Episode 03: The Doctrine of Discovery in the Mesoamerican Context with Davíd Carrasco Transcript

Jordan Loewen-Colón (00:00:08):

Hello, and welcome to the Mapping the Doctrine of Discovery Podcast. The producers of this podcast would like to acknowledge with respect the Onondaga nation fire keepers of Haudenosaunee, the Indigenous peoples on whose ancestral lens Syracuse University now stands. And now introducing your host, Philip Arnold and Sandra Bigtree.

Philip P. Arnold (00:00:30):

Hello and welcome to the podcast. I'm Phil Arnold associate professor and chair of the Department of Religion at Syracuse University, as well as core faculty member of native American Indigenous studies and the founding director of the Great Law of Peace Center, Onondaga lake.

Sandy Bigtree (00:00:47):

I'm Sandy Bigtree. I'm a citizen of the Mohawk nation at Akwesasne and Phil and I are founding members of the Indigenous Values Initiative, which fosters collaborative educational work between the academic community and the Haudenosaunee to promote their message of peace that was brought to Onondaga lake thousands of years ago. Today, we're going to be speaking with David Carrasco and I have to interject here a little bit of my story because it's so connected this relationship we have with David. In 1978, I was a well known performer in central New York in Onondaga nation territory. And I was approached by the Onondaga nation to help them open up the doors to informing non-native people about this special relationship the Haudenosaunee had with the founding of the United States. And I was so honored to be approached in this way, but I didn't have a clue how to help them because I had not heard about this legacy from my family.

Sandy Bigtree (00:02:01):

And it was certainly nothing that was taught in public schools. So I was rather panicked about what it was I could do and what eventually happened as I just left Syracuse. And I went on a journey to try to find out how could I be helpful? And I got involved in a couple different tangent directives and ended up in Boulder, Colorado. This is where I met Phil and he was taking a class with David Carrasco at the University of Colorado and Boulder. And Phil was just telling me how amazing your classes were. And it was life changing for Phil and became life changing for me. And we were invited to go on several trips to Mexico where you do the bulk of your research and your work at that time. We're part of a very large collaborative.

Sandy Bigtree (00:02:57):

And what this opened up to me was the problem of religion and why we didn't know any of these stories about this connection with the Onondaga nation to the great law of peace, something that had existed on this continent for thousands of years. And what was so interesting about the history of religions is because it viewed religion from a critical standpoint and discussing colonialism and that clicked for Phil and it clicked for me, how are we supposed to move forward if we don't address the problem? So anyway, everybody, David Carrasco.

Philip P. Arnold (00:03:39):

Yeah. I wanted to say a few things too. Nothing embarrassing, but I do want to make sure everyone knows how fortunate we are to have David Carrasco with us. Professor Carrasco is the Neil L Rubinstein professor of the study of Latin America at Harvard University, Mexican American historian of religions with a particular interest in Mesoamerican cities as symbols and the Mexican American borderlands.

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David Carrasco was trained as a historian religion at the university of Chicago in Boulder. And as Sandy was saying, or sorry, history of religions at the University of Chicago and is inspired by a lot of questions that we're categorizing today as the doctrine of Christian discovery. As Sandy had outlined, in the early '80s, we became involved with the Moses Mesoamerican archive and research project, which is the brainchild of professor Carrasco.

Philip P. Arnold (00:04:58):

Started in Boulder, Colorado moved to Princeton University and is now at Harvard University, still a thriving enterprise that has inspired a number of young scholars and is still doing tremendous work. David is the author of several books that I won't mention here, but many of them have to do with the issues of conquest discovery domination. So thank you for coming David. And I would like for you to say a few words of introduction of yourself.

Davíd Carrasco (00:05:37):

Well, thank you very much, Phil and Sandy Bigtree. It's great to see both of you and hear your voices and to be part of this very important, even profoundly important series of presentations and dialogues for the public about the Christian doctrine of discovery. I'm very grateful to be here with you to see you thriving in Syracuse, and to have been able to keep this learning and working relationship with you over these years. So whatever else I say, I just want to say I'm thankful and also very proud of you and the work that we do together and how I keep learning from you in terms of these initiatives that you've taken up there in the Syracuse area.

Philip P. Arnold (00:06:32):

Thanks, David. Let's start at the beginning. So in my formation, particularly around the archive and your work a central question of religion has always been colonialism, right? Colonialism, conquest, and domination. And I wonder if you could talk about how you became attracted to the history of religions around these questions of colonialism, because you are really the person in our first season here who deals with religion as a central organizing principle.

Davíd Carrasco (00:07:17):

Sure. I think that I use the word beginning. One of my beginnings of my awareness of this relationship between colonialism, its destructive and generative history and religion came when I was a teenager, I went to live in Mexico city for the first time. My father was there to train Mexican coaches to prepare for the Olympic games. And I had what I call my Aztec moment. My aunt took me to the museum of anthropology, which at that time was the old museum down near the Zócalo. And I went into the museum in Mexico city, near the center of the city. And I saw for the first time wonderful, beautiful, intimidating objects, things that had been made by Indigenous hands, that reflected Indigenous minds.

