



Voices Change Lives

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Lakota Harden

Tashina Ska Win



Lakota Harden (Minnecoujou/Yankton Lakota & HoChunk,) is an orator, activist, community organizer, workshop facilitator, radio host and poet. She has dedicated her life, as a daughter of seven generations of Lakota leaders, to liberation and justice.

Harden first became an accomplished speaker as a youth and representative of the early American Indian Movement's "We Will Remember" Survival School on the Pine Ridge reservation, established out of the 1973 Wounded Knee occupation. She has continued her activism over the years, working with the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC), Women of All Red

Nations (WARN) and the Black Hills Alliance.

Moving into unlearning oppression work in 1987, Harden began collaborating with the Oakland-based Todos Alliance-Building Institute and the Oakland Men's Project. She conducts trainings nationwide for adults who work with youth, across lines of gender, race and age to stop violence. As part of these projects, Harden conducts workshops on unlearning racism, sexism and other social oppressions. Taking this a step further, Harden specializes in "Decolonization" workshops for Indigenous peoples, addressing the impact of genocidal policies in our homes and communities.

Harden's recent activism spans a range of efforts - she was part of South Dakota's Indigenous Women's Network (IWN): Lakota Traditional Birthing Project, focusing on women's health, traditional cultural teachings and women's empowerment. She worked with OYATE, a Native organization working to see that the lives and histories of Native peoples are portrayed honestly through books.

This includes evaluation of texts, resource materials and fiction; conducting teacher workshops, in which participants learn to evaluate children's material for anti-Indian biases; administration of a small resource center and library; and distribution of children's, young adult, and teacher books and materials.

Harden served as Project Coordinator of Mercury Health Education with the International Indian Treaty Council, educating people, especially pregnant and nursing mothers, of the dangers to the unborn and young children posed by mercury left from abandoned gold mines. She helps organize the yearly "Indigenous People's Day Sunrise Gathering" on Alcatraz Island, honoring those who participated in the original occupation in the late 60s, and addressing current Indigenous issues. She is a member of the American Friends Service Committee's Third World Coalition, focusing on struggles of communities of color.

Harden has also traveled to Alaska at the request of the Sitka Tribe to work with their youth on a totem-pole project – helping modern youth revive a centuries-old traditional cultural healing project. She also regularly travels to South Dakota where she is involved in supporting and participating in efforts to keep alive the cultural and spiritual ways of life of pre-colonial traditional ceremonies.

Harden is a host on the weekly radio program *Bay Native Circle* on Pacifica radio station KPFA in the San Francisco Bay Area. The program features interviews, current events and perspectives of the Native American community.

Harden is recipient of the Brave Hearted Woman 2003 Award presented at the Mills College Brave Hearted Woman Conference and the 2004 Sisters of Fire Award presented by the Women of Color Resource Center to leading women-of-color activists and artists for their outstanding commitments to social justice.

Harden is also a facilitator of post-screening discussions of the important feature film, "Follow Me Home," a defiant, humorous, poetic movie that explores race and identity in America while embracing Native, Latino, and African spiritual dimensions. The film stars Alfre Woodard, Benjamin Bratt, Jesse Borrego, Steve Reavis, and Calvin Levels and was written and directed by Peter Bratt. Called "a work of genius" by Alice Walker, the movie was an official selection at the 1996 Sundance Film Festival and won Best Feature Film Audience Award at the 1996 San Francisco International Film Festival and the Best Director Award at the 1996 American Indian Film Festival.

WHAT THEY'RE SAYING ABOUT LAKOTA HARDEN

"Lakota had the entire audience laughing one minute and crying the next. She spoke with such emotion that everyone could not help but listen attentively. Lakota's stories had us all thinking about our own lives and how we were affected by our surroundings. She had us thinking about all the events in the world today and how we can make it a better place for the future."

— Ada Ma, Program Advisor, SUNY Geneseo,
Department of College Union and Activities, Geneseo NY

"Lakota's lecture was one of the most successful events sponsored by the UNT Women's Studies Program this year. Her lecture was extremely well received by our students and faculty and provoked discussion about gender and racial stereotyping throughout our campus for days afterward. Lakota was warm, engaging, thought-provoking and sensitive to her audience."

— Claire L. Sahlin, Director of Women's Studies, University of North
Texas, Denton TX

"Of all the speakers I have brought to the Storrs campus, Lakota Harden was without one of the finest. Our students, staff and faculty benefited tremendously from her visit. She was professional, honest, humorous, skillful, and most of all, respectful in helping each of us who attended further understand ourselves and each other."

— Barbara Gurr, Assistant Director of Women's Studies, University of
Connecticut, Storrs CT

"Being a Native American myself, this (presentation) touched so many levels of emotions. I have heard the stories of the reservations from my family who were raised on a reservation in North Dakota. However, I never have experienced such a transformational movie (Follow Me Home) and experience that truly touched me to the core. This is truly what it is all about; sharing, respecting, honoring, and celebrating our similarities and our differences."

