

Daily Meditation 02-08-23

Saving Rainforests: Chico Mendes, Sister Dorothy and Other Heroes

Good morning.

In today's meditation, we carry on the theme of the last couple days: of light, and Spirit, and especially how light and spirit are found in our forests, and specifically the rain forests, and the great role they play of course, as we all know, in the health and survival of our planet.

Today we zero in on the Amazon rainforest in particular, and a new book that has just come out and been reviewed in the *New York Times Review of Books*, called *Masters of the Lost Land: The Untold Story of the Amazon and the Violent Fight for the World's Last Frontier*, by Heriberto Araujo.

The title of the review is "Life and Much Death in the Amazon." Araujo describes the serious and frightening goings-on in the Amazon over the last 20-some years, and provides what the reviewer called "a cavalcade of hitman, peasant victims, rapacious landowners, criminal attorneys, police officers, and others caught up in the violence."

And of course Sister Dorothy Stang and thousands of others were murdered in this circumstance, in this context, this milieu. And she is appropriately remembered in this book and in the review, because the reviewer says, there's "a deep culture of violence that has now seeped into the social fabric of Amazonia" and it'll be very "hard to eradicate." Just this past June, June 2022,

murders of a British journalist Dom Phillips and the indigenous expert Bruno Pereira were shot dead while investigating illegal exploitation of tribal land in the Javari Valley.

He says this "serves as a reminder that the bloodshed continues unabated, along with environmental depredation."

Under the recently defeated president Jair Bolsonaro, a "right wing populist and a climate change skeptic, ally of Brazil's powerful agricultural lobby," 4500 square miles of Amazon rainforest have disappeared between 2021 and 2022. This area is nearly half the size of Massachusetts -- that much rainforest has disappeared, more than double the amount destroyed in 2018.

Now Bolsonaro was defeated by Lula da Silva last fall and da Silva is a friend of the forest and of the Amazon indigenous people who have been attacked as much as the forest has been, but still, as the author says, "there is no easy end to the cycle of violence."

So all the more we honor and want to imitate, in whatever ways we can, the courage and the spirit and the depth of people like Sister Dorothy Stang, green men and green women who are standing up to protect Mother Earth and her forests and indigenous people and peasant farmers who live there not to exploit but to render the forest sustainable again.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.