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A
beginner's
Guide to

solidarity
with



the Zapatista

WHO ARE THE ZAPATISTA?

The Zapatista are revolutionaries in Chiapas, Mexico. This includes the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN), nonviolent civilians and families, as well as secular and non-secular activists - all joined in solidarity for one cause: the autonomy of indigenous people of Mexico. The Mayan Indians are indigenous to Chiapas. A long history of colonization forced many Indians into a weak economy on communal land, which has since been at threat of privatization, causing peasant and Indian displacement. In the 1960's and 1970's, the Mexican government identified many activists of various political oppositions and oversaw a dirty war of kidnap, murder, and imprisonment. Some went underground. The

Zapatista formed in the Lacandon jungle in 1983. The iconic masks provide protection from persecution. On January 1st, 1994, the world heard about the Zapatista as 3,000 EZLN occupied towns and cities across Chiapas in protest of economic development at the expense of indigenous Mexico. Since then, the Zapatista have gained a strong international network of solidarity.

The Lady of Guadalupe is the patron saint to many indigenous and peasant communities. When masked, some call her the Virgin of the Zapatista.



INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

- Find a chapter of a Zapatista solidarity network or start one in your area or campus
- Talk about it! Host a discussion or movie screening about Zapatismo
- Get involved in NAFTA resistance near you, such as the protests of Interstate 69 and the Trans-Texas corridor highway construction
- The Zapatista host opportunities for international volunteering and learning, including indigenous and spanish language instruction. Visit website on back cover for more information
- Be a revolutionary in YOUR Community

WORKING IN AND OUT OF THE SYSTEM

The Zapatista are not a political party and have no candidate for office. They say they are a revolution making space for another revolution, like a bridge that other friends can pass over. They promote organization from the bottom of society-up. These days they work more out of the system, operating autonomous Zapatismo villages and talking with people on the ground. They have 5 Caracoles, civilian-led political and cultural centers, located in different regions of their territory.

They organize healthcare initiatives, education and language training, and other social services. Their recent campaign 'Other Geography' creates dialogue between various groups of Chicano people about how to plan for the nation's future together. Right now they are working less on government reform and focusing on actively building their communities.



Zapatismo - the movement - challenges the notion that a country is successfully 'developing' if economic reforms profit only a few. Without access to economic or political resources, how will indigenous cultures be heard and survive? Modernization should not require a monoculture at the expense of another culture's repression or assimilation. In Mexico, NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) was detrimental to the status of Indian autonomy as their constitutional rights were thrown out as an 'obsolete barrier' to Canadian and American investors. The Zapatista are named after Emiliano Zapata, defender of peasant lands during the Mexican revolution. In his name, they protest the injustice committed against their livelihoods.





WHO IS MARCOS?

el sub-commandante insurgente Marcos

Primary spokesman of the EZLN, Marcos is internationally famous for his speeches, writings, and interviews for the rebellion. He was a political activist when he entered the Mayan jungle, and he reformed his ideas about revolution after living his next years in indigenous Chiapas. He is only one of many leaders and participants in the Zapatista's movement for autonomy.



The Zapatista protest cultural extinction and refuse to be sent into el divido or oblivion. The Zapatista's vision of the world allows many worlds to exist within it.

GLOBALIZATION

The Zapatista's uprising against NAFTA brought attention to the unfulfilled promises of the Mexican government to fairly negotiate the land rights of Indians and peasants. Trade agreements like NAFTA are disproportionately aggressive, allowing the economic conquest and exploitation of Mexican farmers and laborers. NAFTA contributed to a decreased quality of life for many in Mexico. The export-oriented economy caused a rise of maquiladoras and sweatshops, cheap imports flooded in, the peso drastically devalued, and unemployment increased.

