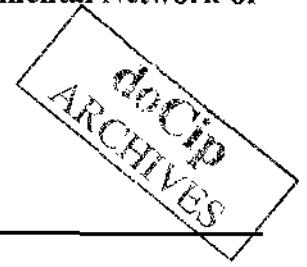


Celia Herrera Rodriguez

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**Intervention by La Red Xicana Indigena, Members of ENLACE the Intercontinental Network of  
Indigenous Women of the Americas.  
May 13, 2004**

**United Nations, NY Offices  
3<sup>rd</sup> Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues  
Culture**



Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Permanent Forum:

We as La RED Xicana Indigena, in *alliance* with our communities, families and nations, are coming together to heal and rebuild our identities and *familias* as women in resistance to the continued colonization and oppression of our people and Mother Earth. As members of the ENLACE, International Continental Network of Indigenous Women of the Americas, we were honored to participate in the recent 4<sup>th</sup> continental gathering held in Lima Peru and are in full support of the declaration submitted to this Forum on behalf of the ENLACE.

As Xicanas from North America in the United States, we are present to address the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, as daughters of those Indigenous un-documented migrant women who join the ranks of the millions of undocumented labors risking their lives to enter the United States borders.

We are not the daughters of middle or upper classes of Mexico, we are the descendants of those working indigenous peoples, who have fled the brutality of poverty, racism, domestic and military violence, relocation, and displacement, from their own homelands and territory.

We are here to speak directly of those women, many of them single mothers, who come here seeking some form of economic freedom for themselves, their children and family in their homelands. It is important to note that as women, disconnected from family, history, nation and land base, we are completely vulnerable within this governmental apparatus to many forms of violence, sexual and economic exploitation.

Our families who manage to settle in the United States do not speak to the historic poverty and racism suffered as indigenous peoples within their homeland. They do not speak to it because in the US Indigenous Peoples who have experienced racism and exploitation in their homelands have the opportunity and are systemically encouraged by the United States to create generic identities as Mexican/Latino/Hispanic, and consequently raise their children as American. We fall prey to the racism and ingrained colonial Spanish and American *policy* of cultural genocide institutionalized in Mexican and American policies of maintaining a free transnational labor pool that has no obvious recourse in the United States or Mexico.

The racist campaigns against indigenous migrant undocumented workers have been cyclical. At the time when Xicanos began fighting for civil rights in the US in the mid-60's and into the early 1970's, one of the first issues that we had to encounter was the rights of undocumented workers. We owe a lot to the work of Bert Corona and Chole/Soledad Alatorre who built the first organization to defend the rights undocumented workers and for the first time women. They created a consciousness of solidarity with indigenous workers throughout the Americas, regardless of documented or undocumented status here in the US.

North/Central America

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During this time, we began to realize the US and Mexico policies that continue to maintain us as a cheap labor pool, which continue to press the idea of Indigenous Peoples as having no rights and history. This in turn, has historically and systemically disallowed any claim to land base, culture, and/or reparation for the removal of our ancestors from our lands. Simultaneously, the educational and political system here in the US disallows this connection. For this reason, many migrant indigenous peoples who are living in the US are unable to reconnect with their indigenous relations and cultures in our homelands. For the most part those connections are broken within the first generation.

**For this reason we denounce the following:**

1. Systematic cultural ethnocide and division between us and other indigenous peoples to whom many of us are directly related.
2. US and Mexico mechanisms that deploy state terror at the US-Mexico Border.
3. US and Mexico's continued shameful negligence of the brutal massacres and massive disappearances of indigenous women and children in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico.
4. US and Mexican governmental policies that create campaigns of psychological terror and illness directed at indigenous undocumented migrant women, men and children living in the US.
5. US and Mexican policies that promote the assimilation of indigenous peoples without affording any rights to history, self determination and sovereignty.
6. US and Mexican governmental mechanisms that allow the exploitation of indigenous undocumented migrant women/workers without the recourse of financial, medical, educational and economic compensation and support for quality of life altering illnesses, diseases and accidents suffered as a consequence of historic exploitation, which includes the direct exposure of workers to pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers, chemicals, nuclear wastes and grossly unsafe working conditions.

**We urge the United States and Mexican governments to:**

1. sign the Draft Declaration on the Rights Indigenous Peoples
2. sign the Convention 169 of the International Labor Organization
3. sign the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).
4. Investigate and put to an end the continued exploitation, disappearance and murders of women and children in border regions and areas of military conflict.

**We urge the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, ECOSOC and UN agencies not to forget the migrant indigenous peoples and women throughout the Americas and the world.**