

WE ARE SHADOWS OF GENTLE FURY

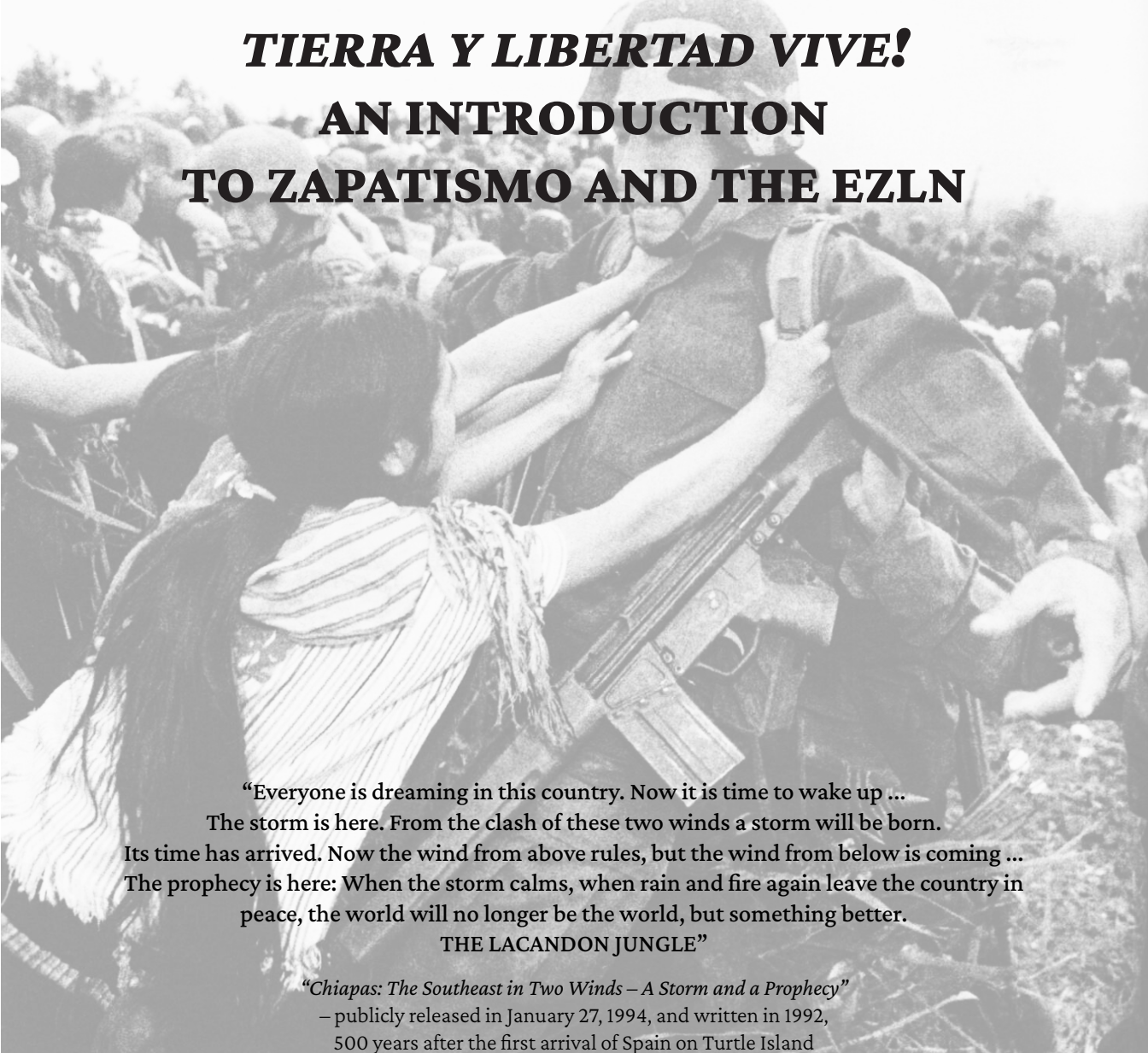


the story & words of the *EZLN*
Zapatista Army of National Liberation



TIERRA Y LIBERTAD VIVE!

AN INTRODUCTION TO ZAPATISMO AND THE EZLN



**“Everyone is dreaming in this country. Now it is time to wake up ...
The storm is here. From the clash of these two winds a storm will be born.
Its time has arrived. Now the wind from above rules, but the wind from below is coming ...
The prophecy is here: When the storm calms, when rain and fire again leave the country in
peace, the world will no longer be the world, but something better.**

THE LACANDON JUNGLE”

“Chiapas: The Southeast in Two Winds – A Storm and a Prophecy”

**– publicly released in January 27, 1994, and written in 1992,
500 years after the first arrival of Spain on Turtle Island**



***“There is a time to ask,
a time to demand, and
a time to act. Now is
that time to act.”***

The EZLN, is without a doubt, the present-day liberators of Mexico. *The Ejercito Zapatista de Liberacion Nacional* (Zapatista Army for National Liberation) is named after Emiliano Zapata, a hero of the Mexican Revolution, and has taken up the call of *Tierra y Libertad* (land and freedom). They are fighting for a free world, beyond this world of injustice – a world in which many worlds, including yours, may fit.

In recent years, many of us have learned all about the initial uprising on January 1st, 1994 when 3,000 indigenous *campesinos* (farmer and rural peoples) rose up in arms to decry “*Ya Basta*” – enough exploitation, discrimination and marginalization. We learned that they had been gathering their forces for ten years before the first public *levantamiento* (uprising) of the EZLN and where an army of those *desde abajo* (from below), the people of Chiapas who decided to fight for their right to live with dignity. That day, forces took over cities, town centers, and about 500 ranches.



That same New Year’s Day, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) went into effect. The agreement lifted internal protective tariffs and sanctions. This devastated Mexican *campesinos* who could not compete against the heavily subsidized corn and beans which flooded the country upon the agreement’s enactment. Two years earlier, in 1992, then president Salinas de Gortari had ‘reformed’ Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution, allowing for the privatization of *ejidos* (collective communal lands). After the Mexican Revolution of 1910, the Constitution was amended to ensure that all *ejidos* were protected from private purchase so that the lands could not be accumulated by wealthy land-owners. This was a major victory of the *campesino* revolutionaries against the *hacendados* (landlords) who had inherited their holdings and their *campesino* workforces from a legacy of



HOY DECIMOS ¡BASTA!

colonial domination and ethnocide. The mutilation of Article 27 by Salinas resulted in large-scale theft of previously collectively-held lands by rich ranchers, dispossessing massive numbers of *campesinos* of their land base. The people of Chiapas and Mexico were devastated, and faced all-time high poverty. However, many of us have known that these reforms were not the isolated cause of the uprising, but rather the most recent form of centuries of colonial domination:

“But today, we say ENOUGH IS ENOUGH.” – *First Declaration of the Lacondon Jungle*

After their armed uprising on New Year’s 1994, the Zapatistas catalyzed a wave of solidarity that inspired a generation of young activists to organize for justice. Their inspiration has touched all faces of the Earth: from demonstrations against global capitalism – such as the anarchist black bloc protests in Seattle in 1999 against the World Trade Organization – to being the precursor of the anti-state/anti-capitalist Occupy and “We Are the 99 Percent” movements after 2008, to the

Purépecha municipality of Cherán in the west-central state of Michoacán who which rose up and proclaimed autonomy in 2011, to present-day Latino/Chicano anarchist and autonomous collectives. Perhaps most importantly, the EZLN offers one answer to the question of what a better kind of society might look like after the end of the Cold War.

