

The Story of Itiba

*A Taino Girl
Living on a Caribbean Island
in the Years Just After
The Landing of Columbus*

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The Story of Itiba

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Sound design: earwax productions, San Francisco

"The people are a story that never ends..."

Meridel Le Sueur, North Star Country

A play to mark the Quincentennial of the Columbus expedition, focusing on the first people Columbus encountered in the Caribbean, the Taíno. Written and performed by the LHS Science Discovery Theatre in conjunction with the "1492: Two Worlds of Science" exhibit on the Quincentennial and its impact. The exhibit is being developed under the co-direction of Jennifer Meux White, Exhibits & Design Director, and Cary Sneider, Astronomy & Physics Director, at the Lawrence Hall of Science, a public science and mathematics center on the University of California at Berkeley campus, with the assistance of grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Science Foundation.

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INTRODUCTION: *Taino mother introduces the play, first making several calls on the conch shell ("fotuto" in the Taino language) to gather audience. Modern girl is standing still and silent on stage, holding telephone.*

Taino mother: Welcome everyone and thanks for being here. Our play today will last about 35 minutes. If you have questions or thoughts about it, please stay afterward for a short discussion. We now present "The Story of Itiba." *(exit)*

Scene 1: *Modern-day father and daughter: father enters during daughter's opening phone conversation. Daughter's school backpack with books, paper, pens, spilled out on table nearby.*

Daughter: *(in the middle of phone conversation with a school friend)* Can you believe all the homework he gave us? And just the night "Quantum Leap" is on besides!

Daughter: *(listens briefly, then slowly and clearly)* Yeh, then this one kid in my class has to go ask the teacher—How can they say Columbus DISCOVERED America when there were already people here? *(listens again very briefly)*

Daughter: Yeh, I *know* it's a good question, but instead of answering it, he gives us this huge assignment! *(sees father enter the room, speedily ends conversation)* uhhh...have to go now...I'll call ya back, bye...uhh...hi Dad!

Father: Working hard, I see.

Daughter: As a matter of fact, I was just discussing my homework. *(sets phone down, grabs notebook, then covers up book that she's already taken from father's study)*

Father: Right. And what's this I hear about a big assignment?

Daughter: Oh, it's all Columbus's fault...him and his Quintessential!

Father: The Quincentennial. The 500th anniversary of Columbus's voyage.

Daughter: Uh-uh...

Father: Back in my day, they taught us that Columbus, sailing for the Spanish crown, proved the Earth was round.

Daughter: Not anymore, Dad. Lots of people back then already knew the earth was round, but they couldn't agree about how big it was.

- Father: You're right. Columbus thought it was a lot smaller than it actually is, that's one reason why he thought he'd reached Asia. But he landed in what we now call the Americas instead. So what's the assignment?
- Daughter: (*dutiful, sighs*) We have to write a story about the people who lived on the islands where Columbus landed.
- Father: That's a great idea. Of course, you know Columbus thought he'd reached the subcontinent of *India*, that's why he called the people "Indians."
- Daughter: Everybody knows that! But whatever they were really called, it all happened 500 years ago—history—it has nothing to do with me. I mean, what's the point?
- Father: That's for you to "discover" I guess. The first people Columbus met were called the Taíno people.
- Daughter: OK, then, the Taíno. But how am I gonna get this thing done by tomorrow! (*buttering him up*) You took all those anthropology classes.
- Father: Well, I do know the Taino had their own way of life and complex culture that faced terrible times after Columbus. Now in this book...how did this get here?
- Daughter: I sorta took it from your study.
- Father: Well, it's a good book. It has some Taino stories in it.
- Daughter: There wasn't *anything* in the school library.
- Father: I'm not surprised. (*pause*) Also, there's a lot that's not known for sure about the Taíno because of what happened to them. Some of what *is* known was written down by a Spanish priest named Bartolomé de las Casas. He wrote this book. It's called (*pause*) "A Defense of the Indian Civilizations."

