



# MIRROR BUTTERFLY

the migration liberation  
movement suite

libretto & testimonials

an Afro Yaqui Music Collective piece  
in collaboration with the CSA series at  
the New Hazlett Theatre

# MIRROR BUTTERFLY CONCEPT

With its own roots in multiple nations and ethnicities, Pittsburgh's Afro Yaqui Music Collective seems uniquely positioned to address the issue of climate migration with art. The group mixes indigenous music from around the world with jazz, hip-hop and funk. Afro Yaqui is well known on the local scene, but composer and baritone saxophonist says the group wanted to take advantage of its residency with the New Hazlett Theater's Community Supported Art series to look at the big picture.

"We wanted to step back and look at the forces that are going to be defining our lives for the next 50 to 500 years," he says.

The result is *Mirror Butterfly: Migrant Liberation Suite*, a 50-minute opera premiering this week. Afro Yaqui employs its big-band approach to the mythical story of three warrior sisters fighting to save their way of life and the planet in a time of ecological crisis.

Just as Afro Yaqui draws on indigenous music – from Mexico, Africa, China and elsewhere – so did the story tap indigenous wisdom. Barson said the story derives from folklore the collective was told by indigenous people from the Yaqui nation, in Mexico; Tanzania; and the Kurdish part of Syria.

"We asked, what are your stories? How would you like this to be told in a musical tale?" Barson says. "And of course we do a surrealist spin on it."

Indigenous iconography informed the libretto, by acclaimed playwright Ruth Magraff, about the three heroines – a flower, a tree and a butterfly – who battle a sword character symbolizing capitalism, with its attendant extractive industries and other forms of exploitation.

Six dancers provide the movement, backed up by four choral singers and a 15-piece band including saxophones, percussion, a rhythm section, and a string section that includes instruments from China and Central Asia. The choreography is by nationally known choreographer Peggy Choy, who blends East Asian traditional dance with African dance. The libretto is delivered in song, rap and spoken word.

The singers includes vocalist Gizelxanath Rodriguez, and the band features acclaimed musicians including saxophonist Ben Opie and Jin Yang, who plays the Chinese lute known as the pipa.

Barson won the ASCAP Foundation's 2018 Johnny Mandel Award for young jazz composers. Support for the show and its related educational programs also comes from the Octave Foundation, New Sun Rising, and Pittonkatonk.

--Bill O'Driscoll | 90.5 WESA, Pittsburgh

# created by

MIRROR BUTTERFLY:

the migration liberation  
movement suite

concept/music: Ben Barson,  
Gizelxanath Rodriguez libretto:  
Ruth Margraff

choreography: Peggy Myo-  
Young Choy

INTERVIEWEES

Charlotte Hill O'Neal (Mama  
C) Azize Azlan

Gizelxanath Rodriguez Reyna  
Lourdes Anguamea

INTERVIEW POSTERS

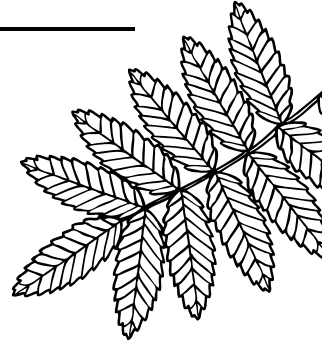
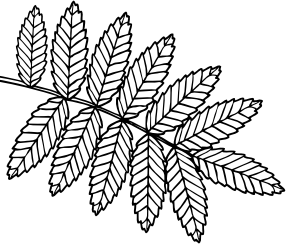
creator: Sarah Huny Young /  
SCDA.co

ZINE

creator: Hana Swift

The story of MIRROR BUTTERFLY is inspired by “The Story of the Sword” and other ancient Mayan/Zapatista parables that demonstrate how indigenous people can defeat invaders.

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## **SCENE 1. MUSHROOM OVERTURE: HOW THE SWORD BECAME A SWORD**

Energies and minerals combine to form mushrooms, and a sword who fights a tree. The sword boasts that he is cruel and can destroy everything in his path. He gives power and wealth to whoever wields him, and death to whoever defies.

The sword annihilates nature, fertility, and homesteads.

Fallen trees are cut into slaveboats and sold to faraway lands, weighed down with tears in stormy oceans. From the wreckage, mushrooms continue to grow, bringing nutrients and warning the trees of deforestation.

DEER: This is the story of a sword. And how the sword became a sword and struck the tree. And how the sword pushed everyone around...into forced migrations that destroyed the planet but made him rich (but still unsatisfied and jealous, craving more and more.) He chose to become a sword out of minerals that could have helped the tree. There was a mushroom labyrinth growing underground out of those same minerals that you could be a part of. Or not if you're happy being a sword that poisons birds and trees. Because a sword like this one strikes the tree. Then fights a stone and water. So really it's a question of - are you a sword?

Right now? What are you becoming from your mushroom minerals?

MUSHROOM CHORUS: You are not alone, you are with us. You are not alone, you are with us, in fire in word. You were slandered but you exist. Silenced but you exist. You were forgotten, Ignored and shamed. You can make your world here! In fire, in word. In fire, in word. You can make your world here! You can make your world here!

DEER: You were once a rebel lashing out against the gods of gold and superiority by deceit, reckless cruelty half-asleep. Trading one overlord for the next. But there is a rebellion deeper, slower to make your own authority beyond the reach of the state by creating not destroying. Or did you want this siege of lies and bullies?

When you are here. Existing. Are you willing to have your own way? Hold your ground? Move slower? wait? Are you willing to wait? To live with worlds beyond your world?

The calendar is coming. You must prepare. There's a CALENDAR FROM ABOVE AND A CALENDAR FROM BELOW. There's an hour before and an hour after the hour you have known. Unmarked on any clock. Unprized by the gray mediocrity of lord and master. There's a mirrored river that flows from the rising sun into the midnight sun and back again. It will show you how the sword became a sword and struck the tree. It will show you how the sword became a sword and struck the tree. A sword like this one. A sword like this one.

MUSHROOMS: A sword-like this one! A Sword like this. A sword-like this one, like this one. Fire catches on the blade, slashing into darkness. Fire catches on the blade slashing into darkness.

SWORD: I am the cruelest. I destroy everyone with my reckless accidents and toxic spills. My blade is sharp and unsanitary. Power to who wields me! Death to who defies me! I cut into all your gifts of nature, labor and fertility. I take em all! I degrade the conditions of what you produce and give you chaos. I expand and make you crave expansion in order to exist. I get rich for profit not use. I commodify your nature, your labor, your fertility. I devalue that and suck you dry for acquisition and disaster. I don't want you to rest. I don't want you stable. I want you anxious and suspicious, full of envy and mistrust, fatigued from every increase as a new boundary to exceed. I want the regime of profitability where money's value is abstract and monolithic and dissolving the only true bond is money. Even the devil is scared of me! I would offer you limitless wealth and godlike transformation but that's what I'm after myself so you'll have to make do with sweat, obesity and hunger. You'll get your alienation and fast, fast food but I always feel like I need something more, lack something more. I crave this, not that. I crave this, not that. I crave this not that.

MUSHROOMS: This half-born world where many worlds are possible. Time is a spiral slow slow slower this half born world where many worlds are possible. Time is a spiral. Slow slow slower. Worlds within worlds, so many worlds are possible. Time is a spiral, slow slow slow. Worlds within worlds.

