

The Sixth Year of a Fifteen Minute Change: Mexico's Indigenous since Vicente Fox

Written by Cosanna Preston

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COSANNA PRESTON, DEC 22 2007

"After a half-millennium of institutionalized racism against its Indigenous population, this nation, which prides itself on its Aztec past, remains deeply wracked by the racial divide."

- John Ross, Latin America Press 2001.[1]

On 2 July 2000 Mexicans were told they could stop waiting; for the first time in 71 years, they were finally being offered a fresh outlook on politics. Change had come to them in the form of President Vicente Fox and the National Action Party (*Partido Acción Nacional*—PAN). The corrupt and oppressive Institutional Revolutionary Party (*Partido Revolucionario Institucional*—PRI) had finally been ousted by Mexico's first internationally accepted elections. In a victory speech Fox told Mexican citizens, "We have all of us won. Mexico has won. Every family has won. Every Mexican person has won. We have all won." [2] (Ifill, 2000). Despite political rhetoric being what it may, Fox seems to have truly believed those words and no doubt many people have prospered under Fox's command.

Unfortunately, this good fortune has not come to all Mexicans, arguably not even half [3] and certainly not to the Indigenous peoples that represent twelve per cent [4] of the population. Despite Fox's election promise to solve the problem of Chiapas in fifteen minutes, the Indigenous people in that state and the rest of Mexico continue to live life at the bottom of the social totem pole. Standard of living indicators remain well below the national average and the government has all but forgotten the one document that promised change on Indigenous terms: the San Andrés Accords, which promised above all, Indigenous autonomy. Now as Fox's successor, Felipe Calderon, waits in the wings to take power in December it is most prudent to examine the government's relationship with its Indigenous peoples in hopes that flaws can be identified and changes made with the ushering in of a new administration.

As this paper will argue, despite revamping of programs, creation of institutions and rebranding Mexico as a "pluricultural" and "multilingual," (Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas, 2006—herein cited as CDI, 2006) [5] the Fox government has failed to improve the lives of the country's first peoples. At best the new policies, inspired by neo-liberal views of development, encourage continued cycles of dependency. While in the worst cases, they function directly in conflict of the Accords.

Indeed there are some scholars who argue that the Accords represent only a small but vocal minority of the Indigenous population and that rather than wanting the collective life and autonomy so stressed in the document, Indigenous peoples are like other Mexicans and seek advancement through the neo-liberal economic system (Kerr, 2006). [6] However, the Accords were supported by both the Zapatista Army for National Liberation (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional—EZLN) and the Indigenous National Congress (Congreso Nacional Indígena—CNI), [7] the two major representative bodies for Indigenous peoples of Mexico. As such, this is the only documented list of demands and desires put forward on behalf of Indigenous Mexicans with their intense consultation. Thus, this paper will consider the San Andrés Accords as the best tool of measurement to contextualize the discussion of improvement in the Indigenous populations since the election of Fox.

It will do so by first providing a background of the Indigenous situation in Mexico, and then it will look at the first year

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of the Fox government and the major legislation enacted, which specifically targets the well-being of Indigenous people.[8]Following the evaluation will be a discussion of the effectiveness of the two major Indigenous institutions the National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Communities (Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas—CDI) and the National Institute of Indigenous Languages (Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas—INALI), and the paper will conclude with a case study of government action in San Cristóbal Xochimilpa, in the Sierra Norte of Puebla.

This case study has been put together through a series of observations during three visits I made to the community for a total time of eleven days. Eight of those days were passed as a government volunteer for the Huertos Familiares program in which University of the Americas (Universidad de las Americas—UDLA) exchange students were recruited to play with children on weekends. For the remaining three days I functioned as an observer in a first grade classroom collecting research for a study on Indigenous language preservation in the classroom. Due to the overlap of subject matter between that study and this one, information collected during my time in both positions will be used here to compliment my analyses.[9]

Understanding the Current Indigenous Situation

“Autonomy means being recognized by the rest of society as a distinct people. ...One which we as towns have the capacity to program and plan, to execute, to elaborate feasible studies on development. That is to say, a sustainable development by means of Indigenous wisdom...”