- Daughter: Dad, I want to write a good story. Can you help me?
- Father: You're a good writer, I'm sure you'll do fine. But there is something I can give you for inspiration. (*Gets up and gets the cemi, hands it to daughter.*)
- Daughter: Hey, this is cool! What is it?
- Father: This is a *cemi*, (*pronounced with accent on second syllable*) a special statue of the Taíno people, that stands for a sacred spirit. A close friend of mine in Puerto Rico gave it to me. Take good care of it.
- Daughter: (*shows it to audience*) It's shaped like a frog. Thanks, Dad. (*As father goes to leave, taking phone*) Hey, where are you going?
- Father: You're the Shakespeare of the family. But come and get me if you get stuck. Good luck with your story, I can't wait to read it! (*Exits.*)
- Daughter: (*Sets cemi on table in front of her. Looks through books and starts to write. As she says Itiba first part of costume is put on, and by time her Taino father enters she is the Taino girl*) "Once upon a time, on a beautiful green island..." No, not "Once upon a time," I hate starting like that! (*Looks through pages, reads from book*) "I wonder what their lives were really like?" What would a girl like me be doing then? "This is the story of a girl named..." "What would her name be?" (*she reads*) "The Taíno earth mother, the spirit of spring and of all growing things, (*sounds out slowly, accent on last syllable in each name*) Itiba Cahubaba." Itiba. (*tambor begins*) Maybe her name could be Itiba. Itiba...Itiba, who was chosen to be a Storyteller of her people...(looks at the cemi, back at book, at cemi) Maybe this special cemi, if I really concentrate on it, will tell me her story...the story of Itiba:

Scene 2: Shift to the time of the Taíno. Maracas/tambor come up slowly, above, as she first says the name Itiba. Mother then enters. Costume change starts when the last line is said ("the story of Itiba.") Mother assists her, skirt is put on, sweatshirt taken off, revealing a cotton top garment and Taino skirt. She is still holding the cemi. Then mother exits. After Itiba's first lines, parents call her and she explains who they are. The family is warm and close. Pronunciation note: accent on last syllables of names and words. Itiba (*itty-ba*) Cahubaba (*cah-who-ba-ba*).

- Itiba: My name is Itiba. The story I am about to tell you is my story. It is also the story of our people, the Taino people. This is my special *cemi*.
- Father&Mother: Itiba! Itiba— where are you? I have to leave soon.
(*voices offstage*)
- Itiba: (*to audience*) That's my mother and father. My father has to go work in the gold mines for a long time, away from us. The invaders led by Columbus have forced all our men to search for gold. (*Mother and father come in with small bundle of his belongings. Itiba holds or gestures father to stay*) Before you go, please tell me the story of the frogs, then I can practice it while you're gone. (*to audience*) I'm preparing to be a Storyteller of our people.
- Father: You mean the story about why the frogs say, "Toa, toa, toa"? You want to hear it again?
- Mother: (*puts arms around both*) She'd want to hear it from you as many times as there are tadpoles in the early spring! (*to audience*) From the time she was a little girl until now, Itiba's loved her father's stories.
- Itiba: (*to audience*) My father's a great Storyteller.
- Father: Your own time to be a Storyteller will be coming soon. Then the stories that our elders passed on to us, the same stories I learned for my ceremony, will be passed on by you.
- Mother: To hold a storytelling ceremony will not be easy.
- Itiba: Maybe it could come next year.

- Father: It will come when the time is right. *(to Itiba)* Here is a story for a future storyteller. *(to audience)* How do you, yes you, here [in this strange land] make the sound of frogs? *(ribit, ribit, ribit)* Interesting. Well, here on our island we say, "Toa, toa, toa." Can you say that? Good! Now, listen carefully, because anytime I say "Frog," you say, "Toa, toa, toa." OK? *(actor uses a phrase to test the audience's understanding, such as: "I was walking in the forest, when I encountered a frog." or "When tadpoles grow up, they turn into frogs." Toa Toa Toa)*
- (Itiba and/or mother and father could act out, or act out in tableau, as it's told. Audience could also be asked to make sounds of birds, wind, etc.)*
- Father: It all began in the sacred cave where the very first Taíno people were created. Yaya breathed lifespirt into them, and they came out of the cave. Then, Yaya sent some men out on a nighttime journey, telling them to return home before sunrise. But they were late, and that angered Yaya, who ordered the Sun to show the people what could happen when they did not live in harmony with Yaya. The Sun turned a man who was guarding the village into a stone. Then the Sun turned some fishermen into trees. And a woman who went out to gather herbs for medicine was turned into a bird that sings in the morning. *(an actor whistles like a bird)* And the Sun changed some of the children, too. He changed them into frogs. *(Give the audience a chance to catch on, or ask, "And what did the frogs say, remember? Toa, toa, toa. Good!")* And do you know why—because that's what Taíno children say when they cry for their mothers. Toa means "mama." The frogs *(pause for Toa Toa Toa)* were crying for their mothers. *(with a closing flourish)* And from that time on, their cry has been the voice of springtime!
- Mother: *(to Itiba)* Toa, Toa, that's what you always used to call me. And now look at you, how you've grown.
- Itiba: *(eagerly)* Do you think I might get to tell that story at my ceremony?
- Mother: You'll need to know all the stories, my daughter, when we can find a safe way to hold the ceremony. Although most of what we do at storytelling ceremonies has been the same since Yaya gave us life, no one is told **which** of our many stories they will be asked to tell--so you have to learn them all.