Davíd Carrasco (00:08:27):

And I saw the Aztec calendar stone, which is a profound expression of story and mathematics of the relationship that these people felt they had with the landscape and with nature. I saw masks that these people had made to express alternative personalities that often were related to deities and ancestors. I saw images of paintings that these people had made. And it just really upset me in ways I couldn't understand. At the time I remember walking out into the Zócalo. Now the Zócalo of Mexico city is really a colonial space. It's a place of colonial architecture that has great influences from the Spaniards and from Christianity. The cathedral is there. The governmental palace is there. The Supreme court is there and all of them in the form of Spanish colonialism.

Davíd Carrasco (00:09:30):

So while I was walking around out there with this sense of disturbance of what I'd seen in the museum, what came to me was in a sense, an internal struggle that I was having that represented not only my identity, but my education in the United States and this complicated contradiction between what I saw in the museum and what I saw outside in the Zócalo, because on the one hand, what came to the surface when I saw these things made by Indigenous people was a sense of shame that I had internalized anti Mexican, anti-Indigenous attitudes in my education in the United States, and that they were being shattered in this experience.

Davíd Carrasco (00:10:20):

And so I felt this sense of shame that I had really been miseducated, but at the same time, on the other side of my chest, where I was having these feelings was a feeling of great curiosity about these people, about what they had achieved, and what was the contradiction between what was inside the museum and what was out there in the Zócalo, just in the architecture and the things that were made to communicate to pastors by what was the identity of the Mexicans. And so I called this my Aztec moment because I realized I was discovering this part of my own identity. My father was a Mexican and we were in Mexico city because of his connection with Mexico's complexity. And so on the one hand I felt shame, but I felt this curiosity and I felt I needed to understand more about this contradiction between the Spanish architecture, which was colonial, which was monumental, and also the things that had been made by Indigenous people themselves.

Davíd Carrasco (00:11:22):

So this Aztec moment taught me that I wasn't white or Black, I was a mixture of these things, and it stimulated in me this profound curiosity to know what these two in a sense, aesthetic styles really meant for who Mexicans were, who I was. And also what had happened to Indigenous people, whose expressions, whose genius, who's caring for the earth and each other had really been confined to a museum. This really concerned me and this was really the beginning of my understanding that colonialism had a long term influence of erasing in a sense Indigenous lives and their histories and creativity.

Sandy Bigtree (00:12:11):

What struck me about one of our early visits down there with you was the Zócalo and the cathedral, and that the actual stones had been taken from the rubble of the Aztec temples to rebuild this cathedral and I just had never seen anything so violent and it was just horrifying to me. And then you proceeded to take us to different villages. And I remember seeing we'd go and visit these churches, scattered all over Mexico. And this same thing had happened all over Mexico where the pyramids in sacred spaces were leveled. And then out of the rubble, the colonists built these churches. So they held down to the sacred space, but reoriented it to Christianity. And then they hired artisans to go inside and paint murals on the walls. And they would have angels in the ceiling they could look up to and you pointed out, I'll never forget it, look at their feet because these angels had sandals on their feet and they were meant to be walking on the earth. I will never forget that moment. And all these doors just kept opening the farther and we toured Mexico with you.

Davíd Carrasco (00:13:31):

Well, yeah, that's a great memory. And well, you talk about something very important for the listeners to understand, the Catholic cathedral, the national cathedral of Mexico, which is this monumental church that really represents the way in which the Catholic church tried to educate people about its symbols, its purpose, but also its conquest of the Indigenous world was built in part from the stones from the great

Aztec temple. That is when the Spaniards blew this temple apart with cannon and had Indian peoples dismantle it, they then took those stones and they put them as the foundation in the very walls of part of the Catholic church, which shows two things. Number one, what I would call the defacement of the Indigenous world, but also the way in which in certain communities where either there are many Indigenous people or the Indigenous people that are there able to fight back and survive, they somehow get embedded sometimes in hidden ways, in the very architecture, ideas, laws, and styles of life.

Davíd Carrasco (00:14:51):

But there's a defacement and a hiddenness but also an embeddedness. And I think we see that in what you have done up there in Syracuse, but let me respond to this idea of defacement and being embedded by just reading something that I was reading this morning. I'm reading this book by Louis Menand, it's called the Free World. And it's about ideas and culture between World War II and during the Cold War. And in a chapter that I was reading this morning called Hollywood Paris Hollywood, there is a lot in there that made me think about what we're talking about and what you're doing. Menand is talking about the making of movies when they first started. And he's talking about how the movies started really in Paris, but they were taken over by Hollywood and he's got this incredible line in 1910, two thirds of the movies shown in the world were made in France.