– Margeritok Ruiz, former national congressman,
Independent Front of Indigenous Peoples, 1997[10]

Since the arrival of the Spaniards in 1519 the Indigenous groups of Mexico have been marginalized, segregated and robbed of their land—the very foundation of their spiritual and physical life. Despite efforts by former president Benito Juárez to undertake land reform in the late 1800s, the trend of large estates in the hands of few has continued to subject the Indigenous peoples to a “slave-like dependency” on the ruling power (Améndola, Epigmenio, & Martínez, 2005).[11]As John Ross (2001) of the Latin American Press argues, policies such as those pertaining to land have effectively institutionalized racial discrimination for the past 500 years.[12]

The present standard-of-living social indicators couldn't demonstrate this more clearly. According to the World Bank, of the 10.3 million officially recognized Indigenous peoples, 89.7 per cent live in poverty while 68.5 per cent live in extreme poverty.[13]This is compared to the non-Indigenous population averages which are 46.7 per cent and 14.9 per cent respectively (The World Bank Group, 2006).[14]This difference between the extreme poverty rates are particularly telling of the ethnic divide. However illiteracy, school drop-out rates, lack of access to potable water and sanitation, infant mortality and life expectancy are also all two to four times worse in Indigenous communities when compared to the non-Indigenous population (Ibid).[15]

With statistics like these showing little sign of improvement throughout the early 1990s, the signing of the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) which only threatened to worsen the situation was the last straw for many Indigenous, especially those in Chiapas. On 1 January 1994 the EZLN launched the Indigenous issues of Mexico in to the world's spotlight when they stormed San Cristóbal de las Casas in the state of Chiapas demanding autonomy for the Indigenous peoples and economic policies that would benefit Mexico's majority—not just its elite (Global Exchange, 2006).[16]It took two years of low-intensity warfare and failed peace negotiations, but finally on 16 February 1996, Mexico's Indigenous population was given a ray of hope through the San Andrés Accord. Signed by both the EZLN and the Mexican government, the Accords outlined that the Indigenous-federal government relationship be governed in the context of pluralism, self-determination, environmental sustainability, consultation and accord, and democratic decentralization. The Accords further stated that this form of autonomy would operate through the recognition of territoriality.[17]Additionally, they promised educational as well as cultural rights and freedoms and the access to basic needs (“San Andrés Accords,” 2001).[18]

Indeed the Accords were a watershed for the empowerment of Indigenous groups worldwide as they only built on the

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support the Zapatistas had already garnered. As a report from the North American Congress on Latin America offered in 1997:

One of the most striking aspects of the Zapatistas is the fact that their demands immediately resonated with so many people around the world. ... In particular, their decision to maintain independence from political parties and the state has opened up new arenas for participation and experimentation in self-government.[19]

The report goes on to say that the Zapatistas represent the ongoing resistance, especially in Latin America but also worldwide, to the exclusionary tendencies of capitalist states.

Unfortunately, this representation and clear set of demands—aside from a few enclaves in the jungles of Chiapas created in 2003—have failed to get beyond the paper they were delivered on. Only eight months after signing, the then president Ernesto Zedillo vetoed the Accords claiming autonomy would only encourage future succession movements and work to destroy national unity.[20] In the four years that followed the processes were largely stalled. The EZLN refused further discussion, setting out a list of five demands[21] that would have to be met before any progress could be made, and the Indigenous issues of Mexico fell off the bargaining table.

The Tides of Change: A Look at Fox's First Year in Office

"The Zapatistas have always argued that they want only to be citizens on their own terms, with autonomy and the recognition that Mexico is a multicultural, plurilingual nation."

- John Ross, Latin American Press, 2001[22]

Throughout the 1990s marginalized groups around the world realized various forms of autonomy. The Kurds in Iraq achieved this effectively through neglect on the part of Saddam Hussein; with the break up of Yugoslavia, Kosovars in Serbia were granted provincial autonomy (though this state has since fallen into United Nations control); and on 1 April 1999 the creation of the Nunavut Territories in Canada marked a new chapter for the country's Indigenous people and set an example for the world.[23] Though clearly the success of some autonomous regions can be questioned—Kosovo being one—such developments left room for hope amongst those still fighting for reorganisation. Thus when Vicente Fox came to power in 2000 there was hope, however little, that this new government could bring change to the plight of Mexico's Indigenous.[24] However, as the rest of this paper will explore, the changes imposed since Fox have been largely paternalistic and at worst counterproductive.

