

COVID-19 Chronicles Lydia Miller Kuku Yalanji May 2020

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This morning, I woke to the crisp assault of icy water in the air, and excited with anticipation, I opened the windows and ran downstairs to breathe the cleanest air I have ever breathed in my life ... is this where I am being returned to, having come from? I am experiencing the past, present and future during this time.

The beauty of the earth now is an echo of my Ancestors, and I am in wonderment as I contemplate how stunningly beautiful our existence was before the terror and nightmare of the savages ... a sky that is blue, iridescent and sparkling with the diamonds of planets and stars. They awake me at night and in the early morning, and I willingly ease out of my bed to look at those resplendent energies that have called my Ancestors for Millennia, just as they call me now. I wish I knew their names, and I pay homage to them for reminding me that they have always stood as sentinels to me and my kin's existence.

I lament each day when I hear that we may return only for the purpose of serving a machine of profit that can't survive unless its workers are in slavery and subservient to its profit ... but wait, I whisper, I am not ready. I am still trying to understand how the magnificence of a world I lived in has been diminished, and I am not ready to go back to the dystopia I have been forced and coerced to live in ... I can't breathe, and my chest tightens when I think of how this is not what I want. I want to hear my Mother call for us each break of day when birds are the heralds of the new day. I still listen to traffic and wake at all hours, wondering why and who it is that awakes at this hour – are they shift workers, are they so-called essential, are they lost in the mire of the disruption?

I photograph the dawn as a reminder that I may never see this exquisite interlude again, as the madness tries to regain its hold and coerce us into believing this is normal ... I breathe deeply so as not to succumb to the panic of returning to a dysfunction that is now all the more pronounced in its starkness ... this is the 8th week and it is my chronicle of COVID.



Lydia is a Kuku Yalanji woman from the rainforest regions of Far North Queensland. Lydia is currently the Executive Director, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts with the Australia Council for the Arts. Lydia has more than twenty years' experience as a performer, artistic director, producer, administrator and advocate. She has extensive experience in the arts, health, justice and community sectors and was previously Executive Officer, NSW Aboriginal Justice Advisory Council. This essay was originally posted on Facebook on 1 May 2020.