Davíd Carrasco (00:16:03):

American audiences watched westerns imported from France in which the Indians wore mustaches. Now what this says to me in terms of what Sandy Bigtree was just talking about, this is about what the Christian doctrine of discovery is partly about. And that is it's about the defacement. You got Indians with mustaches. In other words, you're defacing these people. And what happens during colonialism given in the example that Sandy Bigtree gave with the stones is colonialism defaced the earth. It defaced the land and the relationship that people who've been living on the land for thousands of years had with the land. It also we talk about the idea of the legal part of this doctrine of discovery. There's a lot of, but really what I see in the legal history of this is a defacement of the worldview of these people.

Davíd Carrasco (00:17:21):

You deface the worldview, you deface the earth, and then you deface the people. In other words, this is really a form of tremendous aggression, not on the part of the native people. So they always like to talk about the aggression of the native, but it's part of the aggression of the Europeans, the colonialists, and that aggression gets put into the buildings, it gets put into the way that people are treated, it gets put into the legal system, which is really based on a *cosmovision*. That is a religious vision. So I think Sandy Bigtree's example of how the stones are defaced and then embedded is a very, a very good, very important one to mention.

Philip P. Arnold (00:18:12):

That's great. Thank you. I wonder if we could go back to the div school at the University of Chicago. Because one of the thinkers that you introduced both of us to actually, been formative for me, Mircea Eliade, who was the primary inspiration for the history of religions for many, many years at the University of Chicago, you were his student, but then also, and very importantly, Charles Long, who we lost last year, but Charles Long is an important voice in this analysis of religion and colonialism. And frankly, the doctrine of Christian discovery that I think gets lost. Oftentimes in our conversations, you were very close to professor Long. And I wonder if you could tell us about how he introduced you to the issues of colonialism coming from your experiences as a young boy in Mexico city, but also how he helped frame the intellectual issues around this issue of colonialism and religion.

Davíd Carrasco (00:19:48):

Yes, well, so when I was growing up, I had an experience that in a sense prepared me for professor Long, and this experience represents something that you and Sandy Bigtree write about in your article about the Columbus statue. And that is what I began to see as a teenager was not only this experience in Mexico, but it was an experience with African Americans. And it taught me that the demography of the country, the human demography of the country was much more diverse in terms of its humanities than what we were able to acknowledge in our school system. And I became very familiar with African Americans and the African American presence through my father was a basketball coach and he was the first Mexican American to be a head basketball coach at a major university, which was American University. And at that time there was no, there was no other college in Maryland or the Washington DC area except Howard university, which was all black that allowed black people to play in public sports until my father recruited African Americans from Washington DC to play at American University.

Davíd Carrasco (00:21:05):

And these African Americans, they became the stars of this team and this team became a championship team. So I grew up with a Mexican American, a brown man, coaching white men and Black men in a team that was fully integrated and was despised by many of the other teams that they played against and I witnessed this. And so I began to see not only the Indigenous presence through my experience in Mexico, the Mexican presence through my father, but the African American presence. And so I was tuned in by the time I was 15 to see this rich human diversity and to wonder why these different groups didn't have equal or almost semi-equal presence in the stories of the country and in the institutions and so forth. So what happened was these two experiences prepared me when I got to the university of Chicago for some of the gifts that came to me.

Davíd Carrasco (00:22:10):

And one of the first gifts, as you said Phil, came from the writings of Mircea Eliade. And I was very impressed with an essay Eliade wrote called the new humanism and in the new humanism, Eliade says, and this is written around 1950s, that was coming over the horizon of the west. That is the horizon of the universities. The horizon of the United States are the spiritualties and the histories of Asian people, of Indigenous people, of Latin American people. And that this is going to have a major impact on the way in which education is taught. And people become aware of the spiritual soil of human cultures is what Mircea Eliade said. And this idea about things coming over the horizon, Indigenous people coming over the horizon, over the African Americans coming over the horizon, well, they'd already been over the horizon, but now people were becoming aware of their crucial presence, their part of the demography.

Davíd Carrasco (00:23:14):

But the second gift from the University of Chicago to me came from Charles Long, not only what he taught me, but Long was interested in learning about what the students brought to the university. And so he was interested in me as an African American and a Mexican American and some of the students in terms of their Indigenous background. There was another student who was a Mexican American who had a connection to Indigenous people, Irene Vasquez. There was Michio Araki from Japan. So what Charles Long then did was he talked about colonialism being part of what's coming over the horizon that is people were becoming aware of how central colonialism was not only to the formation of all of these people in the United States, but he also was very impressed with how this colonialism was a total was a total movement. It was legal, it was ideological.

Davíd Carrasco (00:24:23):

It was physical and not only was colonialism having these elements, but it had a religious tinge to it that it was always justified in terms of language like the new world. Language of the new world really meant a world that was like the new creation of the world. So what Charles Long said that was so important is that

colonialism represented for the people who were Indigenous through the language of the colonizer. It represented a second creation of the world that as Indigenous people would understand that their world had been created by, by the makers, by the creators, but because of the suffering that they underwent because of the languages that were imported and the languages that were partly lost, that their condition was like a new beginning for them. The new world was a new world for everybody. It was a new world for Indigenous people for African people.

