

EZLN: A Meeting with the O'odham

By Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos

La Otra - The Other Mexico
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Bueno, Compañeras and Compañeros:

First we just want to thank the Monroy family, who is receiving the Sixth Commission and the Karavana's compañeros, who are giving us lodging here, in... Rancho el Peñasco is it called? Thank you Compañeros and Compañeras. And thank you to all of you who have endured the six hours that we have been here, and I hope you have a little patience for what I am going to say.

We especially want to thank the traditional O'odham authorities. Don José, Doña Ofelia – I don't see her anymore – Is Doña Ofelia still here? No? Brenda, Doña Brenda? They're not here

either, what a pity. Doña Alicia? Well, that's what happened to us. The traditional authorities went away and we came to listen to them. No? But Don José is here, as I want to bring a message from the indigenous Zapatista communities to the Tohono

O'odham people, and also for the Navajo and Cherokee people.

What the compañero, the Purépecha chief Salvador said, from the National Indigenous Congress, also represents our thinking. The traditional O'odham chief, Doña Ofelia, pointed out something that we already see in the papers. That thing that a few people are promoting here, the National Indigenous Convention, is a lie. It is really directed by someone who was an official under President Vicente Fox, and later was unemployed and is now involved with the National Indigenous Convention, which is really a movement to support López Obrador. The Indian peoples don't interest them. The documents, which they are presenting, which those people are distributing, make no

mention of the San Andrés Accords, which have cost blood and death not just to Zapatistas, but to more than 40 Indian peoples, tribes and nations of Mexico, who are in agreement with that struggle. We are in agreement with what was expressed by Doña Ofelia, the O'odham traditional authority.

"We are Zapatistas. We live in the last corner of this country. We are of Mayan roots. We are people of Tzeltal, Tzotzil, Tojolabal, Chol, Zoque and Mam roots." And it is our custom at times to speak, when we speak with other Indian peoples, to use a symbolic language with tales and legends – "sometimes we speak about our history,

our goals, with tales, legends and symbolic language, and in this time that we have this message for the O'odham and Navajos and Cherokees, we take this root." To pass on this message that the Compañeros sent me to tell you, we will use that resource. Our elders, our chiefs, say that the gods



O'odham Representative Doña Ofelia and Subcomandante Marcos

made the world, that they made the men and women of corn first. And they specifically put the heart of corn in them. But the corn ran out and some men and women didn't get a heart. The color of the earth ran out, and they began to look for other colors. Then, the heart of corn touched people who are white, red or yellow. So there are people here who don't have the dark color of indigenous people, but they have the heart of corn, so they are here with us. Our oldest ones say, our chiefs, that the people who didn't get a heart, took care of it later, they occupied the empty space with money, and that it doesn't matter what color those people have, they have a heart that is the green color of money. And our old ones also say that, every once in a while, the land seeks to protect its

children, the men and women of corn. And that a time comes – which is when the night is the most difficult – when the land gets tired and needs those men and women to help it live.

They were killing our people with diseases, we were going to disappear, just like the Kiliwa people are disappearing, a few hundred kilometers from here where we are, where there are only 54 families left. And of them, only four speak the Kiliwa language here in Mexico, on this side.

We want to say to the O'odham nation, to the Navajo – I don't know if Michelle is still here? No, not her either, well, we don't have any messenger, I hope that someone tapes it... pardon me, Michelle. What happened is that in our land, our chiefs – I am a Subcomandante, because I am not the chief – my chiefs are men and women like Doña Ofelia, like Don José, 100 percent indigenous. And it fell on me – together with other compañeros – to do other work.

We were already dead and we were called upon to become warriors, according to our legend. And as we were dead, we became what we are: shadows. And in a strict sense we are that: "shadow's warriors or warriors of the shadows."

And January 1, 1994, on the wall of a bank in San Cristóbal de las Casas, appeared a sign that we painted which said: here we are the forever dead, dying again, but now to live. And that was the message that we were giving to the rest of the world: that in this country and on this planet, one had to fight and be willing to die to be able to survive.

In the story that we are telling – or what they ordered us to tell you – the land protected us after the Spanish invasion, and it made us survive and resist the North American invasion, and it made us live. And after the invasion of money or big capital, the land that made us survive is at the point of dying, precisely because of those above. If you think that they are going to conform themselves to seeing us as poor people, without schools, without medicine, you are wrong: they want us to disappear completely.

For entire decades we have been living with diseases, without education, scratching the earth to be able to take some produce from it. Now they also want that land. The Escalera Nautica will mean the total disappearance of the Yoreme, the Mayo, Cucupá and Yaqui peoples from the whole coast of Sinaloa, Sonora, Baja California and Baja Sur, for hotel and tourist businesses. There's not going to be anything more than deceit from the government, for the Yoreme, the Yaqui, the O'odham, the Cucupá and the Kiliwa.

The governments and those who lead them want that land to convert it into a commodity. If we permit that, this land is going to be destroyed. And that which protected us, that made us survive, is also going to die. And if that land and that world die, there will be no reason to fight, or to live, or to study.

What we are proposing here is that we have to unite as Indian peoples. Land dies the same way in O'odham, Navajo, Cherokee, Tzeltal, Tzotzil, Purépecha and Náhuatl territory, and we must unite, but not only in Mexico, but on the whole continent.

