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Opening Ceremony: "Honoring the Ancestors" (LEAD Summit VII)

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LEAD Original Programming

Opening Ceremony: "Honoring the Ancestors" LEAD Summit VII (2016)

START – 00:00:00

[Music]

[Wolf Howling]

>> [Inaudible] and welcome to the next installment of LEAD Media Programming from Studio 54, campus of California State University San Bernardino, the digital media platform for inspired educators, leaders, and community activists and advocates taking our message directly to the people to the [inaudible]. Thank you for sharing our common interest in the analysis, discussion, critique, dissemination, and commitment to the educational issues that impact Latinos. I'm your host, Dr. Enrique Mario Jr., and this episode is a syndicated replay from season seven of LEAD Summit 2016. The theme that year was black, brown, indigenous unity, meaning we share the educational crisis and the struggle side by side. Sacred Circles is an indigenous-based performance group that incorporates Aztec, Mayan, and other traditional teachings [inaudible], storytelling, and imagery to inspire, enlighten, heal, and honor the spirit of the ancestors and the people of all roots. Dembrebrah West African Drum and Dance Ensemble is a collection of professional and semiprofessional lay artist educators, dedicated to the steady preservation and promotion of authentic West African art, culture, and history in all its power, beauty, strength, and grace. Black, brown, indigenous symbolically came together in cultural solidarity in what many considered to have been the most memorable opening ceremony of any LEAD's summit or conference. Continue and enjoy the full value and complexity of this episode. We extend our appreciation to all our LEAD sponsors and partners, planners, volunteers, speakers and panelists, production team, affiliates, and town hall chapters, and commend them all for lifting their voice and uplifting the plight of Latinos in education. Thank you, [foreign language spoken].

>> This is a very special -- we're going to open up now. We had our formal welcome from our various campus representatives, dignitaries. But now we're going to do -- we're going to call in our ancestors. We have a special invited guest today. We're going to honor and call in our ancestors here with us. This ceremonial -- ceremony is made possible through a working partnership with the National Compadre's Network. We have two groups, and what we're doing is -- this is very unique because we're calling -- with the black and brown unity, we're calling in both sides. So, we're calling -- we're bringing in the ancestors from all the branches of the tree. We have Sacred Circles, which is an indigenous-based performance group that incorporates Aztec and Mayan and other traditional teachings, [inaudible], storytelling, and imagery to inspire, enlighten, heal, and honor the spirit of the ancestors and people of all roots. Then we have Dembrebrah West African Drum and Dance Ensemble, which is a collection of professional and

semiprofessionals, lay artist educators, dedicated to the steady preservation and promotion of authentic West African art, culture, and history in all its power, beauty, strength, and grace. Sacred Circles participants are Susana Miho, Setlalia Veso, Verjenja Viso Sanchez, and Victor Munyos [phonetic spellings]. Dembrebrah, we have Bobba John Beatty, Angela Davis Deasi, Quasi Williams, Lebrej Baker, and Honey Fraley [phonetic spellings]. And our mediator today, our facilitator, Maestro Jerry Teo [assumed spelling], who is the Director of the National Compadre's Network, therapist, author, performer, and program developer, and this is great here, the recipient of the Ambassador of Peace Award and Presidential Crime Victim Service Award from President Obama. So, let's welcome Maestro Jerry.

[Applause]

[Flute Whistling]

[Music]

>> We say good morning to you. Good morning.

>> Multiple Speakers: Good morning.

[Foreign Language Spoken]

Welcome Dembrebrah to welcome us. On stage, we are friends. We're family. We're connected in a very sacred way. And this morning already, we saw this video, and as I was watching this video it just pulled at my heart. And part of that is, it reminded me of me growing up in Compton. And in that time, there was violence and struggles and all those things too. But every morning, every morning, rain or shine, regardless of what went on the night before, my grandma would get up real early in the morning, like 4:30 in the morning. I thought she was crazy to get up so early. Right? But she'd get up every [inaudible] morning and began to connect. And what I began to understand as I began doing this work and began trying to bring back, you know, the sense of a oneness, the sense of healing, the sense of value is all ancestors of all races of all people began the day in a good way. And they began the day in that good way connecting, giving thanks for another day, but also asking for help, asking the ancestors to come and bless us and help us. Because sometimes in our minds, the problems are too big, but the spirit of our ancestors are very, very big. They're very, very graceful. They have so many values and so many things. So, today, we're going to offer some of that to you because we believe it's not only what you do in your mind, and education is not only just getting a degree, but it's really the character of the spirit that you carry. And one of the things is that in many of our young people and it's because we have not shared this and forgotten who they really, forgotten that rootedness, forgotten the sense of their spirit, forgotten that those grandmother's up there right now praying for us. So, we're going to ask them to join us. I'm going to ask you to join us and in your way, in the way that your spirit calls. I'm going to ask you to call your spirit and your ancestors too. And we're going to begin today by asking Setlalia Veso to ask for the permission of the relatives here on this land.