SWORD: Sword time is uniform and linear. Sword time is never natural. You're the worker. You're time's carcass. Person is personnel. Synthetic bond eclipses natural bond. Manage and manipulate. Don't question the hustle. Throw that away. It's done. You're done. I need the new. I need the youth. I wanna deny aging and death. It's a race. I have a very short window to brand myself. More frantic, more crowded. Debt and doubt. I need more debt and doubt. I'm craving this not that.

MUSHROOMS: This—slow, all of this—

SWORD: Sword time is slavery, deforestation, monoculture. Sword time is linear and uniform. Sugar cane and corn—Sugar cane and corn deplete the soil. Oops!



## **SCENE 2 : PANTHER TREE / ORCHID MANTIS (Story of Colors and Night Air)**

The sword strikes a mulberry tree who is full of birds.

The tree fights - mantis style - camouflaged with orchids and thistles. The tree bursts into colors when the sword strikes hard through her branches and nearly topples her into exile.

DEER: If something gets in your way do you hack it up? And force whoever-doesn't-serve-you off the grid into exile like a former Black Panther? The Sword pushed her into Kansas and out of Kansas and all the way to Tanzania striking at her the whole way like a mulberry tree. Where do you put your defiance? Swashbucklin with the weaponry or do you open up your branches and your roots even in a strange land? Do you hack down whoever takes what you were taking even if it's hand to mouth and you have it all and all and all? Or are you more like a mulberry tree, letting the hummingbirds and orchid mantis come to your branches to make a small home inside your home?

TREE: Turn and return. In your dreams return. Give the land to those who work the land.

TREE + MUSHROOMS: Give back when the hands are many. Heal the hills, grow fruit and trees. Make brick from clay. Return to stay. Even In Your Dream Return.

SWORD: Your time is done, you sitting duck. That rotten fungi can't sustain your birdbrain wheeze. I've cut your mycorrhizal junk and trolled your networks. Mess up your windmills in a welt. Buy out, bully and bait you into wildfire, drought and storm surge hehehe cult of violence to the forced march of progress. My linear reality in God we thrust can never get voluptuous. Your mantis devilry will fold in on itself, like a bug-bitten weed-choked suck-up wannabe. Yeah you'll do anything for me, you know i

TREE: I see that sword bring down the grey trees to their knees, hacking limb from limb, hacking limb from limb. The rebels who wander, torn asunder, thrown in to the sea, head down bailing out the tears to sink or swim in the leaf litter, fear dung and turkey tail frontier. That sword came down and down hacking into my birds.

MUSHROOMS: "Where the birds had hidden. From the welts Meant to divide you. Kept in the dark, Anxious and carving.

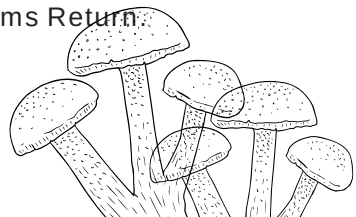
TREE: Before I took root I was a panther in a miniskirt. Sunglasses and Gun, baby on my back, a leather rebel running from a burning cross. When the Sword comes for me, I can feel his blows. When the sword comes for me, I can feel his blows bring me to my knees. Another slave boat, immigration drowning. Little humming, bird tiny windmill, each one teach one a soft infinity.

MUSHROOMS: Stand with your Birds torn Open. In a canopy of rain.

TREE: So the broken birds and I stand with out branches. Learning from the Orchid Mantis how to turn and return.

MUSHROOMS: That's why the night Is good for taking flight and for loving

TREE + MUSHROOMS: Turn and return in your dreams return. Give the land to those who work the land. Give back when the hands are many Heal the hills grow fruit and trees. Make brick brick from clay. Return to stay Even In Your Dreams Return





DEER: Can you stand with your birds torn open? in a canopy of rain?  
Like a housefly in a praying stance (can you tell me like a talking tree?)  
how to live that orchid mantis camouflage? Climb the stalk and wait,  
dressed in petals not too drab the pink and green stand with your birds  
torn open stars buried underground because the night air's good for  
taking flight, for talking, loving and for blooming... HEY YOU KNOW  
HOW YOU'LL FEEL IF YOU DON'T DO ANYTHING AND YOU'RE NOT  
READY FOR THAT FEELING



### **Scene 3. STONEFLOWER / TULIP OF TEARS**

The sword then fights a bending wildflower known as a reverse tulip of tears who has been turned into stone from forced labor in barren migrant fields. A snail encourages the stoneflower to rest and to remember the freedom of her nature. The stoneflower stands firm as the sword splits her in two, dulling the sword's brutality.

DEER: The sword hacked up a lot of trees... And the cut trees burst into color, trying to bloom. The sword was so excited about his assets that he struck a stoneflower. She was what they call a bending flower who had turned to stone in the Kurdish part of Turkey where the migrants bend all day in the hazelnut fields. She had once been a goddess. She had power and so much food that the sword had to force her into the outskirts. So he could strip-mine all her beauty into labor.

SWORD: Yeah she's hard like me so I get to hack at her dignity to get her surplus. Gotta keep her low and force her down, and back and forth, back to nowhere so I can get what she has naturally, like it's nothing really, heheh!

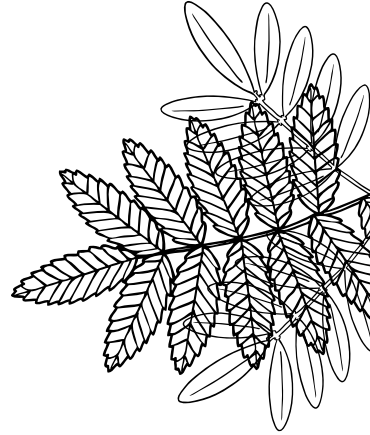
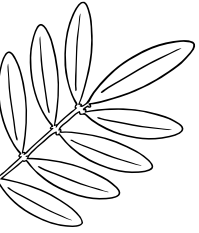
DEER: [to Stone] You are enough. Brace yourself.

SWORD: No other way but by the sword. Fight fight that's all you're good for. Brace yourself hard as a rock, destroy competing capacities for biological life and creation process, you're killin it, yeah, that's great, you're cornered now, can't stay, can't go. You're damaged, you're mine. Brace up and shatter hard like me. Come on. I'm striking. Yeah. What's gonna break in you and me. Let's find out. Go. Let's go.

STONEFLOWER: [warrior's march rap] I was once a migrant bent down in the fields, weak to men & family, exposed without a shield run out of my city pushed to the fear pushed to the dead zone, tulip of tears lost the ugly room, lost my mother tongue no money, sick water, fields of cotton & sun pushed to the mines, under the gun pushed to the city, nowhere to run shattered by the cold sword, barren & done turned back, migrated, & shunned not a tourist, not a beach, old men worked to death forced to the street soon to take their last breath pushed back & forth, pushed to nowhere everybody's hatin, cruel without a care waste of war comes down like the night what will break you first, you, or what you fight? when you start to break, try to find a tree a place with water, dull the cruelty sit with a comrade, some chocolate, and a cat or a little snail in a village with a shell hat when you're bending to the ground, like a wildflower stone forced defeat, forced decay, forced to be alone bent like a lamp over a book like a mulberry tree, like me the only flower left in a dead zone Kept alive when the soil got stripped to a stone flower, stone flower, tulip of tears

STONEFLOWER: (1: [snail recognition, fierce, choppy, bursts] Bend or break that's it? That's it, bend or break????!! Or recognize yourself recognize yourself In the freedom of a caracol Break the system you accept Break the sword! Break the sword, before it breaks your soul fight for what you lost Let go like the split of a sword you know you know this break before you ever bend again break if you must now, break if you must then recognize yourself (wisdom, calm) your love your desires Recognize your slavery know your part, elevate higher you have a different set of eyes no need to clarify You already knew what we have to do you know you'll give your life for this you know we know it too fear made you forget it, forget your nature fear made you forget fertility is part of labor fear was leading you, pulling you away from me you gotta get closer you know this snail when you see it in the spring you can bend and grow, return to Earth year after year when spring comes we're gonna flourish spring's gonna come, and we'll know the revolution is here (you see your nature in the snail) (Tap into power) you know you know this you already know this fear made you forget it you forgot you were shown this you forgot your nature.