Fox worked quickly to bring about his campaign promises. By 2001 the government had turned out a five year national development plan that introduced 40 new programs and retained a 25-year vision. Such ambition and forward thinking was new to the country whose leaders had previously operated term to term. However, problems were almost immediately apparent. As Daniel Zovatto, the regional director of Latin America for the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) observed in 2005, the initiatives have suffered from "institutional deadlock" for the last four years as the executive remained hamstrung by its lack of a majority in congress.[25] Yet even more seriously, the National Development Plan 2001 – 2006 does not contain a single specific reference to Indigenous groups. The man who once said that every Mexican person had won with his election failed to include the most marginalized group in his national vision.

Granted Fox has worked to recognize them in other ways. Directly after taking office in December of 2000 he appointed Xochitl Galvez, a business woman and Otomí Indian from Hidalgo, as his key advisor on Indigenous affairs. Through her office spending on Indigenous communities has more than doubled since her appointment.[26] Unfortunately, as will become evident, it is a question of how that money has been used. Yet the most affecting move by Fox was the introduction of the Indigenous Rights Legislation. In a move that shocked the Indigenous community, Congress passed the bill in 2001 and effectively gutted the San Andrés Accords. As Luis Hernandez of La Jornada, Mexico's progressive national newspaper commented, "If we were to compare this legislation to a tree, it would be more like a Bonsai than a great Oak. ... It's decorative and pretty, but it is not a tree that provides any shade of protection to Indigenous communities." [27] Undeniably, relegating autonomy to state

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control and with modifications to the legal control of land, the bill directly undermined the spirit of the San Andrés Accords and completely contradicted the notion of territoriality.

Through the new law, Indigenous cultures crossing state borders are now prevented from operating as homogeneous societies. Additionally, it has been argued that the law is in direct conflict with the 1989 International Labour Organization (ILO) treaty, signed by Mexico, which states that autonomy and territoriality are essential to the definition of Indigenous peoples;^[28] yet no one in government has stood to take responsibility. Fox said the bill should be viewed as a glass “half-full” and that the government had “achieved something that people believed impossible just six months ago.”^[29] While the PRI and PAN in Congress “portrayed themselves as saviours of national unity for turning back the threat of Indigenous succession.”^[30] As such, seeing no wrong doing, the response to the outpouring of grievance from the Indigenous community has been met with lukewarm attention. Hundreds of appeals have been filed with the Supreme Court, none of which have been won. Of the 331 appeals in Oaxaca, 279 were filed by Governor José Murat on behalf of his communities—most of which were not even informed of the filings. As such, John Ross has accused Murat of using the appeals as a campaign ploy.^[31] Indigenous groups which have filed on their own behalf have been rebuked and outright ignored. Carmen Herrera of the Miguel Agustín ProHuman Rights Centre took to the streets with a group of Indigenous people after the court justice and lawyers for the Congress failed to make an appearance at the appeal. “The justices did not have the courtesy to inform them that they would not be present. ... The Supreme Court owes it to this nation to act in good faith with the first peoples of Mexico.”^[32] Yet despite public and legal appeals such as these, the government has yet to take any steps to alter the gutted law.

Circumventing the Issues: Fox's Policy of Ignorance

“Knowledge of Indigenous cultures is national enrichment and a necessary step to eliminate misunderstandings and discrimination toward Indigenous peoples.”

– San Andrés Accords, III.3, 1996^[33]

Unfortunately, today's promotion of Indigenous culture and rights resembles greatly the superficial national pride in Mexico's Aztec heritage. Through empty laws, ineffective programs and actionless institutions the government is again taking credit for something it hasn't created in an effort to build national unity and international reputation. Since the fallout of the Indigenous Rights Law the Fox government has done everything but recognize the core problems in an attempt to subdue the Indigenous grievances. In the last three years it has created the National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Communities (Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas—CDI), the National Institute of Indigenous Languages (Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas—INALI), and developed four intercultural universities—with six more planned—designed to triple Indigenous enrolment by the end of Fox's term in December 2006.^[34] With the universities perhaps a partial exception in that they begin to address the education deficit, this institution building only adds more bureaucracy, symbolically addressing cultural inclusion while outright ignoring the issues of land and autonomy that underline the Indigenous struggle.

