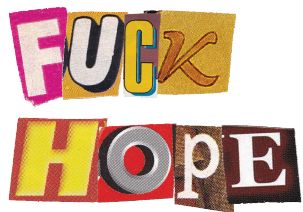


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A PROJECT OF
INDIGENOUS NIHILISM

AVULSION
we will tear us apart





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Because when we talk about nihilism, what people are really afraid of isn't collapse. It's what's revealed in the absence. Who fears truthlessness except the colonizer, expecting you to chase the American Dream? Who fears purposelessness but the capitalist, always measuring your worth by what you produce? Who fears meaninglessness but the settler who thinks you owe your life to a nation that tried to erase you? They're not afraid of nothing. They're afraid of you realizing that their everything was never meant for you.

They want to believe that Indigenous nihilism is just a branch of their philosophy, some angry offshoot of Western thought. But we're not growing off their tree. We're the river that changed direction.

Avulsion isn't a metaphor we borrowed. It's something we live. It's what happens when pressure builds, when sediment clogs the channel, when the old path no longer holds. The river doesn't ask permission. It doesn't mourn the banks. It cuts loose. That shift is sudden, violent, and permanent. It doesn't mean the river dies. It means it refuses.

And we've refused before. We've burned their outposts. Cut fences, sabotaged wells, bled out their roads and powerlines under starlight. We've broken out of their jails and burned their laws in the street. We've sunk their monuments into the dirt they pretend to own. We've blocked their pipelines not to protest, but to say no more. We've crossed their borders without papers and refused their flags even in death. We've thrown back tear gas, started fires, and fought with more rage than they ever expected us to have left.

Not because we were promised a better world. But because the one they built was never ours to begin with.

That's what Indigenous nihilism is. Not Western collapse, but Indigenous refusal. Not despair, but disloyalty to systems that want our meaning only when it's marketable, spiritual only when it's safe, political only when it's palatable.

We don't flow where they point anymore. We carve new channels. And we don't apologize for the flood.

Nihilism has been used like a weapon, but not by the people you think.

Liberals say it's the reason young people won't vote. Fascists twist it into some void they can fill with violence. Even some anarchists flinch, like it's contagious.

But when they talk about nihilism, what they're really doing is guarding their belief systems, all of them, right or left. What scares them isn't nothingness. It's the idea that their solutions might not work anymore. That the river might abandon its course.

I'm not here to argue some brand of philosophy. I don't come from college degrees, non-profit activism, or sacrificial altruism. I'm Diné, raised with ceremony close by, not always within reach, but close enough to shape how I move in this world. I've never been comfortable using words like "sacred" in my own mouth, but I respect when it shows up in others, especially when it comes from land, family, or memory.

What I don't respect are the people, the academics, politicians, movement moralists, who misrepresent nihilism on purpose. They use it like a slur. They don't understand it, and worse, they don't want to. Because to them, questioning everything means destabilizing the thing they've already chosen to believe in. The vote. The cause. The revolution. The community. The party line.

Liberals call it defeatism, the reason people don't vote or "engage," like the world is going to hell because some of us won't pick the lesser evil. Conservatives treat it like rot, proof society has lost its faith, its family, its flag. Fascists love to wear nihilism like a mask. They twist it into permission: nothing matters, so dominate. Be cruel.

Even the so-called radicals aren't immune. Democratic socialists think nihilism is a threat to class unity. Revolutionary communists see it as anti-materialist heresy. And a lot of anarchists act like the worst thing you can do is stop believing in community.

Some people of color, especially in nonprofits or campaigns, treat nihilism like betrayal. They will look you dead in the eye and say that giving up on the system is giving up on your people. Like refusing to vote is the same as siding with death.

Others say nihilism is white privilege. That it's a luxury belief, something only a tenured professor or suburban dropout could afford. They say it is the status quo. That believing in nothing lets the system win.

But that's a misunderstanding too. Because when you're Native, or Black, or undocumented, or trans, or poor, you don't need a philosophy to feel like the world doesn't care if you live or die. You feel that shit every day. Naming it isn't surrender. It's clarity.

And then there's the kind of nihilism people whisper about on the rez or in the hood. The kind they don't call "nihilism" but treat like a warning. The uncle drinking himself to death on the streets or the cousin who stopped looking for work when they started to bang. People say they've "given up." That they don't care anymore. Sometimes that's true. Sometimes it's not.

But I've heard our own talk about that kind of life like it's a kind of failure. As if not participating positively in capitalism or clean living means surrender. But I don't buy that either. Because what looks like giving up is often just what's left when every promise has already been broken. And maybe the real problem isn't that some of our people don't believe in anything. It's that they've been lied to about what's worth believing in.

In Western thought, nihilism is the void that opens when God dies, a collapse of values, a loss of meaning. But for us, that void isn't philosophical. It was carved out by force. And we know what they've tried to stuff into it: God, flag, job, healing, hope.

What I'm referring to as Indigenous nihilism isn't about giving up. It's about not being lied to anymore.

It's not passive. It doesn't sit in a corner and mope. It's the kind of clarity that comes after watching every system that claimed to protect you,

schools, churches, cops, courts, councils try to erase you or your people. It's what settles in when you stop pretending any of this was ever neutral, or fair, or designed for us to survive.

Indigenous nihilism says: the world you're asking us to believe in is already dead. And no, we're not interested in reviving it. We're not trying to fix it, vote it better, or mourn it like something sacred. We're standing in the space its collapse left behind, and that space is honest.

What we won't do is fill the collapse with someone else's fantasy.

Not religion that doesn't speak our language.

Not degree plans wrapped in "giving back."

Not patriotic myths that turn soldiers into saints.

We're not calling casinos sovereignty.

We're not calling strip mines economic development.

We're not selling trauma dressed up as beadwork and calling that healing.

America was never ours.

And no amount of scholarships, nonprofits, or entrepreneurship is going to buy us freedom from this dead world.

Indigenous nihilism doesn't fall for polished lies.

UN declarations with no enforcement.

Religious laws that protect churches more than ceremony.

Sovereignty defined by what the U.S. is willing to allow.

They call it recognition, progress, rights.

It's branding.

Even decolonization by committee still imagines us in uniforms, in unions, in governments — just under new management.

They want to swap the flag and call it freedom.

We've seen this story before.

We're not playing the same role again.

We're not interested in surviving on their terms.

We're interested in refusing the terms altogether.