They, those who are up above, have already shown for hundreds of years, for centuries, that the only thing that they have done has been to destroy the earth. No more – "no more that's enough" – it's sufficient. Now we have to take the land's destiny and its defense into our hands. Don't leave it one minute more in the hands of the rich. We, those who have the color of the earth and hearts of corn, without regard to our skin color – we have to do it, because if we don't, the whole world is going to disappear.

To the one who has money, what's happening is not important. O'odham and Navajo territory is now a territory of death. Your fields, where your culture flourishes, is where poor Mexicans are killed, families who try to cross to the other side. The O'odham and Navajo people cannot permit that. You know that they are converting our lands, besides, into their garbage can: we are their garbage dumps. Toxic wastes, nuclear wastes, are not going to the residential zones, not in New York or Washington: they are going to Indian lands. And land is like the human body; one cannot inject poison into one part without affecting the rest. They think that they will only poison O'odham and Navajo land. They are going to poison everything and they are going to destroy it.

As the National Indigenous Congress compañero said: "we came to invite you, not to ask the government, but to get rid of it." Not to be praying that the North American and Mexican governments respect O'odham territory, which is divided by the borderline. And we know that the borderline crosses through your people's ceremonial center. We want that border to disappear, so that once again the O'odham, Navajo and Cherokee nations exist, as well as our peoples, because they already demonstrated that they cannot conduct this world and take it to a good end. We have to do it, not just for our Indian peoples, but for all humanity. Therefore, we say that our struggle is for humanity and against neoliberalism.

We wanted to invite you to join this movement, which is called the Other Campaign, so that as Indian peoples, the history of each 100 years is not repeated again. It is going to be repeated, but one part is going to change.

In 1810, we struggled for independence against Spanish power; in 1910, against the landowner's power. In 2010 – and even before – we will struggle against the power of money. But, differently than the 200 and 100 years before, now the Indian peoples will have to be respected. The same thing will not occur again: that another comes to power and the Indian peoples disappear again, or suffer the same poverty and scorn. Therefore, as Indian peoples, we form separately inside of the Other Campaign, and separately we talk to each other and separately we make agreements.

Those who are up there above, *compañeros* and *compañeras* of Sonora – Yaquis, Yoremes, Cucapás, O'odham – are only going to deceive you. They are going to buy off one or two of you, they are going to take them on a trip – like traveling around with those who distributed the paper just now – around the world, but their people are going to disappear. And if you are the leaders, it is certain, they are going to take you to hotels, or to the conventions those that the politicians have, but your people are going to disappear. And photos of your leaders are going to come out in the newspapers, but the garbage dump is going to poison your land.

And there will be many gatherings and declarations, but our poor Mexican men and women are going to continue dying on Navajo land, or on the land of the O'odham. Those things are not going to change if we continue believing in those above.

And that's what the Sonoran government is going to do, after this meeting you are going to see it. It is going to declare that it will resolve the indigenous problem, it is going to seek you out and it is going to invite you to the big hotels; it's going to give you good food, and it is going to put papers in front of you to sign. It is going to give you some aid and some credit. But nothing, absolutely nothing, is going to change in your territories.

The San Andrés Accords, which are the ones that represent the agreement of more than 40 peoples, tribes, nations and neighborhoods of the Indian peoples of Mexico, they say one thing that everyone forgets they say: that indigenous territory is indigenous. No one can do anything in indigenous territory if the community doesn't accept it. Not putting a garbage dump, or a hotel, not even crossing through your territory without permission from the authorities – which is certainly what the

compañera Ofelia was complaining about, and about which we also complain.

That is what we are saying wherever we go. And in this case, we were thinking that we were only going to talk with the O'odham people, or with Indian peoples, but how good it is that you arrived from many places. And especially, the people who are struggling on the other side in the United States, also with Indian peoples, and also with this injustice, this war of annihilation there is against the undocumented.

A little while ago when we were coming here, we crossed the border, there in Sonoyta, we crossed over on the other side and later we returned because we had to come here. But the big extension of the desert was seen and I was thinking – I imagined what all the *compañeros* from the Karavana – what it was going to mean crossing that desert, without food. If the heat or the cold doesn't kill you, the Minutemen kill you, or the ranchers, or the motorcyclists, or La Migra. And no one was going to take count, not even the university studies. If we, as Indian people, do not unite... We are proposing a continental gathering of all the original peoples of these lands, in October of the coming year, when 515 years of the "discovery" are completed. Now it was good! 500 years are enough to show that they couldn't.

And if the governments of the United States or Mexico didn't see us when we were few, we will see if the world doesn't see us when all the Indian peoples of this continent – from Tierra del Fuego to Alaska – unite and begin to tell of all the injustices and struggles. And that gathering is going to be in Northwest Mexico, near the border – which does not exist for us – in other words near the Oodham, Navajo, Cherokee, Cucapá, Kiliwa, Yoreme, Yaqui land, where we have been all these days. In a few days, we are making agreements with each other and taking votes, perhaps next month this call that we are proposing will come out.

That is more or less what we want to tell you. I hope you can pass the message to the traditional chiefs: Ofelia, Brenda, Alicia – Don José is here – Michelle: I ask a favor that you pass it to the Navajo people, the *compañera* with the Cherokee people.

We only ask you that, we are going to talk directly among ourselves and make an agreement. The next time that we come my chiefs will come, I will not come, they sent me first to see how it was. I report to them and then they will come, those that command me, because that is our way. That is what we want to say, *compañeros* and *compañeras*. Many thanks, Good Night.