



# Notes from Oaxaca

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In 2006 the Mexican state of Oaxaca was embroiled in a conflict that lasted more than seven months and resulted in at least eighteen deaths and the occupation of the capital city of Oaxaca by the Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca (APPO). The conflict emerged in May 2006 with a strike involving the local teachers' union and has since grown into a broad-based movement pitting the Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca (APPO) against the state's governor, Ulises Ruiz Ortiz. Protesters demand the removal or resignation of Ortiz, whom they accuse of corruption and acts of repression.

The following collection of articles was translated from a number of different sources and posted to the libcom.org website. They provide a number of useful insights into the situation in the volatile Mexican region.

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# Oaxaca: Overcoming the fear

## The long struggle for dignity

By Silvia Gabriela Hernández, Kiado Cruz, Rubén Valencia\*<sup>1</sup>

(This article was prepared for a special edition of the magazine “La Guillotina” dedicated to the topic “Re-thinking the Left in Mexico”)

“This is not a movement of leaders, but of bases”

The APPO has never been an organisation but rather the name of a movement. The current crisis does not represent a rupture within this convergence, between the actors or groups within the APPO but rather a feature of the essence of this movement. It is the natural result of a process in which some of its actors have wanted to define this movement as if it were an organisation or a political party; pretending to appropriate for itself the right to represent the movement. The struggle of the APPO has not only been against the government of Ulises Ruiz, but against all authoritarianism remaining in the pueblos, neighbourhoods and social organisations. This struggle against authoritarianism extends to many spheres, including Section 22 itself to use just one example; in their moment, the teachers repudiated the leadership of Rueda Pacheco.

In order to understand what is happening in Oaxaca we need to return to its recent past. Firstly, we need to remember that we are the most culturally-diverse state in the country, with a majority indigenous population; of 570 municipalities, 418 are governed by internal organisational customs (assemblies). By means of the struggle for indigenous autonomy, there has been achieved a partial recognition of these systems of governance; nevertheless, the struggle continues for the full right to self-governance.

This notwithstanding, Oaxaca is a state which, historically, has generated diverse social movements. Already in its past it has removed three governors from office, the last being at the end of the seventies.

The six-year term of José Murat, the “governor” prior to Ulises Ruíz, ended in a politic of “money or lead”, that is to say, you will be bought, or you will be punished. Similarly beforehand, the term of Diódoro Carrasco also implemented heavy-handed tactics. Nevertheless, many pueblos, organisations and entire regions fought for the right to self-govern, for example, Loxichas, Unión Hidalgo, San Blas Atempa, Xanica and Benito Juárez in the Chimalapas. The social organisations also suffered political repression from state governments, and the movement and parts of the struggle went through a phase of demobilization and disarticulation. In this situation there was for the first time in Oaxaca, the presence of a candidate of the “centre left” that had been an apparatchik of the state government, and who

<sup>1</sup> \*Silvia Gabriela Hernandez. Sociologist. Political expressant for the facts of the 16th of July Official Gueleguetza. Member of VOCAL.

Kiado Cruz. Social researcher and communicator. Editor of Oaxacalibre.

Rubén Valencia. Social activist and researcher. He has been an APPO Councilor. Collaborator in VOCAL and Universidad de la Tierra in Oaxaca.

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had run in elections for the position of governor, against Ulises Ruíz.

In obvious fraud, and in the midst of popular discontent, Ulises Ruíz came to power with the slogan “no marches, blockades or encampments” and, in authoritarian manner and pre-meditated action, moved the executive and legislative seat of power to a town half an hour from the capital. Continuing along these lines, the government constructed a judicial city in the municipality of Reyes Mantecón. In this way, they paved the way to converting Oaxaca into a city at the service of tourism, a sort of colonial Disneyland, continuing the plan with a series of renovations to reconfigure the urban landscape; the most visible being the remodelling of the Zocalo where, flushed with money and power, they cut down trees and raised spaces to create areas more in tune with the extravagant tastes of the governmental class. Furthermore, it saw the multi-million theft of cultural heritage and governmental funds. The government gave the go-ahead to the expansion of the bus terminal into the Jalatlaco barrio, one of the oldest in the city, generating with this a great unrest that gave birth to the citizen council in this neighbourhood.

In addition, the government of Ulises Ruiz began a campaign of aggression against the newspaper Noticias, including the occupation of their warehouses and buildings in revenge for its director’s support for the opposition candidate, who had already won in the minds of the people.

In this context, Section 22, which represents the Oaxacan teachers, began on the 15th May, as they do every year, to set forth a series of demands, such as higher wages to cope with a higher cost of living. It is also important to say that the people, for various reasons, did not support this mobilization of the teachers. Nevertheless, when the state police entered the Zocalo on the 14th June to evict them in brutal reprimand, it provoked a spontaneous as then unseen solidarity.

Political parties and vertical organisations

On the 5th of August 2007 the people of Oaxaca returned to show that they were not prepared to participate and far less to believe in bourgeois and capitalist “democracy”. And they did it with a greater forcefulness than on other similar occasions. The day of the elections for the state congress saw more than 80% of the population abstain. In the face of these undeniable facts, some detractors prefer to search for excuses for what happened, despite understanding perfectly well the message sent by the people through their massive and deliberate electoral abstention: that nobody believes any longer in institutions which serve in the name of the people, those politicians and their friends working in favour of private interests.

We do not care about the lawsuits against the fraud of the PRI nor the disputes between the parties over the supposed legality or illegality of a Congress made up solely of members of one party which serves only one interest. Rather, we believe that that which really matters is the fact that the system is a fraud in its totality. Is it not the case that the political system created a power contrary to the citizens it supposedly represents and that also intends to legitimise that which only 20% of the electorate ‘chose’? This is not to discount those who voted for the PRI under threats, tricks, bought votes and without counting the falsification of figures. They

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know that they are illegitimate; they know that the 5th of August represented another step forward for the Oaxacan people in their struggle to free themselves from tyranny and for respect of their dignity.

Currently in Oaxaca, the internal debate of the APPO and the social movement has polarised. And the mass media has accomplished its mission of clouding the motives of this debate: positioning at its' whim, the "moderates" on the one side and the "radicals and intransigents" on the other. Conveniently, they emphasise the division between the electoral block of the APPO and those groups "out of control" as they call them. But for us, there is no such simple division. On the contrary, the process of reorganisation is far more diverse and complex than that. There is no doubt that there are honest people who believe that participating and putting forward candidates can eliminate the tyranny in Oaxaca, or that proposing laws can change the relation of society to the State. Nevertheless, in a movement of movements such as that which has developed since 2006, we believe intuitively that the process has gone beyond cosmetic change and reform of so-called 'democratic' laws and institutions. What is being confronted here is a vision of 'development' and 'progress' which is poised to rob everything from us, and this is being challenged through the construction of extremely diverse paths toward a dignified and fair life, and just as much in the countryside as in the city.

There are organisations that concentrate on the 'democratisation' of existing institutions. What does this mean? For nearly two decades talk of socialism has been abandoned in order to roll over to capitalism and in this way began the 'struggle' in the name of 'democracy'. However, in order to understand these new concepts it is necessary to re-examine their origin.

The original meaning of the word democracy comes from the Greek and signified the "power of the people", needless to say it now has nothing in common with its' original meaning. Capitalism and its' proponents have attempted to make us believe that the form of 'democratic' government supposedly based on the participation of the people in decision-making, was and remains the only form of political organisation, or at least the least imperfect.

Amongst the same Greeks from whom came the concept of democracy, that which was called "the people" was nothing more than a class from 'high society', 'enlightened' because they were supposedly the only ones capable of deciding the common good, but at the same time marginalising and oppressing the rest of the population. This form of politics that the rich and powerful call 'democracy' robs the people of their voice and of their capacity to make decisions over their own lives. This idea is based on the notion that the people 'don't know' what they want and 'don't know how' to govern themselves and as such constitutes one of the fundamental pillars used to justify repression, which supposedly serves to safeguard 'law and order' and 'peace'.

However in Oaxaca, the majority of the people, and above all the indigenous pueblos, are already clear on this. In reality it has always been this way. And their response has always been the same: the full right to govern themselves, through methods which whilst imperfect, attempt to subordinate Power to collective deci-

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sion. In the same way, the organizational practice and the spirit of the barricades raised during the popular mobilisation also recreate the self-organisation that, in spite of the times of repression and alarm in which they took place, demonstrated a vitality and confidence in self-defence far from the sort of organisation based on the 'democracy' that concentrates power and decision-making on the hands of a few.

Organisations with vertical control structures have attempted to appropriate and control the movement and impose their vision. These organisations betrayed the movement. They allied themselves with political parties that represent neither the struggle nor the principles generated in 2006.

These opportunist organisations, such as the FPR and the FALP accepted the distribution of support and credit financed by the system, through proxies such as mototaxi licences and other crumbs. Many have been co-opted by the State and have returned to their habitual behaviour: their shady negotiations and receipt of resources as a sort of palliative to poverty, they institutionalize the struggle in order to regain their status as intermediaries between Power and the people. As such, the challenge is clear that faces the so-called civil organisations, which began as intermediaries and that now have the opportunity to accompany this struggle for the dignity of the people.

It is evident that the structure of the APPO Council is not useful for the movement's reorganisation. Neither the provisional leadership nor the media leadership directed the path of the movement. There cannot and should not be an imaginary structure, which from some office or hotel deigns to make decisions on behalf of the pueblos of Oaxaca.

We need to continue finding modes of participation that can guarantee greater articulation. We have far more in common than we have differences that divide us. If our principles are upheld and the respect is there to unite our diversity, it is possible to cross to the next stage in the struggle stronger and better organised. We do not forget the graffiti collective that repeated in its slogans: This is not a movement of leaders but of bases.