The EZLN movement is an impressive, living example of the possibilities we can reach by refusing to engage with government. Zapatista communities adopted the strategy of building *autonomy* (independence and self-sufficiency), not of taking over authority or institutions. They organize themselves without the Mexican (narco)government. They have their own systems of justice, health, education, and production. Independent studies of the improved quality of life for people in Zapatista territory have shown the following: people opt for local justice systems, literacy rates have risen, higher levels of primary education completion, increased positive health outcomes, near elimination of maternal mortality rates, and near eradication of hunger (Alvaro Reyes and Mara Kaufman, 2015).



un mundo donde quepan

As the Zapatistas would say: there is a time to ask power to change, there is a time to demand change from power, and there is a time to *exercise* power. The EZLN's autonomy stems from their successful strategy of taking territory away from state and landlord control, directly acquiring resources back into the hands of the indigenous peoples of Chiapas, and construction of their communities on their own terms. The EZLN has shown the planet that it is possible to collectively create a new world: *a world in which many worlds may fit*. Subcomandante Galeano put it simply:

“We Zapatistas say: ‘I am as I am and you are as you are. Let’s build a world where I can be, and not have to cease being me, where you can be, and not have to cease being you, and where neither I nor you will force another to be like either me or you.’ So when we Zapatistas say, ‘A world where many worlds fit,’ they are saying, more or less, ‘Everyone do your own thing.’”

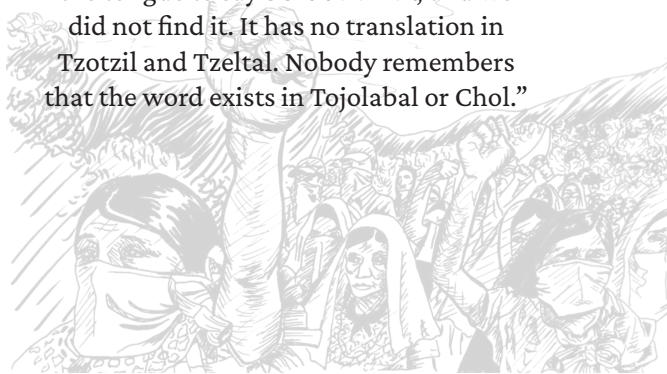
The EZLN communiqués, testimonies, and reflections compiled in this document highlight the stories and lessons of participants in the Zapatista movement. The EZLN's project of indigenous autonomy is a product of the Zapatistas'

extraordinary level of organization, discipline and determination. They envisioned a world of justice and dignity and then set out to transform their dreams into reality. They built something from scratch and were not deterred by the unlikelihood of success.

At the same time, they have demonstrated humility in knowing that they do not have all the answers – rather, they pose the question of “*how do we live our lives*” to all the peoples of the Earth, for them to begin to answer this for themselves. As the EZLN would say, the journey of a million miles begins with one step, *preguntando-caminando* (walking we ask and learn). They invite you to honor and walk your sacred path. May our commitment to dignity end the siege of colonization on our lives. *Surrender does not exist in the language of truth:*

“In the committee, we debated all afternoon. We searched for the word in the tongue to say SURRENDER, and we did not find it. It has no translation in Tzotzil and Tzeltal. Nobody remembers that the word exists in Tojolabal or Chol.”

muchos mundos.



FIVE HUNDRED YEARS OF INDIGENOUS RESISTANCE

FEBRUARY 1, 1994

In our heart there was so much pain, so great was our death and our shame, brothers and sisters, that they no longer fit into this world given to us by our grandfathers. So great was the pain and shame that they no longer fit inside the heart of just a few, and they spilled over and began filling other hearts with pain and shame, the hearts of the eldest and wisest of our peoples, and the hearts of the young men and women, brave ones all of them, and the hearts of the children, even the youngest ones, and filled with pain were the hearts of the animals and plants. The heart filled with stones, and our whole world was filled with pain and shame, and the wind and the sun were also pained and shamed, and the earth had pain and shame. Everything was pain and shame. Everything was silence.

The pain that gathered us made us speak, and we recognized that in our words there was truth. We understood that not only pain and shame lived in our tongue; we learned there was still hope in our chests. We spoke to ourselves, we looked inside ourselves, and we looked at our history. We saw our eldest fathers suffer and struggle, we saw our grandfathers struggle, we saw our fathers with fury in their hands, we saw that not all had been taken from us, that we still had what was most valuable, that which made us live, that which made our step rise above plants and animals, that which made the stone stay beneath our feet, and we saw, brothers and sisters, that dignity was everything we had, and we saw that our shame was big for having forgotten it, and we saw that dignity was good so that men would be men once again. And dignity came to reside once again in our heart, and we were renewed. And the dead, our dead, saw that we were renewed, and they called to us again, to dignity and to the struggle.



OPENING REMARKS AT THE FIRST INTERCONTINENTAL ENCUESTRO FOR HUMANITY AND AGAINST NEOLIBERALISM

*JULY 27, 1996
AGUASCALIENTES II, OVENTIC
SAN ANDRES SACAMCH'EN DE LOS POBRES
CHIAPAS, MEXICO*

Brothers and sisters of
Asia, Africa, Oceania,
Europe and America
Welcome to the
mountains of the
Mexican Southeast.

LET US INTRODUCE
OURSELVES.

We are the Zapatista
National Liberation
Army.
For ten years, we lived
in these mountains,
preparing to fight a war.
In these mountains, we
built an army.
Below, in the cities and
plantations, we did not
exist.
Our lives were worth less
than those of machines

or animals.
We were like stones, like
weeds in the road.

We were silenced.
We were faceless.
We were nameless.
We had no future.
We did not exist.

For the powers that be,
known internationally by
the term "neoliberalism,"
we did not count,
we did not produce,
we did not buy,
we did not sell.

We were a cipher in the
accounts of big capital.

Then we went to the
mountains to find

ourselves and see if we
could ease the pain of
being forgotten like
stones and weeds.

Here, in the mountains of
the Mexican Southeast,
our dead live on.

Our dead, who live in the
mountains, know many
things.
They speak to us of their
death, and we hear them.
Coffins speak and tell us
another story,
that comes from
yesterday and points to
tomorrow.
The mountains spoke to
us, the Macehualob, we
common and ordinary
people.

We are simple people, as
Power tells us.