The CDI promises to work against social exclusion, promote tolerance respect and dialogue, sustainably manage resources, and utilize consultation whenever changes are of “significant impact.”^[35] Who decides what is meant by significant impact is not clarified, but the surrounding discussions of government coordination and support of government actions imply that the body is no less of a top-down approach than Mexico has seen in the past. Perhaps one could argue that at least something is being done, but if one considers the previously mentioned figure that spending on Indigenous peoples has doubled since Xochitl Galverz' appointment and the clear statement in the San Andrés Accords that Indigenous groups seek the ability to decide their own forms of internal government—politically, socially, culturally, economically and organizationally^[36]—it is clear that the government could have put the funding to more appropriate uses inline with the wishes of the people the funds are supposed to serve.

Thus far INALI seems no better. Created in March 2003 it promises to promote, preserve, and develop Indigenous languages, knowledge and culture in order that Mexico as a whole provides respect and acknowledgement to these societies as integral to Mexican culture.^[37] Immediately, overlaps in cultural visions are apparent between these two

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institutes despite a stated objective of the CDI to act as a coordinating body.[38] More worrisome than bureaucratic overlap is the lack of awareness amongst those supposedly affected by these organizations and the utter lack of presence by the organizations in the communities.

While spending time observing in a classroom of one Indigenous community, San Cristóbal Xochimilpa in the state of Puebla, the teacher admitted that she had never heard of INALI. [39] Further there had clearly been no efforts by the organization to implement Indigenous language programming in the classroom despite INALI stating as its objective "...to promote the strengthening, preservation, and development of the Indigenous languages that are spoken in the national territory..."[40] and Article 7 of the General Education Law supplementing, "the speakers of the Indigenous languages will have access to their obligatory education in their own language and Spanish." [41]

The children of this classroom, three years after the creation of institutes designed to protect language and bolster social inclusion, have yet to obtain educational materials in their own language. Furthermore, the teacher receives no official support for language training despite the necessity to utilize both Náhuatl (the regional Indigenous language) and Spanish in the grade one classroom for basic communication. The materials exist. The teacher showed me the one copy of a language arts book that they had in Náhuatl but the tokenism of this one book speaks volumes of the commitment from the government. Instead of receiving proper language instruction, the teacher is left to her own devices. Having learned Náhuatl with the aid of her mother (also a mestizo teacher in a Náhua school who learned the language without support), from Indigenous radio and other forms of personal study, she is able to revert to Náhuatl to better control the classroom, and attempts to incorporate it in basic lessons like counting and reading—putting sentences on the board both in Spanish and Náhuatl.[42] However, as she explained to me while showing me books on Indigenous education and culture that she's obtained on her own, any official support is hardly seen. "There is money but by the time it gets to the school it's gone from hand to hand to hand and there's very little left." [43] Thus she continues to provide dual-language instruction to the best of her ability and hopes for the day that the government will pitch in.

Implementing Dependency: the Case of San Cristóbal Xochimilpa

"If there continues to be in the world cultures that are believed to be superior to others, then what we are guaranteeing in the future is self-destruction. It is war – everyone against everyone. Because those who think themselves superior will continue dominating the world, while those of us who they have always wanted us [sic] to believe are inferior will now rise up to say "Enough!" We are equal."

