

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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The Mixteco primarily reside in the Mexican State of Oaxaca in Southwestern Mexico. They have been arriving in larger numbers than ever before to this part of the North American continent in the last twenty years.

Their experience is composed of different dynamics compared to those of their mainstream Mexican counterpart. One of these dynamics is based on the discrimination they receive, not only from Anglo-Americans, but also mainstreamed Mexicans and Mexican-Americans. Their vulnerability is partly due to language and cultural differences.

By exploring their experiences and subjectively capturing nine individual's stories of migration, my intent is to make direct and indirect comparisons of how global socio-economic forces impact communities that until recently were self-sufficient and autonomous. Their stories are not much different than those of their counterparts who, because of economic factors, are forced to immigrate or face permanent economic destitution.

The Mixteco subjects' lives and trials serve as witnesses to help explain the intricate web of micro-events, which collectively influence and respond (most negatively) to macro events of which we are now witnessing as the planet's population polarizes between the *haves and have nots*.

The focus of the research is the experiences of nine Mixtecos families and individuals who migrated from their homeland in Oaxaca to the state of Oregon, USA. The interviews focus on their personal experiences as they confronted the challenges of coming north, first to northern Mexico and then to the United States.

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Nine Native Mexicans in the Willamette Valley

by

Willan A. Cervantes

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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

Willan A. Cervantes, Author

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Ometeotl!

This work is dedicated to Manuel Pacheco who empowered and changed our lives to make a difference in the short time he was here.

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Tlazo Kamati

CONTRIBUTION OF AUTHORS

Dr. Manuel Pacheco was involved in providing guidance and intellectual contributions as the subject unfolded.

Dr. Lani Roberts provided the motivation, the final intellectual development and refinement needed to complete this challenging subject. She picked up as Pacheco went onto higher ground.

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CHAPTER I

WHY ARE IMMIGRANTS COMING?

Introduction

How I arrived at this topic begins with my own background. I am an immigrant according to the U.S. government. I am also a naturalized citizen since 1986. I was fifteen years of age when my parents thought it was a good idea. The stigma of being an immigrant has diminished in most social settings, but politically it's a hot subject, particularly during economic downturns. I do not enjoy the stigma of being an immigrant but I was not able to speak my mind with complete confidence. I began asking myself questions that I believed required intelligent answers or at least assertions that could put at peace my discomfort with this term, immigrant. I saw others like me who accepted this position and minded their own business in controversial settings. Even family members led us to believe that since this is not really our country, we should just be quiet and be appreciative since we were the lucky ones. I found no satisfaction and, instead, irritation with this. I wanted to dig deeper and find out why people, particularly self-sufficient communities, came here. I wanted facts that could affirm that a lot more was going on behind the big decision of leaving one's community and risk life and limb. I wanted to hear it from those who left, why they left. I wanted to know that choosing to leave had to do with a lot more than just one day waking up and saying, "I want a better life for my family and I."

In the pages that follow, I will follow the intricate yet obvious connection between macro events, defined in this thesis as the implementation of policy by internal

and external socio-economic pressure at the national and global level, and micro events, defined as personal and community reaction to these policies. What I am proposing here is to bring these interacting dynamics close to home. I want to give it a human face here in our own backyard-Oregon. I have lived, worked, and traveled throughout the Willamette Valley for the last five years, first as a mental health assistant for a Head Start program in the Woodburn area and later as an employment and training specialist in the Independence/Monmouth area, ten miles west of Salem. Both of these areas have large Spanish-speaking communities who began to settle permanently in the late 1960s. The Mixtecos are its newest migrants. California has seen a rise of Mixtecos communities since the early 1980s, but not until recently have they begun appearing in larger numbers in Oregon.

Methodology

I picked nine individuals that had three common characteristics. First, they spoke a native Mexican language as their first language and the Spanish language as their second language. I use language as a primary factor to identify my subjects due to its importance in expressing a world-view different than other ethnic groups. Language has a tendency to store concepts and ideas that compliment the social and historical environment where the population originally thrived and evolved. The second factor was that the subjects had families or dependents traveling with them. The danger of traveling as a family raises concern and, at the same time, brings to light that “immigrants” are not just single brown males, but families, who depend on this work for their livelihood, making them less impulsive and prudent in the decision making process, and at the same time making them vulnerable to potential abuse and high degree of tolerance to labor

exploitation. Most of my male subjects had initially arrived to the U.S. single. Most of my female subjects came already married, or with a family member. The final factor was two years of migrating from harvest to harvest and depending 100% on it for their livelihoods. The migrant trail is a treacherous one, as has been documented already by the likes of Ruben Martinez in *Crossing Over*, Luis Alberto Urrea and his graphic observations in his book *By The Lake of Sleeping Children*, and *Harvest of Empire* by Juan Gonzalez. It is particularly difficult for a family with young children. These three factors combined allowed for fascinating stories of hardship and hope.

Due to some language limitations, the questions were simple and themed around the following subjects: birth-place, background, education, immigration, customs, local and national politics and their experience migrating around the U.S. See Appendix A for IRB approval. Finally, I put the interviews thesis into a socio-historical context that did not require intensive academic preparation to understand it. In Chapter three I parallel indirectly the micro experiences of my subjects to macro events happening at the national and international level and add similar observations made by others.

Some of the limitations and challenges of this work began with the brevity of the interviews and the nature of the questions, which dwelled on particulars concerning the focus of the thesis. Most of the families were here briefly (two weeks to a month) and my interviews with them were limited by this fact (length of harvest). I was not in a position to ask for more than two hours of their time in some cases. One interview lasted a brief 45 minutes: the family was living out of their van. Due to some of the language difficulties with some of the subjects, I simplified and focused on the migrant experience and their lives in their villages. With those subjects who had a greater understanding of

the Spanish language, I was able to expand the conversation into more sophisticated subjects involving national politics and ethnic identity.

This thesis does not in anyway attempt to represent an overall perspective on the migrant experience as experienced by the Mixtec people or any other people who are in this line of work. It does seek to document this particular subjects' experience inside the context of globalization and the socio-historical continuum unfolding as I record.

“The Immigration Issue”

We see it in our newspapers and on the nightly news. The cover story of TIME magazine in its June 2001 issue (June 11, 2001) was titled “Amexica.” Here in our own state of Oregon, the immigration issue has taken center stage as candidates define their tolerance of the issue. In 2002, Some Oregon residents introduced a measure similar to California’s Proposition 187 (passed in 1994), which denies undocumented immigrants access to social services. The history of xenophobia in the United States is well documented. Places where heavy immigration has occurred, such as California, Florida, and New York, have become subjects of endless studies both in and outside of academia. What about in other parts of the country? In many areas the issue is just beginning to attract attention, and tension has begun to build.

In most parts of Oregon, the population has been relatively homogenous until recently. But drastic demographic changes have taken place in the last twenty years. Immigration by ethnic minorities, particularly those of Mexican descent, has contributed to this rapid change. The arrival of these new immigrants has played a role in brewing tension, which occasionally has led to aggressive confrontations exploding sporadically in different parts of the state. Mexican men, the first to arrive because of their high labor

mobility, have over time begun to make permanent settlements throughout the state, either by marrying locals or by bringing their families from Mexico. One such settlement is in the city of Independence, a rural town 15 miles west of Salem, Oregon. One of its long time residents of Mexican descent speaks of how 20 years ago, when he first arrived in the area, if he saw another Mexican or brown person, an excitement would surge through him and he found it easy to approach his compatriot as if he was a long lost friend. Now, he says, Mexicans are in every corner of town and in many cases he purposely avoids them. Part of his shunning away from his own people has been the number of problems that gangs began causing during the 1990's. This reaction is one of many concerning immigration and the inability of communities to cope with rapid demographic change. This inability brings fear into play, which leads to emotional outbursts, which create further tension and ultimately consequences, which impact us all. The purpose of this thesis is to bring this controversial social topic by exploring the lives of recent immigrants and their experiences of immigration. At the same time, I will put as background historical facts and contemporary issues, which have influenced and are influencing the dynamic of immigration in this country.

Hispanic Immigration

According to the 2000 census, the Latino population in Independence is now approximately 30%, recording 1818 of the city's population of 6,035. It is believed that there are considerably more but due to fear of reprisals, many immigrants do not participate in this official count. However the present chapter is not a discussion of population growth per se. Instead it is about attempting to answer questions that make

immigration a socially sensitive issue. The basic question “Why do they come here?” cannot, thus be answered by scrutinizing government agencies such as the INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service), now known as U.S Citizenship and Immigration Services, or even invoking the mythical welfare state with its large give aways as portrayed by conservative media critics and others. This thesis will attempt to answer this question, which implies an objection to immigration, not only voiced by the dominant population, but also by Mexicans and other Latinos, who have established roots here, and in an ironic way, separate themselves from the newcomers.

What is the problem that immigration brings, and is it in fact a problem? The assumption that immigration is a “problem” is usually put forward in order to affirm and further consolidate notions of prejudice based on narrow views of reality. These views are disconnected from larger global forces that are beyond the usual understanding of the ordinary person. This thesis will attempt to reveal these forces through the Mixtec people’s experience of immigration as background to explain and answer: Why do they come? Recent historical analysis will take us slowly to the past, and through the past, the answers will make more sense.

Modern Day Resistance: Passive and Violent forms

In 1992, The Ejercito Zapatista de Liberacion Nacional, known by their acronym EZLN (Zapatista Army of National Liberation), launched an armed rebellion in the southern state of Chiapas, Mexico. Their army, comprised mainly of indigenous Mayans, brought to national and international attention the plight of Mexico’s peasantry. It was a cry of a people who felt dispossessed by decades of economic modernization, centuries of inequality as well as government policies aligned with international financial interests

embodied in the North American Free Trade Agreement, and World Trade Organization. These policies were designed to increase foreign trade and investment with little benefit for the population as a whole (Barry 156). Excluded from the political process and repressed by the military and vigilantes hired by local ranchers, the Maya found little alternative but to take up arms (156). This form of protest has been common ever since the arrival of the European invaders in 1492.

The last 514 years of European occupation, domination and colonization have taken a toll on the original population of the Americas. From the beginning, organized violence in its different forms had been used to destroy indigenous populations across the planet; even to this day, e.g., Brazilian Indigenous tribes. This form of conquest and colonization was practiced and perfected in places like Ireland and Eastern Europe (Chomsky 1993 17-18). The brutal invasion of the Americas did not differ by much except that the booty and material rewards would prove extraordinary, e.g., gold, silver and new foods, among many others. Each new excursion into native territory carried its justification: civilization, free trade, manifest destiny, enlightenment, noble ideals, modernization and, most recently, democracy and neo-liberalism. All these “reasons” ultimately gave way to subjugation and the death of millions of people and ultimately the exploitation and extraction of their resources found in their homelands.

The native peoples of the Americas have displayed remarkable cultural resilience in the face of demographic catastrophes: loss of lands and political autonomy; recurrent infusions of outside technologies, animals, foods and procedures over the centuries; and disrespectful disregard of their values and ways of life by the governments and citizens of those nations into which they have been forcibly merged. To the extent possible, indigenous peoples have been selective about what aspects of the outside world they

incorporate into their cultures. The indigenous communities have not been without resources. They have used their internal unity, in many cases under a dedicated local leadership, to incorporate the changes forced upon them in the best terms they could muster. However, local rebellions by native people were endemic in Latin America over the last five centuries. Occasionally these rebellions became widespread and threatened major regions and even national governments. Through a combination of selective adaptation and peaceful, or sometimes violent, resistance, the native people of Latin America, even those subjugated by Europeans, have been making their own history the last five hundred years (Kicza xi).

Indigenous people have been so successful in drawing upon their own resources and capacities that today their numbers are growing; they constitute a majority of the population in countries such as Guatemala and Bolivia with a substantial plurality in Mexico, Ecuador, and Peru. Even in countries where they do not make up a large part of the population—Brazil, Colombia, and Chile, for example—native people have been able to assert their rights and claims and make the national societies come to grips with the issues of native autonomy and control over land and other resources (Kicza xii).

