

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Why Go to Standing Rock?

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Essay and photographs by James Storm, Los Angeles, CA, and Dr. Valerie Pronio Stelluto, Boston, MA.

What took us on the 1,700 mile trek to Standing Rock was our determination to protest the ongoing discrimination against Native Americans. The Lakota are a proud people, with passionate hearts and gentle spirits. We wanted to stand with them in their fight against further injustice.

January 18: The Backwater Bridge was barricaded with roadblocks and barbed wire, closing down North Dakota Highway 1804, cutting off access to medical facilities. By nightfall the hillsides were lined with military vehicles, rocket launchers to the north and south. Police cars lined the highway. Over one hundred police in riot gear stood at the ready.

Water protectors, protesters against D.A.P.L. (Dakota Access Pipeline), answered the armed police buildup with snowballs and yelling. The police responded with tear gas and rubber bullets. The water tanks were put in position. Arrests were made.

The next days were quiet ones. We watched the main camp, Oceti Sakowin, begin to be broken down. The Tribal Counsel had sent out a warning. Spring floods were coming.

On our last night at Standing Rock, we looked out over the three camps, Oceti Sakowin, Rose Bud and Sacred Stone. We saw the peoples' struggle, felt their intense spirituality, which encompasses everything around them. Their grace and courage are truly inspirational. And we are changed for having been a part, for even a short while, of their struggle.

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The authors and photographers



Jim Storm. Photo by Alexis **Jim Storm** is a photographer living in Los Angeles. The last four years he's been traveling and photographing people on the move, riding in Greyhound buses, exploring the northwest states of Montana, S. Dakota and North with a little Nebraska thrown in. "The heart of America is the open road," Storm declares. Living up to that quote, Jim plans to spend the spring and summer months in Pine Ridge, South Dakota, photographing Lakota artists.



Dr. Valerie Pronio-Stelluto is a physician with a passion for photography. As a former Director of Medical Student Education and "Humanism in Medicine" award recipient at Harvard Medical School, Valerie was also a photojournalist documenting the clinical journey of her Harvard and MIT students in becoming competent and compassionate doctors. As a member of the Board of Governor's of the Massachusetts American College of Physicians, Valerie has been lauded for her photo contributions. Valerie looks forward to joining Mr. Storm in continuing to photograph the Lakota people.

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