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The Doctrine of Discovery, Unmasking The Domination Code

This powerful and landmark documentary “The Doctrine of Discovery: Unmasking The Domination Code” is a result of the collaborative efforts by Dakota filmmaker and Director Sheldon Wolfchild and Co-Producer Steven Newcomb (Shawnee, Lenape). The film, based on Newcomb’s thirty years of research, and his book *Pagans in the Promised Land: Decoding the Doctrine of Christian Discovery* (Fulcrum, 2008), brings to the big screen an amazing and little known story:

The first Christian people to locate lands inhabited by non-Christians (“infidels, heathens, and savages”) claimed the right to assert a right of domination to be in themselves. On the basis of this religiously premised argument, the U.S. Supreme Court has defined the land title of the Indian nations as a “mere right of occupancy” subject to a right of domination on the part of the United States. The first “Christian people” that claimed “ultimate dominion,” said the Supreme Court, could grant away the soil while yet it was still in the possession of the “natives, who were heathens.”

Birgil Kills Straight, a Headman of the Oglala Lakota Nation, provides insight into the traditional wisdom and teachings of the Seven Laws of the Oglala Lakota. The documentary points out that the traditional teachings of original nations and peoples form an alternative to the dehumanizing domination system of Christendom.

Theologian Luis Rivera-Pagán, who is interviewed in the film, points out in his book *A Violent Evangelism: The Religious and Political Conquest of the Americas* (1992), that an accurate history must account for the theological and religious justifications for claims of domination over the original nations and peoples. Rivera-Pagán talks about the devastating effects of “the absolute devaluation of one’s being,” or, in other words, dehumanization.

The film calls upon the Holy See at the Vatican to revoke the papal decrees that set into motion the domination system, and points out that the values and teachings of original nations are a sacred path for all Life.

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