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SPEECH BY AILTON KRENAK, ON 09/04/1987, AT THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY, BRASILIA, BRAZIL



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Ailton Krenak is an indigenous leader, environmentalist and writer. Born in 1953 in the state of Minas Gerais, in the Middle Rio Doce region. At the age of seventeen, he moved with his family to the state of Paraná, where he learned how to read and write, and became a graphics producer and journalist. In the 1980s, he began to devote himself exclusively to the indigenous movement. In 1985, he founded the non-governmental organization Indigenous Culture Center (Núcleo de Cultura Indígena), which aims to promote indigenous culture. During the Constituent Assembly of 1987, Ailton produced a striking scene: in a speech at the podium, dressed in a white suit, he painted his face black to protest against what he saw as a setback in the struggle for indigenous rights. In 1988, he participated in the founding of the Union of Indigenous Peoples (União dos Povos Indígenas), an organization that seeks to represent indigenous interests on the national scene. In 1989, he participated in the Alliance of Forest Peoples (Aliança dos Povos da Floresta), a movement that seeks the creation of nature reserves in the Amazon, making possible economic subsistence based on extraction of latex from rubber trees, as well as collection of other forest products. He returned to Minas Gerais, where he dedicated himself to the Indigenous Culture Center (Núcleo de de Cultura Indígena). Since 1998, this organization has held, in the Serra do Cipó region, in Minas Gerais, a festival designed by Ailton: the Festival of Indigenous Dance and Culture, promoting the union of different indigenous populations.