Ai: This is not a typo

The danger is not a conscious machine.
The danger is an unconscious people holding great power.

From An Urgent Message on Artificial Intelligence
from the Kogui People, Gonawindua, Colombia

i.

Ai.

I have been having spell-check problems. Again.

Editors and even friends have flagged me.

I think you have a typo.

This is not a typo.

ii.

Grammar has its rules.

When a phrase like *artificial intelligence* becomes an acronym, rules suggest those letters be capitalized.

Language, however, always has room for play.

Of late, I have noticed how our current political flood waters rushing into the seas of authoritarianism require creative responses to linguistic challenges.

Just yesterday a friend said *small-d democracy.*

Beyond institutions and political parties, she wanted to capture essence: The deeper, shared values and truth. The integrity of the very the spirit of democracy.

This lower case does not diminish. Rather it emphasizes the need for essence and integrity.

In that same spirit of wholeness, I say *small-i intelligence*.

iii.

Many worry that we may attribute to our digital creation a human quality of life, of consciousness where it does not exist.

I worry less about anthropomorphizing artificial intelligence than about deifying its place among us, raising to superiority what is only part of a wider whole.

Kogui-wisdom holders are right to be wary and weary of placing the challenge of safety in the hands of *unconscious people holding great power*.

iv.

Some refer to artificial intelligence as freely consulting legions of experts, like having an instantaneous conversation with a hundred Nobel Laureates gathered in your living room.

This razor-focus on access to specific expertise that was previously distant, even restricted, constitutes a promise of superiority: The fullness of humanity's mind at the edge of anyone's fingertips. The rush of power can be felt when that promise delivers on inquiries and tasks.

Yet, embedded in that promise of *exclusive* access, these hundred laureates in the hand, I also sense the danger of *exclusion*.

When intelligence is not connected to human agency, collective discernment, and shared wisdom, it becomes disembodied knowledge, easily fragmented from life-giving purpose.

Consider who is not in that room of laureates.

The oral, Indigenous, and wisdom traditions, with their extraordinary and expansive intelligences carried over generations in story, ceremony, and land.

The intelligences of Nature that can be heard only when listening transcends the spoken word.

The probing spirits of artists and ethicists, the souls of mathematicians and desert fathers and mothers gifting understanding that speaks not only to what we can know and do, but also to who and how we can and should be — with each other and our planet.

These should never be afterthoughts or footnotes.

These ways and wisdoms constitute our wholeness.

v.

A simplicity lies at the heart of the wilding growth of artificial intelligence.

Ai is what Ai centers.

It centers disembodied human knowledge, delivered as searchable artefacts.

It elevates and positions one part of humanity's essence as superior.

I do not write Ai to dismiss it.

I write Ai to remember.

Each time that *small i-intelligence* lands on a page it is a reminder to check ego, pause for purpose, and lift forward life-giving collective wisdom.

vi.

In times of great chaos, the most grounding questions are simple and straightforward.

Which intelligences will we choose to center?

Whose ways of knowing will we ensure are acknowledged, respected, and uplifted?

For what purpose do we receive and offer the gifts our minds, spirits, and hearts?

vii.

Ai.

This is not a typo.

This is remembering forward to who we are and who we will choose to be.

Together.

john paul lederach
30 october 2026