Davíd Carrasco (00:25:31):

It wasn't just a new world for the people that came from Europe. And this newness was like a second creation. Indigenous people and African people could have undergone the second creation now had to do the work of not only telling the story of the second creation, but in the world of Charles Long, taking this tragedy that had happened to them and finding new religious resources to make a better world for everybody. And it was only these people who had undergone the second creation who would be able to identify the resources that out of this tragedy that could help everybody come to a new world and a new humanity. And it seems to me that you see this type of discovery of new resources in the work of African Americans, Martin Luther King, Cornell West, like Dolores Weta, and also into this great center of peace that you have there.

Davíd Carrasco (00:26:35):

And the way we tell the story of Hiawatha and those people communicated to us. So Charles Long really was the person that articulated this relationship between the tragedy of colonialism and the people who could find new resources out of it to make a better work.

Jordan Loewen-Colón (00:26:55):

Do you need help catching up on today's topic, or do you want to learn more about the resources mentioned? If so, please check our website at podcast.doctrineofdiscovery.org for more information. Now, back to the conversation.

Philip P. Arnold (00:27:14):

One of the things that I remember about those meetings in Boulder and Princeton of the Mesoamerican archive and research project was long, essentially putting us all on notice to be keenly aware of how we're understanding religion and how it operates. I mean, it was almost thrilling to be able to listen to Charles Long and his way of framing the deficiencies that we have as academics to understand the tragedy that you were just speaking of. You know, I mean, one of the things that we're trying to do is try to get inside what that must have been like when, for example, Cortez lands on the shores of what's now Mexico and encounters these people, there was the reading of the *Requerimiento*, right? Or the requirement that was horrible, I mean, it was terrifying and yet made perfect sense to the Christians at the time that were there to both evangelize and destroy simultaneously.

Philip P. Arnold (00:28:43):

And I mean, you're uniquely qualified to talk about these things, these aspects of conquest that directly involve religion. We've talked about the fascination with Indigenous peoples and their traditions, but also religion is the vehicle for this trauma as well, and particularly in Mexico. And we don't hear about that in enough, frankly, in the United States.

Davíd Carrasco (00:29:16):

Yes. Well, so Charles Long when he spoke, as you know, he was kind of listening to music. He was at some point it was almost like listening to music through his words. And Charles Long really taught us

about this contradiction in the study of religion. On the one hand, his study of religion came out of this period in European history where people were raising really wonderful questions about epistemology, what is knowledge, and also turning their tools of learning on everything from plants to the stars, as well as human communities, but at the same time that this new type of inquiry was being made, that was the same exact same time that colonialism was going out was, was affecting every society in the world in some way, and doing it in a top down approach.

Davíd Carrasco (00:30:20):

You've got this language of the doctrine of discovery. See, now, whenever you have a word like doctrine, see what you have there is a statement of authority, a statement of hierarchy, and a statement that says, this is already an accepted almost universal view of the world. That's what a doctrine is. And you have this notion of discovery. It's not a doctrine of meeting, it's not a doctrine of encounter, it's not a doctrine that says we were engaged with one another. It's a doctrine of discovery. Now, this *Requerimiento* and the doctrine of discovery, let me give you an example of how much this attitude that is a kind of a cosmological attitude appeared in the Spanish mind.

Davíd Carrasco (00:31:14):

Well, I spent 10 years rereading Bernard Diaz Del Castillo, his great memoir of his participation in the military wars in Mexico in Guatemala, it's called *the True History of The Conquest of Mexico*. That's like saying the doctrine, the true history of the conquest of new Spain and in the very first paragraph in the very first paragraph that he writes, you have an example of how some of the work that the two of you are doing on understanding the doctrine of discovery, how this got this doctrine of discovery, this attitude of superiority justifying this type of violence, became a part of the everyday language of the Spaniards. In the very first paragraph of this document that he writes his memoir he says, he's writing this to the emperor. You know, he's writing this to his majesty.

Davíd Carrasco (00:32:28):

And he says, I'm going to tell you the story of how "all the true conquerors, my companions, who served his majesty. And then here are the four terms that are really elements of the doctrine of Christian discovery." He says, what we did, we served his majesty by "discovering, conquering, pacifying, and settling most of the provinces of new Spain." Now these are the key terms in the first paragraph. What do we do? We discovered them, in other words, in a sense, we made these people up ourselves. We made them up. We discovered them. That's the first thing we did. Nobody knew about them until we got there. They didn't even know each other until we got there. But the second word is conquering. In other words, we beat them up. We used our aggression to injure them. The third word is pacifying. What does he mean by that? He means by pacifying, that we came there, we had this requirement that we read and the requirement that we read said, look, we have arrived.