The debate that seeks only changes in the law and 'democratisation' of existing institutions provokes the belief that all we can achieve is modifications in the law and that an 'enlightened' minority will do the work. In terms of facts, laws are useless for the people from below; they are created for the powerful and rich.

For a long time we have been accustomed to seeing the legislative assemblies as the centre of power, but we consider this a mistake caused by inertia or tricks. A superficial vision of history has made us think that power reaches the people through Parliament. Nevertheless, power resides in the people and is entrusted momentarily periodically to those who the people choose as their representatives.

Despite these arguments, we do not deny the importance of the so called "umbrella" laws which can contribute to the fortification of the self-organisation processes of the pueblos and neighbourhoods, mainly in urban areas caused by individualisation and the development model which excludes the majority to benefit a few.



Without a doubt it is important to support the citizens with actions to revoke the mandate, the participative budget, the referendum, the plebiscite and all the proposals approved in the Forum Constructing Democracy and Governability in Oaxaca, held by Section 22, the APPO, civil organisations, the pueblos' traditional authorities and individuals, in August 2006 in which 1000 people participated in reflection on the changes required in Oaxaca.

In the same way, we recognise the importance of the proposals of the Constitutive Congress of the APPO in November 2006 and the regional assemblies' resolutions in 2007. We need to stress the regional assemblies such as the Istmo assembly held in Ixtepec, the Guelatao assembly in the Northern Sierra, as well as the Forum of Autonomies in Tlahuitoltepec in the Mixe region and the State Forum of Indigenous Pueblos.

### **Communality as a path to Liberation and Resistance**

In reality, the Council of the APPO does not represent the wide and diverse social movement. That which some call dispersion, is in fact the process of reorganisation taking place in various spaces and specific territories. A new phase is starting, the outcome of which no-one can predict. In the round tables and in the last plenary of the Third State Assembly of the APPO in which the electoral bloc did not participate, the APPO was defined as a movement of movements and its main organ as the General Assembly, its principal characteristics as Communality and multi-cultural approaches.

The APPO has to fight from the bases for the construction of popular power. If it moves forward with concrete definitions it will not be merely one resolution more but a real construct that could restructure the APPO. The struggle then, is not only for the overthrow of the governor but to create the conditions for autonomy and popular power in every corner of Oaxaca. These are some of the accords that came out of the Third Assembly. Although this assembly was not fortified and built on it is important that the communalist character of the movement was recognised; it is clearly more than the name APPO or social movement. What is important now is an analysis from below and clarity in the changes we want.

On the other side is the APPO of the streets, of the soul; those who identify themselves not with the name, but rather with the work to be done. Those who move on and continue marching forward but who are often unseen, such as through the construction of alternative articulations such as tianguis populares (popular markets), caravans, marches, meetings, building of compost toilets, vegetable gardens and the sharing of roles and knowledge; these things that go unseen and are unmediated and that finally achieve a strong voice that also generates human relations of a collective nature that break through the structures of capitalist individualism.

The principal of Communality as a source of inspiration for the strength of the APPO and the social movement has been so important that it is necessary to focus on its meaning. Floriberto Díaz, an indigenous Oaxacan activist and intellectual proposed the concept, due to his experience with the indigenous pueblos, and

to attempt to shed light on a way of life based on the communitarian model of the pueblos. From the outset Floriberto stated that Community is built on four fundamental elements: communal territory (use and defense of collective space), communal work (interfamilial through mutual aid and communal by means of 'tequios' such as free works carried out for the benefit of the community, communal power (participation in assemblies and in the carrying out of the various civil and religious offices that make up their governmental system) and communal recreation (participation in festivals and sponsorship thereof).

This characteristic of the communities and indigenous pueblos' political organization is based on their own concept of power: as a public service and assemblies as political decision-making process. Jaime Luna explains, "The meaning of power in indigenous populations is very different from a mestizo rural or urban world. In our communities power is a service, that is to say the execution of assemblies' decisions, of the collective. In the other world, it means the execution of decisions by the authority itself, elected through electoral mechanisms with little control by society.

An authority in community is an employee in service of the whole, an employee with no payment, he can not make his own designs and when he must do so, it can only be realised after consultation. Opposite to this, political power in rural or urban mestizo societies is the possibility of executing their own ideas and satisfying their personal interests, there is no assembly". Luna also explains: "the assembly is the maximum authority in the community. It always works by consensus, but in some cases for practical reasons the vote is used. The authorities' election does not reflect a political parties' intention because it is founded in the prestige and in the work. This conception of power makes us understand that "the political parties are our immediate obstacles".

From the beginning, the idea of Community has been related to the concept of autonomy, which is the exercise of the power of the people. The Community constitutes and creates the necessary conditions towards a full self-government.

Benjamin Maldonado tells us that the idea of Community as governing principle of indigenous life arises and is developed through means of discussion, agitation and mobilisation, but not as an ideology of combat but rather one of identity, demonstrating that the indigenous specificity is its communal nature with its own ancient, historical and cultural roots from which it attempts to orientate the life of the people as a People.

Community is a concept understood by a large part of the teaching body and amongst indigenous Oaxacan intellectuals, through their experience in the communities of which the majority are indigenous, as well as their systematisation exercises to explain their immediate reality. Community, in its present context does not deal solely with recognition of our indigenous peoples' way of life and its influence on the interior of the movement, but it is also a readiness to act critically and collectively against imposition, intolerance and an electoralism that seeks only to reproduce the same schemes of domination from which our people have suffered.



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The proposal of Communalism can be understood as the equality of rights and obligations of all members of a community to participate in the decision-making process (and where the community is headed), so as to enjoy its benefits and products.

In the APPO this principle is recognised as the inspiration of the movement; the difficulty in its implementation in the Council was precisely the fact that there was no defined territory. The city of Oaxaca and the offices in which the Council met did not permit every one of the peoples, organisations and sectors to achieve consensus in the short, medium or long-term.

The reorganisation of the movement

It is necessary to look into the future in order to visualise part of the profound change that is needed in Oaxaca and that we all yearn for. What appears most realistic and probable of success is to continue with the regeneration of an opposition movement, based on the present Oaxacan reality; beginning with the fact that no one supports Ulises Ruíz Ortíz or his people. There are difficult elements, which could also serve as binders for a larger and more united movement, because the pressures suffered by the neighbourhoods and communities are very acute and the necessities of everyday life both intense and diverse. It is often observed that the initiatives to organise mobilisations and to present demands to the authorities do not truly reflect priorities or authentic needs, but rather circumstantial factors that attend to the urgent but disregard the important.

It is necessary therefore to reflect on action: if our movement is purely ideological or if we are a movement with a face and a heart which we intuit come from the most profound depths or our way of thinking, feeling and acting, inherited from our ancestors, that which seeks the common good in that We, who are the community. If this intuition is confirmed by all, we could define the constructive routes of action and learn from the past when, for lack of clarity in a project of the country, state, barrio or community, after the Revolution came to power it gave way to the reformist bourgeoisie. That is to say that in this the necessary time has not been taken to reflect on proposals that attack problems from the root in order to move beyond the established order and the chaos generated by the lack of a constructive programme.

It is an annoyance to many that new barricades flourish. Not exactly those of self-defence but more those of decision-making spaces of the communities and from which are born new forms, creative and novel of self-organisation. We believe that it will be from there, from the neighbourhoods and communities that the energy of change will emerge once again and the strength necessary for this profound alteration. We must give the necessary time, must listen and engage in dialogue with all possible meanings and not only where ideologies prevail, some of which are already bankrupt.

We believe that the social movement, the peoples, neighbourhoods and barrios, in their diverse scenarios of struggle, in their declarations of regional assemblies or public manifestos, are building popular power to allow us to rule ourselves autonomously. Both the peoples' power and autonomy come together to build this path,

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but it is the way in which has been built that has created these differences. For us, what remains of the APPO Council does not move forward at the same speed as the peoples' actions and initiatives. Because of this, confusion has spread outside our immediate communities and the richness of the process in which the movement resides, plural and diverse like society itself has not been clearly shown.

All these problems notwithstanding we want to stress that the movement of Oaxaca remains alive, even after the repression of the 25th November during which there were more than 25 deaths, and more than 300 compañeros taken prisoner. There are disappearances, police and military aggression and political prisoners remain imprisoned. It has been recognised that before 2006 there were 30 political prisoners. It is undeniable that as a result of this the people do not take to the streets as they did before, but it is also true that the routes of the APPO and of the social movement have been unable to reach agreement in this period of re-organisation.

From before 2006, Oaxaca has been the place with the most community radios in the country (more than 50), and more have since been set up in different pueblos and communities, and the number of Internet sites promoting actions or proposals from the movement has also grown. There are neighbourhood bakeries, organic gardens and workshops for children to which are invited many other collectives and individuals; there are a host of initiatives.

We continue fighting and are pleased to know that women have created other spaces, including the Encuentro de Mujeres in which neighbourhoods, collectives and organisations meet. At the time of writing there exists a cultural and artistic tianguis serving as a space for reorganisation at which organic vegetables and handcrafts amongst other things are on sale. Demands for the release of political prisoners continue apace. Also, young graffiti artists of various collectives are meeting with each other to reclaim public spaces for artistic and political activities that generate exchange and spread the struggle further.

The Encuentro de Jovenes, with organisations, collectives and spaces of the youth organises caravans to pueblos and communities in resistance in order to learn and exchange ways of resisting and to promote mutual aid. Also the different places of learning that create spaces for reflecting on the actions of the movement, defining capitalism and how to realise different ways of life in order to re-generate scope for community in the city.

We are not romanticising. We say that on a march it is impossible to take decisions in assembly, and until now there have only been marches or political actions that do not provide the opportunity for the people to give their opinion on what is happening and take on a role or obligation along with the rest of the movement. By this we do not mean that it was only the barricades that convoked assemblies, they were also employed by sectors of civil organisations and other spaces such as the more than 10 thousand assemblies that exist in Oaxaca and that fight for their communal identity.