Every day and the next
night,
Power wants us to dance
the x-tol
and repeat its brutal
conquest.

The kaz-dzul, the false
man, rules our lands and
has giant war machines,
like the boob, half puma
and half horse,
that spread pain and
death among us.
The trickster government
sends us the aluxob,
the liars who fool our
people and make them
forgetful.

This is why we became
soldiers.
This is why we remain
soldiers.
Because we want no
more death and trickery

for our people,
because we want no
more forgetting.

The mountain told us
to take up arms so we
would have a voice.
It told us to cover our
faces so we would have
a face.
It told us to forget our
names so we could be
named.
It told us to protect our
past so we would have a
future.


In the mountains, the
dead live: our dead.
With them live the Votán
and the Ikál,
the light and the
darkness,
the wet and the dry,
the earth and the wind,
the rain and the fire.

The mountain is the
home of the Halach

Uinic, the real human
beings, the big chief.
Here we learned and
remembered that we are
what we are, the real men
and women.

So, with our voice
strengthening our hands,
with our face reborn,
with our name renamed,
our yesterday at the
center of the four points
of Chan Santa Cruz in
Balam Na,
the star was born who
defines humanity
and reminds us that
there are five parts that
make up the world.

In the season when the
chaacob ride, spreading
the rain,
we came down once
more to speak with our
own
and prepare the storm
that will signal the
harvest.



We brought forth the war
in the year zero,
and we began to walk
this path
that has brought us to
your hearts,
and today brings you to
ours.

This is who we are.
The Zapatista National
Liberation Army.
The voice that arms itself
to be heard.
The face that hides itself
to be seen.
The name that hides
itself to be named.
The red star who calls
out to humanity and the
world
to be heard, to be seen, to
be named.
The tomorrow to be
harvested in the past.

Behind our black mask,
Behind our armed voice,
Behind our unnameable

name,
Behind us, who you see,
Behind us, we are you.

Behind we are the same
simple and ordinary men
and women,
who are repeated in all
races,
painted in all colors,
speak in all languages
and live in all places.
The same forgotten men
and women.

The same excluded,
The same untolerated,
The same persecuted,
We are you.

Behind us, you are us.
Behind our masks is
the face of all excluded
women,
Of all the forgotten
indigenous,
Of all the persecuted
homosexuals,
Of all the despised youth,

Of all the beaten
migrants,
Of all those imprisoned
for their words and
thoughts,
Of all the humiliated
workers,
Of all those dead from
neglect,
Of all the simple and
ordinary men and
women,
Who don't count,
Who aren't seen,
Who are nameless,
Who have no tomorrow.

Brothers and sisters:
In these mountains, the
talking coffins spoke to
us and told us ancient
stories that recall our
pains and our rebellions.
Our dreams will not
end as long as we live.
We will not give up our
banner. Our death will
live on forever.

ZAPATISTA WOMEN'S TESTIMONIES

from "Compañeras: Zapatista Women's Stories" by Hilary Klein (2015)

"Before 1994 there was no respect for women. Even our fathers told us we weren't worth anything. We didn't have the right to hold public responsibility. If we tried to speak up in the assemblies, the men made fun of us. They insulted us and said that women didn't know how to talk. Thanks to our organization [the EZLN], we have opened our eyes and opened our hearts. It was in the organization that they first began telling us that how we were living was not right. We joined the struggle and that's when things started to change and we stopped being oppressed. Now we can participate in political work. In community and regional assemblies we participate side by side with the men. We have the right to hold any position within our organization. We also have the right to leave the house, to dance, to sing, to play sports, to go to a community party. Today there is hope and freedom in our lives. Thanks to the organization we have found *compañerismo* and unity. We have also found respect between men and women. Our struggle is our liberation because it gave us the courage to participate and defend our rights." – from the *Regional Women's Gathering in Morelia* (June 2001)

"We learn combat tactics and we do political work in the villages. Within our organization there is respect, especially among the combatants. In the communities there is still that ideology, and women are still abused, but within the ranks of the army there is a great deal of equality. The work that men do, women can do as well. We receive the same training, and we can achieve the same military ranks and level of responsibility. For example, I have the





rank of insurgent major. I command a battalion of soldiers, I direct them when we're at war, in combat, and I know I can lead them." – Major Ana María

"We gave women space to talk, to express their feelings and how they wanted to change all this: life in the family, with their husbands, with their children. That was where the ideas came from: if things are this bad, we asked ourselves, why not change it? Change men's ideas as well and find a way, as an organization, to turn these ideas into a law. And that's how the Women's Revolutionary Law was born: talking, venting, analyzing. It's not something from outside—it came from our own ideas, our experiences in our families and communities, with our parents, our husbands, our children."
– Captain Isabel



"The women organized to form a cooperative and we began to see that women can also participate in meetings and assemblies. From there we started thinking, little by little, about how we want our lives to be. We want to change all those ideas that have been put in our heads for the last five hundred years. So we organized and now women participate more, now they can leave their houses. Even if they have children, they can leave the house for a while and go to a meeting or a women's gathering, help out with the women's cooperative, or go to a health workshop." – Comandanta Micaela



"The [EZLN] authorities don't make decisions on their own, they have to lead by obeying. They have to listen to everyone and take into consideration what the people want. The government does whatever it wants to. Our indigenous authorities lead, but they lead by obeying." – Ofelia, a woman from La Garrucha
"The job of the Good Government Council is to even out the economic resources so that each region or

autonomous municipality receives the same amount. It's hard because we still don't have the knowledge and experience to do the work, and we don't have a manual to tell us what to do. It's just us, creating the path of autonomy as we go. We are doing our best, even those of us who don't know how to read and write. We have said since the beginning that we will learn, little by little, because the people themselves guide us and teach us." – Citlali

"Our ancestors lived and worked collectively. Whenever they organized some community project, they included everybody. But this way of working together, of living collectively, had been lost. People did their work individually, each person for himself. For example, when somebody got sick, there was no structure to help each other out. So we began to think about whether there was another way to do things. We began to see that many solutions are possible if people work together." – Ofelia

"The Zapatista autonomous health care system was born before 1994. It began when we realized that so many health problems in our territory were because of the lack of health care, the lack of clinics, hospitals, and doctors, and that so many people from our communities dying from curable diseases—men, women, children, and the elderly—were because we are discriminated against and left behind by the government just because we're indigenous. We began to analyze and come to consciousness about how to confront these problems and look for solutions. After several community meetings, we decided to form our own clinics and have our own health promoters and not depend on the government." – Argelia

"Our autonomous education is very different from government schools because the government





teachers teach us things that are not useful to us. They have their own reasons for being teachers—it's not because they care about us as indigenous people. That's why we created an autonomous educational system, so that children can be taught in our own language and according to our own culture.” – Lila