– Margeritok Ruiz, former national congressman,
Independent Front of Indigenous Peoples, 1997 [44]

In fact, San Cristóbal Xochimilpa provides an excellent window onto the workings of the government. In the community of 994 inhabitants, nearly half the population is employed in agricultural labour, many of which are seasonally migratory. As such the Secretary of Social Development (Secretaría de Desarrollo Social—SEDESOL) implemented its Attention to Agricultural Labourers (Atención a Jornaleros Agrícolas—AJA) program in San Cristóbal Xochimilpa in 1993.[45] The national program, active in many communities around the country, seeks to improve the life and employment conditions of these workers, their families, and their communities through the encouragement of social organization, and the execution of programs through participation, co-responsibility and self-management.[46]

The SEDESOL is increasingly proud of their work. The regional supervisor proudly showed me a house he had personally helped build in 2005 and listened with interest as a woman explained her plans for an extension which would be built when her husband returned home from his work term in Mexico City. This little two-room house incorporated everything that was the workings of the government: a new sturdy place to live, a family being supported by a migrant worker and thus a beneficiary of AJA, electricity (most of the time) and a mother who prided herself in raising her children to speak both Náhuatl and Spanish—integrating her Indigenous heritage with the wider mestizo Mexican world. Indeed, looking just at this family and its home they are a government success story. And if one keeps such a narrow view, government success stories are all around—new family homes, new roofs, new

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floors, new stores—they all are dispersed amongst the community providing much needed improvements and in the case of stores, job creation.

However, this discussion is concerned with the Indigenous population as a whole and just walking outside the door of the AJA house, the stark contrast that can exist even in one community was evident. While the one particular family benefits from a new home of dry wall and cement, the neighbours continue to live in a wooden shack with earth as their floor. Government documentation failed to adequately explain the selection process but the outcomes, the blatant discrepancies in quality of life, act as a microcosm for the greater economic discrepancies in Mexico.

Additionally, these programs while claiming to be government initiatives actually receive a great portion of their funding from the target communities. As a further sign of lack of commitment, the town-centre advertisements, which list the program achievements, are posted only in Spanish despite legislation requiring the promotion of the territorial language. One such posting listed the 2005 results for Huertos Familiares, a specific AJA project implemented in the community that's main initiative is to develop family gardens for subsistence purposes, but also includes all the social and physical capital initiatives that are part of the umbrella AJA program.[47] This posting noted the financial breakdown of investment where shockingly the investment from the community and its supporters was three and a half times that of the state contribution.[48]

This is not an irregularity in the AJA program, reminiscent of the neo-liberal ideas of structural adjustment programs from the International Monetary Fund, the program requires the beneficiaries—the producers (the hosts of the migratory labourers) and the communities from which the labourers come—to provide funding before the government will agree to be involved.[49] In the case of the Huertos Familiares in San Cristóbal Xochimilpa, AJA will then provide up to 60 per cent of the funding to purchase land for family gardens,[50] but the community is expected to invest the rest; a tall order for a group of coffee farmers that sells one kilogram of coffee for one peso.

As a further criticism, while the government basks in figures like 26,461 workers helped in 2006,[51] it fails to recognize that in effect the programs have created more work for the already underpaid, overworked community members. Instead of addressing the policies and circumstances that allow for pay averages far below minimum wage,[52] the program provides workshops to make potential employees more wage-worthy and hope the employers will recognize this additional skill.[53] Furthermore, instead of addressing the horrendously low return on primary goods such as coffee, AJA asks impoverished communities to provide funding so the program can help construct gardens to which the women, already over-burdened as seasonal single parents, now need to attend.

In the end there is still no guarantee that the additions to the town will function consistently. In 2006 the Fox administration supplied an additional \$280 million pesos for the paving of roads, and the supply of electricity and water to remote communities.[54] The rationale for the road money was explained by Xochitl Galvez, who argued:

“There are many communities where people must walk for eight hours to get their children or a pregnant woman to the doctor, and they often die along the way. ... Without roads we cannot bring in electricity, drinking water or refrigerators, so women must cook three times a day, and they have no time to get education.”[55]

Ironically, San Cristóbal has had a dirt road since 1994 with a bus that supposedly services it every hour and half to transport people and their goods to the nearby city of Zacatlán. Additionally, AJA reports that 100 per cent of the community has had potable water since 1988 and 90 per cent have had electricity since 1955.[56] Yet all the problems that Galvez claims can be solved with roads still exist. During our volunteer lunches community women regaled us with stories of walking six hours to Zacatlán to have their babies. The house where I stayed, a new AJA house, lacked a refrigerator but meals were only served twice a day; despite her husband working away from the community, the mother of this family also had to work and so there was only time for the preparation of two meals for her nine-year-old son—once early in the morning for him to eat cold on his 11am break from school, and once when she returned from work around 7pm. Electricity works sporadically the women told us, chuckling, sighing and shaking their heads each time it faltered, and running water is available in some places in the town centre. However, its potable quality is dependent on the strength of one's stomach.[57]