Currently in Mexico we identify three reference points still worthy of mention and of being paid attention: the citizens' movement headed by Andrés Manuel Lo-

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pez Obrador, the Otra Campaña initiated by the Zapatistas and the APPO or more accurately, the Oaxacan social movement. To us, it will be the last two, due to their historical depth that will continue and endure and will without doubt be historic references of the social struggle in Mexico.

For those that know Oaxaca through the APPO, it is necessary to realize and keep in mind that our State has always fought. An elderly lady participating in the APPO said before the cameras “We are not prepared to resist for another 500 years, we are fighting for our freedom.” Oaxaca, in its’ great regional, municipal and communal diversity has its’ own stories of struggle to tell.

In the midst of all, the repression continues. Talking of security, police presence is raised and with it delinquency, violent assault and mob attacks. Intimidation of the opposition and political prisoners as hostages of the system continues. But there is no police or military coercion that can break the firm will of the people. From the depths of our heritage we have learned to defeat fear. We have learned to cure ourselves.

We believe that this struggle is with and comes from the pueblos, barrios, neighbourhoods and communities, in organisation outside the system and the political parties whose interest will always be to attain or conserve power. We think that the supposedly democratic structures are designed precisely so as to impede what profound change can bring, because the people themselves are their only legitimate representatives and only a political organisation arisen from plurality and based on freedom can achieve this profound transformation that we all want in Oaxaca.

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## Caravans For Land And Territory

*From Encuentro de Jóvenes at a meeting of youth groups in the Oaxacan Social Movement)*

Compañeras of Oaxaca, Mexico and the World,

We hereby inform and request collaboration, through means of donations, workshops on specific themes and assistance with musical fund-raising events. This is with the aim of contributing to the realisation of a number of caravans to various regions of the state of Oaxaca.

As is known, in Oaxaca we are currently living through a process of persecution and hostility toward the autonomous initiatives and resistance of the peoples and it is therefore urgent that the movement is reorganised from its very base.

This is to say through meetings, exchange of experiences and learning of our various struggles in each one of our areas and spaces. At this time the priorities are the communities far from the public eye that are defending their territory and communality.

Examples of such are: Benito Juárez in the east of San Miguel Chimalapas, in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec region, San Pedro Yosotatu in the Mixteca region, San Juan Copala in the Triqui zone and San Pedro and San Pablo Ayutla in los Mixes, amongst others.

The proposal of reorganisation through the caravans to the pueblos has the intention of becoming reacquainted with each other in the social struggle and to contribute toward these resistance struggles of Oaxaca between barrikaderos, alternative media, neighbourhoods, collectives, organisations, pueblos, individuals and international observers.

Those who participate in the caravans will do so in order to discover together their different methods of struggle and the various forms of collaboration in these struggles.

In this first instance our route will be to the community of Benito Juárez, Chimalapas on the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. We begin in Yagul, in the valley of Tlacolula and we continue with the community of Jalapa del Marqués. After we come to the pueblo of Tehuantepec and so pass on to San Blas Atempa. We will then meet with the assembly of the fishermen of the barrio, collectives and organisations of: the Seventh Section of Juchitán, Ixtepec, Petapa, Zanatepec, Ixtaltepec and Juchitán, respectively.

Finally, we come to la Venta and from there to Zanatepec, Ixtaltepec and Juchitán in order to see in the dawn in Benito Juárez, Chimalapas.

All these communities and the people that live there, with their different histories and experiences. Perhaps some have heard of these communities in the news or through marches, meetings and camps. Perhaps some interested parties are aware of what is happening there. In the same way, we want to know what is happening in every one of these pueblos.

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## **Antecedents.**

This proposal initiates from the Meeting of the Youth of the Oaxacan Social Movement (Encuentro de Jóvenes), which took place from the 11-13 January 2008 in the community of Zaachila, formerly governed by a popular council in resistance. This encuentro saw participation of individuals, colectives, barrikaderos, organisations, initiatives and neighbours and that discussed the role of young people in the movement of 2006 and the proposals for reorganisation as a whole. In the plenary session they approved a plan of action, from which emerged the proposal of the caravans. It should be mentioned that the callout for this encuentro came from the 3rd State Assembly of the APPO that took place between the 17-18 November 2007. Attending as non-participants were those who are members of the APPO but who, through the social movement of the streets share the fight for the transformation of Oaxaca, Mexico and the World.

### **Proposal of the Caravans**

The First Youth Encuentro saw the proposal as part of the upcoming work plans, to organise caravans of a state, national and international character to different regions of the state. This proposal was adopted with various intentions.

Before moving on however, it is first necessary to clarify that these caravans are called for with the simple fundamental principles of ‘moving forward while asking’ and ‘teaching while learning’. In other words, based on humility and a genuine desire to learn and not to impose.

### **Propositions**

1. To provide an opportunity for the youth of the encuentro to draw closer to the regions in which a diversity of people, organisations and collectives work, and in the same way to reach out to the different communities living through a process of resistance and autonomy.

2. To bring state, national and international observers and compañer@s to these different regions with the intention of giving wider coverage to the cases of paramilitary violence and militarisation, the theft and destruction of natural resources, human rights abuses and agrarian conflict etc.

4. To inform the regions of social struggles of state, national and international movements. In the same way, to link together this resistance and the struggles of other communities.

4. To carry out workshops of mutual aid in the exchange of knowledge to the various regions, such as first aid, silkscreen printing, video, radio, computing, literacy tools, composting, recycling and permaculture. Also, information on sexuality, human rights, neo-liberalism, cultural reclamation and women’s participation.

5. To effect articles and comuniqués through writings, video and radio shots etc. on the observations made in the communities in order to spread the word of the problems of the regions on both the national and international levels.

6. To take information from one region to another and to different parts of the

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state, country and world.

These caravans are to be carried out in a selective manner, with groups of trusted young people who will have participated in preparatory workshops before leaving for the regions. In these they will be informed of:

- The current situation in the communities.
- The norms and agreements of participation.
- The consequences of not complying with the above.
- The requirements of participation in the caravans, not only as mere spectators but rather as actors. As such our proposal is that a diversity of works arise from the approach to and accompanying and diffusion of the communities.

One point that must be made clear is that our proposal is flexible, insofar as it permits modification of its programme and expositions in order to better adapt itself to specific conditions and necessities, and above all, the priorities of the communities. It is for this reason that our first route will be fed into by the different themes to be jointly arrived at by the communities and the Encuentro de Jóvenes. As such, some subjects such as the defence of territory and biodiversity stand out for attention on this first stage of our caravans.

### **Programme of the first Caravan, Oaxaca-chimalapas.**

#### **From the 5th to the 12th May 2008:**

- Yagul, Tlacolula, community defence.
  - Jalapa del Marques. Struggle of the fishermen and their neighbours against the imposition of a hydroelectric plant.
  - Tehuantepec. campesinos and communal land-holders in defence of the common good of their pueblo, occupying communal territory in order to create a campesino colony in defence of common land.
  - San Blas Atempa. Campesinos and the pueblo organised against the caciques (local bosses) of Ulises Ruiz and created their own self-government for more than three years through a popular council which brought with it the imprisonment, injury and death of participants. Currently in a phase of reorganisation.
  - The Seventh Section of Juchitán. A meeting with the assembly of the fishermen of the barrio, who are opposing the installation of wind turbines and fighting for their lands. Here, we will meet with collectives and organisations from Ixtepec, Santo Domingo Petapa, Zanatepec, Ixtaltepec and Juchitán who fight side by side with the pueblos against transnational corporations and Plan Puebla Panamá through a diversity of initiatives for resistance and liberation.
  - La Venta. Comunal land-owners against the imposition of wind turbines on their lands.
  - Zanatepec. A meeting with the campesinos of Reforma de Pineda and Zanatepec who are fighting in defence of their maíz. We will camp there for the night and early the next morning move on to the Chimalapas.
  - Talks, interchange and workshops on a variety of issues in the community of Benito Juárez. These to include; genetic modification, opening up of agriculture, free trade zones, Plan Puebla Panamá, ASPAN (Security and Prosperity Partner-
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ship of North America), human rights and organic pest control. Also, workshops on painting for children, recycled paper, cheese-making, appropriate technologies and visits to conflict zones amongst others.

Sincerely,  
Encuentro de Jóvenes en el Movimiento Social Oaxaqueño.

¡¡Oaxaca vive, la lucha sigue!!

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# The Path of the Jaguar

## for the Regeneration of Our Memory

*This communique followed on from the initial callout for aid in forming the Caravans for Land and Territory, as the participants drew closer to launching the initiative.*

*Meeting of the Youth of the Social Movement of Oaxaca.  
Comunique: Re. The Caravans, from April 2008*

To the dignified people of Oaxaca

To the people of Mexico

To the people of the World

Here is our humble, just and dignified word. We are young people, created by the struggle. After 2006 we can never be the same. We no longer conform, we will not forget and we will not forgive. Our state is experiencing so many injustices that wound us to the very heart, but they are not seen on tv or heard on radio commercials. Only those of us who have learned to find and see the Other Worlds in our lands, that are come from the depths of history, only those who can see these are aware of what is happening.

For this reason we have today taken the initiative to leave for these Other Worlds that are being invaded by transnational corporations with governmental approval and support. But we already know, we have already learned that when the government talks of development and progress, only destruction, robbery and imposition result. Where they tell us there will be more jobs, this is only because we will no longer be working for ourselves, but rather for the bosses or those selfsame governors. This is the situation we found when we took a closer look at our Oaxaca.

In Mexico as in the world, many are fighting and resisting this vision of development and progress, because they know it is only to the benefit of a few, and that these few are not the legitimate owners of the land and its resources.