“We want children growing up to know what freedom is and how to resolve their own problems. That's why we teach them about the culture of their ancestors, and about their history. We want them to know about their own culture. We still haven't achieved everything we want to, but we know what resistance means. We are getting to know the needs of our people and what we want to achieve in the future. We're still on the path because the struggle is long, but we don't want to be oppressed anymore. That's why we're sharing our experiences. We have to find the right path all together and not leave anyone behind. My mother and father were very oppressed because they had a patrón and the patrón was in charge. We don't have a patrón anymore and now we want to be free. When we see the children talking, we can see that they are already experiencing freedom.”
– Isabel



“The children, they know. My granddaughter, when she was smaller I used to tell her, ‘Come here, mi hijita, there's more work to do.’ ‘Ay, so much work, abuelita!’ she would say. ‘I'm a little girl, I should be free. Girls should be able to play.’ That's what she used to tell me when she was about six. ‘I have rights now, too, abuelita. Don't give me so much work!’”
– Eva



“As older women we feel happy. How could we not be happy when we see these changes, that our granddaughters have freedom in their lives?”
– Blanca Luz

FOURTH DECLARATION OF THE LACANDON JUNGLE

January of 1996

The flower of the word
will not die. The masked
face which today has a
name may die, but the
word which came from
the depth of history and
the earth can no longer
be cut by the ears with its
cannons.

We were born of the
night. We live in the night.
We will die in her. But the
light will be tomorrow for
others, for all those who
today weep at the night,
for those who have been
denied the day, for those
for whom death is a gift,
for those who are denied
life. The light will be for
all of them. For everyone
everything. For us pain
and anguish, for us the joy
of rebellion, for us a future
denied, for us the dignity
of insurrection. For us
nothing.

Our fight is caused by

hunger, and the gifts of
the bad government are
lead and paper for the
stomachs of our children.

Our fight is for a roof
over our heads which
has dignity, and the bad
government destroys our
homes and our history.

Our fight is for
knowledge, and the bad
government distributes
ignorance and disdain.

Our fight is for the land,
and the bad government
gives us cementaries.

Our fight is for a job
which is just and
dignified, and the bad
government buys and
sells our bodies and our
shames.

Our fight is for life, and

the bad government offers
death as our future.

Our fight is for respect for
our right to sovereignty
and self-government,
and the bad government
imposes laws of the few
on the many.

Our fight is for liberty
of thought and walk,
and the bad government
builds jails and graves.

Our fight is for justice,
and the bad government
consists of criminals and
assassins.

Our fight is for history
and the bad government
proposes to erase history.

Our fight is for the
homeland, and the bad
government dreams with
the flag and the language
of foreigners.

Our fight is for peace,
and the bad government
announces war and
destruction.

Housing, land,
employment, food,
education, independence,
democracy, liberty, justice
and peace. These were our
banners during the dawn
of 1994. These were our
demands during that long
night of 500 years. These
are, today, our necessities.

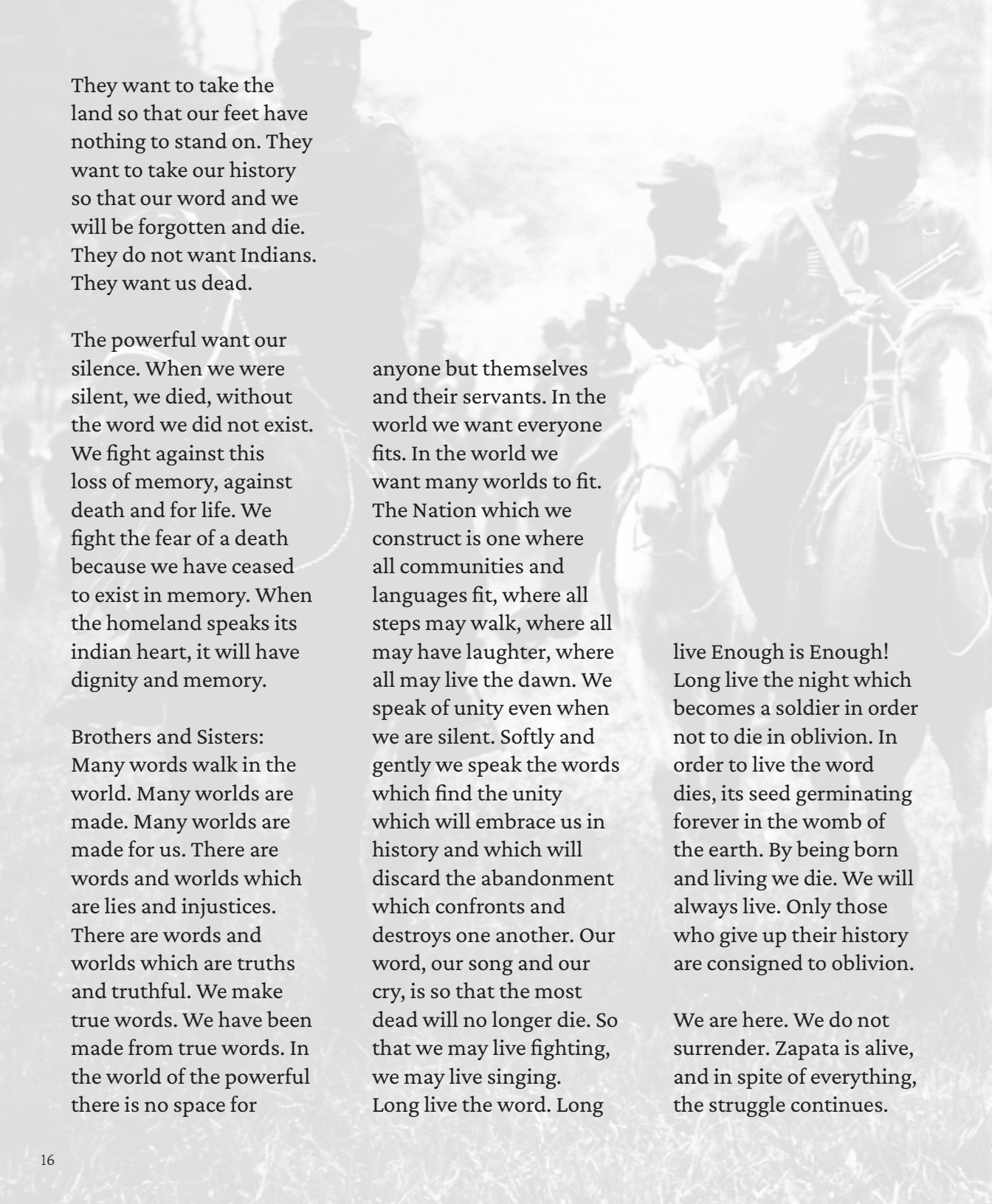
Our blood and our word

have lit a small fire in
the mountain and we
walk a path against the
house of money and the
powerful. Brothers and
sisters of other races and
languages, of other colors,
but with the same heart
now protect our light
and in it they drink of the
same fire.

The powerful came to
extinguish us with its
violent wind, but our light
grew in other lights. The
rich dream still about
extinguishing the first
light. It is useless, there
are now too many lights
and they have all become
the first.