Itiba: *(seriously)* And learn about the stars and the earth, and when we plant, and when we harvest, and which cemí to thank for everything—there's a lot to remember!

Father: Yes, I remember when I was preparing, how difficult it was. But I'm sure you'll do fine when your time comes. *(looks up at sun)* But now, I must go with the other men of the village, to that backbreaking work in the gold mines. *(Hugs mother and Itiba, then, to Itiba, trying to cheer her:)* Till next time, my little frog. *(audience: Toa, toa, toa)* *Itiba and mother exit; Father exits briefly).*

Mother: Come Itiba, we've got so much work to do.

Maracas/tambor come up as father exits to go to the mines. Under rhythm father returns to stage and recites soliloquy on work in the mines, sometimes bending and working as he speaks, also expressing hopes for freedom in his movements. Alternately, shorten soliloquy (see bracket suggestions) then go straight to next scene, or insert soliloquoy later in agricultural scene.

Father: Who are these men who come from afar?
On boats with sails like wings
Did they drop to the Earth from some distant star?
They seem so possessed by things.

We Taino use little pieces of gold
For special bracelets and such
But with it, *they* buy and sell people
They seem to crave gold so much.

We're forced to mine for it all year long
Allowed to see our families only one or two times
Mountains of Earth are stripped from top to bottom
We dig, split rocks, move stones,
Carry dirt on our backs to wash in the rivers.
[When water floods the mines, we must dry them
By scooping up panfuls of water and throwing it outside.

Oh, to be at home with my wife and Itiba
To be at sea in my canoe—there the only water
To scoop would be as I sailed free!
How can we live through this misery?]

Who are these men with cross and with sword?
Who hold us enslaved in the name of their Lord. *(Exit)*

Scene 3: Mother and Itiba will be working in field by house. Itiba and her mother speak as they walk onstage. Itiba holds the cemî.

Itiba: Mother, shall I get the digging stick and prepare the mounds for the *yuca*? (*pronounced you-cah*)

Mother: Yes, Itiba, but it would be wise to put your *cemî* in a safe place so the invaders will not see it.

Itiba: But mother.

Mother: Things are not as they once were. Our ways have been forbidden, and there will be much trouble if your *cemî* is found.

Itiba: Yes, mother. (*hides cemi behind plant, gets digging stick, mother is downstage with the yuca*)

Mother: After we plant the *yuca* stems, there's beans, squash, maize, and cotton. Then, if there's time maybe some peanuts and sweet potatoes.

Itiba: Oh, but what about the berries for *mabí*, my favorite drink? (*pronounced ma-vee, sometimes spelled mavi*)

Mother: Of course, we'll gather those. I like *mabí* too.

Itiba: So does father. I think I'll practice the last story he taught me. It all began in the sacred cave...(*long pause, she stops working, is very upset*) Mother, I can't remember the rest. There's so much work to do, I never have enough time to learn the stories.

Mother: Itiba, my precious one. I know that it hasn't been easy. It is hard on all of us, with father always away at the gold mines. And they demand cloth too—25 of their "pounds" of woven cotton each month, at pain of torture or death.

Itiba: I don't understand. Why can't things be the way they were before?

Mother: It is important for us to remember how it was before—to remember the good things. Remember when all the people of our village, working together, prepared the ground for planting? How we watched the sky each night for the three stars very close together...

Itiba: Yes, the stars called Anacacuya. When they rise high in the sky it means the hurricanes are coming and it is very dangerous for fishing.