In the region of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, pueblos such as Jalapa del Marqués, Juchitán, San Blas Atempa, Zanatepec and Benito Juárez Chimalapas find themselves in strategic points vital to the development of megaprojects such as Plan Puebla Panamá (PPP), the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor and the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (ASPAN in its Spanish initials). As such, one thing that is very clear to them is: The pueblos do not fight for development but their own way of life, dignified and just!

The proposal of the caravans initiated with the meetings of the 11-13 of January 2008 in the Encuentro de Jóvenes of the Oaxacan Social Movement, in the community of Zaachila. These caravans are convoked under the fundamental principles of “walking forward whilst asking questions” and “teaching whilst learning”, and

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with the objectives of enabling the youth of the encuentro to become closer to the regions in which participating individuals, organisations and collectives work, and to the different communities in which the people live a process of resistance and autonomy.

To inform the regions of social struggles of state, national and international movements. In the same way, to link together this resistance and the struggles of other communities.

To carry out workshops of mutual aid and accompaniment in the exchange of mutual ideas to the regions. However, these workshops are at the disposition of the communities and are proposals that must in no way act as an imposition. We must take into account the necessities and the decisions of the communities with respect to the themes and dynamics of each activity.

To effect articles and comuniqués through writings, video and radio shots etc. on the observations made in the communities in order to spread the word of the problems of the regions on both the national and international levels.

The proposals of the caravans is an initiative that is also part of the necessity of reorganising ourselves as a social movement. This proposal of reorganisation by means of the caravans to the pueblos, is intended to facilitate a reacquaintance in the social struggle and to contribute to the linking together of these resistance struggles of Oaxaca between barrikaderos, alternative media, neighbourhoods, collectives, organisations, pueblo and individuals. Also between international human rights observers and alternative medias.

The idea is to meet with people from the eight regions of our state. This first journey will be to the Isthmus in order to gain knowledge of the distinct methods of struggle there and to discover together various modes of collaboration with them.

With this we launch “The Path of the Jaguar, for the Regeneration of Our Memory”. “In Defence of Territory”, that from the 5-12 of May will visit Tlacolula, Jalapa del Marqués, San Blas Atempa, Juchitán, Zanatepec and Benito Juárez, Chimalapas.

¡¡Oaxaca Vive, la Lucha Sigue!!

¡¡Libertad y Justicia para los Pueblos de Oaxaca!!

¡¡Fuera Ulises Ruiz de Oaxaca!!

¡¡Tierra y Libertad!!

Encuentro de Jóvenes en el Movimiento Social Oaxaqueño.  
El sendero del jaguar, por la regeneración de nuestra memoria'

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# The caravan begins to move

## Reports on the Path's progress

The members of the Encuentro de Jóvenes (Meeting of the Youth) of the Oaxacan Social Movement have now begun the journey of the “Path of the Jaguar; for the regeneration of our memory and the defense of territory”.

At midday today the 5th of May, we left the city of Oaxaca as part of this Caravan that will cover various communities over the coming days and that amongst its tasks will accompany, diffuse, collaborate and otherwise aid the processes of resistance and struggle that the people of Oaxaca are mounting in defence of their ways of life.

In a press conference addressed to the margins of Section 22 (of the SNTE teacher's union), covered by local and alternative media, it was announced that the caravan originated from the agreements reached at the Encuentro de Jóvenes of last January in the community of Zaachila, Oaxaca.

### Santa Maria Jalapa del Marques

The arrival at Santa Maria Jalapa del Marques came just before they began a community forum to commemorate the attack made on the community 47 years before, in which they were displaced from their homes as the town was inundated by the waters of the Benito Juárez dam. At the same time as remembering the past they made an urgent call to the other peoples of Oaxaca and Mexico regarding the threat of being once more robbed of their land and resources.

**18:00** – The caravan arrived at the community of Santa María Jalapa del Marqués. It received a meal from the compañeros and compañeras of the Cortamortaja collective and Radio Arcoiris.

**19:00** – A photo exhibition of the former Jalapa or “Old Jalapa” and community music, theatre and testimonies met with those of caravan members in the cultural event to mark the 47th anniversary of the ‘relocation’ of the population of the village that is now in the middle of the Benito Juárez dam and that today private businesses aim to convert to hydroelectric power regardless of the consequences and of local opposition.

During the testimonies of those that had lived through this robbery of their arable land and their burial beneath the waters of the enormous dam, the general state of worry felt by the population became apparent. This due to the shortage of water felt as a consequence of the lack of a project that really takes into account the needs of those who today inhabit the new settlement of Santa María Jalapa del Marques.

“There are 10 municipalities beneath the waters of the dam, which today is also home to a PEMEX refinery. It is shameful that only a short distance from the dam, the village of Jalapa is without water. Antonio Vasquez Castillo, born in “Old Jalapa”.

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The waters of the dam have lowered considerably, bringing into view what remains of the ruins of Old Jalapa. In the centre an enormous temple is now almost completely visible as the waters that covered it for years have retreated. There can still be seen the remnants of once large trees, a secondary school and public buildings.

“Some say that Jalapa did not lose so much. But we would have progressed over these years. We did not know other vegetables, but we knew our own. And it makes me very sad that those that must eat now no longer have to think about these things. But it pleases me to see that there are adults and young people here that can take up the struggle one again (...) I hope this will serve as a testimony so that this will not be repeated in other places. The hydroelectric plant will not pass!”

“The barrio of San Sebastián was at the bottom. It made me happy to see so many carts coming from the mountain with sugar cane to make honey and then panela, whereas before sugar was unknown here. There was maíz, bananas, mangos and great abundance and today there is no richness in agricultura and still less in times of drought.”

The cultural event was attended by members of the Salina Cruz Civic Movement who made an announcement condemning PEMEX reform and calling for the freedom of Pedro Castillo Aragón, a university student who advised them at their founding and who is currently imprisoned in the central penitentiary of Santa María Ixcotel.

Currently, the new community of Santa María Jalapa del Marques has 17 thousand inhabitants and in the face of the water scarcity the PRD municipal government is pumping through dirty canal water for domestic use, heedless of the risk to public health. Needless to say, those who are most affected are those without the money to buy cleaner water.

In 2003, supporters of the PRI distributed land in return for a positive vote toward the hydroelectric dam.

This notwithstanding, the triumph that was the blocking of the dam was won through legal means in the light of a study showing poor construction methods. Today however, and in spite of this legal triumph, big business is not giving up and intends to go ahead with construction in order to “intimidate the CFE (Federal Electricity Commission), initially selling cheap energy in order to monopolise the electricity and thereafter sell it at whatever price they choose, once they are the owners.”

Everything described by the inhabitants of this town in resistance, that founded the Committee for the Defence of the Natural Resources of Jalapa del Marques acquires its real dimension not only in the dissemination of this issue, but rather in the facts and concrete actions that contribute to the defence of its communal vision.

The spreading of their voice through community radio and their ideas through the publication of a newspaper, every day brings new strength to their unshakable will to defend what is theirs by right, inheritance and action; in other words, their land and territory.

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## “The golden wind”

*Wednesday 7th May 2008*

At 08:50 we left Radio Totopo, a community radio station from Juchitán on air for two years now. We left in order to see and hear the struggle and history of the indigenous Zapotec campesinos of the region.

We set off for the place in which corporations such as Endesa, Hiberdrola, Gamesa, Unión Fenosa etc. intend on building a wind park of 5000 wind turbines on more than 3000 hectares of irrigation, a strategic project of the governments of Ulises Ruiz Ortiz (URO) and Felipe Calderon (FECAL).

The lands intended for the wind generators are worked for agriculture and cattle-ranching. In other words they are productive lands in which some campesinos are able to bring home three harvests per year. Equally, the ranching in this zone is not of the intensive sort that degrades the natural environment but rather a reciprocity that maintains a balance with nature; the animals therefore depend on the foods provided by the fields.

As the campesinos put it, the land is *yacuela*, that is to say, it belongs to those who came to it first. “This is our job, to get them out of here. They want our lands”, concluded one campesino.

In this context some of the landowners have organised themselves in the Assembly in Defense of Land and Territory to bring together Zapotec campesinos in opposition to the project. As basic points of principle the assembly rejects the acceptance of or dependence on any political party: “We fight using our own strength” they say. Using consensus to make decisions, they totally reject the installation of the wind farms that would wreck their community life and cause widespread natural destruction and choose to search for alternative production methods that would respect their culture and leave intact their identity as pueblos.

These businesses, based on lies, hope to rob the campesinos of their means of work and survival: the land. “They said that at first the owners would not see much money for the land, but that later they would reap the benefits, which would bring them greater reward.”

In the face of these lies, due to some campesinos not knowing how to read and others because they gave way to the project, some campesinos have signed contracts with the aforementioned businesses for the installation of wind turbines. Those campesinos who have realised they have been cheated are now fighting for these contracts to be annulled and to stop the despoiling of their lands that they conceal. However, in contrast to the campesinos of the Assembly in Defense of Land and Territory, there are some who remain willing to give up their lands, but at a ‘better price’.

The members of the Assembly have talked to some of their neighbours and explained to them the projections of Plan Puebla Panamá, today Plan Puebla Bogotá and ASPAN with the result that they too have joined the struggle for the defence of the land, from which they live.

These lands are very productive and give extremely diverse harvests are the norm with fruit and vegetables such as chile, tomato, squash, watermelon, mango

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and above all, maize: it sustains the people's lives, history and culture. Maize, the land campesinos are inseparable and are intrinsically linked.

The most pressing problem is that of water, now that the irrigation waters for their fields comes directly from the Benito Juárez dam, located in Santa María Jalapa del Marques. As already stated this dam is currently experiencing a critical drought, but this notwithstanding, 33% of its waters are destined for the PEMEX oil refinery "you've been to Jalapa, that is the consequence of the drought at Benito Juárez" they told us.