STONEFLOWER: YOU KNOW A PART OF ME WOULD NEVER ACCEPT THOSE WHO ENSLAVE ME. AND I WOULD GIVE MY WHOLE LIFE FOR THE SEARCH.



## **Scene 4: FOUR-MIRRORED BUTTERFLY**

The split stone and the damaged tree make their way to a river to regrow, only to find the waterways poisoned by the sword. They call to the water for guidance, and the water rises up, reflected in a four-mirrored butterfly.

The mirrored butterfly sings of facing her extinction.

The sword lunges at the river in floods of toxic storm surge. However, the water slowly wraps itself around the sword and regains its shape. The stoneflower and Mulberry Tree find their strength, as clusters of caracol (snails) begin to flourish, dissolving the sword into rust and decay.

DEER: The sword damaged the tree and split the stone. He pushed them out of their homes, into the river where they try to heal. But the sword lunges at the river, flooding it with storm-surge and pollution.

SWORD: Water is the weakest. Good heheh. I fling myself into the watershed and poison all your creatures, make you terrified and sick. You can't resist my blunt -- force --- trauma -- toxins!

MUSHROOMS: Can you hear me. Butterfly! Butterfly!

DEER: The tree is dying, the stone and mushrooms cry out until the water rises up, reflected in a four-mirrored butterfly. The butterfly sings as she faces her extinction. She had gone to the talking tree, in her chrysalis stage, to learn to be like water, to become a butterfly. To dance like a deer till the real deer come.

MUSHROOMS and TREE: I'm Dying, I'm Crying. The River is Dying. Four Mirrored Butterfly. In her chrysalis like water.

DEER: The butterfly can hear the caracols of the spiral. She hears you too, whatever you think of her now, as she sings to you in an ancient grammar that does not bend to the sword. She sings with the voice of the river and the deer. She sings the wisdom of the water people, listen, listen.

BUTTERFLY: (Yoeme) jai-sa-tua-machi lutitipo.... Inim katek omot tat jaiwa.

DEER (translating BUTTERFLY): I am facing extinction. I'm a four-mirrored butterfly Can you face the mirrors of my wings? I fly at night, I search for food and water I only taste your poison It hurts to breathe your footprints everywhere, your poisons all the butterflies are gone  
BUTTERFLY: em yoo wamim jiapsi ta takak...tea ta ka kopta ia

DEER (translating BUTTERFLY): Don't you know the spiritual world is here You don't have to look somewhere else Your ancestors are here still -with the insects, birds and fish you are transforming too where life meets death we'll meet again If you die before me I will face your mirrors with the song of the mirror butterfly If I die before you, remember my wings, my song

BUTTERFLY: She'll have no branches, no petals, where she's torn but you can under-stand her song even when the wise men cannot. She warns of things that come to pass that your extinction is nigh. ...She'll teach you how to be like water, to become a butterfly. Every creature can help you if you turn to stone.

BUTTERFLY & MUSHROOMS: Shamed for too long poco a poco. Small world with-in worlds. The work of caracoles the work of snails New with-in old, old in new You are not alone.

STONEFLOWER: Recognize yourself in the freedom of a caracol, Break the system you accept. Break the sword before it breaks your soul. Fight for what you lost let go. Break before you ever bend again.

BUTTERFLY: Every rock and flower, mushroom, every deer can sing here. You've seen this reflected in my wings in the wilderness and in the Night World. You are guided to me by dreams. You'll know me right away and won't be afraid to look in my eyes or into my wings, you won't lost your mind.

SWORD: How dare you speak in that barbaric tongue!

BUTTERFLY: Plant yourself like a seed in the in caves darkness, the night world. Touch the darkest place to grow, To know your ancestors and previous lives. Give this seed to children. In the wilderness, in the caves, in the night world, dreams of water sea-flowers. Underneath the dawn I know I am about to disappear in this world.

I no longer climb the tree. The tree and I climb. I no longer throw the stones, The stones and I throw. Hiding like a seed, growing toward the light The struggle is for you and you are free I am you and you are me--are me--are me--are me are free are The-tree and I cli-mb.”

MUSRHOOMS + BUTTERFLY: Time is a spiral. The tree and I climb.

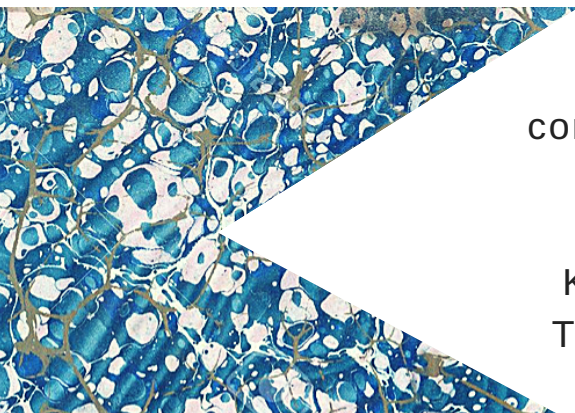
DEER: In the Wilderness when you turn to stone... In the Night World rest with your wings wide open... Dream the Water in the darkest times, plant your Sea Flowers under the dawn, roll back slowly—heart to world—in caracols...of unpaved plaza...unpainted hope and avocado, canteen dreams.

SWORD: I'm dissolving... sinking down in some embrace and rusty... dull and lost...what good is having the best if it brings out the worst in... I..heheh I'm lost...some dream inside a nightmare...nothing is everything and I regret...I...I... why all this purposeless power? Why all this power for no purpose

BUTTERFLY + TREE: The stone and I throw, the stone and throw the stone and I, throw. Mirrored river and I flow mirrored river and I.

MUSHROOMS, TREE AND BUTTERFLY: From the rising sun into the midnight sun and back again.

DEER: Here you won't need money. We'll make up a plate for you. At the end of the night we'll make up your bed. We won't ask when you're leaving or where you go. Sometimes you'll fight like a tree in a storm; like a stone against time, like water. Dawn will melt away the songlines rising in the midnight sun in a relief, a thirst, for all of this



Based on interviews  
conducted with activists  
and climate migrants  
based in  
Kurdish Syria, Ghana,  
Tanzania, and Mexico.

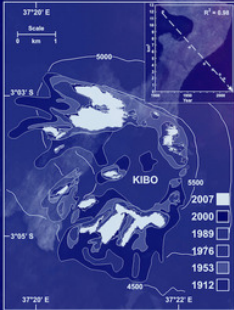
Charlotte O'Neal, or "Mama C," and her husband Pete were exiled nearly 50 years ago due to their belief in the liberation of Black people.