— Jacob Peltier, Environmental & Entrepreneurial Representative, Associated
Student Government, Bellevue Community College, Bellevue

LAKOTA HARDEN APPEARANCES (partial list)

COLLEGES/UNIVERSITIES

University of Redlands, Redlands CA
University of California, Santa Cruz CA
University of California, Santa Barbara CA
Mills College, Oakland CA
University of San Diego, San Diego CA
University of San Francisco, CA
Saint Mary's College, Moraga CA
California State University, Los Angeles CA
Los Medanos College, Pittsburg CA
Fresno City College, Fresno CA
Scripps College, Claremont CA
University of California, Berkeley CA
University of Colorado, Boulder CO
University of Connecticut, Storrs CT
Spelman College, Atlanta GA
Idaho State University, Pocatello ID
Illinois State University, Normal IL
University of Illinois, Chicago IL
University of Illinois, Urbana IL
Wheaton College, Norton MA
Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley MA
Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter MN
Macalester College, St. Paul MN
Hamline University, St. Paul MN
University of New Hampshire, Durham NH
Rider University, Fairview NJ
Western Nevada Community College, Carson City NV
Columbia University, New York NY
Fordham University, Bronx NY
Cornell University, Ithaca NY
State University of New York, Geneseo NY
Lewis and Clark College, Portland OR
Dickenson College, Carlisle PA
University of Tennessee, Knoxville TN
University of North Texas, Denton TX
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg VA
Christopher Newport University, Newport News VA
Western Washington University, Bellingham WA
The Evergreen State College, Olympia WA
Bellingham Technical College, Bellingham WA

Green River Community College, Auburn WA
Bellevue Community College, Bellevue WA
Clark College, Vancouver WA
South Seattle Community College, Seattle WA
Seattle Central Community College, Seattle WA
Washington State University, Pullman WA
Whatcom Community College, Bellingham WA
University of Wisconsin, La Crosse, WI

CONFERENCES

The Color Of Violence II: Violence Against Women Of Color National Conference
Multicultural Conference, United Council of Wisconsin, La Crosse WI
Washington State Faculty & Staff of Color in Higher Education Conference
Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian - 2002 Native Cinema Showcase
2002 American Studies Association Annual Convention, Houston TX
Adult Literacy Conference, Caspar WY
Minnesota State Housing Authority Conference, St. Paul MN
Wasatch Activist Convergence Training, 2005 West Jordan UT
2005 Spelman College Women of Color Conference, Atlanta GA
Brave Hearted Women Conference, Mills College, Oakland CA
International Funders for Indigenous Peoples, San Francisco CA 2007

COMMUNITY EVENTS & TRAININGS

Henry Lee Willis Community Center, Worcester MA
City of Seattle Office for Civil Rights, Seattle WA
Center for Battered Women, Everett WA
Providence Sexual Assault Center, Everett WA
Sitka Tribe of Alaska Domestic Violence Prevention Project AK
Healthy Nations, Omak WA
Family Empowerment Center, Omak WA
Head Start, Omak WA
Early Head Start, Rapid City SD
Indigenous Women's Network, MN
El Centro su Teatro 7th annual XicanIndie Film Fest, Denver CO

HONORS

Brave Hearted Woman 2003 Award
Sister of Fire Award 2004 from the Women of Color Resource Center
Selected for Hedgebrook Women's Writers Retreat 2006

Diversity Trainings / Alliance Building Workshops With Lakota Harden

Since 1987, Lakota Harden has been leading diversity trainings, both locally and nationwide. “Unlearning Racism” workshops, training staff of the “New Bridges” camp, and working with youth at the Battered Women’s Alternatives has brought forth an effective extensive format for working with adults and teens from diverse backgrounds. These workshops focus on learning to eliminate racism, sexism, and other oppression divisions. Harden works with small groups to large forums such as the “Reaching Out” project in Oakland with 1200 people in an audience format. These workshops are interactive and focus on raising consciousness about social issues, and increasing skills to meet multicultural challenges. Workshops can range from 2 hours to 2 days, depending on the size, structure and availability of a group.

The model of workshop teaches:

- ❖ effective intervention and communication skills
- ❖ the ability of recognizing our individual resistance to oppression
- ❖ learning agreements to create peaceful working groups
- ❖ building relationships across difference
- ❖ developing inherent ability of individuals to lead systematic change efforts

Workshop approach:

- ❖ establish blame-free environment
- ❖ combine interactive exercises with storytelling, teaching, dialogue, and action
- ❖ Unlearn the stereotypes and misinformation individuals hold about ourselves and each other
- ❖ Create alliances among diverse individuals and groups
- ❖ Change our own actions in order to bring about institutional change toward a more equitable world.
- ❖ Discussion about what community means, what I can expect and what my community can expect from

The outcome can mean that individuals have an opportunity to:

- **form lasting connections with each other,**
- **learn how the “isms” have been catastrophic for everyone,**
- **become skilled at creating alliances, and**
- **think clearly about next steps in enhancing their capabilities concerning diversity issues**
- **Organizations develop a core of resident experts in alliance to bring about and sustain structural and institutional change.**