

Terraba, the Truth About an Indian Village

This essay describes what I see and what I understand when I look at the reality of my people. My heart can't help but be sad for the land and rivers that are dying slowly. When was it that my brothers began to be afraid to live like Indians? Could it be that the teasing was stronger than the resistance? Could it be that we are the weakest point of a struggle for survival which soon will have lasted five hundred and eighteen years?

I hope that resistance will continue and be the same as my father received from my grandfather, and my grandfather from his father – a flame more than a resistance with arms symbolizes the fact of wanting to have our culture, of wanting our lifestyle preserved and respected, of wanting that our territory is not invaded by corporations that destroy the harmony that we have preserved.

Today I am proud of myself for being able to study in a state university in my country and being one of the first indigenous in my group to have access to higher education, but, do you want to know why I am one of the few? Well, it all started at the school in my village; let me tell beforehand that the Costa Rican education is by no means of quality and the one received by indigenous communities is far from it. The reason is that when it comes to the classes that are given there is no equity to try to preserve our existence as peoples: indigenous culture and mother tongue. In these classes the teachers of these subjects are forced to give lessons in the oldest classroom of the school or under a tree, this is the reality.

Sometimes I feel sad for them; we have been denied the right to almost everything. To have been born indigenous in this country, in which the shade of the skin matters, is the reality. If here there were peace and equality the children of my people would have the same opportunities of access to technology as the children of other regions of the country. If peace existed in Costa Rica, the indigenous territory would be respected, and if there were a real interest in indigenous needs in Costa Rica, I wouldn't be one of the few indigenous who writes a document like this, with the intention that it be read and be heard.

They impose on us more and try to make us forget our language, make us ashamed of who we are, of how we live, of how we think. But they will not succeed if they don't steal the dreams and the will to be a Terraba native.

- 17-year-old from Costa Rica (male)