For their work in the Black Panther Party, Charlotte and Pete have spent much of their life abroad in Tanzania under the invitation of Julius Kambarage Nyerere, whose revolutionary government practiced "Ujamaa Socialism." The O'Neals are part of a centuries-long tradition of African American artists and activists turning to Africa for political and spiritual reasons. Today they continue their legacy of activism with the United African Alliance Community Center (UAACC). Part of their work includes fighting to combat forces that are causing Mt. Kilimanjaro to melt. As Mama C says:

“ BECAUSE OF CLIMATE CHANGE, [THE GLACIERS] ARE RAPIDLY MELTING. SO THE FARMING COMMUNITY WHO HAVE BEEN USING THE RUNOFF FOR SO MANY CENTURIES CAN HARDLY DO IT NOW!

"One of the first things we did when we started homesteading was plant trees indigenous to the area, including fruit trees," she continues.

Afro Yaqui Music Collective met Mama C at the founding of the first Ecosocialist International in Venezuela. In the Migration Liberation Movement Suite, she is represented by the Mulberry Tree.



Total Area Of Ice On Kilimanjaro  
(1912, 1953, 1976, 1989, 2000, 2007)

# CHARLOTTE O'NEAL

"MAMA C"



# "MAMA C" CHARLOTTE HILL O'NEAL

## MULBERRY TREE

The thing I miss the most [about Kansas City] is being around family. Of course, I have my UACC family in Tanzania but I was gone 20 years before I came back to the States. And one of the first things I wanted was a pizza! Now we have our own brick oven pizza stove, so that's ok. You know what else I miss? The live music—I love blues, I love gospel, I love jazz, I love African music but I grew up around that music. Just camaraderie—of dare I say my tribe—as an African in the diaspora. [First impression of Algeria] Well I was a bit surprised that there were so many French buildings that were downtown. It was quite different to see, you know, the sisters draped down. They wore white. Their faces were covered, you could see their eyes. Some of the young girls had miniskirts. Us panther sisters were in mini skirts and dresses. I think we were culturally naive. You know, that was the 60s and 70s, and us women were expressing our strength and that was one of the ways we did it. You don't dress that way in a strictly Islamic state. I had great memories of being around so many comrades, of revolutionaries all over the world...very similar to the comrades at the UACC today. And being around the Mediterranean, getting fresh fish...it was good. We considered staying [in Algeria] for ONE second. But you know, there were some Africans in diaspora in Tanzania, and they urged us to come there, because of the socialism, because Nyerere encouraged us to come. Something is going to blow your mind. I'm a Nyongon priest, and you have to have a roots reading, a divination, that reveals things in your history.

The Boballoa informed me that my ancestral plan comes from where Tanzania is. He said, he gave the reading to the Ifa, you go into another space. It blew my MIND, sister! That was the call, when I got off that plane. And some in the Maasai community would say: "You are from here!" And I said: "No, I'm from West Africa." My DNA on my mother's side came from Cameroon. But my father's side, according to the reading, came Tanzania. I think it's all needed. There are several avenues that merge or do not merge on this path to freedom. You have to speak out against atrocities. But you have to learn skills, mentor youth, each one teach one, and you got to learn to grow your own food! And there are a lot of youth, in US and Africa, who are taking over empty lots and respect farming now! Because there is such a stigma because we were made to farm. There is a hip hop collective here where growing food is a badge of honor now. There are hip hop "stars." This is the age of enlightenment and elevation. And I felt so blessed to see this, it is almost like the '60s again. [on police brutality] It's different. In the US, it's based on racism and economic situation. Here the police are part of the community, that was one of the 10 points of the panther program. So, you have police beat people up sometimes, but very seldom. It's not like the US, where they don't hold police accountable. Did you see a judge gave a 4 cents settlement? This is why I urge young people to find the means to travel outside of America, and to see that the police are unique in that they are a military wing! In Tanzania, they don't even have side arms. Occasionally they'll have rifles, but no tear gas, none of that. So, you need to find out there's different ways of living. When we left [the US], it was with the help of a modern day underground railroad.

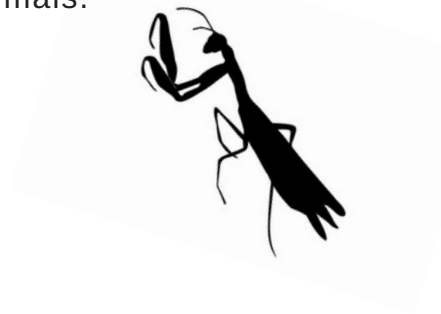
This was systematic escape. I have a tattoo on the back of my forearm: it's a bird from Ghana that says you have to look back to go forward. I have another Andika symbol, named Anjane, and it means that it means the creator is everywhere. Art has always been a means of education, and I want people to see [my tattoos] when I perform. The same migration, under different circumstances, that my ancestors did in the 30s going from the south to the north. I'm telling you, sister, us migrating to Tanzania was one of the best things that ever happened in my life. What was supposed to be a punishment for Peter and me was an absolute blessing. Not only for us...there are people in our immediate family who got married, there are couples who met there in our community center, who started families... because of this migration, there is a merging, a coming back home, of Africans from the diaspora and Africans from East Africa. It was so beautiful and it was meant to be. Another migration that we witnessed in the late 70s, was because of drought conditions, many people were coming to town, like the Masa community, and that condition of climate change was exacerbated by land lost to tourism. They were still raising the same amount of cows, which can be destructive during grazing, which caused desert conditions. A lot of people had to move to town. A lot of people lived in the bush. Another thing about climate change: we are 30 miles from Mount Kilimanjaro. It's not snow covered anymore: the glaciers, because of climate change, are rapidly melting. So the farming community around that who have been using the runoff for so many centuries, they can hardly do it now. I asked my husband recently, because we had VERY heavy rains, like El Nino, like 15 minutes of intensity, because these same rains were falling on Mount Kilimanjaro, it looks glacial again, but it's just packed snow!

So over 15 years I have seen major changes to M. Kilimanjaro. One of the first things we did when we started homesteading was plant a lot of trees indigenous to the area, including fruit trees. So even when it's hot, it always stays cool and shaded on our land. [on her marriage] It's a blessing to be a positive example with everything, including my marriage. One of the strengthening factors is trust. It seems obvious, but mutual trust is important. Letting people be who they are. I'm a priestess of OShun and all that, and Pete isn't really into that, but he encourages me. So those two. Another thing that is huge: working on something that is outside of you as a couple. So for us that is community service. Hey dad, how you doing! I'm sitting in dad's chair, let me know. So we've been packing, everyone knows my dad in the revolution! Community service merging into the we. Another thing to remember is that Peter founded the Black Panther Party. When you live that life, it's not about competition. Now when I was younger, women would flock to him because he is so handsome and charismatic. It used to get to me, but I got over that YEARS ago. And why? Because I trust him! He can admire another woman as long as he knows who is his queen! And he is my king! Did I say we are celebrating our 50th anniversary next year? We've been together since I was 18. And he is 67 now. You know I'm a vegetarian so just about any plant inspires me. I am an avid avocado eater. Bananas, mulberries, we very seldom get them because our students and youth eat them before they are ready. If you walk on our campus, or on the road, or in our village, I can point out to you so many plants that are medicine. And the youth can point that out, too. It's common knowledge. For instance, back in the day, everyone would cook dandelion greens. They are very healthy but people have forgotten. If people could just open their eyes, they would see plants communicate with us.

