

**NO NEW JAILS ON STOLEN LAND!**

# **INDIGENOUS PEOPLE'S DAY**



# **OCTOBER 14TH**

**4TH ANTI-COLUMBUS DAY TOUR**

**DECOLONIZE THIS MUSEUM**

**DECOLONIZE THIS CITY**

*#decolonizethisplace*

# WELCOME TO THE FOURTH ANTI-COLUMBUS DAY TOUR

It has been four years since our communities converged at this museum. Then, we put forth the following demands: Rename the Day, Respect the Ancestors, Remove the Statue. After three annual gatherings, none of these demands have been met. The museum remains silent about calls for the replacement of Columbus Day with Indigenous People's Day, which has been enacted by dozens of cities and states around the country. The museum is annotating some of its displays, but it uses these as token gestures to insulate itself from calls to overhaul the framework of the museum as a whole. The museum has claimed it has no jurisdiction over the Roosevelt monument. Yet it has installed an educational plaque on the structure asking its viewers to consider "both sides" of the genocidal history it represents, perfectly in keeping with the recommendations by the city's Monument Commission, which voted to re-sanctify both the Roosevelt monument and the widely despised Columbus monument at 59th street. This museum is maintained largely by taxpayers and it stands on "public" land, which we know is occupied ancestral territory of the Lenape. Yet the institution has failed to respond to the concerns voiced by the diverse communities of the city that it claims to represent and serve.

On this Indigenous People's Day, we declare our intent to intensify the crisis of legitimacy faced by this institution. We now highlight the presence on the board of figures like Richard Lefrak, one of the wealthiest real-estate predators in New York, and a donor to the 2020 campaign of Donald Trump; Rebekah Mercer, a primary architect of the ascendancy of Trump in 2016; Jacklyn Bezos, mother of Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos, and even the great-grandson of Theodore Roosevelt himself. Whether conservative or liberal in their political outlook, those profiting from genocide, displacement, dispossession, and incarceration should fear our movement as it grows. Decolonization, Abolition, Anti-Imperialism, and Anti-Capitalism inform our work and animate our desires, which point far beyond the museum and extend to the structures of power and wealth at the city at large.

**CHANTS: DECOLONIZE...RETURN THE LAND...ABOLITION NOW! // WHAT'S UNDER THE CITY?...THE LAND! // NO NEW JAILS ON STOLEN LAND...ABOLITION NOW! // KILL THAT SHIT...CAPITALISM...KILL THAT SHIT NOW!**

## DECOLONIZATION: WE WEREN'T MEANT TO KNOW EACH OTHER

We gather together in the spirit of the Guales Indians and enslaved Africans who, in 1526, converged in present-day South Carolina, joining forces to extirpate the Spanish colonizers. This was the first successful anti-colonial slave revolt and Indigenous uprising on the continent. In the aftermath, the self-emancipated Africans and their Indigenous comrades, lived with the land without dispossessing, displacing, or eliminating. Today, we honor this origin story of Black and Indigenous liberation, recognizing that there is a reason why this history is not taught in schools and why it is erased from textbooks. We weren't meant to know each other. But, today, we refuse the divide and conquer strategies of the settler state and reclaim our histories of co-resistance and revolution.

For the colonial-capitalist state, the most frightening collaboration is that between the Indigenous people from whom this land was stolen, and the stolen Indigenous Africans who were brought here to work that land. We must remember the centrality of liberating land to the liberation of our peoples. Without the destruction of the colonial-capitalist state, our labor, knowledges and culture will continue to be stolen, and this land will continue to be used as an endless extraction ground, from from Bronx to Brooklyn, Ecuador to Chiapas, and beyond.

## ABOLITION: NO NEW JAILS ON STOLEN LAND

Decolonization necessitates abolition. All jails are monuments to violence. All prisons are exhibits to the legacy of this state's bloody plunder. The traumatic legacy leading from US settler colonialism to the modern Prison Industrial Complex (PIC) and mass incarceration is clear. We can follow it in history from the genocide of indigenous people and chattel slavery to the war on drugs and migrant detention. Here, on stolen land, prisons and jails are direct offspring of slave plantations.

Right now, abolitionists are engaged in an effort to end the era of jail-building in New York City and beyond. The No New Jails movement is the continuation of abolitionist efforts in NYC to shut down notoriously violent jail Rikers Island without building new jails. In the latest iteration of this fight, Mayor Bill De Blasio and the billionaire-backed Lippman Commission, along with a handful of major foundations such as the Ford Foundation and Open Society, are pushing forward a land-use process to build 4 new jails with a price tag of eleven billion dollars.

Here alongside our Indigenous comrades, we maintain that no one has the right to build a single jail on stolen Lenape land. No one has the right to evict and displace people on land that was taken from the original occupants of Turtle Island. The No New Jails abolitionist framework not only calls for divestment of the carceral state, decolonization of urban land, and massive reinvestment in communities--on our own terms. The jail building era is over.