However, there remains a low intensity attempt to continue to assimilate or, in many cases, annihilate indigenous people. Though violent means are still being utilized in many parts of Latin America a more effective strategy is cultural and economic encroachment upon the resources of Indigenous people.

Who are Indigenous people? According to John Bodley's *Victims of Progress*, indigenous people are a group of people who identify themselves with a specific, small-scale cultural heritage. This is a very narrow definition, but it satisfies the overall theme of his book. In this thesis, I expand the definition of indigenous people across a

philosophical, genetic, socio-historical, spiritual, ideological, and time-space continuum. Up until the last 200 years, indigenous people occupied much of the territory of the world. The industrial revolution and its developing pattern of thought began challenging this (Bodley 1). Despite colonization and its consequent genetic and social assault upon the psyche of indigenous people, it is my opinion that the spirit of indigenous people is ever present and it has not been suffocated as hoped by the large scale societies represented by European and Anglo-American societies.

Philosophically, indigenous people of the world, including America, share a bond with the place they come from or where they have taken root and settled and this is present in their cultural value system. This becomes less common as they are forced to adapt in areas that are dominated by Western values and institutions. If it is not the land, it is their social bonds that prevent complete disconnection and assimilation. Even those individuals who describe themselves, or are described, as completely assimilated, albeit superficially to the dominant culture, retain a certain connection despite their deliberate attempt to suppress it within their psyches. Some do a better job than others in completely suppressing that connection.

Modernization Vs. Indigenous Values

The idea of modernization has served to assimilate and eliminate what is left of Indigenous cultural values across the globe. The advent of western “civilization” and its ideals, which are merely that, have been used to justify an assault on the natural balance embraced by indigenous cultures. Today we are seeing the consolidation of power, most exclusively in the private sector, and the international political sector (NAFTA, European Union, Pacific Union). It is evident that the exploitation on the remaining resources and

the oppression of the working class will not stop unless these very people who are forced or embrace modern consumerist values are prepared to join indigenous people in a massive paradigm shift that embraces values of conservation.

Indigenous values are seen as threatening to the values of monopolistic, consumer-oriented Western capitalism. Indigenous values embrace balance with the natural environment. Western civilization or capitalism seeks the most efficient way to exploit natural resources for consumption and profit. Indigenous cultures are primarily self-sufficient, while 21st century capitalism is organic in the sociological sense; individuals are specialized to fulfill specific and interdependent roles within the society, and specialization is extended to a greater degree as demand and supply rises within a market service economy not to exclude a large underclass used as a buffer and collective scare tactic to keep the now “shrinking” middle class. Members of small community-based economically self-sufficient groups, on the other hand, share in the tasks required for balanced living (Bodley 7). Thus, the two societies are incompatible and this naturally puts them at odds in the best of circumstances. This brings us to the question of cultural assimilation through economic pressure.

Cultural Assimilation: Destroying Small Scale Societies

In its most simplistic form, the indigenous person is forced to leave his/her community in search of work either in the cities of the First and Third World or in large agri-business operations. Leaving behind their communities has a gradual effect upon the individual, as will be explained later. Little does s/he recognize the unseen forces such as global economic policies playing out in the background unless someone points them out. This occurs only if there is access to privileged information through advanced education,

e.g., the university; this is rarely the case. The micro-social events of displacement from the land and community, which impact the individual, family and community, take place in many poor communities throughout the Third World. The pace at which this is happening is dangerously destabilizing for many small-scale communities such as those found in Oaxaca, where the majority of my subjects are from. Apart from loss of connection, there is a loss of community cohesion, alienation, the ultimate consequence of assimilation and, for many, the destruction of their unique identities.

Cultural genocide is defined as the loss of language, values and sentiments that are obtained early in life through ritual and observation (my own definition). The loss of one's native language is the most profound disruption of the socialization process of a younger generation. Radical change in lifestyles and attitudes toward one's community is one of many examples easily observed on the surface. What is important to an individual who has suffered this loss is no longer in tune with the larger interests of the community where s/he came from. He/she is now disconnected by lack of language and social ritual. Instead they are focused on possessions (mainstream clothing, automobiles, cable television, and other such items not necessary for everyday living) and mimicking what is culturally acceptable by outside peers and the larger consumer society.

A case in point is the example given to me by one of my subjects named Yaat (not his real name). As the younger generation assimilates to the larger consumer culture a clash of values and traditions naturally begin to manifest. Yaat shared with me that during a local town celebration in his hometown in Oaxaca, a conflict broke out. What started it was the provocative displays that some of the youth were carrying out on the dance floor. As some of the community members began to criticize these displays, one of the youth challenged one of the members and there was a heated exchange, which

brought in more people. Another observation Yaat made was how distinctly the community members dressed compared to the youths and their parents. The youths and parents had adopted clothing reflecting modern urban styles, which clashed with the more humble clothing offered in the town. Though the clothing and the display of dancing provocatively should be of relative insignificance, it contributed toward cultural stratification as the members of the community had no power over those who used material gain to obtain undeserved recognition or attention. Community members found the clothing and the dancing offensive. These may be superficial indicators of cultural change, but are a direct result of larger forces interacting between macro events (globalization of the economy and politics) and micro interactions (impacts at the social level: person to person and between families sharing the spatial community) that are occurring in many communities. These occurrences must be closely scrutinized in the context in which they are occurring. The above example can be generalized as representing a gradual intergenerational disconnect where overtime the participation in community events no longer bring cohesion as in the past, but instead raise tensions between community members including particularly the loss of respect towards one's elders and their authority inside the communities.

The next several chapters will explore some of the forces and stories that bring to life what is becoming more and more prevalent: these macro forces, which are often elusive, are beyond the grasp of most untrained individuals and are unrecognized by people like my subjects who are reacting to them and who are its sufferers. Macro forces have their roots in the hierarchical power structures that are embedded in what are known as governmental, corporate and international bodies, where accountability is placed in a finite and small group of people.

Each summer there are thousands of Mexican farm workers who arrive in the Willamette valley and among them is a growing proportion of Mixtec migrant workers from Oaxaca. Every late spring they arrive by the thousands to harvest a variety of local valley crops such as hops, strawberries, and flowers. These crops provide million dollar profits to the agricultural industry in this state. Yet, in spite of their contribution to the local economy, the workers' presence often causes concern amongst Anglo-American residents who feel threatened and raise alarms about the immigration "problem." Debates often center on the use of public services, which include welfare, education, housing, health care, and public safety.

Why is the dominant culture in Oregon prone to take up negative views about migrant workers? These views include the accusations that they deliberately attempt to take away jobs from locals, obtain unearned benefits, "take advantage of the system," and contribute toward the rise in crime. Why do people, like the indigenous Mixteco of Oaxaca, Mexico come to Oregon? Why are they willing to risk their lives and bear much sacrifice along with abuse in their temporary communities and work places? Why do some Oregonians not see these migrant workers as assets? The Oregon community risks losing an incredible source of knowledge held by the collective experience of the Mixtecos, expressed in their language, traditions, and hidden knowledge. The assimilation process is a harsh one and it destroys lives, families, and communities here in Oregon and back in Oaxca.

The Mixteco are new to Oregon. Their ethnic group has been growing in numbers among the migrant workers only in the last twenty years. How are the Mixtecos different then other migrant workers? The Mixtecos, like other Mexican Indigenous groups, continue to practice sustainable social and agricultural communities. They speak their

native tongue and are credited with mastering the growth and development of corn.

Among their members, traditional knowledge is kept, which we in academia could learn and put into practice. This is now being threatened by the loss of the Mixteco language and culture through loss of land and introduction of modern agricultural practices. The rapid displacement of the Mixteco from their Mexican communities is an example of the encroachment of a rapidly expanding economic globalization imposed by powerful institutions, to be described in greater detail later.

Before I proceed any further, I would like to explore the issue of volition or choice. The reason for addressing this has to do with the presumptions that many people in the United States have about immigrants in this country. The general perception is that people come here of their own free will, but let us explore the matter of volition within the context of economic globalization.

Deconstructing Volition

So-called natural disasters are one of the minor causes of migration. The decision making process is immediately impacted as communities are ravaged by forces of nature as in the case of floods, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and disease epidemics. Take the example of the 1985 earthquake that impacted Mexico City. This event alone sent thousands of people to the US in search of economic stability due to lack of recovery in their home country. Let us look at human activity as exacerbating the impact of natural disasters as in the destruction of wetland habitat and the recent case of Hurricane Katrina. Evidence suggests the connection between human impact and natural disasters despite the doubts that are expounded by the political elite. Population pressures, unchecked extraction of resources (mining, clear cutting), wetland destruction, river contamination,

pollution and rampant poverty are pressuring our natural environment to the brink of disaster. Here in the United States we still have some safety net, but in places like Mexico no such net exists to address such calamities. In the case of Hurricane Katrina, many found refuge in different regions, and only a few escaped its life changing consequence.

In Africa, the Middle East, China, Australia and the western United States dust storms have become more and more common. The stripping of the land and the desertification of previously fertile land are a consequence of livestock grazing. This has led to increase amounts of dust in the air and an increase of respiratory infections and illness. Bared soil is lost to the wind and the result is wide spread particulate pollution, increasingly recognized as a danger to humans and a factor in trapping solar radiation and bringing about climatic changes (Lyman, 127-28). This example among many can demonstrate the complex array of factors that expressively originate with human activity. Let us consider how this affects our neighbors across this world, which we share.

Choices made by the individual or for the individual at the familial or community level are not necessarily “autonomous.” In the past, communities had a certain amount of control over the decision-making process and the utilization of the resources available to the community. Today, the trend is the further distanced centralization of the decision making process. Thus, the decision-making process at the level of community or family is pressured by outside forces, be it government or other malevolent/benevolent agencies like non-governmental organizations agencies (Peace Corps and Habitat for Humanity) as well as weather and meteorological disasters, linked or not to human activity. In other words, institutions that are removed from the immediate reach of those people being impacted influence the decision-making process at the community level, which, more often than not, disenfranchises them from the decision-making process. Several factors at

the macro-social level affect local and individual decision-making. These factors include theory, which rises from ideologies, which, in turn, becomes policy and, later, is enforced as law. Take for instance the most recent and major example-North American Free Trade Agreement and Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights or TRIPS, which seek to appropriate and undermine the commons* of many communities (Shiva & Holla-Bhar 147). The consequence of centralized-decision-making by planners is ultimately diffused through the rest of society through coercion, discipline, and normalization. This often translates to the mechanics of power as described by Michel Foucault (Rabinow 58).

The relevant socio-economic frameworks are defined by current political and economic policies within institutions of power such as the World Bank, the IMF (International Monetary Fund), the World Trade Organization, and other multi-national corporations. Many critics have described this as human-made disaster. The macro-events in reference to economic and social policy can be put under the umbrella often referred in academic circles as neo-liberalism. Hence, communities such as those of the Mixteco are forced to bear the consequences of decisions made by others and which are removed from their immediate influence. Thus, they lack power. This enormous subject matter will be narrowed in terms of contemporary socio-economic and cultural framework as experienced by the subjects interviewed for this thesis.

Micro-events refer to “the decisions,” whether made passively or actively, occurring at the family or community level with regard to migration. The data used to support these obvious connections, which lead to poverty and eventual immigration, come from nine interviews conducted between 1999 and 2001. This data constitutes what

*The word "Commons" has now come to be used in the sense of any sets of resources that a community recognizes as being accessible to any member of that community. The nature of commons is different in different communities, but they often include cultural resources and natural resources (Wikipedia)

I define as micro social events and reaction at a personal level. The author recognizes that the subjects' contributions are limited to the scope of personal encounters, which are interpreted are by the author and not without potential for bias. Nevertheless, the personal testimony shared by the informants, viewed within a larger macro-social framework, gives us insight into the processes of dislocation and displacement that make up the immigrant experience.

In this thesis, I will start with a socio-historical summary in chapter two. Then in Chapter three I will present testimony of my subjects with examples of factors involved in their displacement as backdrop. Chapter four will summarize my findings of these interactions between the macro and micro events and will speculate about the role of technology.