I've written poems about that—plants that touch your body, even just sitting with them. Even the so-called scientists talk about how we can communicate with plants. I don't know if you ever gone to a redwood forest, in CA, well I've been there, and I can hear the hum of those trees. I've also experienced that with the large outcroppings in the san Getty..(sp?)...when you go there I could hear that SAME hum. It's almost like electricity. It's almost the same as the hum from the Redwoods. There are some trees are like Boaboas, their circumference is huge. Over a hundred people can stand around them!

Those trees, they must be in my DNA, but they really communicate with me, and with insects and animals and birds you can even see intelligence in their faces. If people see that we are as connected to plants and insects as we are to each other. People have forgotten that! We as artists, that is one of the things we can communicate, that we are one with nature. I don't know if you've heard of this book, Secret Life Of Plants, I read it when I was 26 when I became vegetarian. These plants were hooked up to electrodes. They were able to register plants feeling of pain when they were uprooted...that is what we are doing. So I said: "What the heck am I going to eat? This is no different from slaughtering the animals." But I realized I couldn't be the cave like in India eating one seed, or the people who live on breath and air but I chose, I realize that we are taking a life. I tried to be a fruitarian, where you only eat a fruit that's fallen. It didn't agree with me. But you have got to survive. They're so smart, plants learn our language. We don't really know theirs. Same thing with birds.

I was sitting outside with my dad, and a hummingbird came and started at me, I started back at it, and then it flees away. I don't know if that was my ancestor, but something was going on. Same with insects: I like to show this when I'm at a mic performing for people to ask me about my tattoos. That's why I have a praying mantis on my arm. I consider that one of my spiritual animals.



# A Z I Z E A S L A N



WHERE  
ARE THE  
KURDS?

## THE KURDISH PROJECT

Azize Aslan is a revolutionary and a participant in the Kurdish Freedom Movement, and conducts economic studies as a part of the Tejvera Jinên Azad (Free Women's Congress).

Collaborators of the Afro Yaqui Music Collective met Azize in Chiapas, Mexico, within their shared interest in the Zapatistas. In The Migrant Liberation Movement Suite, the wisdom and words of Azize Aslan are reimagined in the character of the flower who turns to stone. Azize is proud of the example set by the Kurdish people in Syria for a life beyond climate change and capitalism; in her words:

“ ONE OF THE MOST REVOLUTIONARY QUESTS FOR ANTI-CAPITALIST LIFE, [THAT] YOU CAN COME ACROSS BETWEEN THE MIDDLE EAST AND AMERICA TODAY, IS WHERE THE KURDS LIVE.

The revolutionary Kurdish movement in Syria provides answers to how to rebuild economies and ecologies in the face of devastating drought and violence, exacerbated by climate change and ecological destruction.

AFRO  
YAQUI  
MUSIC  
COLLECTIVE

# AZIZE AZLAN

## STONEFLOWER

Before my life in Mexico, for 15 years I organized with the Kurdish women's movement. I knew we needed to create a woman's village. After two years I came to Mexico from Istanbul. I grew up in another city in Turkey—Antalya. My family were refugees because of war. Not directly affected by war—in my village — there was no direct war — there was an effect of the war. People could not produce on their land, they couldn't live there, the state forced people to move to cities. They lost everything—lost the house, lost the land, lost family members, and especially men. The state kills men—to weaken the family or just for whatever reason. But my family was living in the city, not in the village. In my city, there was no water for agriculture. Before the war, we moved to the cities. After 19 years, my family had to move to another city in Turkey. In the wartime, my family moved to this city as migrant workers in the lands. They couldn't produce in their own lands so they had to move again. Every year they would migrate to this city, and return back. My city is Sanliurfa, in northern Syria. Between Turkey and Syria. There is a Turkish city. Historically, its a city of Kurds, but at the same time, Turks, Armenians, everyone lived together. It was very a chaotic city. There were different ethnicities, but they were living in peace. But after all this time, the state did wouldn't recognize the Arabs, they would say “everyone is Turkish,” They wouldn't recognize our ethnicity or background. Because of this thinking, the war started to happen. Because the state wouldn't recognize the ethnicities of the people, for example they killed all the Armenians in 1915, an Armenian genocide. It was part of the construction of the Turkish State. There are 40 million Kurdish people, and there are 15 million Kurds in Turkey. Because they were able to recognize the genocide, the Kurdish people were very rebellious. In 1978, the Kurds rebelled again, but this time they had a lot of confidence.



In previous times everyone was separated. The 1978 rebellion consolidated their movement and confidence. This war was very strong, until 1990-96, there were 6 years intense war, with assassinations, burning whole villages. In this moment, 1,500 people disappeared. In my city, we didn't have the war directly, but all the cities in Kurdistan were affected. My family had to move, to find work, to Antalya in the East part of Turkey. It wasn't easy. We didn't have anything, anything, no money, anything. And...we had nine siblings, 5 women and 4 men, and I am the youngest. My family was poor, without anything, we had a tent. We went there to work on Turkish land. I went to a school in Sanliurfa, when we moved. I already had the ability to speak Turkish. But it was a problem to speak Kurdish. It was very difficult because we couldn't speak our mother tongue. In my home city we could speak languages without a problem. For each day, I and all the young people, moved with other families. The Turks made us live outside our city. So we had to walk for two hours to school. We stayed there for three years. Afterwards, my siblings, worked in the center of the city, and my brothers went to a busier part and we all moved to the city. It's a city very touristic city. With beaches. In Sanliurfa, I remember seeing lots of wheat, but in Antalya, we cultivated cotton. As you know, cultivating cotton is so heavy. Working the land was hard and manual especially for women. I remember beautiful times picking cotton—because it reminds me of nature. There were rivers, we used to fish, sometimes it was very dirty and we got sick. We took care of each other. We were called terrorists, so there was a very communal life. Very beautiful memories, we had to take care, and defend, together, our lands, from an enemy. So we defended our city together. There was a large snake that came out of the Earth. Everybody was thinking it was so dangerous, and we wanted to kill the snake.

With my sister, she was 15 years old, she stopped everyone from killing the snake, saying, “No, no we can’t kill it. This snake is beautiful. This snake also has a family!” So everyone went crazy. My sister grabbed the snake, and took it to its place. A boa constrictor about two meters long. We all went to look at what she was doing. In this moment, I remember I was shocked because the snake had made a nest, and the earth was super fine, and it was super clean. It was living just like us, it wasn’t any different than us. So we were afraid of them, but they were also afraid of us. So we let it live in peace. There are many examples like this. Insects in nature don’t cause fear, but in the city, there’s the idea that everything has to be super clean, and the insect is something dirty, it is anti-hygienic. It’s part of modernity this idea. At least, capitalist modernity. The system of capitalist modernity creates out of difference. In nature there are varieties, there are differences. But the capitalist system, it marks these differences, as contrarios, antagonists. Nature is about living with difference, but the system says “If you are a man, you have to exploit a woman to be a man. If you want to be rich, you have to exploit poor people. If you want to be a dominant nation, you have to exploit poor countries. In nature, there are certain elements that are antagonistic. Like a lion when it eats a prey is natural, to have life. The way the capitalist system puts it, it’s mandatory to have conflict because of the differences—you cannot compromise together to give life to each other. It creates a division of class, first when the woman lost her position to create. I will talk a little about civilization. First, there was the neolithic revolution. Women were so powerful initially that they were goddesses. For this, there was the neolithic revolution. Women had a lot of power and decision in their communities. Men didn’t have to leave the communities, because women had stored so much

