

NARRATOR:

The Disability & Philanthropy Forum presents Jen Deerinwater, Founding Executive Director of Crushing Colonialism.

JEN DEERINWATER:

Every issue is a Native issue, is a disabled issue and so forth. Thinking about my own research, looking at climate, environmental degradation and Indigenous people on a global level, what I found was it wasn't just those of us considered American Indian and Alaska Native here in the so-called U.S., but it's our relatives in so-called Australia, so-called Canada, Aotearoa, known as New Zealand. Every single place I could find data, Indigenous people had the highest rates per capita of disabilities. This isn't because we're somehow genetically more predisposed. It's because of colonialism. It's because of genocides that are still occurring to this day. That's why.

I can say for my own personal self, I recently learned that a spinal fusion I had almost seven years ago, despite me telling doctors repeatedly how much pain I was in, turns out it wasn't a successful surgery. So I've been in agonizing pain for years while doctors just keep telling me, "Oh, it's just mental illness." Well now I have to have two surgeries to fix that. It's also not a coincidence in my mind that while in the hospital for that original surgery, I was called a Redskin and a lot of other deplorable names. These are the outcomes of anti-Native racism and genocide and the way that they're still impacting us in the very real moments of today.

Since we are here to talk about philanthropy, I'll get into that as well now and say that the philanthropic industry is also responsible for this. Everything that foundations have, they have because of Native genocide as well as the minoritization and oppression of other groups of people like Black folks and women and so forth. But everything you have, you have because of what you took from us and you continue to keep from us. There are more than enough resources to go around. No Native or disabled person, let alone a Native and disabled person or led organization should be out here struggling for funds.

NARRATOR:

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