## ANTI-GENTRIFICATION: LAND, LIFE, HOUSING

Land is life. Community control of land leads to stabilized housing, and protected communities. NYC residents have understood the gravity of gentrification for many years, we have seen corporate greed destabilize communities with no remorse.

"Rezoning" and "economic development" in Harlem and other communities throughout the city are just political tools to administer land grabs in an "official" capacity. We cannot let landlords, elected officials, and local sellouts off the hook for participating in the destruction of Harlem. It's no secret that when land value increases, a new wave of upper-middle class white residents feel comfortable enough to to make homes and live out their dream lives in Harlem. We understand that this symptom of gentrification plagues black and brown neighborhoods across NYC, targeting lower-income tenants. Now, the city seeks to continue their campaign against our communities with the proposed building of 4 new jails, which will serve to cage the most vulnerable in our community: our youth and those who have been squeezed out of their homes but cannot relocate. They have removed us from our lands for centuries; seeking to destroy our connection to each other, our connection to the earth, and our connection to ourselves.

Detention and incarceration is a prime tool of the white settler state which administers the continual genocide of black and brown people in it's never ending campaign of theft, greed, and consumption. Our communities, cultures, and livelihoods have been under attack since the advent of colonization. We understand that gentrification is the state's repackaged campaign to keep us in the grips of destruction, and we will fight it with every tool at our disposal.

## ANTI-IMPERIALISM: SOLIDARITY WITH PEOPLE, NOT NATION-STATES

The United States operates as not only an internal settler-colony, but an external empire to facilitate capitalist accumulation in concert with the other imperial powers and multilateral agencies like the IMF, however tumultuous those relations may sometimes become in the age of Trump. The aim is to enforce favorable conditions for capital and to suppress popular movements that threaten the system and its local representatives. The two largest recipients of U.S. military aid are Israel, engaged in a continuous project of genocide against Palestinians, and Egypt, whose military regime was reconsolidated following the democratic revolution of Tahrir Square. India, Turkey, Brazil, Philippines, Haiti, Ecuador, Peru, and even Mexico with its nominally progressive government...the ruling classes of all these nations benefit as clients of the United States, and receive explicit or implicit sanction for attacks on their people, especially Indigenous peoples, immigrants, racialized minorities, women, and LGBTQ folks. The projects of demilitarization and anti-imperialism do not denounce U.S. policy in the abstract or speak out into a void of global public opinion: they call for building resistance on the ground here in the belly of the beast, including amongst our diasporic communities with ties to the places where war and empire are happening on the ground. When we speak of anti-imperialism, we mean solidarity with people and movements, not the nation-states and governments that claim to represent them. Free Puerto Rico, Palestine, Kashmir, Rojava, and beyond.

## 1) ROOSEVELT MONUMENT

Colonialist historians and their apologists on the NYC Monuments Commission plead for us to view this statue in its historical context, and to celebrate Roosevelt the statesman, Roosevelt the conservationist and Roosevelt the advocate of national parks. But even in his time, he was known as an imperialist, as a eugenicist, and as an elitist. A former NYPD commissioner and "hero" of the conquest of Cuba, Roosevelt wrote about whites as "the forward race," about the only good Indians being dead Indians, and about Blacks as inferior. There are not "two sides" to genocide and white supremacy. The plaque attached by the museum to the structure makes a mockery of our history and our communities. It only strengthens our determination to uproot this violent object no matter how many NYPD officers are called upon to protect it.

## 2) SENECA VILLAGE

Commissioned by city elites as a picturesque landscape for ruling class leisure and "passive recreation" for the white working classes, Central Park was founded on a dual history of displacement: first, the removal of the Lenape caretakers of Manahatta during the initial period of settler-colonization; and second, the eviction of the Black community that took up residency in what was known as Seneca Village between 82th and 89th streets starting in 1825. In the first large-scale usage of eminent domain in the history of New York, the city evicted all of the residents of the settlement in 1857 to make way for park construction, allowing Frederick Law Olmsted to engineer an artificial "nature" of lawns, rambles, and vistas on the erased grounds of the community. Anticipating later projects of Urban Renewal, park advocates described Seneca Village as a "shantytown" and the residents there as "squatters" and "vagabonds and scoundrels". Egbert Viele, a former officer in the Mexican-American war and the park's first engineer, wrote a report about the "refuge of squatters" living on the future site of Central Park, and criticized them as having "very little knowledge of the English language, and with very little respect for the law." Seneca villagers fought back against the evictions, but the "green" vision of Olmsted was prioritized over the survival of the community.

## NYC NOT FOR SALE: THE PEOPLES HOUSING PLAN

1. End homelessness in New York City. Immediate housing for all homeless people through new construction or seizure of vacant "warehoused" properties. Citywide moratorium on evictions.
2. Universal rent control. Apply rent control laws to all rental properties in New York City. Institute an immediate rent freeze, and phased rollback of rents to 20% of tenant income.
3. Transfer distressed buildings to tenant ownership. Transfer properties using the 7A receivership process or eminent domain. Tenant ownership in the form of cooperatives, mutual housing associations, or community land trusts.
4. Repair and expand high-quality public housing. Full funding for the NYC Housing Authority (NYCHA) and full repairs and enhancements for all NYCHA properties. Begin construction of new, high quality public housing with community centers and art spaces. Provide free language services for all NYCHA residents.
5. Democratize development. Institute direct election of community boards with veto power over development decisions. Expand public input into the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP). Moratorium on upzoning until these reforms are completed.

