



## **Community Rejuvenation Project's Latest Mural Urges Commuters, Consumers to "Decolonize" The message of Decolonization meets the people**

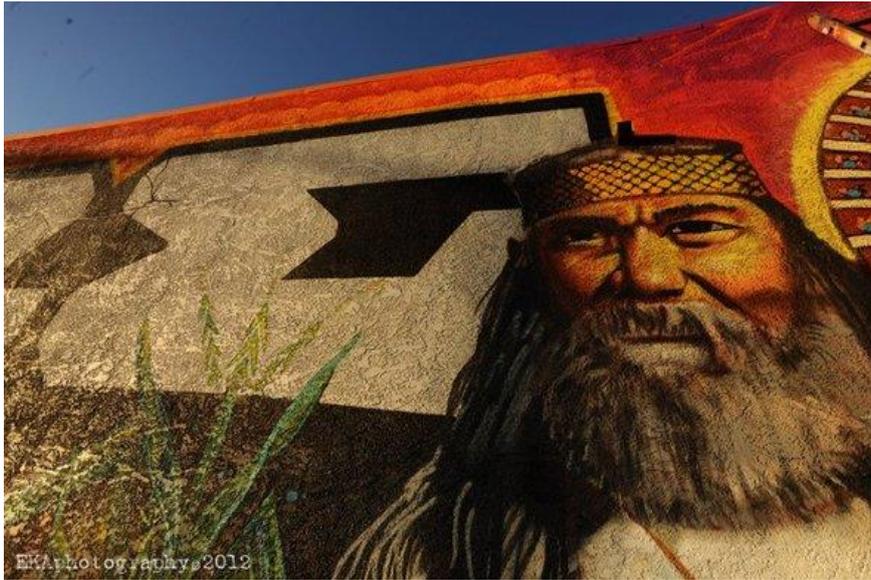
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As we enter the third month of the year, the Community Rejuvenation Project has rolled out another monumental mural. Located at the intersection of East 12th St. and 16th Ave. in East Oakland — a highly visible location facing both the BART tracks and the 880 freeway — a massive "Decolonize" message greets thousands of commuters daily. The 30' x 200' mural— painted over the course of 2 and ½ days by CRP artists Mike 360, Raven, Release, Beats 737, Desi, Rate, Abacus, Pancho, Yesenia, and Dora—suggests a return to traditional values and ancient wisdom.



**Figure 1 The message of Decolonization meets the people. Photo by Eric Arnold. More Photos at [www.CRPBayArea.org](http://www.CRPBayArea.org)**

"Decolonize is a universal message to all people of the earth to reconnect to their ancestry, the earth, to their traditional medicines and knowledge, and to a global consciousness that we are all related," explained CRP guest artist Lavie Raven. "Everyone on the planet has indigenous roots to somewhere." Mazatzin Aztekeyokalli oversees the mural and tells us what time it is.



**Figure 2 Mazatzin Aztekayokalli oversees the mural and tells us what time it is. More Photos at [www.CRPBayArea.org](http://www.CRPBayArea.org)**

At the wall's right hand-corner, Mazatzin Aztekayokalli, a local elder, is shown standing in front of an accurately depicted Tonalmachiotl, the sacred Mexica sunstone sometimes referred to as the Aztec Calendar. The sunstone symbolizes how understanding ancestral culture and knowing one's place in the space-time continuum of the universe is an important aspect of decolonization. The wall's left-hand corner depicts Huitzilopochtli, an Aztec solar deity and the patron saint of the ancient city of Tenochtitlan, in hummingbird form. Huitzilopochtli represents the light's constant struggle to overcome darkness, which remains a relevant theme, especially in this day and age. Huitzilopochtli faces the left because he is close to our hearts.

In the center of the painting is a picture of Mixtli, the newborn son of CRP members Mike 360 and Dora Chavarria. Mixtli is depicted emerging from the cosmic womb with an outstretched arm in front of a bright star, symbolizing the galactic equinox, an event which occurs precisely every 26,000 years. This represents the hope of new life as well as the eternal renewal of the celestial cycle. Dora Chavarria, Mike Threesixty and the real Mixtli Kozkakuatl, the inspiration for us to press forward.

On either side of Mixtli, elaborate calligraphic letters spell out the phrases "One Heart" and "One Mind" – reminders that we must be unified in our struggles if we hope to succeed. Other imagery includes corn and sunflowers– references to native plants targeted for genocide along with indigenous people by colonial settlers and the U.S. and Spanish governments; peyote, a hallucinogenic plant used in traditional shamanic ceremonies as medicine, representing the need for spiritual healing as part of the decolonization process; and the Andes mountains, considered to be the sacred home of the gods. Release rocks the massive Decolonize spell out visible from the other side of the 880 Freeway, an enormous undertaking.

"Decolonize" also represents CRP's commentary on the Occupy Oakland movement, and a reminder that indigenous communities of color already inhabited native lands before colonizers, settlers and tourists arrived. In October 2011, the Occupy movement began

its encampment in Oscar Grant /Frank Ogawa plaza by asking the blessing of local indigenous elders. This was an appropriate first step. Yet since then, however, the indigenous community and communities of color have repeatedly voiced concerns around exclusion, despite the fact that these communities were affected by economic woes, underemployment, and bank foreclosures long before the recession hit the white middle-class. Many in these communities also objected to the name "Occupy" – a term inherently identified with colonialism and the colonial mentality. Yet a proposal to rename the movement "Decolonize Oakland" was voted down by the General Assembly.



**Figure 3 Huitzilopochtli faces the left because he is close to our hearts. Photo by Eric Arnold. More Photos at [www.CRPBayArea.org](http://www.CRPBayArea.org)**

It is perhaps no coincidence, then, that since its failure to uphold the heartfelt message of communities of color—that decolonization should be the goal of the people’s uprising – the Occupy movement has become unfocused and is lacking in direction. “With the ‘Decolonize’ message, CRP is taking a stand to address the larger social, economic and environmental justice issues that are faced in the communities that we work in,” CRP Founder Desi W.O.M.E said. “We maintain that forward progress is not possible without a connection to indigenous roots and a greater awareness of nature. This mural, like others we have done, is beautiful to look at. But we also want it to make you think. This piece of art will be viewed by thousands of commuters daily. If just one of them stops to think about what the mural is really saying, even for a moment, then CRP has done its job.”

For more information about CRP, interviews with CRP artists, or sample images for media usage, contact Desi at [CRPBayArea@gmail.com](mailto:CRPBayArea@gmail.com) or (510) 269-7840. All readers are invited to celebrate the Mexica New Year with Mazatzin Aztekayokalli this Sunday beginning at Noon at CCSF Mission Campus 1125 Valencia St. San Pancho, Califaztlan. For more info: [lizadoc@yahoo.com](mailto:lizadoc@yahoo.com), [zemazatzin@hotmail.com](mailto:zemazatzin@hotmail.com), (415)756-5589

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