- Mother: Yes, and as Anacacuya sets on the horizon, as it will tonight, it's time to plant. (*sadly*) Just the two of us this time.
- Itiba: I think the field is almost ready, mother. I've made the mounds and prepared the ground for the seeds.
- Mother: (*looks out over field*) Your work looks good Itiba, you've learned well. If you've finished with the digging stick, help me cut up the rest of the *yuca* stems.
- Itiba: (*Crosses over to mother, sits beside her, picks up a stem, looks at it thoughtfully before she starts cutting*) It's amazing how a whole new *yuca* plant will grow from just one piece of stem. Mother, that's just like the story of Baibrama, the harvest *cemí*. (*rises, moves to center*) If one of his arms or legs gets cut off (*gestures to describe*) it will grow back. He can be whole again, no matter what happens! Oh, mother please tell me the story of Baibrama!
Please tell me again!
- Mother: Yes, Itiba. Our people say that one day the great harvest *cemí* Baibrama was sailing in his canoe. Suddenly, the canoe was overturned by a hurricane started by the waving tail of an evil Sea Serpent. Beneath the water...do you remember Itiba?
- Itiba: Beneath the water sharks tore Baibrama into many pieces and the pieces washed up upon the shore.
- Mother: That's right. The Serpent laughed and laughed...
- Itiba: But he forgot that Baibrama could grow back together, no matter what!
- Mother: Which is what Baibrama did. Like Baibrama, we are able to grow and gather crops despite the fierce hurricanes. So may our people today, though torn apart by the greed of strangers, be able, like Baibrama, to join together as one.

- Itiba: That story has great power, mother.
- Mother: Yes, Itiba, in one way we are all storytellers. And all planters.
- Itiba: When we start to plant, will we place a *cemi* in the soil too, to send the rains and help the plants to grow?
- Mother: That is what we have always done, but now we must do it in secret, to defy the men from across the water! (*crosses back and begins cutting the yuca again*)
- Itiba: We could place just one *cemi*, a very special one. Grandmother said she would carve one out of a seashell. Maybe I could run down to Manatee beach (*gestures left in direction of beach*) to look for one.
- Mother: (*builds to a serious warning*) No, Itiba, I've told you as many times as there are stars in the sky, you must never go there, not while the invaders have their fort there. (*Itiba begins to question*) You are no longer a child in the eyes of these men. Promise me you will never go to Manatee Beach alone.
- Itiba: Yes mother, I promise. (*thinks about their loss of freedom, the meaning of her mother's words*)
- Mother: **And Itiba, if the invaders should ever come for us, you must try to escape to the sacred cave in the mountains. Do you understand?**
- Itiba: Yes, mother, but where would *you* go?
- Mother: I would go to help Grandmother. Later we would meet you in the mountains.
- Itiba: Mother, I know there is terrible danger; but I believe in the power of our stories! Perhaps they will protect us.
- Mother: They *are* very powerful. In you will be the wisdom of our people. And one day perhaps Itiba, your own daughters and granddaughters will pass on our ways through our stories. (*pause*) For now, let's finish cutting up the stems. Then we'll need to get more of the *yuca* we've already set aside for baking bread.
- Itiba: (*eagerly, showing she knows*) Yes, but we'll need to take the poison out of the *yuca*, so the root can be made into cassava bread. First, we have to squeeze the harvested *yuca* root, then grind it. You know, Grandmother says....

Father: *(entering)* What does Grandmother say?

Itiba & Mother turn, surprised. They run to him, hug him, happy to see him. He is obviously tired, and not well.

Itiba: Father, they've kept you away so long. I'm so happy to see you!

Mother: But you're home sooner than expected. *(concerned)* Is everything all right?

Father: The other men from the village and I travelled all day and night to get home as fast as we could. Our time with you is much too short. *(in more hushed tone)* We heard that the Cacique, *(ca-see-kay)* one of our leaders, has gone to meet with Chief Guarionex. Maybe we will fight the invaders at last!

Mother: Yes, I have heard she has gone to this meeting. How long can you stay this time?

Father: *(angrily)* Only a few days. *(looks at Itiba)* Itiba, look at you, you've grown up, changed so much since I've been gone.

Itiba: *(eagerly)* Father, I've been learning as many stories as I can. I was going to learn another one from Grandmother today, only I helped mother with the planting.