CHAPTER II

COLONIZATION YESTERDAY AND TODAY

The Rise of Europe-Macro Forces

The maintenance and pursuit of power and privilege is as old as the tribe, empire and nation state. In order to pursue and maintain power super-structures such as the nation state, social fabrication or myth had to be invented, transformed or integrated to justify its existence. The last 500 years has rapidly unfolded and solidified these socio-political and economic structures due in part by the displacement and utilization of resources that are converted into “wealth.” This, in turn, is used to influence the continual exploitation of people and resources behind the mythical notion of “progress” and the advancement of “civilization.” In order for these societal themes to take hold and justify domination by Europe, the U.S. and later Japan, intellectual justification had to be invented and institutionalized within a narrow ideological framework. In this chapter we will look at the historical context of neo-liberalism and its evolution. We will also explore the corporation as an economic vehicle.

Invading The World

The colonization of the world was a rapid and violent process, as Noam Chomsky describes in his book, *Year 501: The Conquest Continues*. The wealth acquired by the

ruling class and the up and coming merchant class from this supposed accident set the stage for the beginnings of global capitalism and colonization-exploitation, which Europe would lead. According to Jack Weatherford, in his book *Indian Giver*, the silver pouring out of Mexico and Peru supersaturated the silver market, driving the price down and allowing its use as a means of exchange. Even today, in many places in Latin America, money is colloquially referred to as plata, or silver, more often than dinero, the direct translation of the word money. The tremendous quantity of silver put enough riches in the coffers of the European nobility and their business consorts that Africa, the former supplier of this precious metal, was basically cut out of the equation, foretelling that continent's future place in a violent and rapidly changing world (Weatherford 17).

The imperialistic intention of the European powers was quickly exposed as less than benevolent. As Europe entered the 18th century, the expansion began taking a more sophisticated mode as the industrial revolution began transforming societies by the mechanization of labor and mass production. A new and evolving international capitalist order began to emerge and take form. A political and social order was necessary and amicable to accommodate this transformation on a worldwide scale.

The introduction of new American foods to the European food supply and diet, such as Mexican corn and Peruvian potato, would further facilitate the population explosions in the European continent and the world. Weatherford continues: For centuries the northern countries such as Russia and Germany suffered periodic famines when the grain crops failed because of unsuitable weather. For as long as the Old World depended on grain crops, the great population and power centers remained in the warmer southern nations around the Mediterranean, where the grains flourished. Greece, Rome, Persia and Egypt all had successful empires primarily because of their control of grain production...As American staple foods began to arrive...Adam Smith wrote about the tremendous importance that its adoption portended for Europe. He accurately predicted that increased cultivation of potatoes would cause an increase in production an increase in population, and an increase in the value of land... Power shifted toward Germany and Britain and away from Spain

and France...Despite the Irish famine, the population of each country boomed as it adopted the potato...(Weatherford 65-66, & 70).

On corn Weatherford writes:

...Most European farmers learned to grow corn, but most of them never learned to eat it...many important products such as oil can be made from it, and it makes a nutritious food for most domesticated animals...corn did for the animal population of Europe, what the potato did for the human population. The new animal food not only increased the supply of meat and lard, but also increased the supply of eggs, milk butter, cheese, and all the animal products that constitute an important part of the European diet. These foods substantially increased the European intake of protein...(73).

Population explosions would facilitate immigration from Europe to further colonize the American continents and the world. Better-fed populations led to longer life spans and better health. It lowered mortality rates causing populations to double within a hundred years in some regions (Weatherford 73). Native Americans gave the world three fifths of the crops now in cultivation and the Europeans took advantage of it. Europeans now had the wealth, and the necessary stable diet to take over the world. Unfortunately this would not only have extreme consequences for the native populations in America and other parts of the world, but the European populations would eventually be impacted. Over exploitation of their own environment and over consumption and expansion of their populations led to unsustainable levels. As the natives were being slaughtered or worked to death, the populations of Europe began facing social pressures and unrest, which led hordes of them to cross the sea, particularly to the Americas. Capitalism had a new home to expand the exploitation of resources and an invigorated workforce that was rapidly taking hold in the new occupied lands with little resistance.

Capitalist Expansion

The history of the world in the last five hundred years, as described by contemporary academic observers and historians such as Noam Chomsky, Micheal Parenti and Howard Zinn, is described as one of plunder, tribute, gold and glory. Today, capitalism has developed a more sophisticated form of acquiring power and wealth. Military invasions and violent subjugation of native populations became less common; the exception is Iraq. Today, systematic accumulation of capital comes through the organized exploitation of labor and the penetration of overseas markets. Rather than outright political domination or colonization by international powers banks, companies do the bidding. Capitalists invest in other countries, dominating their economies, cultures, and political life. In doing so, they integrate their exploitive structures into an international system of capital accumulation. Charles Beard made this observation in his book *The Economic Basis of Politics*:

Capitalism...entered upon an era of full freedom of contract and unrestricted competition, and the results which followed upon the mad rush for wealth supply materials for the pessimist and cynic who make human nature a synonym for all that is mean and selfish. Labor became a commodity to be bought and sold on the market. Conditions of life became secondary to the production of wealth (113).

A central imperative of capitalism is expansion. Investors will not put their money into business ventures unless they can extract more than they invest. Increased earnings come only with growth in the enterprise. The capitalist ceaselessly searches for ways of making more money in order to make still more money. One must always invest to realize profits, gathering as much strength as possible in the face of competing forces and unpredictable markets. Given its expansionist nature, capitalism has little inclination to stay home. Almost 150 years ago, Marx and Engels described a bourgeoisie that “chases over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, and

establish connections everywhere... It creates a world after its own image "(Parenti, 1995, 3). In their pursuit of greater profits, the expansionists destroy whole societies. Self-sufficient peoples are forcibly transformed into disfranchised wageworkers. Indigenous communities and folk cultures are replaced by mass-market, mass media, consumer societies-cooperatively held lands, are supplanted by agribusiness factory farms, villages by desolate shantytowns, and autonomous regions by centralized autocracies (4).

Another aspect of capitalist expansion is the cultural and psychological impact it causes upon those who become victims of its imposition. Alienation is one such characteristic.

Alienating and Dominating the Masses

Both Adam Smith and Karl Marx agreed that capitalism creates a milieu that alienates people from the products they produce.

...In the progress of the division of labor, the employment of the far greater part of those who live by labor...their duties... of the great body of people comes to be confined to a few very simple operations, frequently one or two...This leads...a great part of men...to be... formed by their ordinary employments. They become as stupid and ignorant as it is possible for a human creature to become. The torpor of his mind renders him not only incapable of relishing or bearing a part in any rational conversation, but of conceiving any generous, noble or tender sentiment, and consequently of forming any just judgment...even of the ordinary duties of private life...(Smith, A. [1776] 1937, 734).

Marx expressed similar thoughts and continues along similar sentiments:

What, then, constitutes the alienation of labor? First, the fact that labor is external to the worker, i.e., it does not...develop freely his physical and mental energy but

mortifies his body and ruins his mind. Labor is therefore not voluntary but coerced; it is forced labor. It is therefore not the satisfaction of a need, it is merely a means to satisfy needs external to it... lastly, that external character of labor for the worker appears in the fact that it is not his own, but someone else's that it does not belong to him that he does not belong to himself but to another...(Marx [1844] 1976, 3:274).

Leading this displacement from the land by finite communities and the alienation between people and their product has been the idea of free trade and its vehicles: the modern state and the corporation. The intellectual justification as well as socio-religious mandates worked hand and hand to rationalize the advancement and occupation of foreign lands. On the intellectual side was the rationalization of free enterprise and its validation: liberal economic theory, expounded by Adam Smith and David Ricardo.

Liberal Economic Theory: Revisiting Adam Smith and David Ricardo

Adam Smith and David Ricardo were English philosophers and were proponents of economic liberalism and free market capitalism. Their modern day counterparts, who use their writing of economic liberalism, like to suggest that theirs is an economic system created for the purpose of satisfying the economic needs not of monopolies, but of all people. In this regard, they invoke the theories of Adam Smith and his book *The Wealth of Nations* (Korten 76).

First published in 1776, *The Wealth of Nations* presented a radical critique of government and state protection of business monopolies. Smith demonstrated the ways in which state support and protectionism tended to distort the self-corrective mechanisms of a competitive market that comprised small buyers and sellers. Adams Smith's ideal was a market comprised solely of small buyers and sellers (Korten 225). Each participant would be too small to individually influence the market price of the commodities

exchange. He hypothesized that this would result in an optimal allocation of society's resources (Korten 77). Over the long term, if excess supply leads to market prices being consistently bid down below the natural price, the weaker or more adventuresome producer will be induced to shift their capital to another enterprise that offers a more favorable relationship between natural and market prices. Similarly, if continued deficiencies result in persistent unearned profits by keeping the market price above the natural price, more producers will be enticed to enter the market place and supplies will be increased until prices fall to their natural level. Thus, by the working of the wondrous "invisible hand" of the competitive market, over time the market price will approximate the natural price--producing a satisfactory outcome for both buyers and sellers and an optimal outcome for society in terms of the allocation of its resources. The items people need and want are produced and exchanged in a manner that is fair to both sellers and buyers while maintaining a constant pressure to keep prices in line with natural cost, all socially desirable outcomes (Korten, David 74). Exactly the opposite seems to be occurring today as observed by David Korten. What we are seeing is an economic system that has a far greater resemblance to the monopolistic market system that Smith condemned.

Another often-quoted figure is David Ricardo, also recognized as a prominent figure regarding free trade. Early in the nineteenth century Ricardo proposed two interrelated concepts: specialization and comparative advantage. According to Ricardo, each nation should specialize in those activities in which it excels so that it can have the greatest advantage relative to other countries. Thus, a nation should narrow its focus of activity, abandoning certain industries and developing those in which it has the largest comparative advantage. As a result, he believed, international trade would grow as

nations export their surpluses and import the products that they no longer manufacture. Efficiency and productivity will increase, and prosperity will be enhanced (Goldsmith 172). Ricardo argued that free trade needed to be bound by certain conditions. First, capital must not be allowed to cross national borders from a high-wage to a low-wage country. Second, trade between nations must be balanced. Third, each country must have full employment. Finally, capital must be locally or nationally rooted and its owners directly involved in its management. It is only in this way that Ricardo foresaw the benefit of the free market to translate the pursuit of self-interest into optimal public benefit (Korten 77). Today this theory has been manipulated by the powerful and made to fit any society that wants to participate in the modern era regardless of objections of those being impacted. This theory is called neo-liberalism.

“Neo-liberalism”: Misconstruing Liberal Economic Theory

Neo-liberalism is the defining political and economic paradigm of our time. It refers to the policies and processes whereby a handful of private interests are permitted to control as much as possible of social and economic life in order to maximize their personal profit. This acrid definition given by Robert McChesney in his introduction to Noam Chomsky’s book, *Profit Over People: Neo-liberalism and Global Order*, sharply illustrates the pervasive nature of a neo-liberal economic philosophy (7).

Contemporary followers of Adam Smith and David Ricardo define economic liberalism in terms of the following elements: sustained economic growth, free markets with little to no government interference or regulation, and economic globalization—a move toward a single integrated world market. Their belief is that this will raise living

standards for its active participants. Progress in these elements are measured by economic statistics: the GNP (Gross National Product), the GDP (Gross Domestic Product), per capita income, capital formation, employment rates, literacy, formal education, consumption of manufactured goods, number of doctors and hospital beds per thousand persons, and the amount of money spent on government welfare and health programs. Yet these may be irrelevant measures of actual quality of life for autonomous or even semiautonomous small-scale cultures. It is widely recognized that standard of living, which is the most frequently used measure of progress, is an intrinsically ethnocentric concept, which relies heavily upon indicators that lack universal cultural relevance whatsoever (Bodley 132). Let us look at this closer.

Impacting the Powerless Through Rationalization

Economic policies that are adapted by governmental institutions at the national or international level begin in theory, which is confined in narrow frameworks of ideology, in this particular case, western-based ideologies (Chomsky, 1989, 48). These institutions are rooted in narrow frameworks, ethnocentric in their value system, e.g., the Protestant work ethic, the self-righteous domination of Judeo-Christian religious belief and modern day Manifest Destiny. Economic policy exists within a framework of ideology, which by its inherent constricted nature, is not applicable to all societies and their socio-economic and ecological particularities.