Davíd Carrasco (00:33:53):

And we came here to find you and to control you. But as a way of pacifying you, we are going to invite you to become like us in a religious way, by accepting our religion and that will calm you down. Now, if you don't want to be calmed down, we then in this moment, we have the right to kill you. We have the right to kill you. So we are here to discover you, conquer you and control you, kill you. But the last word is really crucial. And that is the word settling. What this means and what is crucial in terms of this whole story of colonialism is that we are here to take your land. That's what he was saying. We're here for the land. And what you find the next page, now as Del Castillo said, when we left Spain to get on this little boat and be sick for three months to come over here, they told us, he said, they told us when we got here, we would be given some Indians who would work on our plantation, right?

Davíd Carrasco (00:35:17):

So this is really what this colonialism is all about. It's not about freedom. It's not about creating a new world where people can flourish. It's not about the land of the brave. It's about discovering conquering, pacifying and settling. And this is what I see. And, and what he, what he, what he says in that first paragraph is the Christian Church is backing us up all the way. So here is a document that is written in Guatemala in the 1560s. And he's got your Christian doctrine of discovery right there, right there. So this became the worldview of these people. And as a sense of the worldview, this is what Charles Long meant by religion. Religion could also be part of this type of sophisticated legalized aggression.

Philip P. Arnold (00:36:25):

Yeah. And I think one of the things that Long was trying to communicate, at least I heard, was that if you want to know about these people, if you want to know about the Aztecs or the Maya or Inca or the Haudenosaunee, you have to deal with that colonialism as a fundamental question, right? As a fundamental filter, we'll say. So it's not just that we can just peer into Aztec society and understand who they are, like most Mesoamerican assume or Mesoamericanists assume, but rather we have to deal with this fundamental question of colonialism destruction, as you said, that is an impediment to our understanding these significant others. I mean, one of the things that I was attracted to was the work of Sahagun Franciscan priest, because he was the one that's assembled this encyclopedia during the 16th century.

Philip P. Arnold (00:37:40):

And yet simultaneously was destroying the society and culture of the Nawa speaking people of the time. This was to be used as a tool of conversion or assimilation if you like or something else. And maybe you could speak about how there are all these texts, these pre-Colombian texts especially that you've worked with very closely. And what happened to those. I mean, we had to supplant them with like the works of Sahagún and others.

Davíd Carrasco (00:38:24):

Yeah. Well, so I like that very much. How to understand any of these people, you really can't in my view start before colonialism. When I was in college they taught us this technique that some of these Mediterranean authors used to use when they wrote these great books Aeneid or the Odyssey. And some of them use this technique called in medias res. In the middle of the story, you start in the middle of the story, and that's the way you got to understand, you see native American peoples today, that's the way you got to understand the Americas. You got to start in the middle of the story. Now, the middle of the story is colonialism because we know that these people were here for thousands and thousands of years before Europeans came and we know that they're here now doing their thing and struggling, fighting back creating and keeping the Long house alive.

Davíd Carrasco (00:39:34):

But if you really want to understand our relationship to these people, you got to start in media rest and is in the middle of the story. And the middle of the story is when the Indigenous people saw these Europeans away from their homes coming into their communities. And it's that encounter, that exchange, which really tells you the situation that we are in order to understand and try to see through that experience to how Indigenous and Europeans and Africans had to deal with that encounter. And if you can, as Charles Long would say, you crawl back through history to learn what are the resources of the great law of peace? What are the resources of the declarations of independence, and so forth? So you mentioned Sahagun. So for your listeners, Bernardino de Sahagún was a Franciscan priest who was educated in Salamanca Spain.

Davíd Carrasco (00:40:37):

And he was part of a new wave of Franciscans who had been trained in their theology in a kind of a humanistic way that is they came to ask questions about the cultural forms of society, including the people they wanted to evangelize. And Sahagun was a linguistic genius who came as you know to Mexico very early on after the arrival of Cortez and began to learn the languages of Indigenous people. And two things happened to him. Number one, he saw that he could use their own language as a format to evangelize them, to convert them. But he also saw that they had this brilliant marvelous language. This language had a very different way of telling stories of using submit symbols and metaphors of developing rhetorical strategies. And this began to change him a little bit as he used his own research with native peoples native teenagers and their families to reconstruct the world of the Indigenous people before he got there so that he could use this as a way of training other priests to know what it was that had to change.

Davíd Carrasco (00:42:00):

Now, what's really important to me here is for your listeners to understand that we often use the term transculturation rather than acculturation to talk about what happened to Indigenous people during this time. Indigenous people had to pick and choose not only things from their own deep tradition, but also from the tradition that was being injected into their society. And they picked and chose Indigenous people, they picked and chose the Virgin Mary. They liked the Virgin Mary. Indigenous people, they liked the name of Santiago because he rode a horse and he was tough. Indigenous people, they liked Jesus and the cross, but they also realized that they related to their Indigenous female deities, that they're related to some of their own heroes, that they're related to some of their own stories. And they put this together. But it's also important in terms of what you're saying, Phil, about Sahagun that not enough has been done of this, to understand how the Europeans also changed.