Approximately three years ago water users were given individual irrigation modules. This comes after approximately thirty years of administration by the Secretary of Hydraulic Resources and at the exact moment that the installations are in poor condition and there is no more water. The campesinos say this comes from deliberate "ill will"; that these businesses with their grand projects claim that since their fields are no longer productive due to the lack of water and resources, they prefer to sell them for construction of parks and projects and thereby leave the countryside with nothing: "they tell us that if these projects come the campesinos will no longer live in bad conditions because they'll have other means of income".

In its eagerness to pillage the land, the government invents ridiculous lies and pays for false studies in order to put about the belief that the lands are no longer productive due to growth of thorns and poor soil.

Sadly, throughout the history of this region the government and private businesses have been able on various occasions to take advantage of the goodwill of the campesinos.

Firstly through modernisation projects they took apart their lands, destroying mountains to make way for irrigation agriculture, dependant on the Benito Juárez dam. More lately, now that water is scarce they attempt to gain these lands in order to steal the wind that passes over them; all whilst paying a pittance in return. "Since the project arrived, our lives have been changed, but today we take responsibility."

The indigenous Zapotec campesinos of Juchitán, Binni Zá "Peoples of the Wind" know that "The golden wind" is that which the business want to find in the lands and skies of the men and women of the wind. For this same reason they have stated that "we will not negotiate," "here the true owners of the earth are the campesinos, not the municipal president who meets the businesses behind closed doors and betrays the people."

In the afternoon in the central districts of Juchitán an assembly took place between the campesinos of the pueblos, individuals from the Isthmus and members of the caravan. Over the course of several hours they related in Zapotec, their original language, the series of cynical lies to which they had fallen victim, due to the businesses who have begun the wind farm projects and their vile eagerness to rob them of their lands.

The assembly began with a presentation by several members of the caravan, in which they explained its aims and its firm solidarity and support with the struggle

of the campesinos of the zone in defence of their territory.

As the meeting progressed, the turn came for the *compañeros* from CACITA who explained the ways and means in which they work, that is to say “taking the initiative and seeing not only how we can produce, but also how to produce the means of production” by means of which “we can see how to strengthen our independence, our autonomy as pueblos and remain in our communities.”

After this there followed a demonstration of how to use the ‘bike-machines’, appropriate or alternative technology designed as a tool to facilitate the work of the *campesinos*.

The prototypes were of a ‘bike-degrainer’ and ‘bike-mill’ which bring together “this motive of resistance” and tools with diverse benefits, amongst which are that its efficiency is in the use of the larger muscles of the legs rather than the arms and that it requires no combustible fuel or electricity in order to work. As such it does not pollute and becomes still more efficient “where there is no electricity.”

Due to its low cost it contributes to the family economy and helps maintain fitness and conserve the environment.

The lying argument of neo-liberalism:

The assembly continued with testimonies of *campesinos* who had been the subjected to the lies of businesses desperate to possess their lands.

“We were tricked into signing the contracts, these businessmen made agreements behind closed doors and then imposed them.”

During the meeting with the young people, the roughly ten adult *campesinos*, the majority of them old and who had lived on the land their entire lives, gave their accounts in Zapotec on the manner in which they were made to sign the documents obliging them to rent out their lands for thirty years, and when that term was up, to renew the contracts for a further twenty-five under the same conditions.

A total of fifty-five years. The businesses said they would pay \$7500 pesos per year per hectare from when the project began to work. The installation of the wind generators would take place over two years, during which time the businesses would prepare the site for the wind turbines. In practice, this would mean the levelling of the mountains and the prohibition of installing anything (trees, houses, posts) over two metres tall in order to avoid lessening wind power.

Nevertheless, it was never explained to the *campesinos* of what the contract really consisted. They were never offered translation into Binni Zá so that the inhabitants could gain a deeper understanding of the implications. Today many of them have realised that they have been tricked.

“Once they gave us \$150 pesos per year per hectare for the lease of our land. Not even enough for a coffee, not enough to live on. My lands gave me \$15 thousand pesos a year, up to 20 when things were going well. Its a pittance, an insult what they are offering us.”

During the talk the *campesinos* firmly gave their testimonies and example. Everyone listened attentively, responding to and commenting between themselves on their decision not to rent their lands. And amid laughter at the things the businesses had promised, they showed their indignation at the cheating and manipula-

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tion on the part of the government and all the political parties to put an end to their struggle.

“To convince us, they cheated us, telling us that it was a governmental programme, that PROCAMPO was about to finish and that this project was to take its place.” “As campesinos you will have trains and aeroplanes and will rise up out of poverty,” they told them. In clear cut aggression toward community life “they came to us one at a time, they never got us together to be able to talk and give our points of view.”

The businesses know they have to reconvince the campesinos to not default on those contracts already signed. The businesses send the campesinos letters saying that they will pay them \$50 pesos more, that it doesn't matter that they made the demand to annul the contracts. Furthermore, they offer that in times of drought they will give them use of the pature for ranching. Now the campesinos are asking, ‘If they are going to denude the countryside, where will they get the grass from?’ ‘And from what are they going to live during the two years of the installation of the wind park?’

“The government projects come very quickly and we don't have time to understand where it is all taking us, and what we see is that the money we have is not enough at market because our products are now worthless, because our government, together with governments of other countries has signed agreements to sell their products and so damage the production of the pueblos. It is therefore important that every pueblo, every people that is fighting implants in their children the will to defend what is ours.”

The businesses continue insisting that the people leave the assembly and give up on their demand of the annulment of the contracts. Initially, the businesses came with lies, promising that “now is the moment to leave poverty behind” and that their project was similar to those of PROCAMPO.

Now, in face of the demands to annul the contracts the spokespeople of the businesses claim that the lands no longer produce, this when the fileds are full of produce. They promise the campesinos riches, reachng the extremes of saying they will “have trains, even planes”.

From the produce of their land a campesino can gain \$2000 pesos per month, whilst the the businesses offer \$200 pesos per year for the use of their lands. They use threats from ‘coyote’ middlemen, in the regions in which these projects are dictated by the federal govenment, as well as slandering the members of the Assembly in Defence of the Land “they could be bought with \$500 million pesos. In other words, the businesses that supposedly offer clean energy are playing a dirty game in order to gain control of the territory of the Isthmus campesinos: those that bring clean energy also bring dirty tricks.

Today the dignified declaration is: here the wind project will not pass!

The demand is: annulment of the contract!

And the call to other pueblos is Do not fall for their tricks. It is the businesses that lie!

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## We cannot negotiate over the land, dignity is dignity

*Monday 26th May 2008*

*Enceuntro De Jóvenes of the Social Movement of Oaxaca*

The last community visited by the caravan was that of Benito Juárez Chimalapa, that forms part of the Municipality of San Miguel Chimalapa. From its origin up to the present day this community has been marked by the struggle and resistance of the inhabitants in defence of their lands. Benito Juárez was founded on communal lands of the municipality of San Miguel Chimalapa by means of the Presidential Resolution of 1967 that recognised these lands as communal and belonging to San Miguel Chimalapa, within the State of Oaxaca.

The case of Benito Juárez is yet another example of how the government generates conflict between pueblos. The communal farmers of the Chimalapas face an agrarian conflict of more than 40 years without resolution. Already the State of Chiapas has in cahoots with that of Oaxaca and the Federal Government have given up these communal lands for exploitation. This goes back many years. Predating this conflict, in 1930 concessions were given to the wood company Rodolfo Sánchez Monroy, a business from Michoacan that was handed these lands for unregulated and excessive logging of the forest and jungle.

This company helped itself to all the wood in the zone and occupied an area of more than 2000 hectares. In 1976 the decision was taken to fight against this exploitation and “many people from other places working in the lumber industry, we came to these lands and succeeded in defeating and removing the logging company.” This long fight was begun by twelve pioneering Zoque, native to the area and various employees of the sawmill, who for more than a year and a half, lived on the mountain suffering all sorts of humiliation and violence, until the government finally recognised the right of the Chimas communities to the lands and ordered the removal of the company without compensation. Nevertheless, the government did a deal with the company over the machinery without ever paying anything to the communities of Chimalapas.

This is however, just an initial victory in a long story of struggle and resistance that has not always seen successes and triumphs. The Chimalapan territory is largely covered by virgin forests and jungle that makes up one of the world’s most important biological reserves, which has long been coveted by governments and the wealthy. These include cattle-ranchers of the adjacent municipalities, landlords and politicians (such as the ex-governor of Chiapas Absalon Castellanos, and other Chiapanecan invaders aided by the government of that state), conservation groups dependent on the government such as PROFEPA and SEMARNAT and international actors such as the World Bank. All have constantly and indiscriminately invaded and exploited the riches of Chimalapas and attempted to grab for themselves the control of this territory.

In this way, thousands of hectares of communal lands in the Eastern Chimalapas reserve find themselves invaded, principally by landlords and ejidatarios (communal farmers) protected by the Chiapanecan State through the municipality of

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Cintalapa de Figueroa. Assisted by the Chiapanecan government through support programmes, the community of Díaz Ordaz uprooted itself and integrated itself to the Chiapanecan State, despite sitting on the communal lands of Benito Juárez Chimalapas, Oaxaca. This has generated an agrarian conflict with the community of Díaz Ordaz, which no longer accepts the communal ownership of the Chimas. Said conflict has developed with the indifference and complicity of the federal and state governments of Oaxaca and Chiapas. This complicity between the governments of both states is due to their preference that these lands that legally belong to the state of Oaxaca and for the communal benefit of San Miguel Chimalapas, should be in the hands of Chiapanecan colonists in thrall to small-scale private property and that of the ejido system (government-sponsored communal lands, that thanks to the reform of article 27 of the Constitution, established the basis for the sale and accumulation of land in the hands of a few). This is an indispensable condition for the advance of any given project of exploitation and robbery.

