

An Invitation to Participate in and Contribute to:

A Celebration of Ancestors of Many Cultures in Shared Sacred Space

When: The day and evening of Saturday, October 30, 1993

Where: The Hall of Flowers, Golden Gate Park, San Francisco



Vision

What we do together in sacred space reverberates in ordinary space and time. What we learn by attempting to share this space with each other will help us learn how to support each other in our day to day struggles, how to be stronger allies and how to counter the forces that attempt to divide us. For these reasons, we in the Multicultural Ritual Group are committed to creating a day of bringing together a large, diverse community to honor all of our ancestors in shared sacred space.

Out of our discussion of our previous experiences, we have attempted to create a structure that could allow many different groups to interact without losing their own integrity, and to create the opportunity for both large- and small-group experiences.

We envision the Hall of Flowers transformed by stations — areas to honor the heritage of different peoples. The event will start during the day and will last till 11pm. People can enter and leave at will through a special gateway that marks out sacred space. Throughout the day, we will move back and forth between performance times, when everyone gathers together for dance, poetry reading, music, and story-telling that represent the gifts of our various cultures, and times for smaller-scale experiences at the various stations — more intimate ritual, story-telling circles, unlearning racism groups, etc. The evening will close with a simple ceremony planned by the core Multicultural Ritual Group.

This vision is evolving, and we welcome input.

Who We Are

We, as the Multicultural Ritual Group, are a circle of people of different ancestries, traditions and spiritual practices that have been working together in one form or another since 1989. We began as an outgrowth of Reclaiming, a collective of women and men dedicated to linking feminist and earth-based spirituality with political action. Each year at Halloween, Reclaiming offers a ritual to celebrate the beloved dead and empower a new vision for the coming year. Reclaiming is rooted in native European spirituality, and its rituals mostly attract those of European ancestry. Members began searching for ways to build a more harmonious and equitable balance among different cultures, and the idea of a ritual celebrating the ancestors of many cultures was born.

As the group developed, we were joined by people of color who were willing to share both creativity and challenges. We learned that we could not simply celebrate our diversity without acknowledging the pain of our histories and the present realities of racism. We were challenged by a number of people, particularly by one woman of color, to consciously turn over the leadership of the group to people of color, and that decision became a turning point in the group's process, resulting in an explosion of energy that proved almost overwhelming.

In 1992, we created a ritual to acknowledge the 500 Years of Resistance. The heart of the ritual was a circle of people of ten or twenty different backgrounds and traditions who each stepped forward to tell something of their personal stories. Along the walls of the room, different cultures set up stations or altars to represent their traditions, and each included a basket of strips of colored cloth. People were invited to circulate among the different stations, participate in events at each, and take a strip of cloth that represented a part of their heritage. At the climax of the ritual, we braided the cloth together into one long strand, and wove a basket.

The ritual was moving, powerful, in parts controversial, and about five hours long. Since then the group has struggled to process the new challenges that the ritual brought forth, resolve some of the contradictions that became apparent, and integrate the lessons we've learned, some of which are —

- We can't deal with cultural diversity without also confronting gender issues and diversity of sexual orientation—and it's not easy to take on all of that at once!
- The Bay Area is enormously rich in the variety of cultures and traditions gathered here — so rich that one evening can scarcely begin to even acknowledge them all.

- To work with this diversity, we want the planning group to include as wide a representation as possible — yet it is actually very difficult, if not impossible, to plan anything in a group of forty or fifty people. We recognize the contradictions between wanting to be an open planning group, yet small.
- Ritual creates its own time, which is often incompatible with clock time, yet we have an obligation to vacate the space we have reserved by a certain hour.
- Telling our own personal stories seems to be the core act that can help us cross the lines of our differences. Yet this is also difficult to do in a large group.
- We want to support all people in defining their own heritage. This includes recognizing the diversity of European heritages, while doing this in a way that is sensitive to all cultures.

Participation

The planning group sees its role as limited to coordinating the logistics of the event, creating an open space/structure within which other groups and individuals can participate, and planning a small closing ceremony.

We invite you and/or your group to participate and contribute in any or all of the following ways:

- Create a sacred area (or work together with others on this), and/or plan a small-group ritual from your tradition.
- Offer a dance, song, poem, teaching or story to the large group.
- Facilitate a small-group discussion. (We would like to have facilitators who represent as broad a diversity as possible.)
- Encourage people from your community to come.
- Pass this invitation on.
- *People/groups who participate/contribute in the ritual are strongly encouraged to take part in three get-togethers beforehand, so that we will have the opportunity to get to know each other and have some shared experience:*

Sunday 9/12, 1pm

Thursday 10/7, 7pm

Saturday 10/23, 1pm — "Dress Rehearsal"!!

Money

We will have to charge money for this event — to cover the expenses of space rental, supplies, insurance, etc. We are committed to keeping the cost as low as possible, with a sliding scale and no one turned away for lack of funds. We will also provide as many free tickets as we can. No individual will make a profit from this event.

Relationship to Reclaiming

Reclaiming will arrange the rental of the space and provide insurance for the event, and list the event in its newsletter and events line.

Contact People

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