Davíd Carrasco (00:43:05):

They also underwent change you see, and the changes that they underwent are often ignored or minimized. It's like what you've been teaching people about how the Haudenosaunee needs view of integration and peace and balance and negotiation influenced the way in which Franklin and Jefferson and these people came to understand their society. They were changed too by those stones, those ideas that were embedded in the way in which discourse was happening. It's very important to understand that everybody changed. Charles Long liked to say about this process of who changed and the new kind of world that was created. He liked to say the colonizer will never tell you the truth about their relationship with the colonized said, they'll never tell you the truth. They'll pretend like, well, they don't know him that the colonized people didn't do anything meaningful that the colonized people were just standing in the way they just occupy the land.

Davíd Carrasco (00:44:15):

But it's all this stuff. He said, they'll never tell you the truth. He said, but the colonized people, Charles Long would say, I like this phrase. He said the colonized people, they were colonizer watchers. They were always watching the colonizers. And they were watching the colonizers who didn't realize that the colonizers were watching them. And as a result, they had the colonized have a superior epistemological, they have a superior understanding of what is the condition that we are sharing now. And that is particularly what these people who are still pushing the doctrine of Christian discovery. That's what they cannot allow us to put into the public discourse. They do not want us to be able to show that everybody changed in this situation. And the people that know the story most honestly, with *Veritas* are the colonized people.

Davíd Carrasco (00:45:23):

And you see now what's happening in this country. You see, well, not only Black Lives Matter with things that are taking place there in your community, there's much more of an affirmation that the people who underwent slavery underwent colonialism, underwent the robbery of their lands. They're the people who can really free us from this ignorance so that there can be resources for a really honest AND balanced view of where we go from here. And I think the work that you're doing Phil on the Indigenous values related to the land, this has to be developed and taught in as many places as we can. So I think that my statement now that you just heard, that's really out of the legacy of what Charles Long was teaching us.

Philip P. Arnold (00:46:17):

That's fantastic. I wonder if we could pursue this contemporary line. Where do you see issues of the doctrine of Christian discovery of colonialism in our contemporary world? I mean, I tend to see it in a lot of different ways in a hardening of certain Christian world views, an intolerance and yet a kind of openness to fantastical stories about say the election or previous election or whatever. There are a lot of ways in which colonialism is here to stay in some ways, but also, it appears there're these appearances, these manifestations of colonialism in our contemporary world. I wonder if you could just speak about that for a while.

Davíd Carrasco (00:47:25):

Well, the manifestation of this colonialism has been beautifully expressed by Tony Morrison in some of the essays that she wrote called source of self-regard. And one of the things she says in there is that an essay called the foreigner's home. She says that the way this colonialism is being expressed is by turning to the people who are native to the land and saying that they're foreigners in the land, that they don't deserve the land, but these are the people who are natives to the land. And you see this, for instance, along the border. Right now I'm involved in a process that's taking place in El Paso in about three weeks, it's called the construction of the healing garden. And the healing garden is a monument with plants and flowers and other things that is that trying to deal with the citywide trauma suffered when a white man that drove 10 hours from Dallas on August the third, 2019, and murdered 23 Mexican and Mexican Americans in a Walmart.

Davíd Carrasco (00:48:53):

And his claim was that these people were invading, they were invading Texas, that these people are all natives to this area. These people are natives to the area, they're natives to El Paso. These people have Indigenous , Spanish, Mexican, Anglo mixture in them. Their families have been living there for 300 years. And this guy is telling us that along with the border fence and along with the whole four years of the previous administration, bad mouthing these people, that these people are foreigners in their own land. And so this whole thing about the border wall, this is an example of what we're talking about. I think that this whole discourse that's going on now about critical race theory and what is so pathetic about this is when I'm watching CNN or any of these people, they're talking about critical race theory, and they don't even know what it is.

Davíd Carrasco (00:50:13):

They never tell you what it is. You know, the critical race theory, just like the word theory. What is the theory? A theory means that you have some expression from somebody, you have an expression that may be a symbol. It may be a dance. It may be a line like all men are created equal and the theory is that you bring something else to understand that maybe you bring a language analysis, or maybe you bring the law to understand the word equal, or maybe you bring anthropology to understand the word men and when you bring something else to understand this, and that's a theory, you raise a question about, well, who are

the men? Who do we mean when we said men? What did we mean when we said equal? Who was included in the men who was excluded in the men?

Davíd Carrasco (00:51:14):

That's what a theoretical involvement will do with an expression. Maybe you asked the question, what was the race of the men who were in this statement? You know, that's the race part. Critical simply means you're asking deeper questions about what does this mean? And in this critical race theory, what's so important about it is the response to it, which is basically said to me, number one, we will not ever, this is the critique against critical race theory, we will never admit to the destruction of Indigenous people and to their reliance and their resilience. We cannot acknowledge that. That's why we can't stand critical race theory because critical race theory raises the question about what happened in history, right? And the second thing that they cannot understand in this country cannot accept these people is that slavery was a long event.