I am compelled to call the current neo-liberal economic policies “man-made” disasters; the long-term effects are detrimental to society and the environment. This ideology is the basis of most economic planning and the U.S., Japan, France, UK,

Germany, Canada, and Italy are adamant in its continual implementation with little critical analysis of the consequences to their populations and environment. Neo-liberalism is accepted unchallenged by the current economic order of these nations. Policy makers consider neo-liberalism to be the only solution to our worldwide problems of poverty and the best system to allocate goods and services, with the assumption that it will benefit all that embrace it.

Let us put it in further context. To begin, conditions have changed since the 18th and 19th centuries; we have a different world today including a difference in power dynamics between nations. Secondly, Adam Smith's model emphasizes the importance of small buyers and sellers. He was adamantly opposed to state-protected monopolies; in fact, this opposition was one of the reasons he wrote his book in the first place. Smith argued that protectionism distorted the self-corrected mechanisms of a competitive market, so what we are seeing today is in fact the exact opposite Smith proposed in his radical critique. As David Korten observes, what we are seeing is an economic system that, far from being "free," closely resembles the monopolistic market system that Smith condemned (77). Corporations such as McDonalds, Microsoft, and large-scale corn growers in the Midwest, all receive or have received some sort of subsidy from the public. Numerous examples can be cited that attest to the fact that when it comes to competing, the ground is highly uneven.

Adam Smith also assumed that investors would have a natural preference for selling close to home. In other words, he assumed that capital would be rooted in a particular place and believed that individuals saw it to their benefit to invest locally. Yet this premise is clearly outdated. In Smith's time, the inability to supervise capital invested in enterprises based far from home created a limitation for investors. Today,

instant communication by phone, fax, and computer and twenty-four hour air travel to anywhere in the world allow the investor to move freely and supervise his/her capital anywhere in the planet. This freedom has been detrimental to communities, insofar as the prosperity of a community depends on what it produces with the resources it has available. This requires local investment that provides local jobs, produces goods for local consumption, and builds a local tax base. When investment capital is locally owned it means that any social and environmental costs associated with the investment and borne by the community are more likely to be visible. Members of the community know who the investor is, and are more likely to have personal access to that person.

The local ownership of capital is so fundamental to the argument that free markets produce a socially optimal use of resources-that when economist build computer simulations to demonstrate the benefits... they commonly include in the program the assumption that capital may be converted to produce a different product when trade barriers are removed and still remain rooted in place, such an assumption is in complete defiance of reality (Korten 187).

Today, developments in technology allow capital to fly instantly at the touch of a button, which contributes to great insecurity. Take for example the computer and its use as an electronic money transfer device in today's computerized financial system. Individuals at computer terminals can maintain constant contact with price movement in all major markets and execute trades almost instantaneously in any or all of them (Korten 188). Korten also points out, of the \$4 trillion dollars currently invested through pension funds, savings, and other money representing real value, \$800 billion to 1 trillion is used in short-term speculative investment. This means that this money is transferred only with the purpose of making more money and is unassociated with any real value. This money also grows at a rate greater than the prevailing rate of interest.

This growth depends on the ability of the system to endlessly increase the amount of money circulating in the financial system, independent of any increase in the output of real goods and services... Thus the financial or buying power of those who control the newly created money expands, compared with other members of society who are creating value but whose real and relative compensation is declining (189).

This contradicts Smith's propositions to establish a flourishing market place where goods are exchanged at the optimal level. Those who own the assets must be directly involved in their management. This conclusion was based on the observation that owners exercise greater diligence in ensuring the most efficient use of assets compared to the managers who do not have an ownership stake (Korten 187). Thus, these money speculators,

(t)rade up to \$800 billion a day across the globe...through fluctuating currencies...investing in options trading, stock speculation, and trade interest rates. The investor buys a financial product such as bonds or currencies on one exchange in the hopes of selling it at a profit on another exchange, sometimes simultaneously by using electronics...(189).

In the world of global finance, the reputation of brokerage firms and money managers is at stake. The investor looks for a quick return on his/her money. To meet the investors' wishes, the broker is apt to search for the best deal, overlooking any standard of risk behind the investment. The preoccupation of the investor is maximizing returns on the money invested. Neither the broker nor the investor is directly concerned with how the profit is earned or how the value of their investment increases. This type of detachment from the real world of product and its real value* is due, in part, to the construction of a life of luxury set apart in enclaves, and, in part, by self-justifying belief systems.

Unlike the ideal free market system envisioned by Smith and Ricardo, the creation of wealth today is no longer related to the real value of the item or even to production of real goods. Hence, multinational companies such as Nike and General Motors, with few restrictions, may get away with sheer indifference to the environment, its resources, and their own workers, whose exploitation in factories around the world is well-documented.

At this point, it is necessary to return to the current socio-historical context to further develop the contentions outlined above. I will do this by presenting an overview of the major institutions that have shaped the current economic order.

Free Trade

Free trade is the idea that products and services should move unhampered by any sort of regulations between nations. During the 18th and 19th century, British manufacturing interests were dominating most world markets and were powerful enough to have the upper hand to begin expounding the benefits of free trade. This imposing arrangement backed by military might began to be challenged by Japan. During the 1930s, Great Britain, unable to compete with Japan, barred Japan from trade with its commonwealth (occupied countries in their own right), including India. The United States, as did the Dutch, followed suit with their lesser territorial empires. These were significant factors, which contributed toward tension exploding with the onset of the Pacific War, as Japan set forth to emulate its powerful European and American competitors (Chomsky 11). The European states competed and parceled out the rest of the world under imperial, racist and pseudo-enlightened justifications. Japan not belonging to such an elite club of imperialistic and capitalistic nations was shunned,

which leads Chomsky to conclude that the theory of free trade only works between stronger nations forcing weaker ones to accept their trade terms. Japan challenged such an arrangement (11).

Today, as in the past, force has the same end in mind, i.e., to coerce those who are weaker militarily to accept the rule of the powerful. Adam Smith pointed this out, stating that in order to maintain strategic power and economic wealth, “Europe’s success was attributed to its mastery of the means and immersion in the culture of violence” (Qtd. in Chomsky, 1993, 7). Though blunt force persists in many parts of the world to impose a limited view of how a society will function, economic coercion is more cost effective. In modern times it is used as last resort if competing parties do not arrive at compromise or the population has to be taught a lesson by the powerful. At the international level powerful nations force weaker ones to accept both political and economic pressure, e.g., the U.S. embargo against Cuba and other nations belonging to the “Axis of Evil.”

A more recent tool that uses cost effectiveness is debt. This tool is used to threaten nations and their populations with economic poverty. This oppressive tool is violent and more effective than any war in recent memory. Money borrowed by poorer nations is done under the auspice of their local elites who are elected or grab power violently. This local power elite accesses these loans to maintain control of the political and social arenas of their nations, while at the same time selling off the commons of the nation to foreign interests. Further, these elites use this tool to control their economic middle classes who fear economic poverty as experienced by the majority of the population. The process of globalization of the economy is very much tied to borrowing between nations. I will expand this issue of debt, poverty and globalization in further

detail later in the thesis. In our era, power as the concentration of wealth is being expanded under this particular tactic of economic pressures expressed through debt. Its justification is based on liberal economic theory, today known as neo-liberalism. The application of neo-liberalism is led by United States.

This may help explain the framework and the doctrine behind the architects of our current era. It may also reveal the motivation and socio-cultural behavior that encourages the detachment of human from human, as we are all reduced to commodities competing for the lowest wages. I have explained the importance of cooperation between the state and the business sector and their motivation to maintain privilege and power. They do this in several ways, but an important vehicle is the corporation.

I would like now to turn to the role of the corporation. The corporation has a special role to play by the very nature of its organizational structure, which is hierarchical with little room for democratic ideals.

The Corporation-Tools of the Powerful

The corporation, which had its beginnings during the era of European colonization, had an important role to play as Europe sought to dominate economically. The history of the corporation and its actors need to be identified in order to understand the transformation of the economic order in our contemporary times. According to Chomsky:

The corporation as a legal entity had its start in the hasty competition to colonize the newly open markets across the world in the 1700s. The unfortunate accident of Europeans sailors/explorers running into the American continents and later

successfully traveling around the Cape of Good Hope, prove to be extraordinary. All of this was happening as they were struggling to come out of their dark age, as acknowledged by Adam Smith (1993, 4).

During the European expansion in the 1600s and the onset of the industrial revolution in the late 1700s, the concept of corporation began to be utilized for community driven projects, hence its limited role in some parts of Anglo-American society. The corporate charters, which were temporarily given to private parties had their early start as an ideal social invention to put private investment and resources into the service of public purpose. It also allows one or more individuals to leverage massive economic and political resource behind clearly focused private agendas and to protect themselves from legal liability for any public consequence. The fact that the interest of corporations and people of wealth are closely intertwined tends to obscure the significance of the corporation as an institution in its own right (Korten 53).

Some of the early displays of state-sponsored corporate power began in the earlier part of the European conquest and colonization of the world. The Dutch East Indian Company or VOC, based in the Netherlands and formed in 1602, and was granted virtually all the powers of a state. These included the right to wage war and make treaties. The VOC was controlled by merchants and financiers and was allowed to issue stocks, in the modern sense. Its organization displayed the early forms of a modern political economy. A network of trans-national financial and industrial institutions dominated the VOC with internally managed investments and trade (Chomsky, 1993, 6). Similarly, the powerful East India Company was founded in part from the profits of Queen Elizabeth of England's indirect endorsement of pirating. This early state-sponsored corporation was granted a charter in 1600, and extended indefinitely in 1609 (6). As power consolidated

through military and economic development, countries such as Great Britain gained the necessary position to impose its will upon its weaker neighbors, Chomsky explains. This allowed the company to solidify its monopoly over trade with the East on the authority of the British crown.

Some of the strategies employed by the new and rapidly expanding powers were free trade and the accompanying laws necessary to pursue such a path. One example of this kind of law was the Navigation Acts of 1651 and 1662. The acts barred foreign traders from trading with any of Britain's colonies and holdings. This gave British shipping advantageous ground. Another example was the colonization of India and Bengali, better known today as Bangladesh. It was not until 1846, after the Indian and Bengali colonies no longer posed threatening competition against British manufacturing and textiles, that the British Parliament began pursuing the advantages of international free trade (Chomsky, 1993, 7). The advantage of invading and forcing a native population to participate in such an arrangement while at the same time destroying their local economies and then flooding their markets with cheap goods caused an unequal economic trade relationship, which has plagued the world since. Hence the modern corporation's role has not changed much for it has the same end, which is to exploit for the sake of accumulating wealth at the expense of the native populations and their resources. But its progression had to do with the formation of economic institutions that were led by the modern nation state or states. Now we turn to these institutions.

Overview of Contemporary Economic Institutions

Today's capitalist economic order relies on international institutions with a specific mission, to make the world submit to free trade despite the unequal playing field

upon which many nations of the Third World find themselves. Their policies are based on the neo-liberal ideological theory of economics. The primary actors are modern states and their support of non-governmental organizations. Leading the dismantling of national borders and policies protective of local industries are the powerful nations of the north: US, Western European States, and Japan; China is beginning to play a larger role.

During the colonial period, colonizing powers relied primarily on the direct use of force to impose their economic policies. This strategy proved to be successful and expensive at the same time. At first, direct administration by the European nations along with a military presence was a necessity. Later, as the colonization process took hold, and it became too expensive to maintain a military presence, the colonizers began to recruit local and indigenous elites to enforce their policies and manage local economies. Some of the children of these elites were sent to Europe to be educated. As Satish Kumar relates:

Also responsible for the destruction of India's home economy in the eighteenth century was the introduction of the British education under colonial rule. Lord Macaulay, introducing the Indian Education Act stated: "we must do our best to form a class of persons, Indian in blood and color but English in taste, opinions, morals and in intellect" (Kumar 418). Wealthy Indians were sent to public schools and universities; traditional schools were replaced by colonial schools. Educated Indians increasingly learned English poetry, English law, and English customs to the neglect of their own culture. Many educated Indians came to see their own culture as backward, uncivilized and old-fashioned. They wanted to become rulers of India, but they wanted to rule like the British (422).

