

Counter Bulls:

Declarations of Liberation and Reclamation

Acknowledgments: I would like to extend my deep gratitude to the Indigenous peoples, activists, and scholars whose wisdom and resilience have inspired this work. This project draws upon the legacies of those who have tirelessly fought for justice, equity, and the reclamation of lands, cultures, and histories. I acknowledge the voices that were silenced and seek to amplify their truth through these declarations.

Thank you to the global artistic community that continues to challenge oppressive structures through creativity and expression. This work stands alongside the broader movement for decolonisation and justice, fueled by collective struggle and hope.

-**Thato Tatai**

Explanation of the Counter Bulls: Restoring Balance, Sovereignty, and Justice

For centuries, the world has been shaped by decrees of power, conquest, and domination—most notably through papal bulls like *Dum Diversas* and *Romanus Pontifex*. These documents were issued by the Catholic Church in the 15th century, and they served to legitimise the colonisation, enslavement, and exploitation of non-Christian peoples, particularly in Africa and the Americas. They are widely recognised as foundational tools that justified the transatlantic slave trade, the dispossession of Indigenous lands, and the erasure of cultures and spiritual practices.

These papal bulls functioned not only as political and religious declarations but as enduring "spells" that sanctioned systems of injustice and oppression, whose effects continue to reverberate through modern society. The ideologies they propagated—such as the Doctrine of Discovery—laid the groundwork for centuries of colonisation, systemic racism, and economic exploitation.

While these bulls may no longer be legally binding, their legacy remains deeply embedded in the structures of inequality and oppression that persist today. To break the hold of these oppressive forces, there is a need for symbolic and spiritual counter-bulls that reject their harmful doctrines and declare new principles of freedom, justice, and reclamation.

Why We Need Counter Bulls

The counter bulls serve several essential purposes:

Reversing the Legacy of Colonisation: The original papal bulls enabled European powers to claim dominion over lands that were already inhabited by thriving Indigenous cultures. They laid the foundation for the violent seizure of land, resources, and sovereignty. The counter bulls seek to reverse this by declaring the freedom of lands and the restoration of Indigenous sovereignty. They recognise that the land itself holds spiritual value and that true harmony can only be restored when the land is returned to its original caretakers.

Rejecting the Doctrine of Discovery and Enslavement: The Doctrine of Discovery, which was rooted in these papal bulls, justified the enslavement of Africans and Indigenous peoples and deemed non-Christian peoples as "inferior" or "unworthy." The counter bulls reject this poisonous ideology by affirming the inherent dignity and equality of all people, regardless of their culture, religion, or background. They call for the restoration of truth and justice, repudiating the false narratives that legitimised these crimes.

Healing Historical Trauma: Colonisation and slavery caused profound trauma—not only physical and cultural but spiritual and psychological. The counter bulls aim to provide a path to healing by restoring what was taken: land, sovereignty, freedom, and dignity. By recognising the pain of the past and actively working to repair it, these decrees offer a way forward toward collective healing, not only for the oppressed but for all of humanity.

Reaffirming the Rights of Indigenous and African Peoples: The original papal bulls denied Indigenous and African peoples their rights to self-determination, culture, and spirituality. The counter bulls, on the other hand, affirm the sacredness of these rights. They restore the narratives of those who were silenced and uphold their wisdom as equal and essential to the global human family. In doing so, they create a framework for decolonisation in all its forms—legal, social, cultural, and spiritual.

Promoting Equity and Justice for the Future: Breaking the spell of these historical decrees is not only about correcting the past but also about creating a future built on equity, cooperation, and mutual respect. The counter bulls declare that systems of domination and exploitation must be replaced by systems of justice, where all peoples are free to live in dignity and harmony with each other and with the earth. They provide a new vision of power—not one of conquest, but of collaboration and shared stewardship.

A Call to Action

The counter bulls are not merely symbolic; they are a call to action. They invite individuals, communities, and nations to engage in the work of dismantling the legacies of colonialism and slavery, to heal the traumas of the past, and to co-create a more just and equitable world. By embracing these new decrees, we can begin to undo the damage caused by centuries of exploitation and restore balance to humanity and the earth.

These bulls represent an active reclamation of power, truth, and justice. They are tools for those who seek to decolonise their minds, their communities, and their institutions. Through education, spiritual practices, art, activism, and legal advocacy, these counter bulls offer a blueprint for liberation.

Let these counter bulls serve as declarations of freedom. They represent a movement to break the chains of history, to challenge the spells of domination, and to usher in an era of healing, restoration, and equity. Through them, we reclaim the right to live in harmony with each other and the natural world, free from the shadows of the past.