The arrogant wish to
extinguish a rebellion
which they mistakenly
believe began in the dawn

of 1994. But the rebellion
which now has a dark
face and an indigenous
language was not born
today. It spoke before
with other languages
and in other lands. This
rebellion against injustice
spoke in many mountains
and many histories. It has
already spoken in nahuatl,
paipai, kiliwa, cucapa,
cochimi, kumiai, yuma,
seri, chontal, chinanteco,
pame, chichimeca,
otomi, mazahua,
matlatzinca, ocuilteco,
zapoteco, solteco,
chatino, papabuco,
mixteco, cucateco, triqui,
amuzzgo, mazateco,
chocho, ixcaateco, huave,
tlapaneco, totonaca,
tepehua, populucan,
mixe, zoque, huasteco,
lacandon, mayo, chol,
tzeltal, tzotzil, tojolabal,
mame, teco, ixil,
aguacateco, motocintleco,
chicomucelteco.



They want to take the
land so that our feet have
nothing to stand on. They
want to take our history
so that our word and we
will be forgotten and die.
They do not want Indians.
They want us dead.

The powerful want our
silence. When we were
silent, we died, without
the word we did not exist.
We fight against this
loss of memory, against
death and for life. We
fight the fear of a death
because we have ceased
to exist in memory. When
the homeland speaks its
indian heart, it will have
dignity and memory.

Brothers and Sisters:
Many words walk in the
world. Many worlds are
made. Many worlds are
made for us. There are
words and worlds which
are lies and injustices.
There are words and
worlds which are truths
and truthful. We make
true words. We have been
made from true words. In
the world of the powerful
there is no space for

anyone but themselves
and their servants. In the
world we want everyone
fits. In the world we
want many worlds to fit.
The Nation which we
construct is one where
all communities and
languages fit, where all
steps may walk, where all
may have laughter, where
all may live the dawn. We
speak of unity even when
we are silent. Softly and
gently we speak the words
which find the unity
which will embrace us in
history and which will
discard the abandonment
which confronts and
destroys one another. Our
word, our song and our
cry, is so that the most
dead will no longer die. So
that we may live fighting,
we may live singing.
Long live the word. Long

live Enough is Enough!
Long live the night which
becomes a soldier in order
not to die in oblivion. In
order to live the word
dies, its seed germinating
forever in the womb of
the earth. By being born
and living we die. We will
always live. Only those
who give up their history
are consigned to oblivion.

We are here. We do not
surrender. Zapata is alive,
and in spite of everything,
the struggle continues.

A DECLARATION FOR LIFE

TO THE PEOPLES OF THE WORLD:
TO PEOPLE FIGHTING IN EUROPE:
BROTHERS, SISTERS AND COMPAÑER@S:

During these previous months, we have established contact between us by various means. We are women, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender, transvestites, transsexuals, intersex, queer and more, men, groups, collectives, associations, organizations, social movements, indigenous peoples, neighborhood associations, communities and a long etcetera that gives us identity.

We are differentiated and separated by lands, skies, mountains, valleys, steppes, jungles, deserts, oceans, lakes, rivers, streams, lagoons, races, cultures, languages, histories, ages, geographies, sexual and non-sexual identities, roots, borders, forms of organization, social classes, purchasing power, social prestige, fame, popularity, followers, likes, coins, educational level, ways of being, tasks, virtues, defects, pros, cons, buts, however, rivalries, enmities, conceptions, arguments, counterarguments, debates, disputes, complaints, accusations, contempts, phobias, philiias, praises, repudiations, boos, applauses, divinities, demons, dogmas, heresies, likes, dislikes, ways, and a long etcetera that makes us different and, not infrequently, opposites.

Only very few things unite us:

That we make the pains of the earth our own: violence against women; persecution and contempt of those who are different in their affective, emotional, and sexual identity; annihilation of childhood; genocide against the native peoples; racism; militarism; exploitation; dispossession; the destruction of nature.

The understanding that a system is responsible

for these pains. The executioner is an exploitative, patriarchal, pyramidal, racist, thievish and criminal system: capitalism.

The knowledge that it is not possible to reform this system, to educate it, to attenuate it, to soften it, to domesticate it, to humanize it.

The commitment to fight, everywhere and at all times – each and every one on their own terrain – against this system until we destroy it completely. The survival of humanity depends on the destruction of capitalism. We do not surrender, we do not sell out, and we do not give up.

The certainty that the fight for humanity is global. Just as the ongoing destruction does not recognize borders, nationalities, flags, languages, cultures, races; so the fight for humanity is everywhere, all the time.

The conviction that there are many worlds that live and fight within the world. And that any pretense of homogeneity and hegemony threatens the essence of the human being: freedom. The equality of humanity lies in the respect for difference. In its diversity resides its likeness.

The understanding that what allows us to move forward is not the intention to impose our gaze, our steps, companies, paths and destinations. What allows us to move forward is the listening to and the observation of the Other that, though distinct and different, has the same vocation of freedom and justice.

From the bridge of dignity that connects the Europe from Below and on the Left with the mountains of the Mexican Southeast.

We. Planet Earth. January 1, 2021.





COMANDANTA RAMONA

THE FIRST OF MANY STEPS

by Raúl Romero

to shout, along with everyone, that never again a Mexico without us,” Ramona said. And she continued: “That’s what we want, a Mexico where we all have a dignified place. That is why we are ready to participate in a great national dialogue with everyone. A dialogue where our word is one more word in many words and our heart is one more heart within many hearts.”

In clandestinity, *Comandanta Ramona* had played a key role inside of Zapatismo. She participated in a revolt inside the revolt, or what the late *Sup Marcos* called the “EZLN’s first Uprising.” Together with *Comandanta Susana* and other women, before January 1, 1994, Ramona promoted the “Women’s Revolutionary Law,” a document that among other points established that “women, without importance to their race, creed, color or political affiliation, have the right to participate in the revolutionary struggle in the place and grade that their will and capacity determine.”

Ramona became the most visible figure for several generations of Zapatista Maya women who went from living in submission to the colonialist, patriarchal and capitalist structures, to being at the front of a political-military insurgent organization.

Comandanta Ramona died on January 6, 2006, but her steps continue resonating in Zapatista Chiapas, in Mexico and in the whole world. 30 years after the war against oblivion, Zapatismo continues to be a dream that encompasses many worlds, and *Comandanta Ramona* became a star that guides their navigation.

On October 12, 1996 in the Zócalo of the capital, in front of thousands of people, a small woman with a giant heart, brilliant eyes and a sincere gaze, dressed in a white Tsotsil huipil with red embroidery, and covering her face with a ski mask, took the microphone and pronounced an important message: “I am *Comandante Ramona*, of the Zapatista National Liberation Army. I am the first of many steps of the Zapatistas into the Federal District and all parts of Mexico. We hope that all of you will walk alongside us.”

