any way and feature Victor’s writing to help elevate his incarceration and tell the story of repression against land defenders but in particular the repression in the so-called state of Georgia. After the statement there are also poems that he submitted, but he wanted to relay this disclaimer:

First I want to say that I’m not a writer, an author, or an artist. I’m the opposite of all of that. I collect memories, I tell stories, I just simply write; there is no contradiction between the things I write and who I am, there is no fiction. In my personal life, I’m full of extremes and opposites. Spanish is my second language, English my third—colonized two times and still trying to find my voice. Most of the time I write to understand the chaos that is my mind and my heart, and in my own way, to break into a thousand pieces the aesthetic of the so-called world of art and literary creation, rules, and recognition. And finally, I write because sometimes I just need it.

The following is from freevictor.org, to give more background.

Victor is an Indigenous land defender who has spent much of his adult life caring for the water, for the land, for his elders.

On March 5, 2023, Victor was arrested at the South River Music Festival (In Atlanta, Georgia). Victor was unloading camping equipment from his truck with his dog inside when heavily armed police charged at him from the woods, violently assaulted him, and hauled him to jail. After spending months inside DeKalb County without bail set or being indicted for a crime, he has now been transferred to an ICE facility where he again sits without bail.

Victor has given so much to so many throughout his life — please stand with him and demand his freedom!

Statement #2

After being officially criminally indicted by the state of Georgia and reaching seven months of incarceration, I wish to speak once again.

Once again, people are celebrating Indigenous People’s Day, and I want to raise my voice to remind everybody that it also marks 531 years of Indigenous resistance. As Indigenous people, we must go beyond mere representation and celebrations. Police, prisons, reservations, detention centers, and borders operate through a shared logic of immobilization, containing our oppressed communities in their racial system.

I am right now in a place that shouldn’t be holding any people, a place that should be closed. A place that has caused many cases of human rights abuses and violations, a place where many people have lost their lives. A place where people don’t have the proper shelter and healthcare. These places shouldn’t exist; they shouldn’t be holding people. The people here are refugees. This is part of the issue with the prison industrial complex; it exists just for profit. The goal of CCA is to maximize their profits, not to follow a moral compass by treating people with dignity, giving them the proper food, treating them like human beings. When you put corporations in charge of human beings, you will see flagrant violations of human rights, even to the point that people are dying. Everyone outside should raise their voice, demand that this stop.

Now, in times of rising xenophobia and racism, there is not a border crisis but a displacement crisis. When we see images of thousands of migrants and refugees trying to cross the southern colonial border, there is a rhetoric of border crisis. In reality, there is no border crisis but a displacement crisis. The war on migrant and refugee people does not exist separate from anti-Indigenous and anti-Black violence. Border imperialism is structurally bound up in this genocide. (On this Indigenous People’s Day, let’s keep in mind that back in the day, racist immigration policies also prohibit the migration of Indigenous people to the so-called United States.) Crees and Anishanabe from Canada and Yaquis from Mexico crossed into the U.S. in the late 19th and early 20th century and engaged in political struggles for recognition to challenge the state’s subjugation of them as “foreign Indians” and “illegal immigrants.”

Many southern immigrants/refugees are also Indigenous people and Black relatives. Borders and xenophobic immigration laws are rooted in Indigenous dispossession and anti-Black violence. In these 531 years of Indigenous resistance, I stand in solidarity with the relatives and Indigenous nations and communities remembering their

old teachings, stories, songs, and remembering that we are all still warriors. Solidarity with migrant and refugee relatives at the southern colonial border, across the world, and behind bars in these detention centers/concentration camps. Solidarity with the land defenders fighting the Mountain Valley Pipeline Black Snake and protecting life. Solidarity with the people in Gaza and all of Palestine resisting the violence of colonization — we are all owed dignity, personhood, respect. Millions of Palestinian people are suffering from brutal repression — and half of the population of Gaza is children. It's no coincidence that the same companies that provide Israel surveillance and technology in the Gaza Strip also operate in the southern U.S. border. That the Israeli Occupation Force (not the "Defense Force") trains U.S. police and provides them with tactics and weaponry already "battled-tested" on Palestinians just trying to exist as Indigenous people in their homelands. In these moments, everybody should raise their voice to demand the bombing of the Palestinian people be stopped.