Mother: *(to father)* Why don't you sit down. You don't look well.

Father: I'm just tired. And hungry.

Mother: Itiba, get your father something to eat and drink. *(Itiba seems to exit, but goes sidestage to prepare food. Could overhear some or all of what her parents say. Mother begins very seriously, in hushed tone)* How is my brother? Did he come home with you?

Father: He stayed behind. He was too sick to come home. *(she reacts, knowing this means her brother is likely to die, they embrace)* We look for gold all day, but there's so little. The work's exhausting, and then the sickness comes. Those who fail to gather enough gold have their hands chopped off by the invaders! *(mother reacts strongly)* Some have even taken poison from the *yuca*, rather than be murdered by the soldiers or die slowly of starvation and exhaustion.

Mother: So many of our people struck down, so many changes all around us. Hillsides and soil washed away. They've begun cutting down the trees in the Inriri Forest. Their pigs are everywhere, trampling the soil, eating everything in their path. These invaders think the land belongs to them, but we know we are a part of Mother Earth, meant to live in harmony with her and all her children.

Father: How is our Itiba? Is she a help to you?

Mother: *(smiles)* A great help. She is working so hard to become a Storyteller...*(more serious)* but the invaders have forbidden us from celebrating our beliefs and praising the spirits in our own way. *(firmly)* It will be difficult to have the ceremony right now.

Father: It's important to pass on the stories of our people, especially now, when so much is changing. *(pauses to consider)* When I'm away in the gold mines I think—what will happen to our people and our way of life? Are we all going to die? Itiba knows so many of our stories and she's the right age—she could help keep the spirit of our people alive! *(strongly)* I think she should have her storytelling ceremony, and now, while the moon is right, and while I'm here. *(He's weak from exhaustion/ illness)*

Mother: Then we'll have to do it in secret! We must plan carefully. If we get caught we'll all get whipped for it, or tortured or even burned to death. Even Itiba.

Father: The Royal Spanish whip is all the more reason to go on with our ceremonies. *(raises fist in defiance)* Our way of life must be defended to the last!

Mother: Yes, defended wisely, carefully, defended well!

Itiba enters with food and drink.

- Itiba: *(Very assured, like a nurse)* This will make you feel better, Father, here's some guava fruit and some mabi. You should go to Guabanito, the healer, to see if some of her bark medicine can help you. It really helped me when I had a sore throat.
- Father: Thank you, Itiba. Mother tells me you've been a big help in getting the fields ready for planting.
- Itiba: And we plant tomorrow, because tonight the three stars of Anacacuya set in the sky. We can't plant as much as we used to, but, even so, I can't wait for harvest time and our *areitos*, the big celebrations! *(pause)* I hope you'll be home with us then, father. *(pronounced a-ray-toes)*
- Father: That's a long ways off, Itiba, we'll see. But tell me, could you be ready for the Storytelling Ceremony soon?
- Itiba: *(Hesitantly)* I want to, of course, but I don't know if I'm ready yet. Why so soon? *(looks at both of them)*
- Father: Because, Itiba, it might be a long time before I come back, and much could happen between now and then. *(looks at mother)*
- Mother: *(strongly)* Through you, my daughter, our stories will live on. If Itiba feels she is ready, I will agree. Itiba?
- Itiba: *(solemnly, then with conviction)* I've prepared for this day. Yes, I'm ready.
- Mother: But we must do it at a time when the invaders are occupied elsewhere. Is one of their Saint's Days near? Maybe when they get paid, after they've been drinking.
- Father: Yes, we'll have to find that out. And we'll need to gather all we need for the ceremony, our *guanín*, our golden necklaces from their hiding places. These are never to be taken by the invaders! I will go tell the village of our plans. *(Exits)*

Scene 4: Maracas/tambor as Mother prepares Itiba for the ceremony. Father could circulate in audience reminding them it is secret and important. They need to be respectful. Obtains things needed for ceremony from offstage. Makes sure not to distract from mother's speech.

Mother: First, I will make the special markings with jagua fruit and bright bixa. *(Note: first is black, second bright red. Mother speaks as she makes ceremonial markings in zig-zag lightning pattern on shoulders and two circles on collarbone.)*

Itiba, my daughter, think now of
The great woman chieftain named Loiza
Leader of our people long ago
What would Loiza have done
Which pathway would she show?