Davíd Carrasco (00:52:18):

Just like the destruction of the Eagles is a long event. This is not something that happened in 1619, or took place in 1776. This has become part of our mentality, our biology of who we are. And that is what people who are putting down what Indigenous people are trying to say when they don't want these names for these sports teams. They don't want to face up to the fact that the destructiveness that went along with the formation of the country and all of its good stuff, the destructiveness is still with us and you cannot deal with it unless you deal with it. And it seems to me, this is really what is crucial in terms of the way in which you and some of your colleagues up there are introducing this nasty, dangerous word, peace. You know, that's a word. That's one of these radical, critical words, peace. Peace. Peace in El Paso, peace in the face of the man who killed all these people. And he said, I just came here to kill as many Mexicans as possible. Peace.

Philip P. Arnold (00:53:44):

Wow. Wow. I know you've been very active in this peace garden. I wish you well down there. I think anytime we can have a healing space, healing garden, I think we need it. Well, I mean, we're bouncing around here. We're definitely bouncing around on a lot of things, but that was a wonderful critique of what's going on in the United States right now. It seems to me too, it seems to both of us that these are urgent matters too. They just didn't disappear in 1619 or 1521, which we're at a big year when it comes to the destruction of the Aztec 500th anniversary this year. And, I mean, these are not just issues of the past or academic issues, but they're urgent issues of our future as well as you're indicating here.

Philip P. Arnold (00:54:58):

And so I don't really have a question so much as how do we get these ideas, these concepts, this education about the past, as a matter for our shared future to the children? I mean, I'm wondering how do you explain these things to your students? I think you have a demonstration of this now, but how do we communicate this more widely?

Sandy Bigtree (00:55:29):

We come across some people who don't want to talk about the dark side of peacemaking, just what you've talked about, right? And they want to lean towards the positive thinking movement. And frankly, that's the church Trump grew up in. And so peace is not about the absence of this public discourse that is deeply troubling and challenging. And you have to integrate all of it and work our way through it. You can't ignore the problems. That's what I said in the beginning about the history of religions. You're talking about colonialism and the problem that's keeping us from obtaining peace. Sid Hill says peace in the

message of scandal, peace can only be obtained when you're in proper relationship to the natural world. So what is that going to uncover with all the mining that's going on all over the world or the pollution of all the rivers and oceans? That's not going to be peaceful for some because it just gets very complicated.

Philip P. Arnold (00:56:40):

Yeah.

Sandy Bigtree (00:56:40):

But the basic tenant of living in balance with the natural world, try doing that.

Philip P. Arnold (00:56:47):

Yeah. It's not just kumbaya between human beings, but how are we going to realize or get people through that trauma in El Paso? You know, how is that possible? You know, because we're all traumatized in various degrees.

Sandy Bigtree (00:57:08):

And it's disruptive, we need to do that work.

Davíd Carrasco (00:57:11):

It seems to me that in a way it comes down to what is our view of the human's capacity for destruction and creation for χάρις (cāritās) and aggression for love and hatred. And if you want to have this pie in the sky view of what human beings are, doing one of the things I did in preparation for today's dialogue is I went and not only read your article about the statue of Columbus, but I read to some of the other articles that were referenced there about the legal history in the United States and the way these Supreme court decisions basically reiterated the doctrine of Christian discovery as though this was not destructive. I mean, you get these, these people are repeating over and over again that we white Americans, we stole this land and it was all right.

Davíd Carrasco (00:58:22):

I mean, that's what they're saying. Basically, these Supreme court decisions say in effect these Indigenous people, what this guy said recently. These people, they didn't do anything with the land until we came along. So we had a right to steal it as though this is a good thing, rather than it was at least a paradoxical thing and it had evil in it. And there's an inability for people to see this. I once heard a terrific psychoanalyst in Boulder give a talk, about what may be the best talk I ever heard. And he was talking about excavating Freud. And he said, one of the reasons that people have a resistance to Freud is that Freud really saw that there was both a creative side and a very dark side to people, the old people.

Davíd Carrasco (00:59:23):

And if you didn't pay attention to the dark side, if you didn't always keep a vigilance about it, then it was going to win. And you had to keep a vigilance about the dark side and try to give the life side an upper hand. And that's what the peace is. The peace is trying. The peace is not saying the peace. Movement's not saying there's no war, it is war. We want to look at war and you people can say war does this good stuff, and war does that good stuff, but it's the peace that you've got to give it the upper hand, but you don't give it the upper hand by ignoring the disruptiveness of the doctrine itself. You just used the phrase, Sandy Bigtree, the proper relationship with the earth, the proper relationship. Well, we know there's an improper relationship and we do it all the time so you can't ignore that.