Even though the Chimas have proposed that the Chiapanecan campesinos living on the invaded territory remain there, but under the authority of the communal good of San Miguel Chimalapa, the federal and state governments of Oaxaca and Chiapas have avoided this process of integration that would bring an end to the conflict. The communal farmers of the Chimas respect nature and have achieved a balanced way of life with the jungle. However they worry that the mentality of the Chiapanecan ejidatarios and small land owners that occupy Oaxacan communal lands, aided and abetted by the Chiapanecan government, will permit the growth of the logic of indiscriminate exploitation of the forests and jungle, through indiscriminant logging, conventional agrochemical agriculture and extensive cattle-ranching.

To give back to the community in return for the lessons that they had shared with us of their experiences struggling to defend their territory, we exchanged our respective knowledge with them in order to achieve a greater understanding of the day to day reality of the children, youth, women and men of the town.

In this way the caravan and the Chima community shared workshops, talks and experiences and we were able to gain a little insight into community life in the Chimalapas.

The workshops were as follows:

**Dry/Compost toilet.** A toilet was completed that had been built by some of the community and a diversity of techniques and styles were discussed amongst the community and members of the caravan.

**Painting for children:** This workshop saw the participation of the majority of the children of the community, who created a vivid portrait of their way of life and their environment. The painting characterised each picture through their different colours and anecdotes.

**Recycling of aluminium tins:** Young people and children participated in this workshop, creating different figurines from the cans. From what were once discarded tins, they created flowers and embossed drawings. In the interchange at the end came a number of additional designs, apart from those they had been shown.

Mural: Painting by the caravan on the side of the bilingual primary school of Benito Juárez Chimalapas.

Silkscreening: The relevant techniques were shown to the youth and a number of the more senior member of the community. From this workshop t-shirts were printed with a design alluding to the Caravan of The Path of the Jaguar for the Regeneration of Our Memory.

Cheesemaking: This workshop was shared with the women of the community, part of a long process.

Talk on PROCEDE: This talk saw the participation of comunal farmers, youths, women and children. A video on PROCEDE was projected and there was a contextual and disinterested explanation of what it entails. Afterward was an exchange of relevant opinions, doubts and experiences

Breadmaking: This workshop was given on the last day of the visit. It shared a distinct and economic method of breadmaking with the women of the community.

Bike-machines: As part of this proposal, a collective within the Encuentro developed a model of appropriate technology called a bike-degrainer (for maíz) with a grinder attachment. With the help of the Encuentro de Jóvenes they bought materials and created a workshop on its use and maintenance with the community. At the end of the workshop the machine was given to the community, its use for their collective benefit being determined in assembly.

In this community the processes of reciprocity and interchange were extremely rich. Over five intensive days the entire community and the caravan shared talks, workshops, videos, experiences, assemblies and the festival of Mothers' Day, including Mother Earth. In this way, in Benito Juárez Chimalapas saw the drawing to a close of this first journey of the caravan, coming to agreements of how to continue with the work begun in this community that defends and fights for its comunal territories and for the respect necessary to establish a harmony between human life and nature.

"Defence is sacred, for what is justly our land. We are the owners of the common land and we respect it as such."

## **The Colony of Yagay**

### *Encuentro De Jóvenes of the Social Movement of Oaxaca*

The colony of Yagay is found in the locality of Tlacolula de Matamoros, in the Central Valleys, Oaxaca. Yagay fights to remain as the colony that they have formed on common lands and all they want is to be left in peace.

"Defence is a legitimate right for a dignified place to live. The land belongs to those who work or live on it."

The colony of Yagay is found in the locality of Tlacolula de Matamoros, in the Central Valleys, Oaxaca. As the caravan arrived at this settlement, the colonists of Yagay, children, women and men came out to greet us.

In 1967 a parcel of land was ceded to around fifty families, originally from the mu-



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nicipality of Tlacolula, as was the place that became Yagay. In 2002 they formally established a colony there, building houses from tin. Over the years new families have arrived, whilst others have been forced to leave due to the levels of repression to which they have been subjected. The colony is registered as 'irregular', despite being situated on communal lands.

As part of the reform of Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution, communal lands have become the object of the greed of those who would turn them into private property. The self-proclaimed owners of the lands of Yagay have attempted to foster the image of the colonists as robbers and stealing the land, arguing that they have illegally invaded the land. Nevertheless they have been unable to produce even one document demonstrating legitimate ownership. For this reason they constantly threaten to burn the houses of the population of Yagay.

One of the supposed owners of the land, Noel Florentino Aguilar has made a summons to two of the legitimate inhabitants; Ofelia Martínez Domínguez and Germán Andrés Javier, accusing them of organising the illegal occupation, when their only crime is of having defended the lands that had lain idle until the colonists decided to occupy them to avail themselves of the dignified life to which we all have right.

In January 2006 in front of the State Commission of Human Rights, the colonists made a summons to the ex - deputy Noel Aguilar for the threats against the families of Ofelia and Germán. Ex - deputy Aguilar arrived to ridicule the denouncement, clarifying that this sort of thing did not worry him as he was very good friends with the governor and that they could well be jailed if they failed to understand. Currently, Ofelia and Germán are locked up in Tlacolula prison and the colony lives under constant threat.

Yagay fights to remain on common land on which the colony is situated and all they desire is to be left in peace. "They used to shoot at us from the hill up there," they confirm. "We have photos proving that all there was here in Yagay were nopal plants and nothing of what is claimed in the declarations of the summons. From pure bad intentions they are attempting to rob us." The threat of destruction and eviction of the colony of Yagay began with the advent of the selling of common lands and ejidos for the construction of the 'Yagay Division' or suburb located directly in front of the Yagay colony.

The persons laying claim to these lands are Dagoberto Fajardo, María del Carmen Chagoya, ex-deputy Noel Florentino García Aguilar and his wife, Elsa Rina Chagoya, who keep a constant watch over the inhabitant in order to intimidate them. They even go as far as to lay claim to various hectares that are not even part of or adjacent to the Yagay colony.

"We need a place to live. We ask for the freedom of our compañeros who are wrongfully imprisoned. We demand that they respect the place we live so that we can continue living on communal land. We are tired of the injustices and humiliation we endure, all for being humble people: they keep watch over us, they will not let us live in peace. Our colony is poor, there is no electricity, no water. All we have is a place to live with our children. Those originally from Tlacolula and who no longer have space to live in have the right to occupy these lands... What we have

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seen is how they come to make us live in fear. They will have to listen to us, they will listen to us as we deserve: they have security in their lives, of their lives, they have lands, they have the power to have held public office. All we want is that they leave us to live in peace.”

We hereby express our fraternal solidarity with the colony of Yagay and with all of those who fight to obtain dignified land and shelter, despite the constant threats and violence that the powerful justify in the name of private property and the accumulation of wealth.

## Isthmus region

Historically, the Isthmus of Tehuantepec has been besieged due to its strategic location in the narrowest part of the country, finding itself sandwiched between two oceans; the Gulf of Mexico and the Pacific Ocean. At its most narrow, the strip of land separating the two is a paltry 200 kilometers, making it an envied location for the passage of merchandise from the United States, Europe and Asia destined for Mexico and Central America.

The Isthmus of Tehuantepec includes six indigenous territories: 1) El Chontal, 2) La Planicie Costera, 3) El Sistema Lagunar Huave, 4) La Sierra Mixe-Zapoteca, 5) La Selva Zoque, 6) La Zona Norte, Mixe Baja. Throughout this territory there co-exist 5 principal original cultures: the Chontales, the Zapotecas (Binnizà ), the Huaves (Ikoods), the Zoques and the Mixes ( Ayuukjä'ây ).

There exist various ambitious projects for the region which form part of a larger megaproject that is integral to future exploitation and development. An example of this are the wind turbine projects designed to provide energy for the large business and factories to be built in the area. Examples of towns of this coastal plain which have already begun the construction of these turbines are la Ventosa and la Venta.

Others have been obliged to lease their lands, such as Santo Domingo Ingenio, la Mata and Juchitán. Realising that they have been cheated, these localities have undertaken to fight and defend their land from large Spanish corporations such as Unión Fenosa, Gamesa, Endesa, Eoliatec, Preneal and Iberdrola, the U.S. interests General Electric and Nerón and French Energy.

From the arrival of the Spanish led by Hernán Cortes, through the large Monterrey group in the 1980's with the Alfa-Omega projects and the 90's with the Trans-Isthmus megaproject, up to the present day with Plan Puebla Panamá (to include other states and countries), and now through its virtual transformation under the guise of “specific development projects”, the powers-that-be have aimed at the widespread exploitation of the region.

No matter the time, name or manner in which it is dressed up, it is well known that the ultimate goal of each and every project of this size is to rob the people of their territory and indiscriminately exploit the natural resources of the area, attempting all the while to justify these actions through claims that they are necessary to create a more egalitarian development and provide the people with access to public services.

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They are attempting to impose the same system of exploitation as in the zone of Sistema Lagunar Huave where six years ago, through the same impositions and tricks they tried to create shrimp farms in the territory of the Ikoods of San Francisco del Mar and San Mateo. Nevertheless, at the time the mobilization of the people succeeded in stopping these impositions, which now return once more under the pretence of wind projects, specifically in San Mateo del Mar.

This is just as in 2002 in Unión Hidalgo, a coastal plain Zapotec community, that by means of a popular mobilization that included the taking of the municipal palace and forums by the victims of repression and that suffered imprisonment and murder, succeeded in halting the shrimp farm project that formed part of Plan Puebla Panamá but that is once again attempting to gain a foothold in the region through the back door by use of the wind farms.

Furthermore, these projects come linked with a motorway network to bring together the two Gulfs found on the Isthmus. These motorways are vital for the passage of merchandise and the flow of capital. At this time there are road sections still unconstructed owing to the opposition of 29 indigenous communities of the Chontal zone, such as San Pedro Huamelula, Astata or Morro Mazatan, whose opposition stems mainly from the fact that the road is planned to pass over fertile arable land and that would leave destitute the thousands of campesinos in the area.

