

FOREWORD

Humanly written, with humility and humor in equal measure, *How to Get Even with the Universe by Getting Right with the World: Working within Sacred Space and Time* is an enchantingly eloquent unveiling of hands-on perennial wisdom, earth honoring ceremonial artistry and soul restorative personal revelation. Lovingly gestated into being within the infinitely fertile empyrean womb of my shamanic soul brother and treasured friend *Corazón Pensante*, (Thinking Heart) aka Steve Guettermann, I'm certain the living truth encountered within the pages of this remarkable book will undoubtedly prove to be a classic in the field of neo-shamanic earth literacy and contemporary ethnospiritual inquiry. Not only is Steve's gift of storytelling on a par with the soul illuminating tales spoken by tribal wisdom keepers of time immemorial, his honestly transparent narrative style invites us to gain deeper insight into our personal struggles and existential challenges as vital preparation for walking more gently and lovingly as sacred passersby upon our Earth Mother, Gaia-Pachamama. A rare gift of inspirational word, illuminating vision and cross-cultural shamanic ritual practice, *How to Get Even with the Universe by Getting Right with the World: Working within Sacred Space and Time* is a beacon of hope for all people called to embody a beauty walk of eco-spiritual healing presence upon beloved Pachamama.

Walking in beauty is being conscious of the sacred reciprocity governing All Our Relations, deeply aware of the exquisite balance between what is taken and what is given during our passerby journey upon this good earth. This unconditional act of generosity, of freely giving without regard for receiving anything in return, embodies the indigenous ethos, the core cultural identity that has guided the lives of our traditional earth honoring peoples before the advent of recorded history. Known as *ayni* by Quechua speaking peoples of Heart Island (South America), it is widely embraced as "cosmic or universal common sense," having become an inviolate principle of right living that informs and governs every human affair and activity in a manner sustaining of deep reverence for our Originating Mystery and Great Sacred Web of Life as a whole. An authentic life of *ayni* demands visceral attentiveness to the pulses, rhythms, cycles, and perpetual ebb and flow among all things born of Creation's dreaming. A life of *ayni* is labor of unconditional love, a soul restorative shamanic path through which our thoughts and visionary dreams, words and medicine songs, actions and gratitude dances, all find seven generation eco-spiritual sanctification in the world.

The greatest gift we humans have to offer the earth is our heartfelt appreciation for the blessing that is life. This experience of gratitude carries a quality of engagement and belongingness within it, of bringing ourselves into alignment with the rest of creation. Anytime gratitude is felt and given expression we become conscious co-creators in the unfolding journey of life. Aligned with the powers of the universe we learn to serve the greatest good for All Our Relations. In this manner expressing gratitude becomes an act of creative confidence, for emptied of the needs of our ego personality we free ourselves to come into deeply caring relationship with the whole of Creation. In essence, within our human impulse to gratitude flow the vast cycles of universal reciprocity. Through our loving recognition, the rest of the Earth achieves a deep fulfillment. Our praise and thanksgiving are as essential a part of life's "give and take," as are the cycles of oxygen and water or any other nourishment flowing through the biosphere. For everything that is taken, something has to be given in return. Life is give and take and all prayerful expressions of gratitude involve a reverent sense of belonging. Among native Quechua speaking people of Perú when we say *Yusulpayki* – or thank you – we are really saying "we belong together," we acknowledge our interdependence, meaning that we *all* belong together, that we are of each other. We belong here. Life belongs here. Belonging is the basic truth of our existence. In its deepest sense, at the heart of gratefulness, we also find this expression of reciprocal belonging known as *Living in Ayni* when we are freed from self-preoccupation and can be filled with thankful reverence for the sacrosanct gift that is life.

As *How to Get Even with the Universe by Getting Right with the World: Working within Sacred Space and Time* movingly reminds us WE ARE the Earth. Pachamama-Gaia shapes us, as we shape her; she informs our body and inhabits our soul, for what surrounds us, is us – the air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat, is as much in us as it is of the living Earth. To live a sustainable life of harmony and balanced reciprocity

with All Our Relations – mineral, plant, animal and human, seen or unseen – we must prayerfully dedicate our dreams, thoughts, words and actions to the wellbeing of the entire earth community. To fully live this understanding is to follow our Original Instructions and engage in the Great Work of restoring a soul animated experience of the sacred to the world. It requires us to stop, to feel, to listen, ever more deeply, to the sanctified inhalation and exhalation of Mother Earth’s breathing, to the resonant drum beat of her perennial wisdom heart and soul sentience. Within the pages of this book, we are treated to a refreshingly incisive marriage of personal revelation and time honored ceremonial artistry. It is a body of work that inspires and catalyzes our human awareness of the accessible magic at play behind Creation’s dreaming our world into form. Its embodied vision serves as a beautifying gift for the human soul, an opening and passageway beyond our current obsession with materiality.

The indigenous soul exists in all of us – we are all native children born from the miracle that is Gaia-Pachamama’s dreaming. All traditional earth honoring people living today are very closely tied to critical habitat and biodiversity hotspots. They are the stewards not only of habitat, but most important, of the indigenous soul to which we are all heir and which we must reclaim. Laying aside our anger about the past and our fear of the future, both indigenous and non-indigenous people must exercise a spiritually compassionate activism as our healing legacy to the seven generations. It takes the ability to be fully alive to the present and let that earthy song come through us. In doing so, we inhabit not only the land, but the ground of our Being, where past and future fall away and we are enlightened fully, as the soul of the planet. Most earth honoring traditional people wisely proclaim that the future is behind us and that we are really moving towards the past, just as a plant during all its phases of outward growth is in reality moving toward the seed from which it originated. Or, to paraphrase Australian aboriginal elder Banjo Clarke: “Life is a *walk about* of return to our original Dreaming.” The reality is that there is no “environment,” save in our imaginations. Drawing from diverse sources of earth honoring shamanic medicine ways and ritual practices, we must inspire each other to walk a graceful path of healing beauty upon our beloved Pachamama, celebrating life as a sacred gift, and teaching Love by the way we live. This is my understanding of the Original Instructions bestowed upon humankind by Originating Mystery.

How to Get Even with the Universe by Getting Right with the World: Working within Sacred Space and Time, is a living embodiment of these Original Instructions. It is about living in *ayni*, about living in beauty, about a divinely ordained balanced reciprocity between what is freely received and generously offered forth to serve a healthful thriving of our species-wide interdependent relationship as Pachamama’s children. It is a compelling invitation for humankind to embark upon a journey of inspired evolution and enlightened right action – to reclaim a soul animated time of dreaming the world into form, a prophesied time of human shamanic presence when we again shall move through a wilderness where every plant, every rock, every animal speaks to us, each embracing us in its song. For this I say *Yusulpayki*, my beloved brother, Steve, *yusulpayki!*

Don Oscar Miro-Quesada
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