As the native elites related more and more to their colonizers, diplomacy began to prove more practical and more cost-effective than sheer force.

As many Third World nations sign pacts, enter agreements and become heavily indebted, a rapid erosion of national sovereignty begins. Economic dependency slowly strangles any advantageous position a nation might have had in bettering the conditions

of its people. The dependencies between nations of the North and South are enforced by powerful institutions based in the industrially developed Northern countries (U.S., Canada, Western Europe and Japan), e.g., the World Trade Organization in Washington D.C. These institutions and their imposed policies have proven to be advantageous both economically and politically for multinational corporations, which are mainly located in the nations of the North. As resources are extracted, labor is exploited. China and Mexico's populations are a good example of how populations and their exploitation allow the manufacture of goods, which then flood markets in the First World which, in turn, puts local manufacturers out of business and drives down wages as the economies are service-sector oriented.

Following World War II, the governments of Western Europe and the United States, under vigorous American leadership, sought to construct a more stable international economic order to avoid another worldwide depression as experienced in the 1930s. Their efforts focused on trade and monetary policies. The institutions created to oversee this American led international trade system were the IMF (International Monetary Fund), the World Bank (also known as International Bank of Reconstruction and Development), and the GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade), which would evolve into the well-known and controversial World Trade Organization.

At a series of meetings held in Bretton-Woods, New Hampshire in July of 1944 world leaders, headed by the US and UK, designed the World Bank and the IMF to govern relations in two of the three main arenas of the world economy: production and finance. Designs for an institution to govern relations in the third arena, regarding trade, were left to a world conference in Havana, Cuba in 1947, from which emerged blueprints

for an International Trade Organization or ITO. These three institutions became the foundation for multilateral efforts to prevent the political and economical consequences of economic nationalization that preceded World War II as well as to avoid horrors of the economic breakdown of the great depression years of the 1930s (Korten 160).

The International Monetary Fund was designed to promote free trade and exchange and to oversee the global economy, with the goal of mitigating macro-economic problems such as large trade and budget deficits. The IMF has been especially successful in avoiding accountability for its failed policies and programs, including its policies, which benefit large foreign investors and transnational corporations. Through the IMF, nation states became internationally accountable for their monetary policies in varying degrees (Korten 164).

The World Bank was created to finance European reconstruction. In the wake of World War II, Europe began to rebuild its economy through the rapid dispersal of grants and loans for balance of payments support and imports to temporarily meet basic needs (Korten 160). The United States provided the driving force for the construction of this postwar international economic order. The war had left Europe and Japan economically indebted and devastated. The United States found itself in an advantageous position and became a great source of credit and exports. An international economic order based on the principles of free movement of goods and capital served America's domestic and foreign economic interests and capabilities perfectly (54).

The International Trade Organization was a development-oriented trade institution. Despite the fact the fifty-three nations signed the ITO charter, the US Congress refused to ratify the charter. Instead, the U.S. government led a successful

effort to get other nations to sign on to one small section of the agreement that offered rules for the reduction of tariff barriers. This agreement known as the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, and it has governed trade relations since 1948 (Cavanagh et al 212).

GATT is a legally binding codification of rules for the conduct of trade among its member states (Walters & Blake 14). This institution, located in Geneva, Switzerland, has also provided the international infrastructure for all major multilateral tariff-reduction negotiations since WWII. Its general goal is to maximize growth in world trade and the global economy. This is done through a reduction in trade barriers pursued on a non-discriminatory basis (14). GATT's primary function has been to introduce a form of permanent international oversight and accountability for commercial policies that, prior to its existence, were viewed as exclusively national prerogatives (14). The agreement, according to Goncalves and Goncalves, is flawed. In their article, "Alternatives to the World Trading System," they concluded that the agreement heavily favors the powerful trading nations of the North. In the 1990s, in the most recent round of GATT talks, the U.S. managed to expand GATT powers through the creation of the World Trade Organization (215).

The WTO has the power to hold nations accountable for any sort of violation regarding international trade. The WTO seeks to insure that other countries are following through on their commitments to allow foreign companies to invest without restriction in central areas of their economy. In Mexico, the specific case at hand, the likely outcome is clear to all: "The obvious corporate beneficiaries of this new area will be U.S. carriers, who are best positioned to dominate an uneven playing field" (Chomsky, 1999, 68).

Since their inception, these international institutions have served the interests of those nations that hold an advantageous position on an uneven playing field. According to Robert McChesney, it is not a conspiracy of powerful interests. Rather it is through a variety of institutional mechanisms that inequalities between nations and people are maintained (13).

Structural Adjustment Programs

Structural adjustment is the name of a set of policies designed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to further indebt nations. The stated goals of structural adjustment are: to combat inflation to re-establish the equilibrium of the balance of payments of debtor countries and to prepare the ground for launching economic growth. “Sustained” growth is seen as the primary, long-term objective of adjustment programs. The Bank and the Fund identify sustained economic growth as that which is to be promoted by the market with no interference from the state, its engine being the private sector. This concept can be summed up by the term “market-centered, profit-oriented” development (Cavanagh et al 132). In theory the nation that adopts these structural adjustments, will create growth, which will produce revenue to pay the loan back and, in turn, provide sustainable economic activity.

Structural Adjustment Program in Mexico

According to the World Bank, the purpose of a structural adjustment program is to create or restore “sustainable” economic growth, make lasting progress, and alleviate poverty. Yet, if these are truly the goals of adjustment, the record shows it has not worked, at least not in Mexico.

In 1973 Mexican national and international policies began to withdraw investments in sectors such as small family farms, which supplied food staples to the majority of its population until the 1960s. With the assistance of the World Bank the government began backing away from supporting its traditional agricultural sector in favor of large-scale export production, small-scale agricultural producers began to feel the crunch. This transition occurred over a period of time beginning in the 1950s. During the 1960s and 1970s, conditions worsened as governmental support diminished and Mexican economic planners sought to attract foreign investment, free trade status and privileges from the US. As Tom Barry summarizes, the increasing loss of government support led to a loss of productivity in the agricultural sector due to uneven competition, thus leaving agriculture producers vulnerable to larger and more powerful agrocorporations including foreign companies. Displaced rural workers were forced to survive by entering the unregulated labor market to become servants and low-skilled laborers (36).

Mexico's green revolution, as anticipated by the Mexican technocrats, never arrived. During the 40 years after World War II, the US's vast agribusiness industry and an expanding service sector began pulling many Mexicans and Latin Americans to the North. Lands left behind by the displaced workers, were often swallowed by larger farms and ranches that hired few of the displaced. Although they do not directly own or cultivate land, foreign agribusiness exercises substantial control over the production process through their buying power, technology and market links. Often the contracting corporations are so involved in the production process that they even alter soil preparation and cultivation schedules to ensure the quantity and quality needed to stock US produce markets (Barry 78).

On another level, government cutbacks in agricultural spending and the lack of any serious commitment to improve Mexico's agricultural research capabilities also made Mexican export growers dependent on the flow of agricultural "know-how" from the United States. The foreign contractors' penetration into and control of the countryside has increased because the Mexican government has encouraged foreign investment as a means of financing rural development, especially in export agriculture (79).

Along with the displacement of the traditional agricultural sector, another factor contributing to migration has been demographic change. Mexico's population has been growing by 2.1 percent a year. In places where there are indigenous populations, particularly in poor places like Michoacan, Oaxaca, Guerrero and Chiapas, it has been growing at 5.4 percent a year. Indigenous women, with little access to birth control, are having five to eight children. Most children are beating the mortality rates because of easier access to medical facilities, better diets, government support and dollars coming from North of the border. Over the years, this soaring population growth, along with the lagging economic growth, has left many rural people little choice but to move to the industrial cities, the agriculturally rich regions or to the U.S. (Oppenheimer 52). Despite investment in some of the prominent sectors such as agribusiness and industrial parks with close proximity to the border, many are not able to find jobs. In what would look like promising developments to absorb these displaced rural dwellers, such as a newly built dam began irrigating the large valleys in Sonora and Sinaloa, it did not keep up with the population increases; these valleys supply the U.S. with its winter greens. Similarly, many found that the expansion of maquiladoras (factories) did not provide enough jobs for this immigrating, underemployed population. For many it was the last step before

crossing the artificial border to a more financially stable life as demonstrated by their relatives and friends.

In 1982, Mexico suffered a debt crisis that threatened that country's economy. President De La Madrid (1982-1988) responded by introducing a series of structural adjustment programs arguing that, if Mexico was going to recover economically, the population would have to submit to cuts in all sorts of government-sponsored social programs, and subsidies, as well as a supposedly one time major devaluation of the peso (Pastor & Wise 421). Mexico's governmental endorsement of a liberal economic policy entered its second decade in the nineties with the passage of NAFTA (421). The promises of sustainable growth and better income equity became, instead, deteriorating income distribution, below average economic growth, and massive organized resistance, peaking with the Zapatista revolt in the southern Mexican state of Chiapas in 1994. Some of the consequences of the continued implementation of neo-liberalism through the decade of the 1990s in Mexico are debt and impoverished agriculture.

Enter NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement)

The official introduction of North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between Mexico, the United States, and Canada took place on January 1, 1994. President Salinas de Gortari (1988-1994) expanded De La Madrid's economic adjustments into another important sector, agriculture. He began by sweeping away a complicated web of price supports that had evolved since land reform was first initiated by constitutional decree in 1917. Tariffs on most agricultural imports were abruptly lowered, as were subsidies on production; price guarantees were eliminated for all crops except corn and

beans. At the same time, the government cancelled its crop insurance program and the Rural Development Bank began to restrict its loans to peasant growers whose operations were deemed profitable and only at market rates. Under NAFTA, the agricultural sector's exposure to competition accelerated even further. Tariffs on 57% of the value of US-Mexico agricultural trade were immediately eliminated in 1994 with 94% to be eliminated over the subsequent 10 years. Tariffs on the remaining 6% of highly sensitive products like corn and sugar will be done away with over fifteen years, by 2009 (Pastor & Wise 441).

It is important to understand the impact the implementation of this neo-liberal economic policy has had on Mexico's rural sector. It is because of these policy changes, in particular the withdrawal of governmental support for the small-scale agriculture rural populations need to survive, that we begin to see the gradual dislocation and displacement of rural people. Mexico's population as of 1994 was more than 92 million. Twenty-six percent (just under 24 million) are economically active in the rural sector (Pastor & Wise 441). Moreover, 40% of that population was under the age of 16 in 1992 (441). These statistics paint a picture that shows that for the last twenty years, a steady displacement of a young work-bound population has been occurring. Adoption of policies that negatively affect a substantial percentage of the Mexican population leads to the growing presence of this young population in the United States, including in the predominantly white and rural state of Oregon.

The next section will look at one of the many Mexican states that have been affected by these policies and how they affect the social, cultural, and economic lives of nine families.

CHAPTER III

PRE & POST HISPANIC HISTORY OF THE MIXTECOS

“PEOPLE OF THE CLOUDS”

The Mixtecos

Mexico is a rich, ethnically diverse nation. It has hundreds of ethnic groups that are closely and distantly related by custom and language. There are even groups that do not seem to fit in any one category and are unique in language and custom. The government has attempted to assimilate these many groups into the national culture and, at times, has been aggressive by purposely displacing whole communities. It is only recently that the social climate has allowed a multi-cultural and pluralistic milieu to enter national life.

The Mixteco are one of these large ethnic groups with distinctive language and history. The Mixteco population is spread throughout three states in Mexico: Oaxaca, where most Mixtecos live, Guerrero, and Puebla. The Mixteco in the State of Oaxaca have been historically recognized and divided into three areas, Baja (low) and Alta (high) Mixteca and the coast. It is believed that the Mixtecos began populating this area between 6000 BCE and 700 B.C.E. Throughout this period continued technological transformation gave rise to a civilization that is very much Mixtec in nature. Around 1458 C.E. the Mexica, or Aztec, began military incursions into the area. After intensive negotiations the area came under the economic and political umbrella of the Aztec confederacy (Dahlgren 80-90).