It was the first time that a member of the Indigenous Revolutionary Clandestine Committee of the EZLN arrived in the city, which meant not only breaking the military siege, but also reinforcing the dialogue and meeting with many other native peoples and social sectors of Mexico: “We came here

ZAPATISTA WOMEN'S REVOLUTIONARY LAWS

As published by the EZLN in The Mexican Awakener, issued on January 1st 1994 in conjunction with the uprising.

In their just fight for the liberation of our people, the EZLN incorporates women in the revolutionary struggle regardless of their race, creed, color or political affiliation, requiring only that they meet the demands of the exploited people and that they commit to the laws and regulations of the revolution. As well as, taking account of the situation of the woman worker in Mexico, the revolution incorporates their just demands of equality and justice in the following Women's Revolutionary Law.

First -- Women, regardless of their race, creed, color or political affiliation, have the right to participate in the revolutionary struggle in any way that their desire and capacity determine.

Second -- Women have the right to work and receive a just salary.

Third -- Women have the right to decide the number of children they have and care for.

Fourth -- Women have the right to participate in the matters of the community and have charge if they are free and democratically elected.

Fifth -- Women and their children have the right to Primary Attention in their health and nutrition.

Sixth -- Women have the right to education.

Seventh -- Women have the right to choose their partner and are not obliged to enter into marriage.

Eighth -- Women have the right to be free of violence from both relatives and strangers. Rape and attempted rape will be severely punished.

Ninth -- Women will be able to occupy positions of leadership in the organization and hold military ranks in the revolutionary armed forces.

Tenth -- Women will have all the rights and obligations which the revolutionary laws and regulations give.





SUBCOMANDANTE MARCOS, INTERVIEW WITH JULIO SCHERER

—Are you a rebel who demands profound changes or a revolutionary who fights for radical transformations, another way of making a homeland?

—*We position ourselves more as a rebel who wants social changes. That is to say, the definition as the classic revolutionary does not fit us. In the context in which we emerged, in the indigenous communities, that expectation did not exist. Because the collective subject is also a collective subject in the revolutionary process, and it is the one that sets the guidelines.*

—If you failed as a rebel, would you opt for the revolutionary path?

—*Destiny is different. The revolutionary tends to become a politician and the social rebel continues to be a social rebel. The moment Marcos or Zapatismo becomes a revolutionary project, that is, something that becomes a political actor within the political class, Zapatismo will fail as an alternative proposal.*

—Why does a revolutionary become a politician?

—*Because a revolutionary fundamentally aims to transform things from above, not from below, unlike the social rebel. The revolutionary asks himself: Let's make a movement, I'll take power and transform things from above. And the social rebel does not. The social rebel organizes the masses and transforms from below without having to consider the question of taking power.*



TO THE CEOIC: SHADOWS OF GENTLE FURY

OUR STEP WILL PROTECT THOSE WHO HAVE NOTHING.

MARCH 15, 1994

As long as they speak with contempt, how can there be peace in these lands? As long as they silence and murder our brothers, how can we ask our collective heart if it is time for peace to enter, hand in hand with dignity, through the doors of our impoverished lands? They want to shove us back in the corner, to wrench a surrender from us; over a road paved with the death of our dignity, they want to take us back to the peace that is war for our peoples.

We will not do it; we will not surrender. If they refuse a just and dignified peace, then we, men and women of the shadows, will dress ourselves once again for war, and this time our rage will be a product of deceit. The machetes of justice are being sharpened again; once again, our lands smell of gunpowder.

We are shadows of gentle fury; our step will cover the sky once again, its protective cloak will protect the dispossessed

and the good men and women who understand that justice and peace go hand in hand. If they deny us our rights, then our tender fury will enter those fine mansions. There will be no fence our shadows will not jump over; no door will be left unopened, no window left unbroken, no wall left standing. Our shadow will bring pain to those who call for war and death for our race; more tears and blood will flow before peace can sit down at our table with good will.

We, the shadows of gentle fury, will come forth once again so that our voice can be heard and finally drown out the lie. The "Enough!" of our first call was not enough. It was not enough to make the earth bloom with the blood of our dead.

The men and women of gentle fury will have to walk once again; again our dead will have to rise, and the history of our wounded heart will speak again, so that the deceit

and lies will end, so that the arrogance in these Mexican lands will finally perish. May the men and women of the night come forth once again and, dressed in the dark clothing of gentle fury, speak with a voice filled with the voices of everyone, to silence all these lies.

Do not leave this heavy flag in our hands alone; may everyone raise it. Let us all change the land that it envelops; Mexican brothers and sisters, do not forget this voice of the mountains. The light of our dead is still very small. Let us all join our lights let us shatter this shameful night once and for all. It is time for dawn to break.

May our dream keep vigil over your step, to protect you from evil, so that black shadows do not threaten you; for you, brothers, we keep our heart and our fire burning-so that you may walk in well being, so that, finally, this furious tenderness may reign in these lands.

PIECES OF THE PUZZLE: 1983-1993

FROM THE INITIAL CLANDESTINE STAGE TO THE GOOD GOVERNMENT BOARDS

from “The Fire and the Word” by Gloria Muñoz Ramírez (2008)

“First I’m going to talk about the first ten years when we organized the villages and formed the insurgents and militias, from 1983 to 1993. The organization found the way of getting to know the people in those years. Our EZLN learned how to adapt itself to our indigenous peoples, that is, that the organization knew how to make the changes necessary to be able to grow. We recruited by becoming political commissaries. . . The companeros had a way of life, and by understanding that, we could go much further in the work of organizing the villages.

When we began there were problems of land, for example, in the Lacandon area in Montes Azules, in the prices of the products, in marketing, and all these problems led the companeros to understand a movement like the Zapatista Army. We talked to them about the struggles of Lucio Cabanas, of Zapata, of Genaro

Vazquez.

Our organization began to organize itself better. When we explained why we were fighting back we began to make it more clear what we want in this struggle, and why. I always did the work of political commissary, that is, I was the one who had to explain our struggle to groups of families in each village. I explained why we struggled in the EZLN, I invited them to participate in the struggle and they were told how to be careful because everything was underground. They were told that we were against the government, that we struggled against the system that was screwing us. We explained each point of why we were fighting back. When we described our struggle the problem was that, for example, when we told them about health, and they thought that right away there would be good health and good education. Then comes the explanation that the struggle is long, that one day there will have to be a war to bring about these ends,

that the government doesn’t understand any other way because the government isn’t interested or concerned about indigenous peoples. We explained to them what they experience on a daily basis and they understand what their own situation is, and they ask us what they have to do. And we explain the struggles of Villa, of Zapata, of Hidalgo, and how things have been won; we explain to them that thanks to these movements we won some things but that it’s not enough.

Then we explain our dream. And we tell them that we struggle for good education, good health, good housing and all the other things. With time, the organization began to show itself and grow. Battalions of insurgents and militias came first. Clinics were built in each region, these clinics were organized by insurgents and that’s how the EZLN began to provide services to the people and to organize with them. All

this was a big sacrifice, but in this way the villages began to participate more and they themselves helped to build their clinics.

