

Two Questions

1)

I sprinkle sweetgrass over the fire
after I am told that God
is pleased by the smell
 of burning sweetgrass.

I sprinkle sage over the fire
because, I am likewise informed,
the bad spirits flee the smell
 of burning sage.

I—who believe not
in the Lakota God or
 in such spirits—
have I thus shown my respect
for the traditions
of this indigenous people?
Or am I expropriating
 their culture
to create some meaning
that is otherwise absent
 from my own life?

2)

I hear participants
identify themselves over Zoom:
My name is [fill in the blank]
I live in [such and such city or town]
which is on stolen [name of tribe] land.

It is good, I decide, for us
to acknowledge the theft
 of this land.

But what, I would like to ask,
are you doing to restore the land
 to these first nations?

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