When the Spaniards entered what is now Oaxaca (where most of my subjects are from) in 1524, they quickly overwhelmed and controlled the population with little armed force. Smallpox and measles had already taken their toll in the region, weakening the

population and any significant resistance. As the Spanish began to establish a permanent presence in Oaxaca, they began to exploit what was left of the local population, which brought disastrous consequences to the Mixtecos. The native population was obligated to work to the brink of exhaustion until they fulfilled their duty to their new masters. Death in the cities, mines and ranches became the norm. This caused protest and escape to more remote sites. The Catholic Church finished the job of colonial control and influence as the new religion it introduced was forcibly imposed through threats of death if conversion was refused (Fernandez 286). As time went by, a disharmonious union took place between Indigenous rituals and Spanish ceremonies. This union of traditions, albeit imperfect, helped the Mixteco people to weather some of the more intense periods of colonization.

In the economic sector, a radical change was the introduction of foods that were new to the continent: wheat, barley, oranges, olives, and bananas. Another more damaging introduction was of old world animals such as cows, sheep, pigs, horses, donkeys, mules and goats (Edinger 126). Together these new species would prove to be ecologically devastating in the long run. Steven Edinger, author of *The Road from Mixtepec*, explored some of the causes for out migration through Mexico and U.S., focusing primarily on the animals brought to Oaxaca, Mexico. Most of the destruction took place in the northern part of the state.

Because the mountainous Mixteca was ill-suited for large scale, European-style agriculture, peripheral lands rented by the encomenderos always went to the grazing of cattle, sheep and goats. As Woodrow Borah puts it, livestock began to replace human beings as the dominant species of the region...The early colonial years were boom times for the cattle business. The livestock grazed not only the vacated farmland but the uncultivated slopes as well. All the abundance of the Mixteca was at their disposal, with no natural predators but for a few mountain lions and coyotes...The livestock boom represented the Mixteca's first encounter with world economy...The stock animals behind the boom roamed the Mixteca as though wild. Overgrazing

would inflict an everlasting scar...The livestock began to encroach on lands still under cultivation trampling and uprooting the Indians crops. The livestock trampled the neglected terraces and stripped the lands of their vegetation. The arrival of each wet season, the rains began to wash away the topsoil...the erosion brought on by overgrazing compounded itself with the arrival of what cultivation and the ox-drawn plow. The Spaniards preferred wheat to the native food staples, and regular plowing was needed for wheat farming. After harvesting the wheat, the cattle would move in to have their fill-these methods worsen the erosion problem (Edinger 41-43).

Today this region suffers from topsoil erosion, which affects the productivity of the land, especially if it is related to animal grazing. As the human population has increased, the demand on the land has as well. This has caused gradual out migration due to unsustainable modern farming practices (Lyman 145). Erosion is, thus, one of several factors involved in the out migration of people, particularly in this area of Mexico. Recent geographical surveys of the Mixteca region in Oaxaca suggest that 78% of the total land area has been injured to a degree, while 30% of the formerly arable land has been completely lost (Edinger 45).

Brief History of Migration

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimates that almost 100 million people in the world today live outside of the countries in which they were born. They are not just moving from Mexico to the U.S., but from developing countries to developed ones all over the world (Bacon 25). The Mixtecos are part of these 100 million people. The Mixtecos of Oaxaca are newcomers to the agricultural migrant circuit of Northwestern Mexico (Sonora, Sinaloa, and Baja California) and the western United States (primarily Oregon, California and Washington). Intensive migration began officially during World War II with the Bracero Program. Mixtecos, along with thousands of other Mexicans, were recruited to work in the agricultural sectors of both

Mexico and the United States in the 1940s, which continued until the program ended in 1964.

In the 1960s and early 1970s, Mixtecos were recruited to Sinaloa and Baja California, two states in the northwest of Mexico. During the Aleman Presidential administration, heavy investment in irrigation open up the fertile coastal plains of Sonora and Sinaloa in northwestern Mexico to private farming modeled after the capital-intensive agriculture of the United States. The resulting production was mainly cotton and, in the winter, vegetables destined either for export or for processing by US companies that were, in turn, busily opening plants in Mexico, particularly around the US Mexico border (Stephen 3). During the 1980s, the two states of Sinaloa and Baja California would serve as one of the many stops on the northward journey into California and the Pacific Northwest. Eighty-two percent of the Mixteco migrants that arrived in California, migrate further, traveling to Oregon and Washington and back to Mexico. Of the estimated 40,000-50,000 migrants active in the 1980s, 10,000 were able to take advantage of the 1986 amnesty. The remaining tens of thousands lingered as undocumented people, vulnerable and subject to exploitation and the fear of deportation. Their status is permanent fear and uncertainty for today and tomorrow. As of 1993, a study completed by Zabin and Hughes showed Mixteco presence estimated at around 50,000 in California alone, making up about 16.6 percent of the state's farm labor force (Stephen 4).

Mixteco labor is used to harvest strawberries, raspberries, cucumbers, hops, Christmas trees, broccoli, squash and other crops. Because of the demand for their labor here and the economic pressure at home, no matter how many walls are built on the border, no matter how many troops or national guardsmen or helicopters patrol it,

Mixtecos and other workers will cross it looking for an uncertain future compared to no future. There is no more eloquent testimony to this than the fact that almost 400 women and men died in the last three years in the desert trying to make the journey from northern and southern Mexico (Bacon 25). According the renowned Christian Science Monitor, more than 3,000 migrants have died since 1995, and that's a conservative estimate, because it is based on bodies actually found. Despite anti-immigrant laws and anti-immigrant backlash, the fact remains that this migration pattern will continue until economic policies both at the local and global level change radically (Nevins 1).

It is not difficult to find the Mixtecos here in Oregon, particularly during the harvest, which begins around April, peaks in July and August, and wanes in October. In many cases, however, the Mixtecos are hesitant to tell their story. This is partly due to their natural distrust of strangers here. This is not to say they are not friendly, but they do not open up easily. This is understandable, as some of my clients have not had positive experiences with people on this side of the border. Their communities are very tightly knit, which is one of the reasons they have had some success in settling down. For most Oregonians, the Mixtecos are invisible. Even to other Mexicans they are seen as different, as *indigenas*, *indios*, *oaxaquitas*, *prietos*, all of which are derogatory terms. Individuals or companies who seek to take advantage of their vulnerable position frequently target them. One must pay close purposeful attention even to notice them, as was true in my case. For me it took two harvest seasons to actually sit down and talk casually about their humble beginnings and even this proved to be a challenge.

Most of my subjects are bilingual. Their first language was Mixteco. Spanish was their second language, which they needed to speak to find survival work in Mexico as they made their way north. Here in the U.S., a third foreign language, English, confronts

them. This communication barrier makes them easy targets. For those who have mastered the Spanish language, their regional accent serves as an identifier, which can be used to target them for potential abuse, prejudice and misunderstanding. One case that exemplifies this problem occurred while I was working with a Migrant Head Start program in the city of Woodburn. An Anglo teacher from the program related to me the difficulty of communicating with one of the mothers while doing a home visit. The teacher described the mother as distant, uninterested and possibly mildly retarded. When I had the opportunity to talk to her, it did not take me long to realize that she partially understood what I had said in Spanish. Later it would be confirmed to me by our social service worker that she spoke primarily Mixteco. One could easily see the potential break down and damage that was averted once we figured out what the issue was.

As I began to look for individuals to interview for this project, I would usually find myself in the middle of a field, talking with them as they picked crops such as strawberries, blueberries, raspberry, hops, cucumber, and zucchini. Their dark, bent figures were only noticeable in the distance because of the bright summer sun. I only took notice of them because I was looking for them. Another place I found the interviewees was at the government sanctioned housing. Some of them are not much different from where one would keep cows or sheep, the only difference being the concrete floor and rough bunk beds. If tenants are lucky they have access to a shower stall set outside. One has to see these conditions to believe it. I encourage the reader to not just have this cross his/her mind. In order to truly internalize this work it will require an exploration of our cultural and societal notions and biases, often perpetrated by an abundance of misinformation and inundation of media-promoted distractions. These subtle forces

prevent us from seriously confronting the reality of today's situations expressed in violence on many levels.

These nine indigenous stories of displacement and migration will be discussed in the context of the U.S.-led neo-liberal agendas, policies, and the consequences of these. The North American Free Trade Agreement and its counterpart, the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas are U.S.-led economic treaties that are wreaking havoc throughout the hemisphere at an unprecedented rate.

CHAPTER IV
CAUGHT IN THE STORM OF CHANGE:
THE ESCAPE, THE \$WORD AND THE CROSS

Nine Families

Between 1999 and 2001, I interviewed nine Mixteco families living with their families in Oregon's Willamette Valley. In the following pages, they explain in their own words the reasons they chose to come north and what their experiences have been. I have divided the chapter into four categories, reflecting dominant themes in these immigrants' lives. By bringing these factors together, we can easily decipher the main reasons that contribute to people's decision to migrate in search of a more dignified life.

In the first section, "Looking Back: The Migrant Experience," we take a look at the personal circumstances of my subjects and their families leading to their decision to come North to the United States. In the second section, "Remembering Our Ranchos: Institutions of Racism and Government Negligence," we explore the subjects' memories of their school experiences and the formation of their identities through their eyes during childhood. This section presents the failed and corrupt institutions that contribute to the deterioration of community resources and loss of livelihood. The third theme, titled "Modern-Day Colonization: Evangelism and Rejection," is where we see how foreign cultural penetration and religious evangelism cause conflict and tension in indigenous communities, ultimately contributing to the destabilization of an already vulnerable people and their cultural heritage. My subjects' testimonies indicate that technology, lack of access and an often-poor educational support system lead to further isolation and alienation, thus contributing to the destruction of identities and the creation of new ones

in which dignity and spirit are repackaged into a series of sound bytes, ultimately expressed through various media, a transformation that furthers transnational capitalism even as it destroys the sacred.

Looking Back: The Migrant Experience (Escaping poverty)

Yaku

Yaku began her story with her early marriage at age fourteen, even though her migrant experience began much earlier, at the age of eight. One of her earliest memories was of the endless tomato fields of Culiacan, Sinaloa. These left an imprint on her mind that included long hours and exhaustion from the heat. Yaku came from a family of twelve children and her father had decided to migrate in search of work in order to honor a debt contracted to bury a relative in the “old traditional way,” she was told. Steven Edinger, in his book *The Road from Mixtepec*, shows in detail how many Mixteco families with time-honored traditions begin to migrate not only out of sheer necessity, but also to maintain cultural bonds that are challenged more with every passing year. Economic inflows from outside the community, namely, remittances sent or brought back from the U.S., are used to maintain traditional practices, such as a traditional Mixteco burial.

The year Yaku’s family left their home in Juxtlahuaca, it had been a difficult year for their own harvest. Yaku’s family plot, in the Alta Mixteca region in Oaxaca, was not river fed but rain fed, and that year their region was experiencing a severe drought. It had not rained enough for the last four years. Such drought conditions aggravate an already alarming situation in the Oaxacan countryside. In 1975, a survey confirmed that 90% of

the population was living off 29% of the arable land. By 1984, the average person could no longer live off his/her land and was either forced to work for someone else or migrate (Edinger 56).

Yaku and her family pushed northward into Culiacan, and then Baja California. They would spend the next six years picking tomatoes, squash, and beans in the rich valleys of northern Mexico. Eventually her father and older brothers would cross the border undocumented to work in Fresno, California where the wages were higher. Yaku would stay behind with her mother and younger brothers and sisters as the older siblings and her father eked out a living on the other side of the border. It was around the age of 14, while picking tomatoes, that she met her husband-to-be. After marrying him, she began to travel with him over the border into the US. The promise of work and dollars appealed to them as they began a family. Yaku and her husband thus joined the ranks of a disorganized mobile labor force whose presence has served well to keep wages and prices down in the US agricultural sector for the last 106 years (Acuña 141).

Yit'a Ita

The first time Yit'a Ita (River Flower) left home was at the age of 16. Like Yaku, she began migrating north to Sinaloa to pick jitomates (green tomatoes) and cucumbers. During her stay in Sinaloa she saw people getting sick. She said that since there was no access to potable water, the people working were forced to gather and drink water from the canal. Other sources of water came from bottles, which cost too much for most migrant families, or from the city, which was half an hour away by foot. She, too, succumbed to intestinal illness from drinking the water.