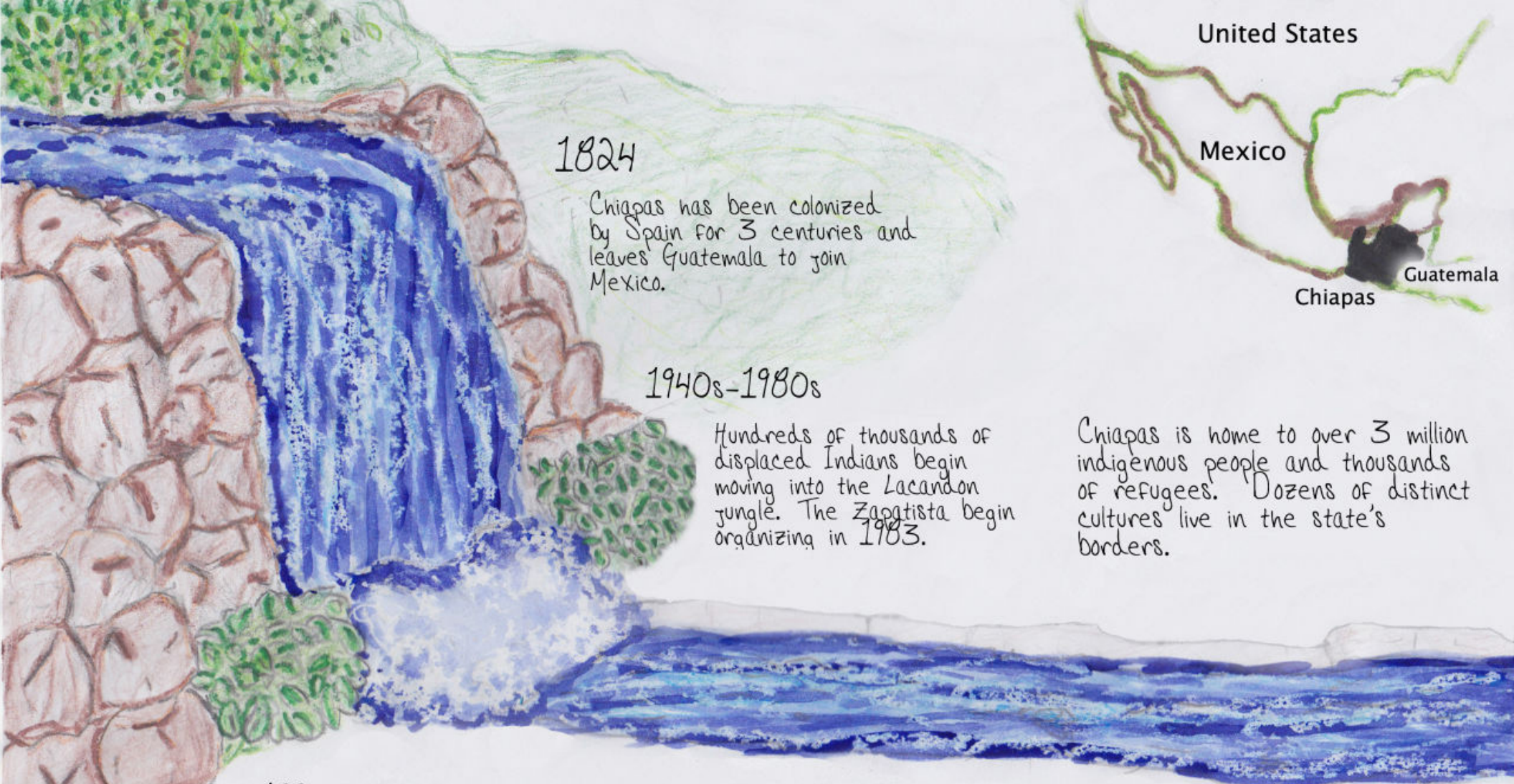
This vision of a U.S.-led global free market was named by American president George Bush Sr. "the new world order." But the protests in Chiapas remind us that this world reorganization was not consensual. The conflict continues to draw the attention of investors and the EU. Though the Zapatista send representatives to negotiations and obey peace treaties, the Mexican government's violent campaign in Chiapas concerns Human Rights Watch, among others.



ZAPATISMO IS AN INDIGENOUS MOVEMENT

They protest for the autonomy of indigenous Mexican communities as "entities of public right," allowed to control their land, represent themselves politically, speak in their native languages, and educate themselves. The Zapatista has members representing several indigenous groups. "We see that there are other people fighting and resisting, because exploitation isn't only in Chiapas, but in all of Mexico. We have heard about the struggles of other indigenous peoples, who also have died making their own demands and resisting in their own ways." (1st INF CPT Federico) The Zapatista made their message heard in a time when the world was supposedly "burned out" on revolution and skeptical of Latin American politics. Hugely successful marches, conferences, and events in solidarity with the Zapatista have occurred around the world.





United States

Mexico

Guatemala

Chiapas

1824

Chiapas has been colonized by Spain for 3 centuries and leaves Guatemala to join Mexico.

1940s-1980s

Hundreds of thousands of displaced Indians begin moving into the Lacandon jungle. The Zapatista begin organizing in 1983.

Chiapas is home to over 3 million indigenous people and thousands of refugees. Dozens of distinct cultures live in the state's borders.

1994

The EZLN declares war on Mexican government on the day after NAFTA is implemented. There are 12 days of conflict before a ceasefire. As indigenous Mexicans are repeatedly denied political representation, solidarity with the Zapatista grows around the world.

2001

The Color of the Earth March: The Zapatista lead a 2 week caravan to Mexico city, met by 250 thousand supporters. The government signs the Plan Puebla-Panamá, another devastating neoliberal development plan.

2003

The Zapatista announce their organization for 30 municipalities and 5 regional caracoles or Good Government Boards.

2012

December 21-31 thousands of Zapatista silently march through Chiapas cities as tourists flood the region for the internationally popular Mayan apocalypse theory.