

**Native Intelligence:
a column by
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This column's focus:
The State of New Columbia
and Our Colonialized Minds**

Native Americans, African-Americans, Boricuas (Puerto Ricans) and Chicano-Mexicanos have had many successes in the past 40 years of intensive struggle. But we have also had many failures, especially in key areas such as the return of lands to Native People, sovereignty issues, economic justice, and the reform of education and textbooks.

One of the reasons why the white corporate elites have been able to maintain their dominance since 1981, why they have been able to rollback multi-cultural education and cripple the schools for lower-income communities, and why they have tightened their control over media and television has been the well-known fact that African-Americans almost completely ignore other ethnic groups and nations when they wage their campaigns. Black leader after leader and group after group -- almost without exception - ignore the desires and needs of Native Americans and other peoples of color.

But, generally speaking, we as Native Americans are just as bad and so are the various Chicano and Mexicano groups. So when I criticize African-Americans I do so knowing full well that all of us are guilty of letting the white rulers play the game of "divide and conquer" with such great success.

Let's get down to specifics: the African-American political leadership has been seeking in Congress the admission of the District of Columbia as a new state to be known as "New Columbia." This would provide a degree of self-government for an area with a Black majority. For the first time, the U.S.A. would have a "black state" with (probably) two senators and a representative of African-American origin.

All of that is well and good, but in pushing the name "New Columbia" the Black leadership chose to insult Native American, Mexicano, and Puerto Rican people, because all of us suffered the deaths of millions of our ancestors thanks to Columbus. Moreover, Columbus ushered in the terrible enslavement of Africans in the Americas. Of course the white slavocracy which originally named the District of Columbia was

proud of slavery and genocide because that is how they obtained their wealth! But what a shock to have modern Black leaders seeking to perpetuate the name of "the butcher of the Indies"!

Now it so happens that Washington D.C. was founded on top of the old Renápe village of Nakoshtank, also known as Anacostak or Anacostia. A section of D. C. is still known as Anacostia and another part has been corrupted to Anacostin Island. The name means At the End of Navigation or At the Full Place (on the Potomac River), that is, where rocks fill up the river and a portage is necessary. The Anacostak people spoke the same language as do the Powhatan and other Renápe people of Virginia and Maryland.

Now wouldn't Anacostia or Anacostak be a great name for our capital? Why not a "State of Anacostia" instead of New Columbia? But the important thing is that Black leadership didn't even think of Native American feelings or of the fact that Natives were living for thousands of years where the District now exists. This is an example of why we don't work well together, why we don't support each other very often.

But the people who put together the D.C. statehood proposal also did not think about the fact that the Native nations, the Virgin Islands, Guam, Samoa, and Puerto Rico also have no voting representatives in Congress and that it might have been a good idea to have conferred with leaders from the reservations and the islands to see if they might not also want to be able to elect senators and representatives. Agreement might have been hard to reach but at least we would have been talking to each other, addressing our common situation of political powerlessness.

Indigenous people are now voting for Congress but as long as it is through the medium of white-controlled states we will continue to be colonized by the white majority and white political structure. The same is true for Mexicano-Chicanos and African-Americans.

We could come up with a common plan of action, but first we have to start thinking of each other's needs and where we have common interests. [April 15, 1994]

[Professor Jack D. Forbes, Powhatan-Delaware, is the author of *Columbus and Other Cannibals*, *Africans and Native Americans* and other books.] All Rights Reserved by Jack D. Forbes