Lack of clean water is becoming a huge issue for Mexico (and much of Latin America). Most water in the countryside is diverted to export crops, and only the affluent have access to clean bottled water. Water flowing from canals is contaminated with fertilizer and insecticide runoffs. Abler and Pick, in an article in the *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*, commented on the health problems of migrant workers who are directly exposed to these contaminants, usually without receiving adequate training or support (Abler & Pick 794).

Around 1992, Yit'a Ita paid a coyote \$2500.00 to get her over the border to escape the situation facing many of her paisanos (people of her region). The money came from her husband who had migrated ahead of her and worked for two years in the California central valley. As soon as she was over, they headed towards Oxnard, California. There they traveled together through out the valley and beyond, picking strawberries.

Itaq Bi Dati

Itaq bi dati's first time in the United States was in 1994. She was already married. The first time she crossed was with a coyote. They met him in Nogales, Mexico near the Arizona and Mexican border. Soon after crossing, her husband took her to Madera, California, where numerous Mixtecos live. Soon after settling in this community, she noticed an interesting divergence between those who had legal documentation and those who did not. Since she and her husband did not have documentation, there was a latent fear in their minds that arose not only when cops were around, but also at work, due to the attitudes of their co-workers. For a while they kept to themselves. It seemed to Itaq bi

dati that those who called themselves “civilized” seemed selfish and did not look after one another, compared to the general caring attitude that her own kind displayed. There seem to be a lack of respect for one another also. “Each individual needs respect,” she exclaimed.

Throughout our conversation Itaq bi dati led me to believe that she had paid close attention to issues surrounding the North American Trade Agreement (NAFTA). After NAFTA was enacted, thousands of people could no longer survive on the little land they had. Its impact has been felt on both sides of the border, particularly in the agricultural industry. A *Statesman Journal* article titled “Few in Mexico or the Northwest Benefit Much from NAFTA,” on July 6, 2003, revisits the impact of the NAFTA treaty signed in 1994 by the U.S. Canada and Mexico, focusing on the impact here in the Northwest.

Journalist Michael Rose summarized its effects on both Northwest and Mexican farmers:

Free trade from the NAFTA has created upheaval in the agricultural industry on each side of the border...It has grain farmers in the Midwest reaping the benefits by sending product to Mexico, Mexican farmers trying to adapt by switching to new crops and Northwest farmers facing competitive threat from fruits and vegetables grown south of the border...US farmers in the Midwest have shipped massive amounts of grain into the Mexican market...Agriculture officials in Mexico say it has displaced the production of Mexican grain farmer, who don't produce enough exports and don't get hefty government subsidies like their US counterparts...Bad farm policies and the end of tariffs on many agricultural imports has forced 25 million Mexican farmers to find other ways to make a living... Many have chosen to illegally migrate to the US...Another response by farmers in Mexico: Shift from grain to higher valued row crops, grown and harvested with cheap labor. The vegetables and fruits produce in Mexico compete with those grown in the Willamette Valley (B3).

Itaq bi dati put it this way: “NAFTA benefits those who own; those who are poor, forget about it.”

Taachi

My conversation with Taachi began with asking about his childhood memories. He was not hesitant to share his feelings of injustice as he was growing up. “Us Indians lived in the worst spots. White people [Mestizos and those of European ancestry] lived in the best spots.” He continued with a tone of resentment: “The situation would be bearable only if it rained on our plots of land.” The well-being of his family depended on the weather. If it rained too little or too much, it would ruin the crops. The best land was near water sources: rivers, lakes and streams. Taachi became very conscious of this inequality and resented it. He remembered his parents struggling as they eked out a living from their small plot of land.

Another example of injustice that Taachi gave was how “white people” came and were really nice to his family and other campesinos. They would target the most vulnerable families and would offer them a certain price for their sheep. After convincing the family to give up their best sheep for the prices they offered, they would go and sell these sheep outside the community at a much higher price. “They are powerful,” Taachi added with a suspicious tone, “they trick us indigenous people because we are weak and are not aware of how the world works outside our ranchos.”

Edinger recorded similar inequalities in *The Road From Mixtepec*. He writes that in the Oaxacan region of Mixtepec, 7% of the population owns 35% of the land, which is less severe than in other wealthier agricultural lands throughout Mexico (55). In the case of livestock, during the 17th through the 19th centuries, Oaxaca was a large exporter for both domestic and regional markets. “Before, there were many goats and the people were few,” said young Gustavo Gomes, one of Edinger’s subjects (55). As modernization made its way into Oaxaca, animals would become a double edge sword, on the one hand contributing toward the deterioration of the environment, but on the other serving as a

resource to trade or sell in years of bad harvests. The animals were also used to produce wool, leather, and for plowing. In Tlaxiaco, a cattle monopoly developed that began purchasing livestock from around Oaxaca. When people sold their animals in years of crop failure or disease epidemics, the buyer would take their livestock for almost nothing (128).

Another experience Taachi described that was related to him was that during the Mexican Revolutionary War (1910-1917) people had little money to eat and some died from starvation. Those who could no longer afford to feed their families with their plot of land would sell their land in order to buy food and other necessities. Once this money ran out these families would leave to find work, becoming the first migrant families. This out-migration began during this war, but it gradually increased and it has not stopped. Before that, no one would leave town. Migrants were primarily men of working age. Only the very young and old remained. The ideal of leaving was to ultimately return. But the ideal was often the exception. People would have children in their new locations and would often end up settling there. Today, Taachi notices that even people with education are crossing the border illegally. He has run into a few such people in the fields where he works seasonally in California and Oregon.

Taquil

Taquil was sitting on his porch with his wife, Nelli, when I pulled into their driveway. They had recently purchased their home. Taquil had found a permanent job with a local manufactured home company in Woodburn. This year-round position had allowed them to settle and properly raise their children. They liked Oregon and felt it to

be a very safe environment compared to where they had lived previously, in Stockton, California.

As we started the interview regarding Taquil's migration experience and what it was like growing up in Oaxaca, Nelli began to jump in and add to the conversation. This was atypical compared to my other subjects. As I delved into both of their backgrounds, I discovered that they came from different economic classes. Taquil grew up poor. Nelli, on the other hand, had not; she had had the opportunity to obtain an education and had become a teacher. She taught for several years before deciding to join her husband in the US. The neglect of the education system in her school district and community offered little hope for many of her students who would not return to school for reasons of survival. Nelli, despite her Indigenous background, was an exception while Taquil was the norm.

Tom Barry's record of socioeconomic indicators gives us a general picture of where Taquil came from. In Mexico, 46% of people 15 years and older and of Indigenous background are illiterate. Only 14% finish primary school (kindergarten to sixth grade). Twenty-eight percent of children six through fourteen years do not attend school. Sixty-three percent of the Indigenous municipalities lose population to out migration. Eighty-three percent of Indigenous people are very poor or extremely poor (175). These indicators help explain the differences in articulation between Nelli and Taquil during our conversation. While Taquil's answers were short and he would pause to answer, Nelli would be quick and was able to answer quickly and drew from her academic experience.

Nelli shared with me some of the history she had learned while in school, such as that about the administration of Lazaro Cardenas and his agrarian reform program.

Cardenas was the president of Mexico between 1934 and 1940. During his administration, according to Nelli, Oaxaca began to be mainstreamed into Mexican national life and economy as well as the emerging global economy. She added that at the time, even soap and toys finally became common all over Oaxaca. Yet soon after Cardenas left office, “all of a sudden” the farm loans and assistance stopped and things began to return to how they were before. In *Zapata’s Revenge*, Tom Barry sheds light on the dynamic Nelli pointed out. Barry writes that President Cardenas, in order to control unrest and address the demands of the numerous campesino (peasant) movements that had proliferated during the 1920s and 1930s, encouraged the formation of a national government-affiliated campesino organization. This organization was to oversee the implementation of some of the agrarian reform programs as promised in the constitution of 1917. As the government funneled money into building this organization it also sought to control its members and use them to maintain power, creating a corporatist relationship that eventually led to a dependent, passive agrarian sector. The successors to Cardenas continued this relationship, which far from empowering campesinos, disempowered them by casting them as clients of political patronage (Barry 165). This situation was made worse by a lack of continuity and accountability within the government itself, for instance government loans and investments allocated by one administration would be taken out and put on another pet project by the next administration (165). Thus, projects that seemingly had a strong start would be dropped in the middle, leaving many worse off.

Modernization, thus, managed to reach Oaxaqueños but only enough to integrate them into the global economy by disrupting their traditional pattern of existence and making it no longer viable. The local producers could not compete with the cheaply

made goods. Traditional hand made clothing became outdated. Sandals were no longer the occupation of all. Community house building became more expensive and less practical. Locally grown fibers competed with plastics and synthetic fibers.

Modernization brought opportunity only to the few. It was as if the resource-rich and heavily populated Mexican south was purposely being integrated in order to exploit it for the benefit of a very few. As this pattern expanded throughout Oaxaca, more and more Oaxaquenos began to take the road north to the cities and the US in larger numbers.

After meeting and marrying Taquil and seeing her teaching career come to near halt due to the inadequate support her school district received, Nelli joined her husband in the North. Only four years have passed since she came to the United States. After listening to Nelli, I turned to Taquil with some more questions. Taquil remembers that, over time, a lot of families were put in the position of deciding which of their children would go to school and which would work along the side of their parents. Those who went to work would typically leave with the father and begin migrating to Sinaloa or Veracruz on the gulf coast. Those who stayed behind would tend to the land, which was seasonal work and insufficient to make ends meet. Taquil's education ended at fourteen years of age, which was above average for the people in his region. As he grew older, he began migrating with his father and, later on, with his brother. He got to travel and got to know a lot of Mexico. Despite his low educational status, Taquil was interested in Mexican politics and had paid attention to the issues related to NAFTA. From his perspective he believes that the trade agreement has caused more migration.

Tindu

At the age of eight, Tindu and her mother began migrating within Mexico along with her three older siblings. Tindu's father had abandoned them. As time went by, the older siblings left for the United States. Her second oldest brother left first and began sending money back to help the family. The oldest brother, seeing this and feeling envious of his younger brother's success in supporting the family, soon joined him. This is what Tindu recalled. Soon the brothers married and began asking their mother to come join them. Tindu's mother, however, kept working her land with the help of her friends and relatives. Tindu's mother owned approximately seven acres of land, of which only one was cultivated due to the lack of help. They planted and harvested corn, which they would sell in order to buy other goods. They would produce enough staple food for two years. Unfortunately, the price of corn gradually lost value as government subsidies were gradually removed and cheap U.S. corn began destabilizing corn prices in Mexican local markets. Overtime, it became harder to make enough money to buy meat and other necessities.

At the age of ten Tindu began doing more migrant farm work. She recalls coming back from the fields after picking jitomates, chilis and cotton. Upon coming back to their temporary camp after laboring all day, she would begin playing with her dolls. During this time, her mother took under her care two children and their sick mother, who soon died. They continued working in spite of this hardship, taking care of the two children who were now orphaned. As they migrated around Mexico's rich fertile valleys, sometimes they would arrive and find all of the housing and temporary shelter was already full of other migrant workers. With no choice left, they would pay someone to build them one. These shelters did not do much to protect them from rain and dust. Tindu remembers waking up soaked after a night rain. Some mornings, some of the

migrant families would have a relative die during the night due to exposure or scorpion bites. Tindu was bitten once, but she was not allergic to their bite.

Yaat

Yaat (Eagle) was born in a town called Santiago Tino in Oaxaca. There are about 300 people in this town. The closest city is San Juan Mixtepec, which is five hours away and has a hospital. Most of the people still used medicinal plants and a curandero (traditional healer) to address health problems like fevers. Our interview took place in his apartment in Woodburn, Oregon. Yaat has three children and recently turned 34 years old. His hometown is poor he states. The houses are all made of adobe and most people grow corn and beans. The people of his town who are considered rich are those who own goats, sheep and cows. His family was not one of these wealthy families. They survived on the little land they had until he was old enough to leave. There are no cars. No post office. Everybody is Catholic and the main holiday is the celebration of Santo Santiago (St. James). Yaat's memories of his hometown are of cooperation, celebration and fighting among men, women, and children.