## 3) THE GREAT LAWN

Following the eviction of Seneca village and the construction of Central Park, this area of the city soon became an aesthetic amenity attractive to real-estate developers, who filled the urban grid on either side of the park with luxury housing for the wealthy. From the so-called Great Lawn, one sees to the east and west the skyline of early 20th-century aristocratic townhouses; in the 1930s, as the rich looked out of their windows, they would have seen on this spot Hoovervilles, self-organized encampments of precarious and homeless workers demanding housing and public support. Looking to the south, we now see the construction sky-scraping residential towers of the 1% in upper midtown. This ultra-luxury city-scape is a harbinger of developers' plans for the northern frontier of the park in Harlem. Another kind of tower haunts this entire urban panorama: the De Blasio administration's plan to install its new jails on the top of commercial high-rises throughout the boroughs.

While initially designed as an aesthetic amenity primarily for the wealthy, the unavoidable presence of poor people in the park has always provoked hatred and paranoia by white elites. The image of the park as a place of racialized disorder has persisted since the 1970s, making it a space of intensive surveillance and criminalization, attested to by the massive NYPD floodlights stored just adjacent to the Great Lawn.

## 4) CLEOPATRA'S NEEDLE

Dating to the reign of Thutmose III in 1185 BCE, this obelisk is one of three such objects bearing the same name. The other two are located in the imperial capitols of London and Paris respectively. In a process initiated by the US consul to Egypt, the object was presented as a "gift" to the United States from the Egyptian Khedive (the local tributary of the Ottoman empire) in 1879 in exchange for securing a trade agreement and diplomatic alliance favorable to the interests of the Egyptian comprador elite. It was removed from the seashore of Alexandria in 1881 by Arab laborers under command of a U.S. naval officer tasked with transporting it to New York.. The costs of removal, transportation, and re-installation in Central Park were born by the oligarch William Vanderbilt, who worked closely with the head of the New York City Parks conservancy to secure a location for it. Seeking to align itself with the mystique of "Eastern" antiquity as well as to mimic the trophy-taking of its geopolitical contenders Britain and France, the United States campaign to acquire this object is itself a monument to imperial plunder, geopolitical manipulation, and oligarchic philanthropy. In this respect, it closely mirrors the histories of wealth, power, and exploitation crystallized by the Metropolitan Museum just behind it.

## MASKS

Today, we have invited people to mask up, if they feel the spirit. For some it is to avoid identification by the state and in the media. For others, it is to identify with ancestral traditions, militant histories and communities of resistance. Whatever the reason, we know that our masks unsettle the settler-capitalist order. They fear what they cannot see.

# ANTI-CAPITALISM: FROM THE MUSEUM TO THE CITY

Now we are here at the Met, presided over by Daniel Brodsky, a member of the Real Estate Board of New York and leading oligarch of the city overall. Since Warren Kanders was removed from the Whitney, we have heard, over and over, "who is next?" From Brodsky, to Larry Fink at MoMA, to Darren Walker at the Ford Foundation, no museum, no board member, no philanthropist, no member of the ruling class should feel safe right now, because our communities have been unsafe for 500 years. We are opening new fronts, and our struggle will not cease until our city is safe for everyone. We are fighting back and building power, using a diversity of tactics ranging from assemblies and protests to creative forms of sabotage: strikes, de-occupations, blockades, shut-downs, home-visits... We are here to say that our IBPOC movements are anti-capitalist, that we aim to create discomfort and fear among the most wealthy, and that invite those who understand this historical moment to join us as traitors against capitalism and white supremacy.

No New Jails and New Sanctuary Coalition are calling on museums and their board members not only to divest from prisons, but to reinvest in communities--on the terms of communities themselves. Among the urgent forms of reinvestment we imagine are in The Peoples Housing Plan, and measures of Indigenous land restitution that are the necessary condition for climate justice. Even as we present this new incentive to stand on the right side, our scrutiny and pressure on museum board members will only continue to intensify: arms dealers, prison investors, climate criminals, real-estate developers, union busters, drug profiteers, school privatizers, advocates of state terror and colonial occupation. As the city burns and the waters rise, the forces of decolonization, abolition, anti-capitalism, and anti-imperialism are coalescing into a city-wide front that unsettles the very ground on which the institutions of culture, education, and power stand. We have come to collect a debt owed to our peoples since Columbus arrived in Ayiti in 1492.

**EVENTS: October 16/17 No New Jails // October 18: MoMA // October 24: City-wide anti-gentrification**

This brochure and action is the work of many groups in the city.