



CHICO MENDES 30 ANOS  
A MEMORY TO HONOR. A LEGACY TO DEFEND.  
LETTER FROM XAPURI

Dear Chico,

In this week of the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> of December, 2018, we, more than five hundred people from all parts of Acre, Amazonia, Brazil, and the planet, met in your city of Xapuri, Acre to honor your memory and defend your legacy, 30 years after your absence from this physical world.

We've lived moments of intense yearning and emotion, Chico! Here present were your fellow rubber tappers and comrades in struggle, men and women, in direct actions against deforestation; from far away, representatives from extractive communities from all of the Brazilian biomes gathered; as well as your friends from outside of the forest, from all over Brazil, and from outside of Brazil; represented here, were people who lived with you, and also many new people, moved by the force of your ideals.

During these three days, we reflected on your wise words, which immortalized your vision for the future of our planet: "In the beginning, I thought I was fighting to save the rubber trees; later, I thought my fight was to save the Amazon forest; now, I understand that I am fighting to save humanity." Certainly, Chico! Your fight was ahead of its time...very much ahead of your own time.

Only you, Chico, could make happen – in this Amazon season of few flights and much rain – this profound dialogue of ours, which because of your inspiration keeps us fighting for a model of sustainable development that liberate us from the evils of environmental degradation and from the pollution of water, soil, and the air that we breathe. Only you could inspire us to keep fighting for a society that is more just, more solidary and more equitable, for a world that we still believe is possible.

Only you, Chico, make us dream while faced with retrogressions announced in the first decisions of a government not yet in power, but which already renounces Brazil's commitment to host the next United Nations Climate Conference; already declares war on unions, civil society organizations, social movements, the rights won by young people, women, indigenous peoples, slave-descended communities, riverine fishing communities, extractivists, peoples of the forest and all of the traditional populations of Brazil.

Speaking of youth, Chico, you must be happy with your men and women companions of the National Council of Extractivist Populations' (CNS) decision to make this meeting a time for sharing understanding across generations. Just as you dreamed one day, young people are more than half of those present here. They are young people who have come to affirm their commitment to your legacy for the next 30 years! Unfortunately, the "memory of a sorrowful past of pain, suffering and death" you invoked in your message to the youth of the future, dated September 6<sup>th</sup>, 2120, is still constant sorrow in our time. The numbers are alarming, *companheiro* Chico: every five days one of your – and our -- men or women companions is assassinated in Brazil.

In 2017 alone, more than a thousand conflicts over land, water and labor were reported in the forests and countryside of our country. In the last 12 months, at least 70 people were killed. The most recent was our *companheiro* Gilson Maria Temponi, in Placas, Pará. Imagine, Chico, one more death, just as were meeting here to honor your

memory, 30 years after your assassination at the back door of your house on December 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1988, by the traitorous bullets of a shotgun fired at the behest of the land grabbers.

But not everything is sorrow! With great happiness, we celebrate your legacy. The fight of your *companheiros* and *companheiras* transformed the Extractive Reserves! Your proposal of collective and shared use of forest areas by the extractivist communities, which you presented in the First National Meeting of Rubber Tappers in Brasilia in 1985, has grown and become public policy, not only in Amazonia, but also in other Brazilian biomes.

Today, there are thousands of families, living on millions of hectares of protected areas. And in these areas, even though there is still much to do, in addition to the extractive production, there is now school, medical care, electricity, and in many cases, internet service! Only now, *companheiro* Chico, the new governments and elected legislatures, threaten to hand over to agribusiness, to logging, to mining, the territories under our watch that guarantee the sustainability of our economy and our way of life. They forget that the environmental services we provide benefit not only us, but all the people of the world.

We hope, *companheiro* Chico, that the achievements of your legacy, which are the result of our resistance during the last three decades, of the alliances that you generously constructed with such diverse partners in the forest and outside of it, reach the hearts and minds of those who are assuming power to continue respecting and working together with our forest communities in defense of our territories, environmental conservation, and the rights of the people of Brazil.

We hope, *companheiro* Chico, right here, on the banks of the Acre River, in this, your beloved Xapuri, in the heart of the Amazon forest, that the young people of 2120 can be here united in an auspicious Chico Mendes Week, to celebrate the strength of the struggle that we bear together with our people, from the forests, from the *sertão*, on the oceans, and on the rivers, to commemorate the unity of all of the peoples of the world around the ideals you bequeathed to us, as well as the global revolution, which the measure of time didn't allow you yourself to live, but of which you had the pleasure to dream.

NO ONE WILL ABANDON THE DEFENSE OF THE PEOPLES OF THE FOREST!  
NO ONE WILL RELINQUISH THE LEGACY OF CHICO MENDES!  
NO ONE WILL LET GO OF ANYONE'S HAND!

Xapuri, Acre, 17 December, 2018

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