Davíd Carrasco (01:00:18):

And what a lot of these people in this kind of Christian Church that they want, there's a Sunday school view of it of church, of Jesus who was crucified is that they don't want to face up to all of the improper of the relationship that any group can have. So I think it really comes down in a way to a much more honest view of the human being of this. This lecture said, he said the damned evidence keeps coming in on Freud's side. You know, I read the New York Times this morning, God, I felt so bad after every page, all of the destructiveness that's going on in Haiti, in this country, in Syria. I mean, human beings have this capacity to take the doctrine of Christian discovery or Muslim or Islam discovery when it's used in this destructive way and they like it. There's a whole bunch of they like this. And that's what we saw that seemed to me with what we've had to face in this country in the last four years in the government.

Sandy Bigtree (01:01:33):

Well, it brings to mind just our story of the creation twins at the center and the thing is like the Sahagun the Jesuits came into the Haudenosaunee territory and began recording the oral traditions in a book. So we have a lot of native people today that have learned these stories from the Jesuits in effect and those histories and what they did was they referred to the creation twins that created everything on this earth as one being evil and one being good. But that's not how the words translate in the Haudenosaunee language, because they're integrated. We wouldn't have the world if we hadn't had both because it takes both for creation to exist.

Philip P. Arnold (01:02:25):

Right. Little more yin and yang like or there's an interaction there, which is expressed in terms of the game of lacrosse.

Sandy Bigtree (01:02:35):

So positive thinking is as detrimental as all the violence and destruction the church has done because you have to integrate bulbs to move forward.

Davíd Carrasco (01:02:46):

Well, I think that's absolutely right. And there you have an example of the Jesuits come in and they liked learning. They tended to camp out and then the digits people become curious about them and they start a dialogue and then they start writing. So what you got to do now is you take what the Jesuits did and you take it back. Just like Sandy Bigtree did, you take it back. It's like you take back what the devil stole you, take back what the Jesuit stole you say, thank you, Mr. Jesuit, but let me reinterpret in the tradition of the people that you heard listened to or what this is. And I think that's in terms of Phil Arnold's question about how do we how do we develop a healing peace approach?

Davíd Carrasco (01:03:47):

I think you have to do what you're doing. You have to form collaborative groups. That's what I did in the archive in order for new knowledge to come, don't be an individual author who just writes acknowledgements of people. I mean, you can do that. You should do that, but really form groups who are going to bring different perspectives and find a way to develop a civil, but very honest and sometimes hard nose conversation so that a new knowledge can come out. Just what Sandy Bigtree did. So creation comes out of this friction sometimes as long as you're trying to give the life force the upper hand.

Philip P. Arnold (01:04:36):

Excellent way to end our conversation here David. Your impact, the impact of the Mesoamerican Archive and Research Project continues to have ripple effects here in Onondaga nation territory.

Davíd Carrasco (01:04:55):

Well, let me say before I hear from Sandy Bigtree, Charles Long and I used to talk a lot and it often came around back to the two of you, Charles Long was somebody, and I'm going to say some of this at his Memorial service, which is going to be on by the way, it's now for the 27th of August. So I'll get the word sent to you in case you want to come down.

Philip P. Arnold (01:05:25):

Yeah. I'd like to.

Davíd Carrasco (01:05:27):

See, Charles Long had this word regard. It was like it was more than respect regard day. He said if you're going to study the Haudenosaunee, you got to have regard for the humanity. And he would say if you don't come at this with regard, if you don't realize that the people you're studying are smarter than you, about what you're studying, you are lost, you don't have any regard for them, but also with Charles Long, you had to develop his regard for you. Because he had a critical eye and he had a high regard for the two of you. We'd often talked about it and he of all of the students and then the grand students, the grandchildren students, like the two of you, he really had a regard for what you were doing in your work up there. And he didn't always have regard for some of the people that he trained and the people that came out of that training, but he had regard for you two.

Philip P. Arnold (01:06:42):

Thank you.

Sandy Bigtree (01:06:42):

Thank you. We never would've landed here without you and Charles Long.

Philip P. Arnold (01:06:47):

And Charles Long.

Sandy Bigtree (01:06:50):

Well, okay. Thank you so much David. We want to encourage our listening audience to please check our website for information. We'll be posting notes, resources of David so that you can have access to and surely form your own kind of discussion groups and use any of these resources we're posting because the purpose of this to get people coming together and talking about these difficult issues. Again, wonderful talking with you David and everybody be well until our next discussion.

Jordan Loewen-Colón (01:07:33):

Thank you for tuning in. We'd like to thank our guest David Carrasco and our host Philip Arnold and Sandra Bigtree. The producers of this podcast were Adam DJ Brett and Jordan Loewen-Colón. Our intro and outro is social dancing music by Orris Edwards and Regis Cook. This podcast is produced in collaboration with Syracuse University engaged humanities and the Department of Religion. Along with Indigenous Values Initiative and the American Indian Law Alliance.