All these projects are interlinked. They bring with them 'modernisation' and the privatization of PEMEX, which will create a disaster of national proportions, particularly in the case of the Salina Cruz refinery on the coastal plain, one of the most important refineries in the country and with great local resistance to its privatization. Similarly, there is resistance to the hydroelectric dam in Jalapa del Marques that was rejected a year ago by the Zapatecos.

In the jungle in the Zoque areas there are attempts to create a dam called Chica-pa-Chimalapa, rejected in the same way by the Chimas communities over 20 years ago and which is currently being reactivated to the supposed benefit of crops in this plains area of the Isthmus.

They cannot fool anyone, it is well known that this project is for the benefit of the petrochemical industry (which the government intends to sell to domestic and foreign capitalists), as with the huge investments in the region such as the maquiladoras, monoculture and business such as Wal Mart that are already installed in Juchitán and Salina Cruz.

The Zoque jungle is one of the greatest water sources of the country and is recognised as one of the 3 best-conserved jungles in the world. This conservation has been due precisely to its remaining in hands communal hands, the owners of which maintain a very distinct vision of life. In this zone the federal government, along with its state counterparts in Oaxaca and Chiapas, has created and fomented conflict between entire communities on one side and cattle-dealers and local bosses who invade their woods, burning the jungle to make way for pasture and degrading the forests with extensive cattle-ranching in addition to indiscriminate logging.

All this is to justify their argument that the communities are incapable of caring

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for their lands, necessitating government and private interests in order to create a biosphere reserve. In reality this will bring with it bio-piracy and bio-prospecting or in other words, the removal of curative plants to create patented medicines to prevent free use as the German company Bayer is attempting to do in the eastern zone of San Miguel Chimalapas.

It is well known that throughout their history, the inhabitants of the Isthmus have defended their territory from capitalist greed. In the last three decades this has been through the Campesino Worker Student Coalition of the Isthmus (COCEI in its Spanish initials). This organization was once one of the most militant and combative in the country.

It had the first communist local council at the beginning of the 1980's and it succeeded in halting capitalist projects in the zone. Furthermore, it served as a strong shield from the coastal plains to the furthest reaches of the Isthmus to push back these invasions. Unfortunately it has now been many years since COCEI abandoned its defence of the territory and culture of the Isthmus. Many know that this was due to the centralization imposed by the leadership in the political commission of COCEI. This process was aggravated by the involvement of political parties such as the PRD in 1988 and the benefits of power. The result was that some of those who had previously fought became deputies, senators and municipal presidents and even advisors to the governor, as happened in 2006 with Ulises Ruiz.

In moments such as these the Isthmus of Tehuantepec was forced through a difficult process. Modernisation plays a key role in this, in that the megaprojects have been approved by the authorities of various different pueblos; as they are seduced by the ideas of progress and development they give away their land. Through knowledge of these movements we have realized that the most honest in the communities, just as in the barrios and neighbourhoods of the city are those who fight as pueblos, without links to political parties.

Parallel to this, organisations and collectives from Zanatepec, Santo Domingo Petapa, Ixtepec, Juchitan, Ixtaltepec, Tehuantepec, Jalapa del Marques and Unión Hidalgo have collaborated in various areas such as the Other Campaign, and are fighting for their autonomy, accompanied by their pueblos in their struggle for liberation. Many of these initiatives have participated in the APPO and the Oaxacan social movement and were primary motivators for the First Regional Assembly of the Peoples of the Isthmus on the 27th and 28th of January 2007 in Ciudad Ixtepec, in which more than 26 Isthmus pueblos and 58 social organizations participated.

There they discussed their problems and alternatives to create a profound transformation in Oaxaca. This assembly has been the instigator of a number of collective processes and has contributed to and worked within the social movement as a whole. In the Isthmus region we believe that it is these groups and organizations that can come together and make possible the reorganization of the movement on the state level.

It is through them that we can participate with other communities and pueblos that we have so far been unable to get to know as we gave priority to certain places of strategic importance to capital, where it is even now imposing its megaprojects.

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We know that the struggle will be long and that it will not be solely against mega-projects but rather against the entire system of neo-liberal development.

It is in this context that from the 5-15 May we, the members of the Encuentro de Jóvenes (Meeting of the Youth) of the Oaxacan Social Movement began a tour that we named the “The Path of the Jaguar, for the Regeneration of Our Memory”, with emphasis on the defence of territory. Leaving from the city of Oaxaca we visited various communities, participating in and developing various collaborative tasks, support, documentation and solidarity. Each request and every struggle was raised by the communities, individuals, collectives, organisations and initiatives in: Santa María Jalapa del Marques, San Blas Atempa, Juchitán de Zaragoza, Zanatepec, Benito Juárez Chimalapa, San Antonio Chimalapas and Tlacolula de Matamoros in los Valles Centrales.

The objectives of this caravan were and remain: articulation and support, the diffusion of diverse struggles, collaboration with the communities in resistance and the obligation to link the processes of resistance and struggle that the people of Oaxaca are realising in defence of their communal ways of life.

Throughout the caravan, reflection, discussion and video screenings took place concerning various neo-liberal plans and projects that menace the territory and communal life of the pueblos. This collaboration was by means of exhibitions and workshops on themes such as Alternative Technology (bicycle machines), painting activities for children, silkscreen painting, murals, stencilling, and the making of dairy products and bread.

On the other side, there was documentation of the large variety of known problems by members of various alternative media groupings. We who made up the members of this initial caravan, along with members of the Encuentro de Jóvenes are currently in the process of compiling, ordering and distributing this mass of material.

In recent months a new wave of aggression on the part of the federal and state governments has begun throughout Mexico and is focused on community and social communication projects in the communities, suburbs and municipalities. Repression and intimidation has been visited on those who, engaged in alternative radio work and diffusion of information aim to inform the population of the reality of the political situation, of the environment and traditional organization and so revive that culture that moulds the identity of every place that neo-liberalism wishes to exterminate.

In the last two months there have been 4 registered cases of repression against alternative, community and social communications media. In Oaxaca, the blockade of Radio Planton re-started from the teacher’s demand in June for sectional relief and the liberation of political prisoners, a blockade that is currently total on 92.1 and 103.1 FM.

In the same way, the community radio station in Zaachila on 94.1FM “the voice of the people that awakes and rises up” has been interfered with and slandered with false accusations of generating and fostering violence in the town. This comes as a result of informing the community of the true events of 20th June, when the

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criminal and despot Ulises Ruiz Ortiz visited Zaachila. The station revealed that the person using firearms against the population was Natalio Péres Tomás, the father of the current PRI Municipal President Noé Pérez Martínez. It also reported that it was this same President who began the confrontation by throwing rocks at the demonstrators and who had hired thugs to provoke a confrontation with those people unwilling to permit Ulises Ruiz to enter their community. To exact his revenge Noe Pérez, with the support of the state government and Office of Communication and Transport (SCT), is attempting to shut down Zaachila Radio through threats in state newspapers.

Examples of these attacks are those suffered by the compañeros of Radio Ñomndaa “The Water’s Word”, a community radio station broadcasting on 101.1FM in Xochistlahuaca, Guerrero, where the Federal Investigation Agency (AFI) caused the burning of its transmission equipment and in a similar way, Radio Tierra y Libertad of Monterrey that operated in a the suburbs, was closed and dismantled by elements of the Federal Preventive Police (PFP) and the SCT.

It is plain to see that these aggressions against the entire community communication project, in these cases the radio stations, form part of a deliberate campaign of persecution and hostility against those spaces that revive and regenerate culture, that denounce injustice and the violence of the state, that spread free determination to the pueblos, barrios and schools, and who do not stay silent. These are the motives of those attempting to close down our spaces of communication.

For this reason we are making a call to be watchful of any aggression against any process of free and community information and to offer our solidarity in whatever way we can. We therefore invite the different radios and communication initiatives of Oaxaca to a Preparatory Meeting on Saturday 2nd August in the auditorium of the Section 22 building (Armenta y López 221 col. centro) at 10:00 with a view to organising the First Assembly of the Free and Community Radios of Oaxaca.

For the construction of a different communication for the people.

Radio Plantón, Zaachila Radio, Radio Arcoiris, Comunicación V.O.C.A.L

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## Barefoot investigators

*The following was published earlier this year by a collection of independent individuals working alongside the Oaxacan Voices Constructing Autonomy and Liberty (VOCAL) group and the University of the Earth in Oaxaca (UNITIERRA)*

The social movement in Oaxaca, the most visible expression of which took place in 2006 and that brought to the forefront a massive social organization that no-one had predicted.

A diverse array of theories has attempted to interpret this movement of movements.

We consider it necessary to contribute to this diversity of reflection and above all, to investigate on a deeper level the proposal of the assembly model which has acted as a meeting-point for the varied forms of social and political expression that have come together in this movement. In this assembly model the pueblos of Oaxaca, for many in the name of the APPO, have found their natural form of struggle and success.

This has been a natural consequence of the assembly experience that prevails throughout the majority sectors of our society, such as the popular colonies and workers' unions, but above all, and where the experience is most radical and profound, in the communities of the indigenous peoples.

We believe that it is necessary to clear our vision in order to rigorously examine what we are and in order to understand the most significant characteristics of our autonomous social movements, and of the paths we believe it is necessary to take in order to create another society.

We need to give form and substance to the new theoretical and political expressions that coincide with present challenges. With this in mind...

