New Brunswick invites the return of unsafe abortions

From the World Cup to the Washington football team, Indigenous people fight to be seen

By DAVE ZIRIN

A 13-year-old boy from Brazil’s Guarani tribe makes a political stand in front of 70,000 soccer fans and what he thinks is an international audience. A movement led by Indigenous women in the United States beats a billion dollar brand of the big, bad, NFL. Both of these stories share more than the fact that they took place during the same week. They have in common the ways that people in power have been reduced to combating their courage by trying to render them invisible. They both demonstrate how if you are an Indigenous person, you can be on the highest possible cultural platform practically surrounded by fireworks, sparkles, and neon signs blaring “LOOK AT ME” and your very presence can still be denied.

Before the opening game of the World Cup, FIFA, the organization that oversees international soccer, thought it would be a good idea to have three Brazilian children each release a “dove of peace.” One of those children was a 13-year-old from the Guarani tribe, Jeguká Mirim. The Guarani are Brazil’s largest tribal group. They have also been subject to incredible levels of violence by ranchers who occupy their land for cattle and sugar production. They have been forced to reservations where disease and malnutrition are rife, their situation may actually be getting worse. The ruling Workers Party is attempting to turn away even more of their lands, which led to violent confrontations—and dramatic images—on the front pages of the World Cup and the capital city of Brasilia.

The effects on the tribe are brutal. There is poverty, there is infant mortality, and in the Brazilian state of Mato Grosso do Sul, the Guarani-Kaiowá suffer the highest suicide rate on earth. Jeguká Mirim wasn’t going to go along with this. The Guarani have struggled and fought for their people suffered. After releasing the dove, he unfurled a banner that read, “Demarcate,” or “Demarcação New!” This is the highly charged slogan used by Indigenous groups attempting to retain their land rights. Jeguká’s father, Olívio Jukwu, said he had no idea that his son was going to do such a thing. Olivia did say that the actions of the Guarani are not standing still. My son showed the world what we need the most: the demarcation of our lands. There was only one problem however with this... (continued on page 2)

Thirteen-year-old Jeguká Mirim and two others from the Guarani indigenous community used the opening ceremonies of the World Cup to draw attention to the plight of Indigenous people in Brazil and demand the demarcation of Indigenous lands as the Brazilian government is proposing legislation that would reduce the size of some Indigenous reserves. Photo from the Facebook page of the Comissão Guarani de Direitos de Terra (CGDT), an Indigenous organization.