

MUJER U'WA¹

SUSAN CÁCERES²

Transnational Indigenous Solidarity

Is Ingrid and Lahe going to U'wa Land to help with U'wa education and schools

It is me and my friends in California, connecting with the U'wa women over years
And continuing the work in honor of their legacies

It is us women in California following the lead of the women in Colombia

It is knowing that Ingrid and Lahe are looking over all of us as we do the work



Image 1: photograph by Michelle Gutierrez*

¹ *Mujer U'wa* supports Indigenous U'wa women in the jungles of Colombia to build female leadership, as they contribute to peace building in a war zone and a territory that is rich in petroleum and natural resources. Their strength, commitment, love and depth show through — as they conduct workshops deep in the jungle, learn traditional weaving, organize around food security, study law and medicine, and protect sacred sites. *Mujer U'wa* is made up of Indigenous U'wa women in Colombia and Indigenous and Latina women volunteers in the San Francisco Bay Area. In the United States, we raise funds, spread awareness and build community. We are a transnational solidarity, all volunteer, grassroots, women-led organization.

² Susana is a queer embryonic immigrant (made in El Salvador and born in Los Angeles). She speaks her truth through poetry, drum, song and film. She earned an MA in Latin American Studies with a concentration in Women's Studies from the University of California, Los Angeles, and currently lives in Oakland. She is the Executive Director for El/La Para TransLatinas, a non-profit organization for Latin American transgender women in the Mission of San Francisco.

Transnational Indigenous Solidarity
Is sitting in ceremony and praying together

It is chewing ayo, sharing stories and learning from each other's herstory

It is sharing songs and tears and laughter

It is us women in the "developed" country, making it as easy as possible for the women in the "developing" country to get the grant funds

Transnational Indigenous Solidarity
Is building trust, long-term, consistently and honestly

It is honoring ancestors

It is standing in our power

It is accompaniment and solidarity with true respect

Transnational Indigenous Solidarity
Is meeting each other's families and chosen families

It is about expanding our tribe

Embracing our purpose

And knowing that if we were still on our native land, we would stand and fight for sovereignty too

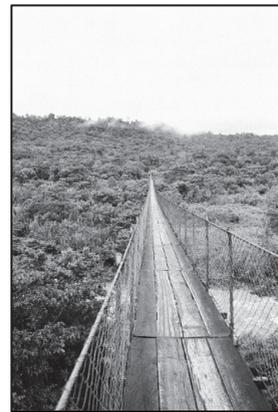


Image 2: photograph by
Michelle Gutierrez*

*The images capture scenes from the U'wa territory, the final native land that Ingrid Washinawatok El-Issa visited before her kidnapping and death, in 1999. The U'wa foster youth play soccer in a clinic for women and children converted from what was once a missionary boarding school. Just as many Native Americans in the United States and Canada suffered abuse in boarding schools, the U'wa until recently suffered a similar fate where they were physically and emotionally abused in the efforts to have them abandon their traditional beliefs and culture. When Ingrid traveled to the U'wa territory in 1999, along with Hawaiian activist Lahe'ena'e Gay, they worked to support U'wa people's respect and love for their traditional ways. One of their primary goals in supporting the U'wa involved making sure their culture was honored in their education as well. This bridge must be descended to arrive at the converted

clinic for women and children. The U'wa have great respect for the river that flows beneath it and all water as it represents life.