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And yet this community is a far cry from the poorest of the poor where the majority of the inhabitants live the daily life of extreme poverty only ever really discussed in statistics. At the very least this community has a school, a town centre where a limited amount of goods are available for purchase and a bus that, though it doesn't run as frequently as the documentation may claim, still connects the mountain-side village with the city up above.

Power in Numbers but Lacking in Politics

"...In the Indigenous communities live those who are the poorest, most excluded, discriminated and marginalized from a general well-being and the benefits of development. The San Andrés Accords need to be fulfilled. ... Autonomy for these villages does not mean segregation, reservations or separatism; it is simply respecting their form of organization within the framework of the state."

– Andrés Manuel López Obrador,
Mexican Presidential Candidate,
Partido de la Revolución Democrática, 2006[58]

It has been six years since Fox took office and a presidential election is on the way in July 2006. Modest achievements have been made. The Zapatistas have renounced their militaristic ways in favour of a tour, named the Other Campaign (Otra Campaña), which, running parallel to the presidential political campaigns, seeks to give a voice to those unheard. Additionally, the four created and six promised intercultural universities stand to begin to address the education deficit, if the target Indigenous groups are able to reach the higher levels of schooling required for entry. Yet still the most fundamental issue of land has yet to be addressed. Though wrought with many other Indigenous problems of its own and certainly not perfect, Canada for example has proven that allotting land (in the form of Nunavut) not just rights and cultural recognition provides the conditions for Indigenous peoples to finally feel gratification.[59] Until the Mexican government can recognize this fundamental principle of autonomy and territoriality that they signed on to in the 1989 ILO Convention 169, the Indigenous problems are destined to simmer.

Still, at a population of 10.3 million, Mexico retains the largest absolute number of Indigenous people in the Western Hemisphere and a quarter of the Indigenous population in Latin America.[60] A victory of autonomy in Mexico would surely pave the way for further achievements in Indigenous rights throughout the Americas. Already, the left is rising yet again in Latin America with the media stars like Hugo Chavez of Venezuela and Evo Morales (himself Indigenous) in Bolivia accompanied by leaders in Chile, Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil. A strong example from a powerful member of Latin America could be all that is needed to push the Indigenous issues in to the forefront.

Yet presently only one candidate in the race for Mexican president, Andrés Manuel López Obrador of the Party of Democratic Revolution (Partido de la Revolución Democrática—PRD), has promised to implement the San Andrés Accords and put the poor first. Meanwhile PAN and PRI seem content to continue circumventing the issues with impressive statistics and new bureaucratic entities. Fortunately, Obrador and Felipe Calderon of PAN continue to play leapfrog for first place in the poles. Thus a chance of a leftist victory in Mexico is not unimaginable. Unfortunately, even if elected, Obrador would still have to contend with first his own Congress and secondly the conservative giant, and Mexico's most important trading partner, the United States, both of which would be significant barriers to any drastically leftist or pro-autonomous policies. Thus even with a leftist victory gained from campaign promises to uplift the poor, significant change for the Indigenous peoples is not guaranteed.

Indeed, as it has been since 1994, the only sure avenue for Indigenous peoples to voice their concerns continues to be through the EZLN and the National Indigenous Congress. For any further action, these marginalized peoples are forced to wait with the rest of the country for an election outcome that will dictate the next six years of struggle.

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[2] Ifill, Gwen. "Vicente Fox Elected." *Online News Hour*. 3 July 2000. PBS. . (Accessed 22 April 2006).

[3] Forty per cent of Mexicans continue to live below the poverty line while the top ten per cent retain 35 per cent of household income. "Mexico." *The World Factbook 2006*. Central Intelligence Agency. 20 April 2006. . (Accessed 22 April 2006).

[4] This is the official percentage from the government of Mexico.