As an Indigenous migrant man, I have been called many things by the state, by these so-called authorities. Now more than ever, I continue resisting this ridiculous narrative and these new RICO charges. I'm a sundancer, a land defender, a frontliner, living in occupied Indigenous land and territories with obligations and responsibilities due to my presence here. (I'm a warrior not by anyone else's definition other than my own and my people's.) These are the identities I hold dear. Because some of these identities have been used as a weapon to oppress me, I use them as a weapon of my own liberation. I protect, nurture, and love in these deep ways. I have been shot by rubber bullets many times; maced, tear gassed, and pepper sprayed more times than I can remember; I have been bitten and attacked by dogs, I have had guns pointed at my face by white supremacists, sprayed by water canons under freezing temperatures, tased a few times and injured many more. And I have always been proud to uphold my responsibilities and take a stand to defend people and land, even though standing up to the repressive power of the state has had a cost—the latest, this indictment, these seven months of incarceration and the so-real-now threat of deportation and removal from this land, this precious land. The land of my relatives, the land where my family lives and the land where my father is buried.

This is who I am. In this continuous detention, I'm completely fed up already with the degradation and the conditions, but I want you all to know that I keep resisting and standing up against the daily conditions, against the dehumanization, and against this fucked up system that separates us. Here I live a life that I don't regret.

Homies and comrades, to all of you who I love: Resist with a depth beyond recognition. Now and forever, keep loving deep, nurturing freedom, valuing life, protecting the sacred, raising hell. We are unstoppable, we are an extension of Earth, we are spirit, we are power, and there can be no borders, restrictions, or jails for that. Until our paths cross and you see me again next to the moon puppy.

Solidarity with the people in places like Atlanta, Philadelphia, standing up against the police state and with the resistance to anti-Black racialized state violence. Freedom to stay, freedom to move and the right to return. From Stewart Detention Center, Unit 6B—close the camps, free us all!

Victor "Ikmu" Puertas

Updates and Messages

1. I completely refuse this indictment and the new charges as this ridiculous narrative and lies of the state of Georgia continue.
2. Much love, respect, and gratitude to my native family for always holding me during this detention, for never leaving me alone, for always making sure that I have the help, the legal support, and the protection that I need during this captivity. You all are a blessing in my life. Thank you for always reaching out to me, for the prayers, the sacredness and the medicine. I love you all more than I can express in these colonial languages.
3. In these times of extreme xenophobia and racism, I ask everybody in the spirit of collective liberation to stand in solidarity and support of migrant/refugee relatives all across the land. Especially in places like Florida, New York, the southern border where the relatives are facing persecution and the brute enforcement of the migra/police state. Walls and borders can't stop the migration of animals, the river, the movement of people or the spirit of freedom.
4. Shoutout to the homies defending the land and fighting to stop the MVP Black Snake. Your hearts and commitment inspire me. To support the land defenders resisting the MVP pipeline, please donate to <http://bit.ly/applegaldefense>
5. To my homies in SLC, and to the homies who were by my side since the start of this incarceration, you are

my community, my thoughtful comrades. I'm so lucky for your presence in my life. I can't wait to be around all of you. Much love and respect your way.

6. Mountain Lion, thank you for your presence and your care since the beginning. Your letters and your art brighten my days and fill this dark cell full of colors and warmth.

7. To the rad crew in Savannah, GA. I love the fact that you are always in contact and that I'm getting a lot of letters from all of you. Your letters are the best and are what my spirit needs. Please keep in touch and keep sending mail! Sorry if I haven't answered yet; I have been really exhausted lately but soon I'll write back to all of you.

8. To the comrades in Poland, Germany, Greece, you are completely right: "No human is illegal; the illegal one is the state." You said I inspire you all. I say you all inspire me. You are in my mind and in my fist.

9. Organizing and resistance never stop; even behind bars, the struggle for dignity and respect and against degradation and dehumanization is alive and full of collective power. To all of you who took the time to call and send letters demanding better food and humane treatment for the detainees in the Stewart Detention Center, to all of you who join your voices, to all the voices here. I'm happy to inform you that the food is getting better by the day. The products are fresh, we're getting more fruits and veggies, and the food even tastes better (this is a lot for carceral food). A big salute of solidarity and struggle from all the detainees of units 6A, 6B, and 6C. Please keep calling and writing, demanding better food until this becomes a norm in this facility. You can write to:

Stewart Detention Center
ATTN: Warden Russell Washburn
146 CCA Road
Lumpkin, GA 31815

The strongest weapons the prison industrial complex has are isolation, silence, and darkness. By raising all our voices together, we are shaking the foundation of this system of despair.