food. Men began taking women's rights when there was a surplus. Women lost their objective of life. Jinwar is a city of women—the movement of women, without men, they create their own story, their own memory of women –to recall historical memory. For example, they are constructing in this town, another time, where the neolithic revolution was, they came back to the same place, they say that it's important to give space to women so they can regain again the position as “subjects of their lives.” Its not to say that they will only create a village of all women and that's it. It's the idea of women creating a village with their love, with their bare hands. So first they arrived and they started dreaming, and then they started building the town. But it's all organic, they are taking care of it. They are making sure that everything has an ecological balance. There are men, as well, who help women. They have spaces —they share everything. Last time i was there they were building this collective kitchen. The movement of women has an argument, and it is important to explain: in all of civilization, they lost their power, but also, they could also not be part of this capitalist modernity. Its an important part to leave this modernity, it's a key element to change history. Women still have the capacity to create communal life. Because they were not part of this capitalistic mode, they are able to care. Maybe women have forgotten, maybe we don't know how to do it, but we have a memory. Tradition, culture, customs, there are customs of the Kurds that are common throughout the region. In the middle east, there are customs, for example Turks, Armenians, there is a culture together, that is more unified. It is more collective, and it its very similar. They share a common set of rituals. For example, if you look at Kurdish history, they have been living in war for many years, but people are super tight. There are many heavy times, and for a long time no one listened to us, we were isolated. The Kurds developed a form that is very communal: for example I went to Rojava for two months. I didn't have to spend money. Everywhere I went there was

food, everyone was sharing food. That's the thing: in my home town, they don't ask you if you want to eat. At the end of the night, they're going to make your bed. They're not going to ask you. They never ask you "When are you going to leave, or where do you go?" that would be very ugly. So that's all a way of healing and caring for each other. If you look at the Kurdish family, no one says "who is your mama, your kids, your siblings?" everyone is everyone's mom, everyone's brother, everyone sister. It was only when I moved to Antalya, I learned who my mom and dad was. For example: there is a community, named Ezidi. It's not Christian, it's not Muslim, their god is the sun. In the middle east, after Islam, there were many assassinations of these people, because they didn't believe in [Islamic] God. But something about them, from my perspective of being women, when women are born, they comunidad chooses a couple of girls, and these girls are chosen to be leaders of the community. They have to get a specific education. As a rule, they can never get married, because if they marry, they will be ruled by patriarchy. Therefore, they never get married, and their responsibility is to learn about how to have natural health care, to resolve the community's problems or issues from a woman's perspective. They cannot have sex. This idea is very interesting, not having sex and being a leader. To be social leaders, keeping equilibrium, they are women, but, decisions that are higher than/above gender. For example, women warriors and militants, in the PKK, for them, there is no sexual life either. They are the leaders of the Kurdish. In all of patriarchy for the Kurds, that's how men accepted them as leaders. The men of the PKK don't have sex as well. I don't think that's something that's right, that we should continue to doing that. But that gives them strength to change the system. I cannot tell you how they manage. I don't live in this situation. They have a lot of internal discussions or conflicts, but I'm just sharing an example. We are activists, I talk to them about feminism,

we talk about relationships that are free, but when we have relationships, we lose rapidly our purpose, our opinion, our confidence. We think about what our role is as women. You are waiting for a man, you have a visualization of a man who is never going to arrive. Maybe this model is not the best, but at the same time, women still lack liberty for our identity, our mentality. Patriarchy is so rooted in our consciousness, it is not easy to let women's identity to be free. I think what they are doing is really important because it liberates their identity and gives a firm account of woman's struggle. Sometimes, in all of history there are sacred moments, just like the Buddhist they go and have similar rituals to liberate the spirit, maybe its a similar way. Its something so beautiful to see that in this part of the world, women are not fighting for a man. In Argentina, there is a group of feminists talking about self-defense. They asked me, "What if two women fight, who defends them?" And I said, "Sorry, but we don't fight." So I asked them: "Do you all fight?" and they said, "yes." and i said, "why?" And they said, "because of a guy. Because a guy was going out with two of them." In this kind of dynamic, we talk about how to be sisters of the struggle. I came to Mexico to learn alternatives, about autonomy. Here in Mexico, there is a very international expression, the Zapatistas. Before I knew myself, I knew about the Zapatista movement. So I always wanted to find out. It was a great opportunity, I came to do my doctorate, and I've just been learning. Two years ago, I met a couple of Zapatistas, but I could not say I knew them, because Zapatistas are very insular. There is an imaginary Zapatista that is international, that is anti capitalist autonomous. But now there is another reality of Zapatistas. I just saw a part of this reality. Because I have a different set of eyes. I don't need anybody to explain to me: I know how to organize, ideological development, handle internal conflicts. People say that Kurds and Zapatistas are the same movement. I thought the same way.

There are some things that are similar. But their existence is very different. We are living in a very different situation. Now, for example, there are many Zapatistas who have been displaced. But at the same time, in the middle east we lived in a war, in Mexico there is a form of war, but it is not a "hot" war. Not like Syria or Kurdistan. This is very important, because the Kurds have make decisions really fast. If they don't make a decision, they will get attacked and if attacked they will lose. But the Zapatistas think very differently. When they make a decision, they go very slow. I think that Zapatistas have a lot international support, because they're not a terrorist organization. The United States does not name them as a terrorist people. Sometimes Chapinecos, poor Indian peoples, but never terrorists. For all the mundo, the Kurds are terrorists, or potential terrorists. And that takes away a lot of international support. Just because the Turkish that there was a PKK and they were terrorists, they had the right to attack. These are political differences. And, yes, there are social differences. What I really like about the Zapatistas. They have a very close relationship with nature. For them, the rivers, the trees, the plants, they have a lot of significance. The Kurds, us, sometimes, have a more internalized capitalistic mind. The Kurds want to "develop," they don't think about what development is? If the movement doesn't establish an anticapitalist barrier, the Kurdish people can develop into a capitalistic model very fast. The Zapatistas are more integrated with their community, with their actual situation right now. In Kurdistan, there are no trees, no rivers. Whatever there was, it got burned. In Kurdistan, all of the historic areas, all of the forests, were destroyed in the moment of the war, that's why the Kurdish people lost their relation to that. The last thing they destroyed was "hasankeyf" [12,000 year old cave dwelling site], it had a 3,000 year history and the people were living there for that long. In the Turkish state, the Turkish state is

destroying this place for a corporation that has been living for 25 years. The Zapatistas still care about nature, and nature takes care of them, but I think it's more that nature is taking care of them. The landscape is impressive, its so beautiful. For example they have a military rule. After 1994 they had a war with the state. They made an agreement. The state compromised on these peace treaties, they didn't follow through. I think there is a contradiction because there is a movement, but people are still being displaced by the government. I am thinking from this revolutionary perspective that, if they are my people, I would defend them. I think there is a contradiction there. In Kurdistan the Pkk supports everybody, even if we don't agree. But the Zapatistas are really strict. If you vote for the government you can't live there. I think the state is against the people, and that's why as a revolutionary i think its primary to defend the people from being displaced. But they just have a different way of operating than we do. When the government comes to attack, they have other communities so they are not fighting against the army or the narcos, so they leave and go to another community. That means to leave the communities, they have this military formation, but they all know how to avoid this conflict. They know if they fight, the state is just going to massacre them. In Mexico, the life of people has no value. When you are resisting, no one can fall, when they put the mask on, they become political. I like the mask as well, in all places, in cities, in communities, they are autonomous communities. When they are done with their duties and responsibilities, they put back the back. That means that I'm doing all this work through a Zapatista ideology, because its all voluntary work. We are not doing it personally, its a political work. So, when you arrive to those places, you immediately know you are arriving in a different world or system. The individuals are not important, what is important is to fulfill the task. I think their structure is very beautiful.