In the regional meetings the *companioneros* began to feel the strength of the organization, because each representative knew how many insurgents and how many militia there were, and there were a fucking lot of us. In addition to seeing the strength, they saw that the situation was more and more difficult, that we were getting more and more screwed over, and they started wanting to break out. They already knew that they could organize, they knew how many insurgents and militias there were, how many villages we controlled, and from there the idea was born that the people need autonomy.

The villages realized that the projects the government were giving the communities were never decided on by the people the government never asked the people what they wanted. The government doesn't want to address the needs of the villages; it only wants to maintain itself. And from there the idea was born that we have to be autonomous, that we have to impose our will, that we should be respected, and that we have to do something so that what the people want will be taken into account. The government treats us like we

can't think.

Then, little by little, the decision took form that it was almost time to rise up in arms. That decision was reached in 1992.

In practice we formed the autonomous townships and afterward we started thinking about an association of Autonomous Townships that would be the forerunner to the Good Government Boards. That association was a practice, a rehearsal of how we have to go about organizing ourselves. From there the idea was born to improve it and the idea of the Good Government Boards came up. We had the idea and we were carrying out the practice. We thought that theory can have good ideas but in practice we can see if there are problems, or how to go about solving the problems.

Each municipality has different problems to confront. There are some that progress more and others less, but when they got together and began to talk about how to solve each one of the problems, that led to forming a new structure—the Good Government Boards.

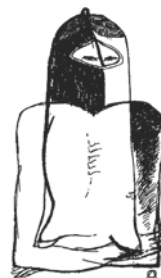
Now we're having meetings among the different Good Government Boards because we see that's the best way to solve the problems. They get together when they have problems with one Board or another, but also to help each other in their jobs and

to advance in everything that each Board has to deal with.

We are showing the country and the world that to be able to develop a better life, you can do it without the participation of the bad government. The progress in health, education, trade, these are projects that we are carrying out with national and international civil society, because together we are building what we think will be good for the people.

What isn't recognized by the people is the constitutional government, because if it were, why would the Boards have more work than the government does? The Boards are solving problems that used to be resolved in the Public Ministry before. Now the people, even the ones who aren't Zapatistas, look for justice in the Boards. So I say the others are the ones who aren't constitutional. We are the ones who are recognized.

I really didn't think that we were going to see this. It turns out that we didn't all die and that we are here, and that there's more to come. Now it's the role of the Mexican people to say what's been accomplished and above all what needs to be done." — Sub Moises (2003)



THE NEW STRUCTURE OF ZAPASTISTA AUTONOMY

FALL AND WINTER 2023

“The crisis of politics is the crisis of alternatives to chaos.” (Part 14)

Amidst the yearly unprecedented records of abnormal climate phenomenon across the planet and amidst the backdrop of an intensifying civil war in Mexico induced by the Narco-State, the Zapatistas released a series of 20 announcements (published between October and December of 2023 on Enlace Zapatista) to the world.

Many of us waited attentively to see the pronouncements as they were each published individually. The first few announcements shocked us all: the “death” of Subcommandante Galeano (now known as Capitan Marcos), the ending of important Zapatista organizational bodies (the Zapatista Rebel Autonomous Municipalities/MAREZ and the Good Government Boards/Juntas), the public closure of the Caracoles, and (most notably) the re-creation and re-organization of the structure of Zapatista autonomy (see: Parts 2 and 3).

A general theme stands out in the EZLN’s latest words:

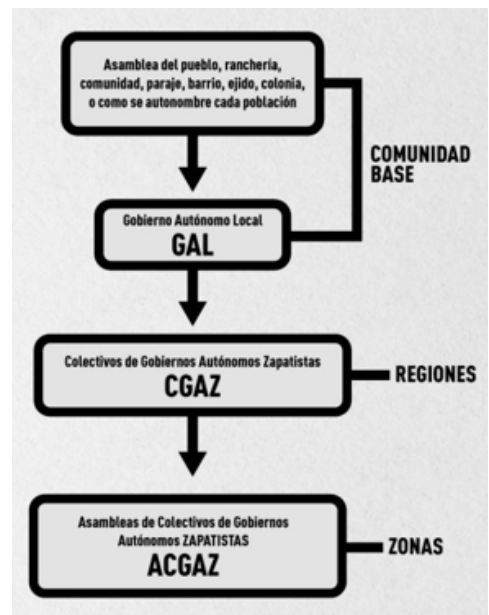
“The structure and disposition of the EZLN has been reorganized in order to increase the defense and security of towns and mother earth in the event of aggressions, attacks, epidemics, invasion of companies that prey on nature, partial or total military occupations, natural catastrophes and nuclear wars. We have prepared so that our towns survive, even isolated from each other.” (Part 9)

This announcement – of the new Zapatista Autonomy — comes after what they indicate as a 10-year critical self-review of the EZLN project, and 3 years to prepare for its practice (see: Parts 9 and 10). Why they saw the need to transform and evolve their structures:

“On another occasion we will tell you what the situation is like here in Chiapas. But now we just say that it is like anywhere else. It is worse than last years. Now they kill them in their homes, in their streets, in their towns. And there is no government that sees and listens to the demands of the people. And they don’t do anything because they themselves are the criminals. Not only that. We have already said that we see many misfortunes that are going to arrive or that are

already here. If you see that it is going to rain or that the first drops are already falling and the sky is black as a politician’s soul, then you take out your nylon and look for where you are going to go. The problem is that there is nowhere to protect yourself. You have to build your own shelter.

The thing is that we saw that with MAREZ and Juntas we will not be able to face the storm. For all this and the rest, we entered into a great series of reflections and came to the conclusion that we only have left a great discussion of all the towns and analysis, of how to face the new and bad situation and at the same time how we are going to continue to govern us. Meetings and assemblies were held, area by area, until an agreement was reached that there would no longer be Good Government Juntas or Zapatista Rebel Autonomous Municipalities. And that we need a new structure, that is, to accommodate ourselves in another way. Of course, this proposal is not just about reorganizing. It is also a new initiative. A new challenge.” (Part 10)



The EZLN saw the need to grow their communities in the face of ongoing and impending crises. Their organizational re-structuring appears to emphasize accountable crisis response and communal survival. They signal that this change was done by further decentralization of their decision-making bodies: they claim to have gone from a few dozen MAREZ (the rebel municipalities) to 1000's of Zapatista GALs, and from 12 Juntas (the governing councils) to 100's of CGAZ's (see diagram on page 24). Lastly, The Zapatista's propose their newest practice of "non-ownership" as land liberation to face the coming catastrophes:

"Well, in summary this is our proposal: to establish extensions of the recovered land as common. That is, without property. Neither private, nor ejidal, nor communal, nor federal, nor state, nor business, nor anything. A non-ownership of land. As they say: 'land without papers.' So, in those lands that are going to be defined, if they ask who owns that land or who is the owner, the answer will be: 'nobody's', that is, they are "common".