10. Thank you to the homies and compas of the Final Straw and the Fire Ant Collective for the rad articles and the badass zines. Please keep sending more and staying in contact until all are free.

11. To Coyote for always holding the smoking mirrors where I can see my multiple me and my whole self, for the wild ride and for showing me how to survive.

12. So much gratitude and love to my father, Tortuguita and my brother Charles shining among the stars, all warriors in their own ways, for the inspiration, the dreams, and the protection.

13. Thanks to all of you beautiful people for all the letters, cards, books (books are lifesavers, and they have made me feel less alone), funds on my books for phone and commissary (I share all I have with many detainees who don't have any support at all. So there are other people, not only me, reading the books and eating the stuff from the commissary). I'm sorry that I haven't yet written back to a lot of my homies and comrades who have been reaching out, as I have been really exhausted, but soon I am going to start writing letters to you. Also, I have never been a big coffee drinker, but now I get it and enjoy a good cup of coffee daily, thanks to all of you. It's like the comrades here always say (and I want to emphasize that all prisoners are political): "Gangsters drink 40s, hustlers drink coffee." This is a tough, rough experience, but thanks to all of you, I am never alone, with freedom in our hearts and love that endures. Solidarity!

14. Support and solidarity with the rest of the people who have been incarcerated and indicted in Atlanta. If you can, please show solidarity with them by making a donation to their legal defense:
<https://communitymovementbuilders.org/donate/>

15. Solidarity is a practice. On Indigenous People's Day, please support Indigenous communities defending their land. Please support Mama Julz, a warrior for justice with Mothers Against Meth Alliance (MAMA) on Oglala territory:

Venmo: @Julie-Dreamer
Paypal: @JulzRich
CashApp: @MamaJulz73

editors note: check freevictor.org

NO JUSTICE
by Victor Puertas

“And when the last one of my people has died and they speak of my tribe like a story from the past and your children’s children think themselves alone in the field, the store, the shop, they will not be alone.

When the streets of your cities are silent and you think them empty, they will be filled with the spirits of the dead. Dead, did I say?

There is no dead, only a change of world.”

– Chief Seattle

For anarchists there is no god, only justice
For Indians there is no god without justice
With my mind full of memories of the “No Justice Shack”
And Tortuguita is more alive than ever,
And No Peace

Editors note:
As of printing,
Victor is out on bail.

2 SONGS
by Victor Puertas

They chanted a song of lying, of stabbing, of hating, of treachery, of revealing, of accusing, of replacing him, removing him, of disposing of him, of betraying, punishing, of using him, of misleading him, of scapegoating him, of burying him.

Then suddenly Coyote sang in answer a song of staying, resisting, of secrets kept, of self-respect, battling against power, of loyalty, of softness, strength like a tower and trust unbroken, freedom, of changing and of shifting shape, broken traps, the cell opening, the chain that snaps, the heart that doesn’t lie and doesn’t bow.

Too old to die young now. Coyote lives forever.
– Diary of a Dog

NO FUTURE
by Victor Puertas

“I have to tell you something,” I said. “I am not going to lie. I have to tell you. I have this God-shaped hole in my heart, and I think you do too.” – Richard van Camp, *The Lesser Blessed*

In this fucked up place, I never know what I am going to say. I don’t plan it. I’m not a writer or an author. I don’t even have a name. I am a place and a number: Unit 6B, 215B, #95610252.

But I will talk about longing, and about these fucked up conditions. They say there is no future, no home for us here. They are right. In the midst of security light and cameras, the daily count, the constant sound of the mechanical door lock, I close my eyes and mouth against this shitty food, just to taste once again the lover’s mouth in yours. They say there is no future, no home for us here. They are right.

A fine love together, one song, a disastrous one. In this place of despair, I am drinking all of this. You will rot here in jail, I hear them saying. And in my mind, I’ve already made so many love stories.

Sometimes conscious, sometimes unconscious, a disgrace, unruly, untamed. My story I tell in various ways. Deep romance, a loved one, sacred, beautiful, disgraceful, ignorant, wild—a dirty joke, a war, a lonely path, betrayal, captivity. Sometimes I forget completely that we are born like the poet says (“the snake and the snake charmer”). At this very moment, at the corner of this twelve-foot-long by eight-feet-wide cell, under the pale electric light, surrounded by these pale walls, I am longing for you. I want to be free. I need more grace than I thought. Grace, love, survival, freedom. I want this song and the warmth of you next to me.