[5] "México Indígena, México Pluricultural." Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas. 2 March 2006. <http://www.cdi.gob.mx/index.php>. (Accessed 2 March 2006).

[6] Lerry Kerr. National Security Seminar. *Relaciones Internacionales 488.02*. Universidad de las Americas. Cholula, Puebla Mexico. 14 February 2006.

[7] This congress, comprised of Indigenous authorities, community representatives, individuals and organizations has convened four times to construct unified positions on Indigenous issues. While it often works along side the EZLN it is less aggressive in its tactics and operates more as a forum for discussion rather than a movement.

[8] While economic plans, notably Plan Puebla Panama and the proposed Free Trade of the Americas have drastic repercussions for Indigenous well-being this paper addresses Indigenous specific policies. As such they will not be discussed in this paper.

[9] The none-cited statements are mine and mine alone. When information has come from a source within the community I will acknowledge them appropriately. For reasons of privacy I have left my sources unnamed.

[10] "Programs in the Americas: Mexico," *Global Exchange*. 20 January 2006. . (Accessed 2 March 2006).

[11] Améndola, Ricardo, Epigmenio Castillo & Pedro A. Martínez. "Mexico." *Country Pasture/Forage Resource Profiles*. Food and Agriculture Organization. January/February 2005. . (Accessed 22 April 2006)

[12] Ross, John. "Law widens racial divide."

[13] Extreme poverty is defined by the World Bank as living on less than \$1 per day. However, one lives in poverty when he/she cannot afford to buy the resources they need to live. The exact amount varies from country to country depending on the cost of living.

[14] All poverty percentages were obtained from "Mexico Highlights." *Latin America and Caribbean*. The World Bank Group. 2006. . (Accessed 19 April 2006).

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[15]Ibid.

[16]"Programs in the Americas:Mexico," Global Exchange.

[17]This concept recognizes that Indigenous populations in Mexico typically cross state borders. As such, this agreement would allow each Indigenous people to govern themselves as a homogeneous group regardless of legal differences from state to state.

[18]"San Andres Accords." Crisis in Chiapas. (2000). <http://www.jaguar-sun.com/chiapas.html<>. (Accessed 2 March 2006).

[19]Harvey, Neil. "Inclusion Through Autonomy: Zapatistas and Dissent." NACLA Report on the Americas.1 September 2005. Volume 39; Issue 2. Factavia.University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta. . (Accessed 23 April 2006).

[20]Ross, John. "Law widens racial divide."

[21]The five demands of 29 August 1996included:

1. The installation of the San Andrés Accords, specifically those aspects relating to Indigenous rights and culture.
2. That the federal government present a proposal for true democracy and justice along with a commitment to reach accord with those involved in the discussions
3. The liberation of political prisoners accused of being Zapatistas (this had already been agreed to but like the Accords the agreement was ignored.)
4. An end to the low-intensity warfare in Chiapas
5. The appointment of a government negotiating team willing to respect the decision making power of the EZLN.

"Programs in the Americas:Mexico," Global Exchange.

[22]Ross, John. "Law widens racial divide."

[23]"Welcome to Nunavut."Nunavut Planning Commission. . (Accessed23 April 2006).

[24]"Programs in the Americas:Mexico," Global Exchange.

[25]"National Visions Matter: Lessons of Success." IDEA, the World Bank, UN ECLAC. April 2005. . (Accessed 2 March 2006) p. 126

[26]Smith, Geri, "Doors Are Opening for *Mexico'sIndians*."Business Week Online; 22 March 2005. p5-5, 1p Factavia.University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta. . (Accessed 23 April 2006).

[27]Thompson, Ginger. "MexicoCongress Approves Altered Rights Bill" New York Times. (Late Edition (East Coast)).New York, N.Y.: Apr 30, 2001. pg. A.9 Academic Search Premier. University ofAlberta,Edmonton, Alberta. . (Accessed 2 March 2006).

[28]Ross, John. "Deaf ear to Indigenous rights." Latin American Press. August 2002. (Accessed 21 April 2006).

[29]Thompson, Ginger.

[30]Ross, John. "Law widens racial divide."