Their assemblies, the way they make decisions, they have a form of vigilance, for example, *concejales tabajaros* (councils of work) who supervise you to do what you're supposed to be doing. They have a beautiful way, like an equilibrium between the military life and the civilian life. There are guerillas, but there are also people. In Kurdistan, its very marked: they are guerillas, there are civilians, who is farming. In Zapatista community, everyone works, and they are constantly changing tasks. That breaks the hierarchy in which the armed forces are living in the "cadones." In the Zapatistas, there are not two different forms of organizations. There is a "Comandancia" but at the same time there is a whole ideological organization: civilian peoples that are politicized that make decisions. Sometimes it's a comandancia. But civil power. [on staying hopeful and renewing strength] That's a question I commonly get asked. Because we've lost so many comrades, so many family members we've lost. You gain hope because of all this death. Because they were fighting. Because they lost. But if you're a good friend, then you have to fight for this friend that you lost. We are all following this idea. My friend went to Rojava just to film people. So there was an attack by ISIS and she died. And after, obviously, it was very painful and I still feel it. She was only 32 years old. In those years she did a lot of revolutionary work, so I have to respect her time. And for me, I'm not allowed to just stop fighting. I have to fight with everyone else. We all have hope, I think, in this military system. If you look through history, you're not just going to find the assholes, you will find the people who changed the world. We are going to create our history. I don't want to live without changing things. There's a flower in Kurdistan, I imagine the mountains in Kurdistan, because the mountains are very beautiful. In spring, all the mountains are filled with this flower. Its a flower that grows, a "bending Flower," like a lamp. It grows like that, and returns to the Earth, and spreads out over the mountain year after year. For the Kurds its very important for it signals spring, but they say "it comes from the struggle." For example this last year, there is a mountain "cudi" and they say "spring comes and cudi is going to flourish." Its a political statement because they say "spring is going to come and the guerillas are going to come as well."



# GIZELXANATH RODRIGUEZ

## FOUR MIRRORED BUTTERFLY

I can't think of just one [favorite performance]. I feel energy is given to the people, kind of in a circle, to give and receive. It's good to have bad performances. There are techniques to overcome the fear. It's both ways, if the audience is not willing to take it, it's not going to happen. I know when it's right, I know when the magic happens. For me lighting is key, to set the mood for the space. The music also. It helps to have the right environment. [most surprising turn as an artist] When I met Ben in New York, I never thought I could deviate from being an opera singer. I was living with my roommate from Mexico, in a house with 14 other artists from Latin America and different parts of the world. Somehow we found each other. He was working with a friend Ernesto Villalobos—both were working on Fred Ho's music. I met Ben at a party, and he started talking about Fred Ho. This was 3 months before Fred passed away. On the Vermont tour, I saw the whole process of the 16-person tour, so many performances. Fred passed away in April 2014. The tour was at the end of January. I started reading, I was really moved by the Maroon book—the political prisoner who was released from solitary confinement when we were doing the campaign, he was released while we were on tour. His book really influenced me, and I decided that I wanted to leave the city and find alternative ways to be self-sufficient in our modern world. So through that book I was able to see the collapse of the capitalist system, that there is something we can do to transcend that collapse. It's going back to indigenous practices of taking care of the land. Before I met Ben, I didn't have any political consciousness. I was clueless. I kinda knew something was wrong but I couldn't explain it,

what was causing it. The connection with Ben allowed me to open up and read, to explore and research my roots, and my connection I have with the land as well. I migrated to the states when I was 12, but I didn't want to migrate. I wanted to stay in Mexico. I had my friends, my grandma was there, I was taking voice lessons when I was 9. When I was 12 my parents decided to move here. I was pissed off! I had my first love in 6th gr, I left that boyfriend. It was very difficult for me. We were in Compton, California the first year. For 3 years, my parents worked in fields in Fresno. My brother and I were studying but I didn't understand what was happening in science, math, and English. I felt I didn't have to learn this language because we were going back. I refused to learn English until 2 years passed. I then realized that I will have to learn this language that I don't like. I didn't like how it sounded. I was able to learn French because it was more similar to Spanish, so I used my time to do that. After high school I went back to Mexico because I couldn't study here because it was too expensive. I studied languages, then started at Conservatory Tijuana that was started by Ukrainian people who came to build the first orchestra of the north. I got to audition and studied in Austria for 1 year. That was an opening moment in my life because I had a lot of dreams about Europe, and I idealized European culture. I went there when I was very young, I remember going to the park in Milano, and the first thing I see on the bathroom floor was heroin needles. You didn't think you were going to [see] drug problems in the rest of the world. It really opened my eyes to the truth. I didn't find a voice teacher [in Italy], so I migrated to Austria—there I experienced the worse racism I experienced in my life. I was working as a dishwasher in an Italian restaurant. I was cooking and washing dishes at the same time. It was a very hard moment, because people were allowed to smoke [in the kitchen]. My vocal system was off because I was inhaling

so much smoke. If I wanted to buy food—cheese or anything—if I didn't order right, they would make me wait for 30 minutes. If I was not accurate with my language, having an accent, they were dismissive and authoritarian. It was obvious I was going to struggle with racism if I stayed there. I had a teacher who was a male singer, I tried to switch, and a lady said that I was there because my ex-boyfriend had auditioned too, and we had both gotten into the Salzburg school. "You are here because we wanted to have your boyfriend in our school." She was hurtful. I said, listen this person is here because of me, I brought him here, you cannot tell me that I was here for someone else. I decided to go to the US. New York was a comforting place for me—people were so diverse. In the subway, people were coming together from all religions, we were all in this "wagon". And I studied to become an opera singer. But now that I'm here, this is just like a continuation of European culture. It's something ingrained in Europe, an aversion to someone that is different from you. You have to go out of your way [to change]. People are raised to be racist, you are not born with it. It is hard to change something you are raised to be, it is hard to go against family instructions, to contradict mom and dad. It takes an extra step to change that behavior. Now I look at my life with different eyes because I am older. My father was a history teacher, and my mother worked for the government as a secretary. They had to migrate. The economic system in Mexico collapsed dramatically because of the business exchange, the free-trade exchange of US, Mexico, Canada. American and Canadian corporations invaded the whole country, and displaced local businesses, tore them apart (small and mid-sized), They couldn't compete with MacDonalD's, Walmart. The whole country became violent, more aggressive, because they had no other way of surviving. Poverty creates violence. The drug trade has been going on for more than 100 years. Chinese migrants brought in the poppy to make heroine. US started importing heroine for medicine for the hospitals

