

Alberto Fernandez's racism legitimizes dispossession of Indigenous Peoples

Via [Marabunta](#)

The idea that we are descended from the boats of immigrants, repeated ad nauseam and today said by President Alberto Fernandez, hides the genocide on which Argentine society is founded. It is a discourse that carries a colonial matrix that is not just words: it is expressed in a specific violence on the indigenous territories today subjugated by extractivism. In the face of his apologies, where he points out that immigrants lived with "our" native peoples, we say to him: Indigenous Peoples exist, we are not "theirs" and today dozens of communities are rising up from their territorial autonomy.

"The Mexicans came from the Indians, the Brazilians came from the jungle, but we Argentines came from the ships. They were ships that came from Europe and that is how we built our society". Alberto Fernandez's statements, although he tried to apologize later, make mention of an old wound. During its formation in the 19th century, the Argentine State carried out a genocide that sought to exterminate the indigenous populations that ancestrally inhabited these territories, today called Argentina, through massacres that lasted until the 20th century. The denial of this memory has a concrete objective, which is the refusal to repair the historical debt that the State maintains with the Indigenous Peoples.

This is a racist discourse that surpasses the current government. In 2015 Cristina Fernandez had pointed out that "all of us sitting at this table, we are not native peoples of Argentina; we are children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren of immigrants. Because this is Argentina: a country of

immigrants". Two years later, at the Davos Forum, Mauricio Macri pointed out that "in South America we are all descendants of Europeans". Creole colonialism has no cracks because for the white elites the indigenous is something almost invisible. And if it exists, it is something inferior to the white. What Sarmiento called barbarian Indians, under the same matrix of thought is updated with the idea that indigenous people are lazy, or that they do not know how to exploit their lands. A higher phase of this discrimination is the idea of the "Mapuche terrorist".

This colonial matrix of thought is not only a symbolic or discriminatory issue. It is the basis that legitimizes the dispossession of indigenous rights. If we do not exist, then our lands can be dispossessed. If there is no historical debt, then there is no need for reparations. That is why indigenous territories are today in the front line of the impact of extractivism. Fracking, mega-mining, deforestation, fumigations, have turned indigenous territories into sacrifice zones.

Alberto Fernández's speech shows the absolute failure of the neoliberal multiculturalist policy carried out by the governments since the 1990s. The different policies on indigenous issues have been subordinated to "development" policies, rights have become a dead letter, and the few recognitions have been based on the folklorization of the peoples, using us as an ornament.

We must advance in an indigenous policy based on the effective respect of rights. The right to intercultural health; to free, prior and informed consultation; to bilingual intercultural education; to the development of indigenous communication; indigenous justice; and a series of demands that we, the peoples, have raised during the last decades. These are condensed in the need for territorial rights to be respected and for progress to be made in the survey provided for in Law 26,160, which crystallizes in the reparation of indigenous

community property.

It is urgent to fight for the defense of identities and their history in the face of a capitalist and heteropatriarchal system that simplifies everything, hiding and violating differences in order to advance in the plundering of peoples and their cultures. From Marabunta we fight so that from the articulation of these territorial autonomies we can project plurinationality from an ecosocialist and feminist perspective. Because Popular Power is also built from the indigenous communities with our voices that resound resistance.

Freedom for the Lonko Facundo Jones Huala

Justice for Javier Chocobar, Rafael Nawel, Santiago Maldonado and all the murdered indigenous brothers and sisters.