Then Brother Bobba John Beatty will come up and offer libations in the traditional the African way. And then we will face the different directions and ask for permission and also give thanks. And after we then call the prayer, then we call action because my dad would say [foreign language spoken]. Right? That words without action don't mean anything. So, the [foreign language spoken], the dance, we got to move it. We got to bring that spirit. We got to bring it in. There's not just enough to talk about it. You got to create that movement, and we're going to see some movement here today. You're going to feel the movement here today. Not only for one tradition but many traditions, drums coming together, dance coming together, hearts, spirits coming. We're sending a prayer for peace. So, with that, I'd like to ask Setlalia to come and bless us this morning.

[Applause]

>> Thank you.

[Foreign Language Spoken]

Greetings everyone. My name is Setlalia Veso. I'm California Mission Indian. From the Gabrielino and Diegueno tribes. My mother is Virginia Carmelo. Her grandmother is Virginia Carmelo, and my people trace their ancestors back to who Hou Topanga [phonetic], the village of Hou Topanga, which was here in San Bernardino. So, I'd like to begin by acknowledging the ancestors from each of the four directions, beginning with the East.

[Rattling]

[Foreign Language Spoken]

Thank you.

[Rattling]

>> Good morning.

>> Multiple Speakers: Good morning.

>> My name is Bobba John Beatty. And what I'd like to do is ask all of you to participate in this libation. This is an ancient African ceremony in which water is offered, important to the earth, in memory and acknowledgement and honor of our ancestors. The way I'd like to ask you to participate is that as I pour the water, I'd like all of you to respond with the Yoruba phrase [foreign language spoken]. Thank you. Yoruba is the language that we choose, so [foreign language spoken], it -- we -- the way we use it here totally means, so it is. When we say [foreign language spoken], that's what we mean. So, first ancestor that we'd like to pour for, the ancestor who created us in his image and likeness, Mother, Father, God, we pour for God almighty.

[Foreign Language Spoken]

[Music]

We pour for the little people who came out of the forest and settled in the Nile Valley. And over the years, they developed one of the greatest civilizations that this world is known, the ancient Egyptian civilization. And that during that civilization is where we discovered math, science. We pour for those ancestors.

[Foreign Language Spoken]

[Music]

African culture was moved to West Africa. As the Sahara Desert dried up and as other countries invaded Egypt, the culture was moved toward the west. We can see that in the studies done by the Dogon people, we can see that the culture was brought, so we pour for those ancestors who moved the culture toward the west, [foreign language spoken]. In the west, there were great civilizations from the 700 AD to the 14 century AD. The civilizations of Songhai, Mali, and Ghana, great civilizations that covered landmasses larger than all of Europe but under one central government. We pour for those ancestors.

[Foreign Language Spoken]

[Music]

The greatest holocaust this world has ever known, the African slave trade. We want to pour for those ancestors, but we want to be sure that we know what we're thinking. We want to clear our thinking up. We want to remind people that these slaves did not come from Africa. Africans, free Africans came from Africa. They were captured and brought and turned into slaves. We have to look at it like it really is, that process, mentally, physically and spiritually harmful, and it's been passed down. But we pour for those ancestors who understood that we needed to maintain that freedom thought, so we want to pour for those ancestors that were many of them were thrown overboard on

some of those ships, some even jumped overboard. And it was thought that their bodies would never be mentioned again, but we want to think about them now, and we want to pour for them.

[Foreign Language Spoken]

[Music]

On various places where they dropped Africans and began that process of enslaving them, there were people who continued a rebellious attitude. There was the Ned Turners and the Denmark VCs and the sheroes, the Harriet Tubmans, we -- and the Sojourner Truths, we want to pour for those ancestors [foreign language spoken]. Even more modern ancestors that maintain -- insisted that we maintain our connection with Africa, we even called ourselves now African Americans, we're talking about Malcolm X and some of those ancestors, we want to pour for them.

[Foreign Language Spoken]

[Music]

In your own families here now, I want you to think about it. And there are certain spirits, there are certain ancestors who you might want to honor, I'd like you to call their names out loud now.

[Inaudible]

[Foreign Language Spoken]

[Inaudible]

[Foreign Language Spoken]

[Music]

We want to pour for ourselves now. We want to pour for ourselves with an intention that we live our lives in such a way that those who come after us will remember us, and they will pour libation for us.

[Foreign Language Spoken]

[Music]

[Applause]

[Music]

>> In the tradition of our indigenous people, people that come from all races of all ways but our indigenous way, where our ancestors taught us we asked permission to begin to pray this way. And if you'd like to join us and face the directions, you're welcome to do that. And we say [foreign language spoken] Creator, Mother, Father. [foreign language spoken]. We begin by facing that direction of the east for that sun rise as we come up this way, a direction where men are the guardians greater. We come to this day and ask your permission, your permission to begin this ceremony to continue what our ancestors have given us. Our ancestors, seven generations back have seated us, and I don't know what they did Creator, but they did sacrifice so much. And put those songs and these words and these dances and this ceremony within us so that we could survive, and more than survivors, so that we could really teach that next generation, Creator. And as the direction of the east, where the men are the guardians, we pray for our fathers, our grandfathers, our brothers, our homeys, our partners, our sons, all that men nation, Creator, that they will step up in a good way, that they will step up in a noble way, that they will step up in an honorable way, and do their role and do their part. We pray in this direction of the east, we say [foreign language spoken].