(to put people to sleep, people injected morphine), so they needed that, for WWI they needed it. It started getting out of control. In the 60s with the prohibition of marijuana, and more drug use in the US, there was a bigger market. Columbia started to get involved. Pot was legal in the US before 1920, but became illegal soon after oil companies discovered they could make things out of petroleum, so they displaced hemp/weed (biodegradable). There was a big push for plastic to be produced. We created the collapse of the ecosystem in order to benefit corporations. But it cannot be that way, not any more. We need to go back in time, to our ancestors. What did they do, how were our ancestors able to be here for thousands of years without destroying their territory. We don't have to reinvent ourselves, they have the answers, they are still alive. I'm from the desert, from Mexicali, we have the desert cactus that are "the giants of the desert." We don't get much rain, maybe 3 times a year we will get some rain. It is unbelievable how the plants will adapt, bear fruits, collect water. For me, that image of resistance, putting spikes around you—is like the Saguaro, the giants of the desert. I am from the Yaqui, my grandfather and father are Yaqui's from Sonora right near Baja California where I was born. I have a deep connection with Yaqui's, I am researching the history, but I still need to understand more about the spirituality, and what the deer means to them. They put large deer heads on their heads and dance a ritual that brings water to the desert. It's sacred, I'm going to find out more when for the first time I am in Yaqui territory in 2 weeks. I've been haunted by images of deer dead on pavement, I see them dead everyday. These are dead deer killed by cars, and they really bother me. I have to reconnect with this animal, what is going on and why are the killing of nature? It is happening to deer but it is happening all around us. The deer are just looking for food, in the trash cans. Why are we taking all the space? They need to eat, as humans we have to do something for them because we are

destroying everything. [how to tell a friend from an enemy] When someone is your friend, when they care about you, it is an immediate connection. When somebody vibrates at the same level spiritually. You can tell when someone doesn't want to interact. Sometimes we connect, sometimes we don't. I don't think I've ever seen people as my enemy. I see people that might try to put me down, or slow me down so I won't achieve my goals - that is the person that really doesn't care about you. You have to connect with people who allow you to grow. There are other people in other parts of the world who are trying to have an alternative way of living, but they get shut down every single time, by capitalism. Capitalism doesn't want to stop growing, it has to be confronted, reconnect with ancestors and mother earth. You are seeing the collapse of the entire planet, we are looking at climate change right now. We have to learn how to grow our own food in conditions that we cannot even imagine how hot it's going to be. We might have to grow cactus in Pittsburgh—with extreme heat and extreme cold. These are challenging times, we have to be active, alert and responsible about what are we leaving behind, our carbon imprint, our damage to the soil. I really admire people like Angela who take care of people. They take care of people with malaria, in the indigenous communities that don't have medicine. They've been blockaded by US, so no medicines can enter. They are experiencing extreme lack of resources to heal themselves, going to ancestral remedies. But these are new viruses and mutations. I admire her courage to keep fighting against the mining companies and helping people to heal knowing that she might get sick cuz they don't have meds, and that area also really expensive I think you have to breathe really deeply and have a lot of compassion. Having thorns is like self-defense, that's compassion and reaction. I was very moved about [Peggy' Choys] grandfather and grand-uncle going to Yucatan, to see about the slaves, In the middle of the book, Yaquis, it says, "In this land used to

work 8,000 indigenous Yaquis from Sonora in region of Yucatan, Merida, ...3,000 Chinese or Koreans..."in the 1900s Yaquis were being enslaved, transported in wagons from the south, a lot of Yaquis committed collective suicide rather than be transported as slaves. I wanted you to know that is this very important for me to go to indigenous communities to learn about their practices, they're thinking is a whole different thing. In Mayan—the same word, this is he or this is she, they don't make distinction of gender, the way they describe time it is totally different from how we feel time. When they conjugate verbs, I cannot fully explain the grammar, has to do with transitions with verbs that are transitory. "The stone & I throw vs. I throw (the ball), it's not separated from nature. The tree & I climb" We have been detached from the whole cosmic universe, we have to make that reconnection again, going to the source of things, re-wiring ourselves, like the mushroom. Understanding that the earth has mechanisms in the ground, interconnections, that are diverse. The earth does best when everything is diverse, monocultures earth gets dry, doesn't like that We are like flowers, you know. It's the same with people.

# REYNA LOURDES ANGUAMEA

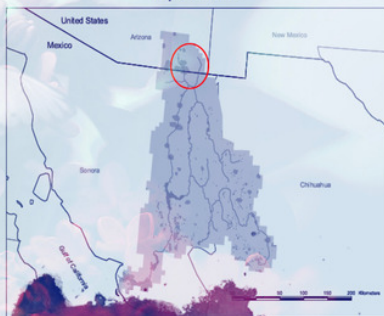
The Yaqui people are members of the National Indigenous Congress, who oppose capitalist rule of Mexico and propose an alternative rooted in the collective democratic practices of first peoples. The Yaquis are based in the state of Sonora, Mexico and, due to repression and forced migration, in Arizona and Yucatan, as well.

Yaqui activists such as Mario Luna and Reyna Lourdes Anguamea are fighting the new attempts to frack areas in the greater Yaqui River basin, which would be a death blow to a sacred and ancestral body of water.

Reyna, the director of the Museum of the Yaquis and a powerful leader in the Yaqui community, is represented by the Four-Mirrored Butterfly (or KAÜTESAMAI in the Yaqui language of Yoeme) in the Migrant Liberation Movement Suite. It is a sacred insect which contains four mirrors on its wings, providing a window into the different worlds of material and spirit that exist in Yaqui cosmology. The butterfly is one of the central characters that helps to organize the women's resistance to the sword. Its lyrics and voice are Reyna's, who translated the lyric from Yoeme. As Reyna says:

“DON'T YOU KNOW THE SPIRITUAL WORLD IS HERE—YOU DON'T HAVE TO LOOK SOMEWHERE ELSE.”

Yaqui Watershed



AFRO  
YAQUI  
MUSIC  
COLLECTIVE



## Reyna Lourdes Anguamea

*How do people confront their fears when they go to the retreat of 3 days called Yoojuara—the place of enchantment?*

The people that find the Yoojuara know right away because they see a sanctuary with snakes and animals that wait for them. They are guided there by dreams. If they are afraid and decide to leave or go back then they don't reach their objective. Which is finding theme selves. When they walk they cannot look to the sides, or back and get distracted because they will risk getting lost or scared by the animals. Some people lose their minds and come back home not being able to fulfill their goal in life so the family takes care of them sometimes the curanderas are able to cure them but those are specific herbs that are not commonly shared and only curanderas know about. The women don't go on these trips. They are guided by dreams that tell them what they will be. Singers or Curanderas(healers). Some others go through a very painful journey. If someone is beaten by a snake and they survive then they become curanderas or curanderos. The singers have an obligation is imposed by the parents or grandparents. During pregnancy if the baby has difficulties being born and survive his/her spirit is given away so that she or he can work for three years singing for the community.





**"The Afro Yaqui Music Collective is nothing short of pure, uncut sonic radical love. These extraordinary artists have returned this thing called 'jazz' back to its real roots—to the earth, to the sky, to the women who produced and protected a people's culture. Ben Barson, Gizelxanath Rodriguez, and the crew have committed to making liberation music—which is to say, music without borders or boundaries; future music from the well of the past that's always on time; joyful music that swings and sings and sometimes stings but always keeps us dancing toward freedom. Follow them. Don't miss them. An encounter with the Afro Yaqui Music Collective may be the most inspiring musical experience of your life."**

**Robin D. G. Kelley, author of *Thelonious Monk: The Life and Times of an American Original***