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[31]Ross, John. "Deaf ear to Indigenous rights."

[32]ibid

[33]"San Andres Accords." Crisis in Chiapas.

[34]Smith, Geri.

[35]México Indígena, México Pluricultural. Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas.

[36]"San Andres Accords." Crisis in Chiapas.

[37]Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas. Gobierno de México. April 2006. . (Accessed 14 April 2006).

[38]México Indígena, México Pluricultural. Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas.

[39]Preston, Cosanna. Field Notes. San Cristóbal Xochimilpa, Zacatán, Puebla. 4 March 2006.

[40]This quote has been personally translated for the benefit of the English audience however the original Spanish version states the following: "...a promover el fortalecimiento, preservación y desarrollo de las lenguas indígenas que se hablan en el territorio nacional..."

"Ley General de Derechos Lingüísticos de los Pueblos Indígenas y Reforma a la Fracción Cuarta del Artículo Séptimo de la Ley General de Educación." Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indígenas. Mexico: Secretaría de Educación Pública, 13 March 2003. p.4

[41]This quote has been personally translated for the benefit of the English audience however the original Spanish version states the following: "...los hablantes de lenguas indígenas, tendrán acceso a la educación obligatoria en su propia lengua y español." Ibid p.7

[42]Preston, Cosanna. Field Notes.

[43]Personally translated for the benefit of the English audience. Preston, Cosanna. Personal Interview. Zacatlán, Puebla. 9 March 2006.

[44]"Programs in the Americas:Mexico," Global Exchange. 20 January 2006. . (Accessed 2 March 2006).

[45]"Estudio San Cristóbal Xochimilpa." Jornaleros Agrícolas. SEDESOL. Gobierno de Puebla. 2006. p. 1

[46]Gobierno del México. "Secretaría de Desarrollo Social." Diario Oficial. Wednesday, 5 March Mexico City: 2003. Section 2, p. 2

[47]"Estudio San Cristóbal Xochimilpa." Jornaleros Agrícolas. P. 3

[48]The total investment as listed on this posting was \$43,535 pesos of which \$31,427 was attributed to federal funding, \$2,732 to the state and \$9,735 was from "the group" (del grupo).Preston, Cosanna. Field Notes.

[49]IMF structural adjustment programs typically advocate user fees and other forms of payment from the beneficiaries for social services or other assistance. The theory behind this is that one will then value what they pay for and not abuse, for example, medical facilities. However, it is often the case that the target group cannot afford the fees, however minimal, and thus are unable to receive any care.

[50]It should be noted that in 2005 that the state and the federal government funding combined exceeded 75%.

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However, official policy states the 60% figure.

"Estudio San Cristóbal Xochimilpa." Jornaleros Agrícolas. P. 4

[51]"Uniendo esfuerzos en beneficio de las Familias Jornaleras de Puebla." SEDESOL. Gobierno de Puebla. Presentación. 8 April 2006.

[52]According to CDI 80.9% of Indigenous workers are paid below minimum wage.

México Indígena, México Pluricultural. Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas.

[53]Gobierno del México. "Secretaria de Desarrollo Social."

[54]Smith, Geri.

[55]Ibid.

[56]"Estudio San Cristóbal Xochimilpa." Jornaleros Agrícolas. P. 1

[57]Preston, Cosanna. Field Notes.

[58]This quote has been personally translated for the benefit of the English audience however the original Spanish version states the following:

"... las comunidades indígenas, donde viven los mexicanos más pobres, más excluidos, más discriminados y más marginados del bienestar y de los beneficios del desarrollo. Tienen que cumplirse los acuerdos de San Andrés Larráinzar. ... La autonomía de esos pueblos no implica segregación ni reservación o separatismo; es sencillamente respetar sus formas de organización en el marco del Estado."

"Proyecto alternative de nación." López Obrador. 2006. . (Accessed 25 April 2006.)

[59]"Welcome to Nunavut." Nunavut Planning Commission.

[60]"Mexico Highlights." Latin America and Caribbean. The World Bank Group.

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*Written by: Cosanna Preston
Written at: Universidad de las Americas, Puebla Mexico
Written for: Class MX 408 Servicio Social
Date written: Spring 2006*