### **Our intentions**

- To hold a systematic reflection on the economic, social and political situation of Oaxaca, from a national and international perspective and with emphasis on autonomous social movements; that is to say those who fight from the base in order to transform society without taking the power of the state. Or those who move beyond the power of above.
  - To jointly discuss and analyse the various proposals of transformation, particularly those that have already reached agreements, such as the constituent assembly towards a new constitution.
  - To explore the nature and characteristics of communal and convivial ways of life (city and countryside) within the Oaxacan context.
  - To provoke consensus-building through joint actions. Unity in diversity.
  - Contribute to the public debate on those themes associated deep-rooted change in Oaxaca.
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## The means

1. Organise a force of systematic investigation, based on the gathering and documentation of information of the social base, principally in pueblos, barrios, and communities of the Oaxacan state and realising this within the framework of the interaction between social organizations, spaces and particular sectors of the Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca (APPO), and the social movement in general, that rose to prominence in 2006.

To make public the diversity of positions and expressions through all possible means; audio, visual and printed.

2. To organize over two semesters, biweekly sessions for reflection on the above themes, of five hours each, and with the participation of social activists, jeopardized academics, social leaders and traditional authorities, amongst others. These sessions will take a graduate form and will begin from Sunday 10th August at 11:00.

## Desired results

- Characterisation and documentation, from the social base, of the social movements in Oaxaca.

- Identification of its main tendencies and proposals.
  - The storing and publication of initiative for transformation.
  - Participation in the public debate for the construction of autonomy.
  - Public dissemination and publication (through audio, video and printing) of base initiatives and existing problems for their concrete application.
  - Contribute to the construction of autonomous initiatives from the social base.
- Characteristics of reflection in action.

- There is no one, universal truth; there are many different rationalities and viewpoints.

- All scientific truth is a hypothesis that may or may not be correct.

- It is not the subject (the scientist) who observes/investigates the object (the people), but rather the subject itself that reflects and acts.

- It is no science for the people, but from the people.

- This is science that is consciousness and practice. 'I observe because I am a part. I am observing myself.'

- Investigation is a moment within practice. We understand ourselves as part of what we observe, while at the same time making subjectivity clear.

- Another way of thinking. It is impossible to understand new realities though old ways of thinking.

- To discuss and consider along with the subjects, not about them.

- It is the subject that examines and thinks from within the processes.

- The movement thinking on itself.

- There are no impartial or neutral views.

- To understand ourselves as part of reality.

- To come from the point of view of our everyday practice.

- To not interview in order to extract information, but rather to talk together and

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so enable all to get something from these sessions.

-This is not improvisation. It is rigorous, systematic, disciplined and public reflection and debate.

### **Pre-requisites for participation**

- Participation in the social movement, in the city or the countryside.
  - This is dedicated to all those who fight to transform reality to the benefit of the people and human dignity.
  - There are no educational or professional requirements.
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# March-Calenda for Dignity and Justice

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*By Silvia G. Hernández Salinas of the the social movement in Oaxaca.*

The march of the 16 July was convoked by Emeterio Marino Cruz who was brutally beaten last 16th July at the callout for the People's Guelaguetza. A year on from the impunity committed in every one of the cases of arbitrary detention, isolation, accusation of criminal damage and arson, we have all been freed. All freed, and none through due process; what is evident today are the marks of repression and torture and the climate of intimidation against freedom of expression.

A year to the day of these events, emotions and energies were running high. Despite the threat of rain, the march continued with chants of "neither the rain nor the wind can stop the movement". It was not a conventional march, but a march-processional that left the State Institute of Public Education of Oaxaca (IEEPO) at 16:00 neoliberal time.

The march was aided by some of those detained last 16th July and by some of the families of murdered members of the movement with a banner reading "Our fallen have no price. We demand justice, widows and families in resistance." In this way all of us who have been victims of repression in acts of dignity, struggle and protest, came together in our different ways to meet in and make possible a calenda of festivity and resistance, with bands playing, men and women in traditional dress from the different regions of Oaxaca.

What was shown is that in Oaxaca there exists a living movement that doesn't come simply from the streets but rather from daily life, the processes of meeting and getting to know each other time and again, that walks hand in hand with the calls to never forget or forgive the repression through which we live. This calenda was marked by marmotas and baskets of sweets, fireworks, mezcal and that showed its organisation.

Rather than forgetfulness, it was shown time and again that the movement still misses its prisoners. The march visited some of these prisoners of the Oaxacan social movement, locked away in the prison of Santa Maria Ixcotel, such as Adán Mejía López who will complete a year in prison this 17th July and where his legal situation is that he has been shut off from advice and can now only await sentencing, a sentencing that will not force aside the search for true, unconditional freedom although they have already kept him prisoner for a year with impunity. The prison echoed with the names of the prisoners; Miguel Ángel García, Victor Hugo Martínez Toledo, Pedro Castillo Aragón, demands and slogans for the freedom of the the political prisoners of Loxicha were shouted from the march.

The march ended with a meeting in the zócalo in festive climate. The march progressed through the main square and came to a halt in front of the cathedral with fireworks and dancing. All throughout, the slogans for liberty and justice did not cease to ring out.

## A letter to a lost friend

To Lorenzo San Pablo Cervantes  
-Silvia Hernández- Rubén Valencia-

*“The true man goes to the roots.*

*To be radical is no more than this: he who goes to the roots.*

*He who does not see things in their depth should not call himself radical.*

*Nor that man who does not aid the security and speech of other men.”*

*- José Martí*

Compañero Lorenzo San Pablo:

Two years on from your murder, this movement continues forward, despite all the differences and finds its way by means of honest and fraternal dialogue. It is in this way, through that brotherhood and honesty of which you were an example, that we believe we have found a clear and solid form of linking together the different resistances and of constructing alternatives to this dominatory system that keeps Oaxaca and the entire world under its yoke.

This rotten system and those traitors to the movement have not satiated their thirst and mean ambition to continue bleeding dry the dignity of this rebellious people; those who, since 2006 have said, “enough”. Enough of authoritarianism, of the petty bosses, of that life-model imposed from desks and offices and that even attacks life itself. Enough of that which pits itself against the respect and harmony existing in the different communities of Oaxaca and its successful resistance in spite of the capitalist savagery that today is manifested in the state government of Ulises Ruiz Ortiz.

We will not beg the government’s justice, but rather we must seize it and make it our own. This system with its laws and demagoguery has proved itself incapable of judging itself. The government, despite all its impunity, will never be able to bring back our now more than 29 fallen in this struggle.

You were murdered in the resistance of Oaxaca of the 22nd of August. This is a significant date for the rebellion of this movement, as one day earlier as dawn broke on the 21st, the people raised hundreds of barricades in response to a group of presumed state police acting on government orders fired shots against the local radio station “The Law” that was in the hands of the people. One of these shots murdered you whilst you guarded the transmitter. Along with all those people simple and from below, you put forward your own body with which to change things from their root, and not for some to institutionalise the movement and benefit from it through delegations, or to strengthen the menacing work of the political parties.

Just as with all our compañeros who lost their lives, you maintained in your mind and heart a spirit of struggle that is mirrored in millions of Oaxaqueños. The very ones who heads held high, struggle to build a different Oaxaca, not with petty

ambitions of power for a few, but with that historic root that strengthens human colectivity; reciprocity. This is a characteristic of the majority of the peoples of Oaxaca.

Lorenzo San Pablo, today, two years from your death, you live within every Oaxaqueño. Impunity persists throughout the entire state, and not one murder has been punished. The government continues unpunished with its state terrorism, that since 2006 has been largely orchestrated through counterinsurgency plans that continue apace.

The same murderers remain in their positions, the same ones who now attempt, in various ways and with different faces to silence the voices demanding justice, dignity and respect for the just and dignified struggle of a people thirsting for freedom. They aim to silence our memory in forgetfulness, to hide their impunity, the murders, the torture and imprisonment. And they try to bury our murdered compañeros with a useless fideicomiso that is nothing to our fallen. Life itself has no price.

Architect Lorenzo San Pablo Cervantes, your family and all your people reject each instance of impunity and injustice intended to make us forget the memory and the multiple stories of the dignity of the Oaxacan peoples. These peoples have risen to their feet in order to never again be on their knees before this system that benefits the few and oppresses the many.

We will not forgive. We will not betray. We will not sell out and we will not falter!

Still fighting, Lorenzo San Pablo  
Still here, now and forever!



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# ***Community airwaves, free to all***

## **We must defend the voices of our people**

On Friday 29 August, one day before the Assembly of the Free and Community Radios of Oaxaca, the report came in of the first dismantling of the inaccurately-named ‘pirate’ radio stations (those without government permission), in Huajuapam de León, under the pretext that it had been transmitting clandestinely in the community.

The primary content of the radio is the defence of the human rights of participants of the Oaxacan social movement. Today we are informed that the evictions continue in the region of the Isthmus (of Tehuantepec). These radios were of a merely commercial nature, but we believe that the true aim of the federal government is to dismantle those radios with direct links to community process and obligations and links to the social struggle.

In the Isthmus region there are many instances of free and community communication media that count on the support and endorsement of the local community and whose programming reflects and contributes to community processes.

The Assembly of the Free and Community Radios of Oaxaca denounces the methods used by the government to send its hostile messages to our *compañeros* engaged in communicatory work in their regions, states and communities. Their intimidatory tactics make it very clear that they take their cue from their tyrannical system and the laws that uphold it, and not from the decisions of the community assemblies of the *barrios* and citizen councils. Communication that does not profit the powerful, is an irritation to them. For this reason we fight together to defend our legitimate right to inform and be informed.

It is now of vital importance to make a profound analysis of these attacks that the government is directing and attempting against community information projects and the messages they send to those of us who do not beg permission to be listened to or communicate with those who do not recognise the laws and who look to community participation. We stand for the fight for communication at the service of our communities and for the autonomy for each of these spaces.

We hereby call on the people of Oaxaca, Mexico and the World to be alert to every action of the bad government against free and community media and to respond in an organised manner, mobilising in the streets in defence of our means of communication.

“For communication from the people”  
V.O.C.A.L. Autonomous radio communication