[Music]

We face this direction.

[Foreign Language Spoken]

You are my other me. That direction of the west, direction where women are the guardians, the first teachers, our first leaders. The ones that sacrifice, that hold us, that give us life. That in their stomachs they hold us for nine months and give us their breasts. They give us their drum, Creator. They give us their blood. They give us this motion. They give us our intent. They give us their purpose. They are our first leaders, our -- so we honor the nation of the women, our women that give us this life and sacrifice first. They are our first teachers about how to be warriors. We pray for our moms, our grandmas, our nanas, [foreign language spoken], homies, sisters, sister friends, [foreign language spoken] all of them, Creator. We pray for those women that are struggling, that are hurting, have been abused, that are homeless, that they will find healing, Creator, in this good way. But that a woman was rise up again and lead us the way they have all these generations. In the way of the west, we say [foreign language spoken].

[Music]

The direction between that -- the two directions of men and women come the direction of the south, where the children come. We know when you bring men and women together in a good way, the sacredness of that next generation. As we pray for those that are on their way, the seven generations will come, those that are just a dream, those that are babies, those toddlers [inaudible] ones that jump up and run and wake us up on Saturday morning and say, I want to eat, I want candy on Easter and want to play and say the truth, Creator. Those children that are looking for the teachings. They're

looking for these ways, these cultural ways and looking to us. We pray for our [foreign language spoken], our adolescents. They're on that bridge, the ones that have their own flow, their own way, that have their own poetry, that speak to us and ask us those direct questions about what happened to the past generations that we are hurting so much. They're looking to us to guide them. We pray for all that generation, Creator, that they will have voice. That they will know who they are, that their identity will be strong. They will be rooted, but they will be strong enough to know that they come from a generation of people that are sacred. That they are sacred themselves and all people of all races are sacred, and they will help bring us all together that way. In the sacred direction to the south, we say [foreign language spoken].

[Music]

In that fourth sacred direction of the north, where the ancestors come from. They are the ones that left us these ways. These traditions, even when they were banished and weren't in our hearts, we played that drum. And our songs we played at our grandmother's saying to us, even if they had to grab us and [foreign language spoken], they gave us that song. All those traditions of those tortillas, those frijoles, [inaudible] all those things that nourish our spirit and still now feed us that way. We pray for the elders, for the [foreign language spoken], those that talk and say that same story over and over and over again. It's not because they're senile, just because we don't have a lesson yet. Where we pray for those slow walkers, the ones that walk with us real slow and slow down for us so that we can get these lessons. We pray for the--

[Foreign Language Spoken]

[Music]

We ask for those ancestors to come in the spirit today and for elders to speak up and share up so that we can learn that next generation way. We say thank you for the elders and the ancestors we say [foreign language spoken].

[Music]

And now at fifth direction, the one [foreign language spoken], we ask you to reach your hands up, reach your hands up, open up, open up your spirit that the soul comes up every morning to greet you with that light, the light of the Creator, the light of the generations. Open up today so that you can feel the spirit, so that you can be healed, so that you will gain that rooted knowledge that is there for you. We open up and we say [foreign language spoken].

[Music]

To this sixth direction, touch the Earth, [foreign language spoken], or Earth that feeds us, that allows us to walk on her. That gives us that food, that nourishment, and when we're hurting, we can fall to her. She will hold us for as long as we need. We say thank

you to an [foreign language spoken], Mother Earth that way, in that sacred way. And we ask you to put your hands out and reach because in the center is the seventh direction is where all people of all races of all roots come together. That one root, that one direction, that human race, we pray for that unity in our language [foreign language spoken], the interconnected sacredness. Because way down deep, our sacred traditions are one, our sacred values are one. We are one people. This nation and this universe has tried to separate us, but our spirit, our traditions, and our values, and our [foreign language spoken] is stronger than any force that tries to break us up. We are one people [foreign language spoken]. And now we commit this -- these teachings to [foreign language spoken]. And we ask you to pull that and feel that and feel the energy of this movement that will come through you. Feel it. You feel like getting up and dancing, feel it. Get those feet move and get that spirit moving. Come on, we got to move and get this energy going that way [foreign language spoken].

[Music]

[Applause]

[Music]

[Applause]

[Singing]

[Music and Singing]

[Music]

[Clapping and Singing]

[Music]

[Applause]

[Music]

[Applause]

[Music]

[Applause]

[Foreign Language Spoken]

>> Don't go, don't go. Bobba John, don't go. Don't go. Hold on, Danny. Hold on, Danny. [Foreign language spoken] we're very honored for helping us call in our ancestor people

today, and we know they're here. We know our ancestors are here with us like that. So, we're honored like that. I want to introduce, quickly, my nephew, Mario Chunika [phonetic], [foreign language spoken] from Los Coyotes.

[Applause]

He's going to do the [inaudible]. We're going to do an honor song to honor the ceremony like that, and we're going to give you some gifts. Okay? So--

[Foreign Language Spoken]

[Music]

[Music and Singing]

[Applause]

END – 00:41:16