Counter Bull I: Liberatio Terrarum (Freedom of Lands)

Issued in the Year of the Earth's Healing, from the Heart of All Peoples

By the Authority of Universal Harmony, for the Balance of All Creation:

We, the People of the Earth, declare and affirm that all lands belong to their original stewards, the communities and nations that live in harmony with the land, sky, and water. No force, decree, or ideology shall claim dominion over land for the purpose of domination, exploitation, or conquest.

We revoke all claims of dominion made by foreign powers under the guise of religion or empire.

We recognise the sovereignty of Indigenous peoples across the earth and affirm their rights to care for the lands, waters, and spirits in accordance with their ancient customs.

We nullify all past and present systems that seek to alienate people from their land, restoring the balance of nature and the well-being of all creatures.

Let the land be free, and let all people be caretakers of their natural world. This is the decree of the Earth and Sky, proclaimed for all time.

Counter Bull II: Veritas Aeterna (Eternal Truth)

Proclaimed in the Era of Awakening, From the Circle of Unity

By the Authority of Truth and Memory, for the Healing of the Generations:

We, the Witnesses of History, call forth the Eternal Truth to erase the falsehoods that justified the oppression, enslavement, and destruction of human beings and their cultures. We stand against the lies that masked greed as divine will, and we here by declare:

The right of every human to exist in dignity is absolute, and no people shall be deemed inferior or subject to domination because of their origin, religion, or culture.

We restore the erased histories of all peoples and nations, affirming that their wisdom, traditions, and knowledge are equal to any others, not to be subjugated or erased.

We reject the doctrine of discovery and all its associated evils, affirming that discovery is the right of all to explore their inner and outer worlds freely, without force or violence.

Let the truth of every culture, person, and spirit be honoured. This is the word of Justice, spoken for eternity.

Counter Bull III: Aequitas Humanitatis (Equity of Humanity)

Proclaimed in the Season of Restoration, from the Roots of the Ancestors

By the Authority of the Ancestors and Descendants, for the Harmony of All Nations:

We, the Voices of All Generations, decree the end of exploitation and the elevation of equity among all peoples. This counter-bull revokes the curse of exploitation and slavery placed on the bodies and minds of generations past, present, and future.

We proclaim the freedom of all who were enslaved and denounce any system, past or present, that exploits human labour or reduces a person to property.

We declare reparations for all the suffering inflicted by systems of slavery, colonization, and economic domination, ensuring the healing of those oppressed and the restoration of stolen wealth and lands.

We elevate the value of cooperation over domination, affirming that true power comes from unity, respect, and mutual aid among all peoples.

Let humanity live in equity and dignity, as one family. This is the decree of Compassion, written into the fabric of existence.

Enactment of the Counter-Bulls

Ritual of Reclamation: Gather in a natural space or sacred place. Speak aloud the Counter Bulls, with intention and clarity. Honor the elements—earth, water, air, and fire—asking them to witness the restoration of balance and the breaking of the old spell. Offer something from the earth, such as water or seeds, as a symbol of renewal.

Artistic Creation: Create physical representations of these bulls, either through writing, art, or digital media. Share them within your community, on social platforms, or in personal spaces as a reminder that the old decrees of domination are void and a new era is being written.

Community Dialogue: Hold gatherings (online or in person) where people discuss the meaning of these counter-bulls and what steps are necessary to reclaim sovereignty, truth, and equity. Collective action can reinforce the breaking of old power structures.

Conclusion: Breaking the Colonial Spell

These counter-bulls act as symbolic declarations of freedom and healing, reversing the spiritual and social damage done by centuries of colonisation, slavery, and exploitation. By enacting these decrees through ritual, art, education, and action, you break the hold of the old colonial "spell" and open the way for a more just, harmonious, and equitable future.

For Further Understanding:

The Counter Bulls are a response to historical papal decrees like *Dum Diversas* and *Romanus Pontifex*, which were used to justify the conquest, colonisation, and enslavement of Indigenous peoples and African populations. These decrees laid the foundation for the Doctrine of Discovery, which sanctioned European powers to claim lands inhabited by non-Christian peoples. The Counter Bulls aim to reclaim sovereignty, heal historical traumas, and challenge the ideologies that allowed these injustices to persist.

For further reading on the history and impact of colonialism, decolonisation, and justice, I recommend the following resources:

"**The Wretched of the Earth**" by **Frantz Fanon** – A foundational text on the psychological and cultural effects of colonisation and the path to liberation.

"**Decolonizing Methodologies**" by **Linda Tuhiwai Smith** – A vital book exploring Indigenous knowledge systems and the need to decolonise research and knowledge production.

"**A People's History of the United States**" by **Howard Zinn** – A perspective on American history from the viewpoint of marginalised and oppressed peoples.

In addition to enacting these Counter Bulls through personal reflection, ritual, and art, I encourage all individuals and communities to engage in learning about Indigenous rights, reparations for colonised peoples, and movements for justice and equity. These declarations are not just symbolic; they are a call to re-imagine our world and take action toward healing and restoration.