For it is not fear that guides our steps
It is the need to act with care
So the many ways we can rebel
Are chosen very well.

Oh, for Loiza's wisdom now.
Perhaps you, my daughter,
Will show us how.

Remember, Itiba, if the invaders come, escape to the sacred cave in the mountains.

Father returns to stage.

Father: Looks like everyone is here. Are you ready? Itiba, do you have your *cemí*? Set it there to watch over us. Let us begin. *(Maracas/tambor throughout, underneath as appropriate, or possibly only briefly in between main portions of speech)*

Itiba: *(Moves hesitantly, but gathers courage)* O Attabeira, *cemí* of spring and growing things, sit here by us and become one with Yaya, the spirit of spirits, and all the ancestors of our Taíno people.

Mother: Hear, O *cemí*, the voice of girl becoming woman, of my daughter Itiba, named for Itiba Cahubaba, the great and fertile mother of us all. Listen to the stories of our Taíno people, as they pass on to our children, and all children to come.

Father: Hear, O Yaya, the voice of Itiba. My daughter, these are fearful times. As you become a true storyteller, you can tell us the story *(pause)* of the spirits of death:

Itiba: *(Speaks to audience)* Yaya, who made the Sun and the Moon, tells us to have great respect for our grandmothers and grandfathers, aunts and uncles, and all ancestors who came before us. For we are a large family, and those who have gone on are remembered with great love. But Yaya also warned us to beware the spirits of death. Yaya said these evil spirits hide in the daytime, but at night they fly out like bats of the jungle, eating guava fruit from the trees. Do not walk alone in the woods at night, Yaya warned, because it is then the death-spirits come among us—they begin to fight us or hug us, then they suddenly disappear. *(she makes whoosh sound)* But there is a way to tell that they are the spirits of death. You can tell who they are because they have no... belly buttons!

Mother: *(after a pause for possible laughter)* Itiba, daughter of my heart, now becoming storyteller of our people. May your life be long and may you see the day of freedom regained. Itiba, tell us of the one who had a vision that foretold our suffering, the story of our great Chief Caicihu. *(kai-see-who, first syllable rhymes with sky)*

(Maracas/tambor in abrupt off-rhythm clatter after the word "belly buttons," as Father hears noise offstage; goes to find out what it is.)

Itiba: Long ago, when Grandmother was a child, Chief Caicihu led our people. Our leader fasted for a vision. In his vision Yaya appeared and told him, "A clothed people will come. Men wearing strange clothes will come to enslave and kill our people." Our great chieftain said these clothed men are to be feared even more than the spirits of death.

Father comes running back just as she finishes. One line then quick exit for costume change.

Father: It's the soldiers! They've come to arrest us. I'll try to delay them. You must escape. *(Exits in same direction)*

Mother: Itiba, fast as a seabird you must fly, to save your life!

Itiba: But mother! I cannot leave you and father!

Mother: Itiba, daughter of my heart, *(embraces her)* you must escape to save, pass on the stories of our people!
In you they will never be lost! *(Exits to follow Father)*

Itiba: But mother! (*Runs to get cemi*) Cemí, I cannot let them destroy you. I must reach the sacred cave, must save the stories of our people! (*Take time as needed, running to decide which direction to go as maracas/tambor rise. Then Itiba exits.*

Rhythm stops suddenly. Within a few seconds, the figure of Bartolomé de las Casas, in a white habit with black cape, comes walking to center stage, speaking in a loud clear voice, slowly, with anger, protest, and righteousness. Near the end of his speech, the modern girl re-enters, having changed backstage as Las Casas speaks. She carries the book in which his quotes are found. After he ends, she reads from the book, repeating the last line of his speech.

de las Casas: My name is Friar Bartolomé de las Casas. I'm here to tell you that the kinds of things that happened to Itiba and her family also happened to millions of others. I came to these islands on an early voyage as a planter, and later became a priest. When I saw what was happening here, the terrible brutality, I raised my voice in protest and wrote many books against the way native peoples were being treated, enslaved, killed. I tried to find out more about their ways of life and their beliefs, as these peoples were destroyed before my eyes. I estimated that in less than 20 years nearly 3 million native people on these islands alone died from violence, forced labor in the mines, enslavement, malnutrition. Families were torn apart. I was horrified by the many forms of cruelty I witnessed. The cries of so much human blood reach all the way to heaven. I wrote... (*modern girl reads silently with him*) Who in future generations will believe this...I myself writing about it as a knowledgeable eyewitness can hardly believe it. (*las Casas exits, changes to modern father*)

