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TALKING STORY IN ASIAN AMERICA

■ Polo



Revising American exceptionalism In brown and black and blue

Part 3 of 3

How we share our pretty little planet

This is a three-part try at addressing America's sudden uncertainty about our exceptionalism in a world of hurt. Does a Great America, make you and me good people?

Part 1 acknowledges our enormous material productivity. Also the scale of our ferociously competing streams of knowledge ("news"). As great as so much productivity is, we clearly don't make enough love. I mean kindness. What's made by intimacy with each other, with our precious planet, with God — however we individually or communally experience what's sacred. And essential to greatness.

Part 2 took me to River Columbia's Old People who suggested some simple propositions on where and how we might alleviate this kind of American poverty. Our mainstream's emotional and spiritual woundedness. The disability that's surely killing us all — brown, black, and white people, beautiful blue seas, and precious green planet, alike.

Still I had to go. Though I could not say where. Or why. I slipped outside our circle and slunk around to where our four grandpas swayed with N'chi-Wana's rumble. To their most bent, to our nenek with thinnest, whitest, and wettest braids, I said, "Nenek manis kami (Ancestor dear ours) I gotta go-go-go."

He locked his gray-blue eyes into me and softly said something soothing. Something I somehow heard over so much fury. Maybe he spoke in Sahaptin or Chinook jargon, certainly not in Malayu or Indo patois. No se. I cannot say. Pero, these missing coordinates of place and time aside, he told me to go home. To go knowing that we know how — in a code as old as bones — how to alleviate frightened families' sorrow. How to elevate everyone's joy. How to build a healthy northwest corner of our shared continent.

I went home. Not to our northern-most tip of Sulawesi's Manado peninsula, mind you. That takes an Airbus A350 jumbo. Pero to Portland. Patient Apsara hummed me through N'chi-Wana's sacred gorge.

She and me arrived ahead of sunrise. I parked my sodden Rockports just inside our apartment door. I resettled onto my comfy couch still not knowing what to do for familia without homes, for our kualarga fleeing kampong (neighborhoods) without work for parents, without law or order for anyone. Though I rested there, knowing how. How we fix

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this.

Now flash forward — to use a screen-savvy, web-homie slang — to the Sunday morning that started this three-part essay. Alternatively, scan back to this story opening, back to our August morning sun making an astounding blue out of Saturday's thick black night. Whichever, I'm still struggling over what to do for settled America's corporate and government leaders. What public policies or programs might ease mainstream fears of neighboring communities, of neighboring nations. Fears rising faster than enormous banks of institutional capital can allay. What to do, is killing us. But you know, how to live and love together is simpler. Jah tentu. Sure it is. And this we surely know. We always have.

Every Sunday morning's mountains, every fireside elder along any of our river matriarchs has always told and told us how to better share this little green planet, spinning through all that dark, cold, silent, timeless mystery. Out there.

Any Monday morning, please pick one, we can be humbler before a deeper vein of human knowing than what's daily compellingly streamed by institutions managing our economics, politics, education, justice. Institutions unable to access our achy earth's cultural and spiritual wealth. Not for lack of trying to appropriate the look and sound of our ancestors and elders, mind you. But because understanding this, living and loving with us — in contrast to owning this or us — takes capital of another kind.

Before lunch Monday, calendar quiet Sunday trips to our two matriarchs, then to those three Cascade sultans. Ask our water and earth and fire. Next list Native or settled or New American community elders to ask. River City's 70 or so ethnic minority streams' elder aunties and knowing uncles are dying to share. Don't ask what to do, that's a complex partnership we must enter formally, respectfully. This has been asked of our elders and subsequently ignored about 100 times. Pero ask

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