If you ask if it is the land of Zapatistas, or 'partidistas' [people who belong to political parties] or who, well, none of them. Or all of them, it's the same. There is no commissioner or agent to buy, kill, disappear. What there is, is people who work and take care of those lands. And they defend them. An important part is that, in order for this to be achieved, there has to be an agreement between the residents regardless of whether they are 'partidistas' or Zapatistas. In other words, they have to talk between themselves, not to bad governments. Seeking permission from bad governments has only brought divisions and even deaths among peasants themselves.

So, respecting the lands that are personal-family property, and those that are for collective work, this non-ownership is created on land recovered in these years of war. And it is proposed that it is worked together in shifts, regardless of what party you are, or what religion, or what color, or what size, or what gender you are. The rules are simple: it has to be an agreement between the residents of a region. Do not grow drugs, do not sell the land, do not allow the entry of any company or industry. Paramilitaries are excluded. The product of the work of those lands belongs to those who work it in the agreed time. There are no taxes, nor payment of tithes. Each facility that is built is left for the next group. They take only the product of their work.

This, very summarized, is what was presented and consulted with all the Zapatista towns. And it turned out that the vast majority agreed. And also that, in some Zapatista regions, it had already been done for years.

Let's say that the first 10 years of autonomy, that is, from the uprising to the birth of the Juntas de Buen Gobierno, in 2003, were years of learning. The next 10 years, until 2013, were about learning the importance of generational change. From 2013 up to date it has been about verifying, criticizing and self-criticizing errors in operation, administration and ethics. In what follows now, we will have a stage of learning and readjustment." (Part 20)

In the final analysis, the EZLN are asking the peoples of the Earth to take inter-generational change seriously, and to continue evolving our methods in the face of new obstacles.

"So, as a summary, I tell you that the MAREZ and the Juntas helped us learn that theory without practice is pure words. And practice without theory, well it is as if you walked like a blind man. And since there is no theory of what we started to do, that is, there is no manual or book, then we have also had to make our own theory. We stumbled through theory and practice. I think that's why the theorists and the revolutionary vanguards don't like us very much, because we didn't just take away their jobs. We also showed them that talking is one thing and reality is another. But here we are and even if they deny us, we exist. Too bad." (Part 10)

"The Zapatista vocation, if someone pushes us to a laconic definition, is 'to be a good seed.' We do not intend to leave for inheritance a conception of the world to the next generations. What we want to leave for inheritance is life. What other generations do with it will be their decision and, above all, their responsibility. When we say that 'It is not necessary to conquer the world, it is enough to do it again', we move away, definitively and irremediably, from the current and previous political conceptions. We do not intend to leave for inheritance laws, manuals, worldviews, catechisms, rules, routes, destinations, steps, companies, which, if you look closely, is what almost all political proposals aspire to. Our goal is simpler and terribly more difficult: to leave life for inheritance." (Part 12)

HOW TO LIVE WITHOUT GOVERNMENT: LESSONS FROM THE EZLN

Self-governance is the idea that the people are capable of organizing their lives outside of a state system. The 7 principles of *mandar obedeciendo* (leading-by-obeying) is a method of autonomy that was not simply invented by the EZLN, but rather comes from several centuries of indigenous communal self-organization. This is a set of timeless, ancestral practices that escape the bounds of politics as framed by the institutions and colonialism of government. Simply put, no one from outside comes to govern: the peoples themselves decide, among themselves, who governs and how. These principles are adaptable to daily life, too:

1. *Mandar obedeciendo*
2. *Representar y no suplantar*
3. *Bajar y no subir*
4. *Servir y no servirse*
5. *Proponer y no imponer*
6. *Construir y no destruir*
7. *Convencer y no vencer*

1. *Obey, don't command*
2. *Represent, don't replace*
3. *Go below, don't go above*
4. *Serve others first, not yourself*
5. *Propose, don't impose*
6. *Build up, not tear down*
7. *Convince, don't conquer*



“This system of assemblies and governing councils demonstrates that the only way to avoid the division of society into the oppressive dichotomy of rulers and ruled is to invent structures where all rule; everyone at some point governs, just as everyone after governing, returns to the cornfield or to the kitchen to continue the daily work of the community.” – *Beyond Resistance: Everything, An Interview with Subcomandante Marcos* by El Kilombo Intergalatico (2007)

// learn armed self-defense // dismantle patriarchy // uproot oppressive traditions // resist authoritarian doctrines // utilize clandestine organization // liberate the territory from institutional and government control // push away sell-outs // organize unity projects // build community cooperatives, restorative justice systems, autonomous education systems, food sovereignty, land collectives, self-run health systems // create encounters at the family, neighborhood, workplace, regional and international levels // search for new kinds of social weapons // resist by any means necessary

“Zapatismo is not a new political ideology, or a rehash of old ideologies. Zapatismo is nothing, it does not exist. It only serves as a bridge, to cross from one side, to the other. So everyone fits within Zapatismo, everyone who wants to cross from one side, to the other. There are no universal recipes, lines, strategies, tactics, laws, rules, or slogans. There is only a desire – to build a better world, that is, a new world.”

ZAPATISMO IN THE U.S.



How can we support the vision and struggle of the Zapatistas from the U.S.? Organize in your territory! The downfall of American imperialism can help to liberate Mexico and the rest of the world from the hold of capitalist colonialism, by defeating it at the source. On the other hand, we can heed their call to live revolution in our daily life by practicing autonomy in our communities.

Question is, how can we practice something like Zapatista autonomy here in the U.S.? As the EZLN would say, the new world was ushered in when they shouted: “*Ya Basta!* Enough!” We may not have authority or capital, but we have something greater: the power to reject everything that is imposed on us. To defy all norms, roles, and hierarchies. Authority can never be able to deprive us of the possibility of saying “*Ya Basta!*” We must say “Enough!” to our dependence on this Earth-destroying system for survival. Like the Zapatistas, we must make moves to become completely self-sufficient. Direct access to your own means of existence is something no one can take away from you, *and you can stop them if they try.*



SUPPORT THE EZLN!

- <https://redajmaq.org/>
- <https://frayba.org.mx/>
- <https://serazln-altos.org/>
- <https://chiapas-support.org/>
- <https://schoolsforchiapas.org/>
- <https://sextagrietasdelnorte.org/>
- <https://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/>

LEARN MORE

Zapatista Documentary:
“A Place Called Chiapas”

[https://www.youtube.com/
watch?v=IBGMkCsHXNc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IBGMkCsHXNc)

“Ashanti Alston on the
Black Panthers and the
Zapatistas”

[https://www.youtube.com/
watch?v=kYQ8N6sit2E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kYQ8N6sit2E)



***“¿DID YOU ALL HEAR?
It is the sound of your
world crumbling.
It is the sound of our
world resurging.
The day that was day, was night.
And night shall be the day
that will be day.”
(December 30, 2012)***



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