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Mutiny

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# MUTINY

Craig Santos Perez

Call this mutiny,  
my refusal to praise  
the first circumnavigation  
of the globe, my refusal  
to herald your name  
bestowed upon ships,  
waterways & galaxies.

Call this mutiny,  
my retelling of the story  
from our perspective,  
my ancestors standing  
on the shores of Guáhan  
sighting three monstrous ships  
piercing the horizon.  
Aboard outrigger canoes,  
they flew above the waves  
towards *first contact*.  
The date was March 6th, 1521,  
according to your calendar,  
not ours, in the year  
of your Lord, not ours.

Call this mutiny,  
my retelling of the story  
from our perspective—  
*we discovered you,*  
lost & drifting  
in our already named ocean,  
*we saved you,*  
diseased & starving,  
with food & water,  
yet you mistranslated  
trade as theft, naming us,  
“Islas de Los Ladrones.”  
You came ashore,  
burned a village & killed  
seven of my ancestors—  
before you departed.  
*First violence.*

Call this mutiny,  
my refusal to affirm the claim  
that you put Guåhan  
on the map. You put us  
in the crosshairs  
of empire. I refuse  
to affirm the claim  
that our history began  
with your arrival.  
Our history spans millennia  
before you were born.  
We navigated this ocean  
long before your people  
ventured beyond  
the continent.

Call this mutiny,  
my refusal to believe  
Guåhan is “Destiny’s Landfall,”  
that your presence was manifest  
by the divine doctrine  
of discovery.  
We were not destined  
to be the first colony  
in the Pacific,  
colonized by Spain,  
used as a port  
for the galleon trade  
between Acapulco & Manila.  
We were not destined  
to be depopulated by disease  
& conquest, or baptized  
in our own holy blood  
by the sharp edge  
of the cross.  
We were not destined  
to have our gods banished,  
canoes burned & lands stolen.  
You called us thieves,  
but it was your people who looted  
the world. You called us savage,  
but it was European civilization  
that mastered savagery.

Call this mutiny,  
my commemoration of Guåhan  
as more than a mere dot  
in the latitudes and longitudes  
of imperial history.  
Today, I commemorate  
the quincennial  
of CHamorus surviving  
the violent wake of your voyage.  
I commemorate my people  
rebuilding our canoes,  
resurrecting our religion,  
revitalizing our culture,  
relearning our language,  
reliving our customs,  
resisting colonization,  
protecting our lands,  
and struggling for sovereignty,  
*still standing here.*

Call this mutiny,  
my commemoration  
of CHamoru resilience,  
which is so vast  
no armada of galleons  
can ever circumnavigate.