

## Despues de Esta Cruz.... Beyond This Cross.....

1985-1986

I designed this sculptural mural in 1985 to draw attention to the intervention of our government against the Central American peoples. My design involves a twisted and jagged cross to symbolize the crucifixion of the poor and exploited by despotic Central American rulers. It also sought to demonstrate our solidarity with the people of Central America, especially those in armed struggle, namely Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala.

My composition evolves from a scene which shows an enormous predatory eagle spreading its wings protectively over a sinister vulture devouring a human being. The eagle represents U.S. imperialism protecting its lackies, portrayed as a vulture and the victim being ravaged signifies the oppressed of Central America.

The numerous people behind the vulture represent those Americans who endorse this cruel arrangement of our government allied with oppressive regimes.

From the right side is approaching a multitude representing the Central American people coming to confront their tormentors.

Foremost in this scene is a campesino carrying a cross wrapped in a red flag. This symbolizes a great motivating ideology to those peoples in the revolutionary struggle, namely Liberation Theology. Essentially, this means that the scriptures and Christ's teachings urges Christians to seek justice for the poor and defenseless and to overcome all forms of oppression.

Other depictions on the mural's right side include:

**Mothers of the Disappeared** – the line of women approaching as they uphold placards bearing photographs of loved ones kidnapped and disappeared by the army and secret police.

**Women as revolutionaries** – a woman with a white head scarf grabbing a soldier's weapon even as other bayonets threaten her. Her left hand is clenched into a fist.

**A revolutionary Catholic priest** – with right hand upraised in protest while his left hand carries our Christian bible.

Banner with the statement "Between Christianity and Revolution there is no Contradiction."

On the left side are depicted conscientious Americans coming to oppose the oppression and suppression of the Central American peoples. At the same time, these concerned Americans denounce our own government's imperialism.

In the near left base can be seen an American religious minister extending his hand in solidarity while another, lower figure, points at a declaration which reads "No more racist war!" Various people together hold out our American flag which appears tattered, dirty and smeared with military boot prints. This was my way of accusing our military of soiling our national flag by siding, participating with, and assisting bloodthirsty dictatorships throughout Latin America.



Approaching on a wheelchair is a Vietnam War veteran amputee whose gesture is one of protest against U.S. intervention. Other people hold up placards questioning the reasoning for intervention. One such poster states "our Chicano sons will not be sent to kill our Central American brothers". Finally, among the multitude, approaches a child bringing an injured white dove as if to confront the warmongers with this symbol of peace so often ignored or forgotten

The ascending imagery depicts various figures representing Central American nations crucified upon their own flags. One of these, I suggest Nicaragua, succeeds in freeing itself, reaching for the region of liberators. Among the liberators is Christ, who uplifts Nicaragua as he shields him from Uncle Sam.

Two of the crucified are even so still being victimized; one, an indigenous woman is being milked of her life essence by a decrepit but well attired female; two, a campesino is having his heart and soul extracted by a wealthy landowner in a white suit.

Another scene is a kidnapping in process of a dissident or conscientious citizen abducted by a government death squad, never to be seen again.

On each extremity of the transverse, that is, the arms of the cross, are depicted the following:

On the transverse left side, is depicted an indigenous Mayan family surrounded by menacing weapons. The child, mother and father are painted with halos over their heads suggesting the Holy Family. A fourth halo, however, is seen around the man's grip on his machete signifying that the right to self-defense and self-determination is a sacred right of all oppressed peoples.

A television camera and a cynical news media with no understanding of, or sympathy for the oppressed in Central America, present the striving of the poor as a communist threat. In this area is also shown a Central American army soldier about to decapitate his own people under the guidance of a U.S. advisor using the CIA Instruction Manual.

On the transverse's right side, are shown first of all, the four American religious women murdered in El Salvador in 1980 for working to assist the poor. Following this is a landowner shaking the hand of an American business man who has just purchased the agricultural and other products of his country for consumption in the U.S. Between the two is shown a young girl trying to cover her nudity with her country's sarape. Her braids have been cut off and are held by a red headed woman, who encircles the world with her legs, while offering to replace the girl's cultural identity with a mask likeness of her white face. Meanwhile, appealing to the landowner are two hungry children who are then threatened by the national army lest they reach the sustenance they need.

My intention with this depiction was to question why should the U.S. consumer be gorged and satiated with the products of poor countries where malnutrition is a daily reality?

How is this arrangement just?

Secondly, aside from the economic exploitation, I wished to portray American cultural imperialism depicted as the red headed woman with the mask likeness of herself, trying to impose it on others.

On the upper area of the cross are grouped together many heroes and martyrs of the struggle for liberation. These personalities represent love for humanity, love for cultures, love and action on behalf of the poor and exploited, and love for justice and compassion. Among these are Christ, Che, Zapata, John Brown, Martin Luther King, \_\_\_\_\_, Sandino, Chief Sitting Bull and others.

This is the region where the young man representing Nicaragua and many others, reach for, the dream of human liberation.