Scene 5: *Modern girl is now on stage. Maracas/tambor begin as she looks at the book and reads his last line again as Las Casas exits. Soon, father enters.*

Daughter: "I myself writing about it as a knowledgeable eyewitness can hardly believe it." (*looking up from her books and writing, she focuses on the cemi, keeps looking at it, may need to ad-lib before father enters, suggested ideas: "Oh, Itiba, you've got to save the stories, you've got to reach the sacred cave, so the stories of the Taino people survive. (pause) I know you can make it Itiba, you've got to save the stories. I know you will. I know you will."*)

- Father: So, how's it going? You've been at it a long time. You missed *Quantum Leap*...
- Daughter: Huh? (*vaguely remembers, looks up at him*) Oh, that....
- Father: You seem upset.
- Daughter: Dad, let's say there's this Taíno girl Itiba, who is becoming a Storyteller. They come to arrest her and the other villagers. I want Itiba to escape to a sacred cave in the mountains where the people are trying to save their way of life. Could that have happened?
- Father: There was resistance...and many people on the islands carry on the Taino spirit today.
- Daughter: The books say the Taíno people of that time were almost completely destroyed; some call it **genocide**, the killing of an entire people. (*pause*) But dad, I really wanted my story to have a happy ending! Maybe Itiba did escape, and that's why the stories survived, and were passed on, and are here today.
- Father: Maybe. The stories of all peoples are precious and powerful.
- Daughter: Dad, I think I've learned *some of* what happened to the Taino people after Columbus landed, but **why** did it have to happen? **Why did so many people die? And why haven't we learned about it before?**
- Father: (*comes closer, hugs her*) All I can say it's important to try to find out the truth, and most of all to keep asking questions like you're asking. (*very softly and gently*) Seems like what happened 500 years ago means something to you now.
- Daughter: Just like Itiba, I want to help keep these stories alive, to help others learn about the Taíno people, who are so forgotten...and I want to learn more! (*with a sense of great significance and caring*) Through the stories, Itiba really is passing on her special *cemí* to me and to all of us! (*holds it in cupped hands, toward audience*) We're related, like a family, under the same sky.

Father: That reminds me of something I read a long time ago, but it stays with me. It's from a message of Chief Seattle in the Pacific Northwest, more than 350 years after the Taino first met Columbus.

Daughter: What did he say?

Father: Chief Seattle said:
How can you buy or sell the sky,
the warmth of the land?
Every part of this Earth is sacred.

Enter Mother in native dress. All stand together, with daughter in center, holding the cemí. Rhythm rises to final roll as they end, bow, and exit.

Mother: Every shining pine needle,
every sandy shore;
The air is precious, for all things share
the same breath--
The animal, the tree, the person
they share the same breath.

Daughter: This we know:
Earth does not *belong* to people;
People *belong* to the Earth.

All three: This we know: All things are connected
Like the blood that unites one family
All things are connected.

Note 1: Recommended post-"curtain" talk, brief discussion, questioning period, led by one or more of the actors. This could include questions from the audience, encouragement to investigate and learn more at other parts of the exhibit, recommending resources for ways to learn more about the Taino and other diverse peoples of the Americas. Ways to approach controversial issues. Explain more about different versions of Chief Seattle's message and his real name—Chief Sealth. Emphasis also on how important stories are in the context of an oral history without written records. Explanation of which parts of the play are based on direct historical testimony and evidence. This post-play time could also include discussions or presentations by Native American spokespersons, young people and/or cultural groups to speak to present-day issues. Other storytelling or art activities could also be offered. Consider noting some stubborn myths, i.e., Columbus did not "prove the earth was round," Columbus never landed on any part of the U. S. mainland (some assume he did because of the use of the word "America" for the USA) and emphasize that Native American peoples lived all over the Americas, not just in a few scattered places. Optional ending line: We want to leave you with this thought: "**Columbus landed on these shores in 1492, but in many ways America has yet to be discovered!**" (quote is by Jack Weatherford, from his book Indian Givers: How the Indians of the Americas Transformed the World).