

Daily Meditation 02/09/2023

Standing Up for the Rainforest and its Peoples, continued

Good morning.

I have now acquired the book that I refer to in today's meditation, *Masters of the Lost Land: The Untold Story of the Amazon and the Violent Fight for the World's Last Frontier*, by Heriberto Araujo. It has received a lot of powerful, supportive reviews. And I wanted to just share with you a few of those.

Roman Dial, best-selling author of *The Adventurer's Son*:

With a journalist's insight and a scholar's scrutiny, Heriberto Araujo tells the timeless story of dominance, displacement, murder, and social injustice that drives large-scale environmental destruction. Masters of the Lost Land documents an Amazonian version of one culture suppressing another through violence, force and corruption. On the surface, Araujo's case study offers more understanding of the past than hope for the future. Yet an essential heroine provides the kind of inspiration needed to break the cycle of frontier eruption and destruction.

So the heroine he is referring to is of course the widow of Dezinho, Maria Joel, who picked up his campaign to support the farmworkers' struggle in the Amazon when he was assassinated in cold blood at his home, but she has been fighting ever since. So she's kind of the central character in the book.

However, Sister Dorothy Stang plays a very important role in the book too. In fact, her murder changed the whole dynamic in the country because she was an American and a Catholic sister, and it got really international attention that those fighting for years did not get in the struggle.

Another endorsement comes from Joe Jackson, author of *The Thief at the End of the World: Rubber, Power, and the Seeds of Empire*. He says about this book:

Masters of the Lost Land is journalism at its absolute best, made even more impressive when one considers the obstacles, obfuscation, and threats, so often encountered there when trying to ferret out the truth. An essential book, and my only criticism is selfish: that it wasn't around earlier, to make my own writing easier.

Another endorsement from Gary Sick of Columbia University, member emeritus to the board of Human Rights Watch:

Heriberto Araujo, drawing on his years of research, has written an essential journalistic account of the murder, mayhem, and mind-boggling corruption surrounding the assault on the Amazon. It is a compelling account of an ongoing natural catastrophe.

And again, I appreciate this context, the bigger context in which the story of Sister Dorothy Stang is being told and needs to be told today.

Jeremy Campbell, author of *Conjuring Property: Speculation and Environmental Futures in the Brazilian Amazon*:

A tour de force. Araujo's masterful reporting from the frontlines in the war for the world's most important tropical biome should be required reading for policy makers, and for anyone who cares about the fight for social and environmental justice for Amazonia's forest peoples.

And of course, Dorothy Stang was the heart of that struggle for social and environmental justice.

And finally Philip Fearnside, research professor at the National Institute for Research in Amazonia (INPA) in Manaus, Brazil:

Heriberto Araujo does a significant service to Amazonia by providing a look into the social hell that accompanies the destruction of the Amazon rainforest.

It is a social hell. It is an ecological hell. And it's certainly time to blow the whistle.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.