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HUFF
POST **IMPACT**
WHAT'S WORKING

Capturing Humanity Through the Arts



“Woman With Pipe, Haiti, 1983.” Photograph from DIGNITY collection by Dana Gluckstein. (c) Dana Gluckstein

The public space between social activism, advocacy and art can be profound. In their own ways, art and social justice are universal languages. The idea that all people should be treated fairly and respectfully transcends backgrounds and cultures. The use of art to move groups, individuals and policy toward these common goals can be extremely effective.

That is why we are standing in solidarity with Indigenous women and calling for justice for Native American and Alaska Native communities in the United States. Joining the power of art with the power of social activism, we are calling on President Obama to take action to protect Indigenous women’s human rights.

The Boston University Art Gallery at the Stone Gallery is hosting Dana’s photography exhibition, DIGNITY: Tribes in Transition. The exhibit consists of sixty extraordinary black-and-white photographs of Indigenous people around the world. These works of art, constructed over three decades, highlight individuality while exhibiting the universal beauty of humanity.



“Elder Woman, Navajo, 2012.” Photograph from DIGNITY collection by Dana Gluckstein. (c) Dana Gluckstein

The exhibition is intended to make a powerful statement in support of Indigenous communities around the world. DIGNITY was initially exhibited at the United Nations in Geneva in 2011. Gluckstein believes that artists have a responsibility to sow the seeds of change for society, and spoke at the World Economic Forum in Davos in 2013 on how art can impact the state of the world. The Boston University show marks the exhibit’s U.S. debut.

It is our hope that viewers will not just be struck by the images, and the stories behind the photographs, but that they will be compelled to act. Here in the United States, everyone who attends the exhibit will have the chance to take part in Amnesty

International’s campaign to ensure that Indigenous women get access to critical health services.

Indigenous women suffer disproportionately high levels of rape and sexual violence. Data collected by the Department of Justice (DOJ) indicates that Native American and Alaska Native women are more than 2.5 times more likely to be raped or sexually assaulted than women in the USA in general. Additionally, 34.1 per cent of Native American and Alaska Native women -- or more than one in three -- will be raped during their lifetimes, compared to one in five in the United States overall.

These facts are sobering, but together we are calling for change. Those who attend the exhibit will be able to call on President Obama and the Indian Health Service to fully implement standardized sexual assault protocols, which require full and equal access to emergency contraception and rape kits for the collection of essential forensic evidence for subsequent prosecution.

Without implementation of these protocols, Indigenous women remain at risk. All women deserve to live free from violations of their human right to safety, health and non-discrimination. By implementing these protocols, the government can show that the human rights of Indigenous women are a priority.

Everyone is born free and equal in dignity and human rights. It is our hope that after the images in the exhibit move the heart of the viewer, that they will then be inspired to act with the mind of an activist.

To take action, visit www.amnestyusa.org/indigenoustrapecare

To learn more about DIGNITY: Tribes in Transition, visit www.danagluckstein.com.