Yaat's parents, brothers and sisters went to the state of Sinaloa to work the fields there. They picked chiles (jalapeños) and tomatoes and stayed there until he was about 12 years old. Yaat learned to accept death when he lost a young brother in these fields. Funerals seem to have taken place on a weekly basis. Conditions were difficult. Drinking water was nowhere to be found except from the irrigation canals, which was contaminated with fertilizer run-off. There were no bathroom facilities. Most of the children died from water-related complications. Yaat came to Oregon in 1984 for the

first time. It was easy, he said, to cross the border. He went through Arizona the first time. He caught a train that took him to Los Angeles then later to Fresno and on to Oregon. He was fourteen years old. Throughout his youth he would travel following the crops. Some harvest would take him all the way to Miami, Florida. It was in Miami where he had his first run in with immigration authorities. The border patrol bussed him to Matamoros, Sinaloa, Mexico from there and with \$100 in his pocket he went to Ciudad Juarez in order to cross to El Paso, Texas. Once he crossed, he went off to Arizona, then to California. Once in Fresno, he began traveling again to work in crops like Tennessee's tomatoes, Virginia and North Carolina's tobacco and Colorado's apples. He primarily interacted with other Mixtecos who spoke regional Mixteco similar to his. Mixtecos have this sense of being united, unlike other Mexicans, he told me. They trust each other, and are there for each other, whether sharing a tortilla or traveling together to the next crop, having just met the night before.

Erandi

I met Erandi at the local library in Woodburn, Oregon, 16 miles up the road from Oregon's capital, Salem. Erandi is in her thirties and is a mother of two. She was dressed comfortably and had her hair tied back in a ponytail. She was relaxed and a bit curious about what our interview would entail. Unlike my Mixteco subjects, Erandi was a Purepecha woman from the state of Michoacan, which is west of Mexico City. Erandi displayed an aura of confidence that her Mixteco counterparts lacked during our interviews. She had arrived in Oregon in 1989 at the age of twenty. She had joined her brothers and sisters after deciding that she missed them too much.

As we proceeded with the interview, I began to think about the person who had referred Erandi to me. This person had not considered the specificity of ethnicity—

Mixteco in this case--to my project. All she knew is that I wanted to speak with people who had retained language and other customs distinct from those of mainstream Mexican culture. To her, a person who spoke a native language apart from Spanish, whether Mixteco or Purepecha was an "Indian." This did not surprise me, as the dynamics behind ethnicity and identification seem to be of little relevance to the mainstreamed Mexican. In Mexico, the "Indian" is one in the same whether he or she is a Tenochca, Tarahumara, Maya, Mixteco or, in this instance, Purepecha. Nevertheless, in spite of her distinct ethnic background, I chose to interview Erandi to see if her views would differ widely from my other subjects. She was the fifth person I interviewed.

Erandi's little hillside pueblo is called San Andres, near the shore of the often-visited Lake Patzcuaro, in Michoacan. The people in the area are renowned for their carpentry skills and rustic expressions in their furniture and household items. Large numbers of Purepechas began their northward trek several generations before the Mixtecos to the rapidly growing industrialized Mexican cities in the Mexico-U.S. border, and further north to fill the need for labor in the expanding U.S. agricultural industry. Many of the Purepecha youth returned to Michoacan with a newly found prestige backed by the dollars in their pockets. Many migrants maintained links to their communities, becoming the latter's main means of economic viability. In one of my visits to Mexico, one of the residents from Zacapu, Michoacan took me on a tour of his town. He pointed out impressive homes that had been built with the U.S. dollars that came into the community weekly. Where once stood a modest sun dried brick home, now stood, what I perceived to be, a middle class home similar to the ones found in many southern California neighborhoods.

Like other Native Mexicans, the Purepechas participated in the Bracero program, of the 1940s-1960s. In Erandi's case, her brothers went to the U.S. in the early 1980s as undocumented workers. When the immigration act of 1986 offered an amnesty that paved the way for millions to receive legal documentation, her brothers were those lucky few to get through the process to obtain the necessary documentation of proof and money to complete this process. Once they had documentation, Erandi's brothers helped other members of the family come. They could do this now, because of their access to better paying jobs and better economic stability. Erandi's brothers no longer depended on seasonal labor, the primary source of income for undocumented workers in the U.S. A recent study done by the Pew Hispanic Center in Washington D.C. found that while finding work is certainly the main reason many migrants cross the border, other factors also play a significant role. The researchers found that the prevalent reasons for coming to the U.S. were higher wages, better working conditions and a chance to reunite with family members (Montgomery A1). The last was the motivation for Erandi's immigration in 1989.

Erandi now works as a Head Start teacher during the summer harvest season. During this time she comes into contact with Mixteco families and empathizes with them as they confront the same obstacles that she did when she first arrived; the main barrier is the language and lack of legal status of residency. Another advantage of having legal status is the ability to travel and stay connected to relatives in Mexico. Erandi had resided in the U.S. ten years before she went to visit, soon after her second son was born. She visited her parents in the small town where she had been born and raised. She shared her experience of this visit, which was sensitive and subtly negative. The first thing she noticed was that the town felt empty, only the very old and very young walked and

played in its streets. It seemed that all able bodies had gone to “El Norte,” the North; the pull north was strongly felt in Erandi’s community. Ten years after she had left, things had changed; she felt disconnected from this place she once called home. Here Erandi had pointed out a phenomenon that has occurred across southern Mexico: the emptying villages and communities to provide a labor force in the U.S.

Erandi was twenty years of age when she migrated and did not necessarily understand the socio-economic and historical forces behind her relocation to the U.S. With all the complexities behind the immigration and the alterations it causes socially, Erandi has become a casualty of survival and economics and all at a cost, including challenging her identity, as I will explain later.

Remembering Our “Ranchos”: Institutions and Racism (The Sword)

Erandi

Most of my subjects began to identify mistreatment based on ethnic discrimination at an early age. As a child, Erandi recalls hearing people use the word “indio” under their breath. Growing up around these hostile attitudes, however, did not impact Erandi as much as it did her family and peers. She could see that her peers at school let this bring them down. At her school, where the curriculum was bilingual, Spanish and Purepecha, the Purepecha children often fell behind those who only spoke Spanish. Most of the children from her community did not begin to learn Spanish until kindergarten. Erandi remembered that in school the teachers would typically pick the lighter-skinned students to do the special projects, while darker peers, like herself, watched as privileges and resources were unevenly handed out. As the years went by,

her darker peers would begin losing interest in school, particularly the girls. She recalled once trying to talk a girlfriend into continuing secondary school (8th-9th grade) with her. During the conversation her friend replied, “Why? We are not meant to study.” Erandi looks back and sees that directly or indirectly her peers grew alienated from the hostile treatment they had received. Many of her peers adopted a quiet and passive-aggressive apathy as they headed toward adulthood.

Discrimination could be felt in many social settings. In another instance, while visiting Quiroga, a town 15 minutes away by car, Erandi entered a bank with her mother to cash a money order that had arrived from the US. As she stood in line she watched an elderly indigenous man (she recognized his ethnicity by the clothes he was wearing) be completely ignored by the bank staff as he stood looking around for direction and attention. The staff expressed hostility and ignored him while attending to others who were behind him in the line.

Today Erandi still speaks Purepecha, but communicates mainly in Spanish with her brothers and sisters. Only when her parents are around is Purepecha used, particularly when sharing personal matters, which the children should not participate in. She teaches her children Spanish and sees no usefulness in speaking Purepecha. Erandi sees Spanish as an important part of retaining an identity but sees Purepecha as useless in the United States. She wants to master English to get a better job and advance. I asked Erandi what she thought of Anglo-Americans. She began to chuckle, then her demeanor changed as she searched for careful wording. She told me that working in the US has been quite challenging, especially when she first arrived and had no legal status. She continued, “at work you have no right to complain about your working conditions.” She has felt many times the condescending looks she must tolerate to keep her job. She exclaimed. “If you

cannot speak English, they look at you like you're stupid or something. Worse yet are the Mexicans born here." She continued, "they seem resentful and I believe it has to do with the education they have received here. So I see them scold others so that they can feel superior. Personally Gringos don't bother me, but they are absolutely clueless about who we are."

Indeed these are turbulent times and at the time I am writing, the Latino community faces the challenge of coming together to challenge proposed federal legislation that would criminalize those who do not have legal resident status. The Minuteman and other anti-immigrant organizations are popping up all over the U.S., ranting about the impact of Mexican and other immigrants from around the globe with little or no facts. The Latino community in the U.S., lacking homogenous interests, has also been divided in their views of recent Mexican immigrants. Though ethnicity has not been brought up in the discussion, a lot of recent immigrants are of the poorer sections of the population, primarily made up of Indigenous communities from around Mexico. There is no denying that discrimination and racism are factors, though most will not admit it and hide behind the veil of the law and the fact that it has been broken by these "illegals." Working in a high school with a substantial number of Mexican and Latino youth, I have also seen the dividing line between those who have recently arrived and those who were born here and have mastered English. I was not surprised by Erandi's observations about the resentment and jealousy that exists in the community.

As our interview continued, I asked Erandi how she identified herself. She responded that she identified as Mexican. She stated this proudly adding that she saw herself as a Mexican who could speak a "dialect." Many Anglos choose to identify people who are Spanish speakers as Hispanic. I asked her. "What about Hispanic?" She

perceived this word referring to people that could only speak Spanish. “What about the word ‘Indigena’?” I asked. She answered that this was her ethnicity. Identity is only an issue when issues of personal pride or separation are concerned. People do not give it much thought, particularly my indigenous subjects. Several of them went to one side as a matter of pride and others avoided the topic altogether.

Yaku

Yaku remembers her childhood in Oaxaca and in other parts of Mexico, as they made their way through the migrant agricultural circuits. It was an emotionally painful experience particularly at school. Terms such as “sin zapatos” (shoeless Indians) or “del rancho” (villager, similar to hillbilly) were common insults in the classroom or during recess. She hated school. She was conscious of how she talked because of her accent. Her clothing made matters worse and made her an easy target. Apart from dealing with the berating and indifference shown by the teachers, her work as a migrant contributed to her failure to retain important academic skills like writing, reading and basic math. Her parents would do their best to give her access to education but as soon as she would settle into the class, the family would move onto the next harvest. What she would retain was the bad experience to which her peers had submitted her. Her brothers would take a more aggressive approach; they would confront the perpetrators, sometimes winning sometimes losing and fights became part of the everyday school experience. Her mother was also resentful of the attitudes shown toward her children. The father was more passive-aggressive and would often walk away to avoid confrontations. Yaku remembers the experience of discrimination every place she went: the schools, the banks the social agencies. Despite these experiences, Yaku gives her mother credit for holding strong

instead of letting the children assimilate into the mainstream Mexican culture. She is proud of her Mixteco heritage. Today Yaku continues to speak Mixteco, the only language her mother speaks. Yaku also teaches her children Mixteco. She does not want them to forget where they came from.

Since the birth of the modern Mexican nation, the driving philosophy has been to assimilate its diverse ethnic groups into a constructed notion of Mexican nationalism. But factors such as discrimination, dispossession of resources, and concentration of wealth have made the majority of Mexicans cling to their regional identities. Only during the last 30 years has the government acknowledged its diverse population through the creation of government agencies that support bilingual and bi-cultural education in Indigenous communities. The problem of economic inequality is a fact of life in Mexico. Social movements that address this have attracted the wrath of the government and the situation has often turned deadly. The state of Guerrero is such an example. Guerrero is a state with the third largest population of Indigenous ethnic groups in Mexico. For many decades, Guerrero has experienced a low-intensity warfare targeting campesinos. In the 1970s, the Mexican government, with U.S. support, conducted an offensive against guerrilla groups accused of being communist. More recently, the war on drugs has been used as a justification for significant human rights abuses (Doyle 1).

Discrimination is salient in Mexico. Though the color line is not as clear as one observes in the U.S. with White and Black relations, the degree of discrimination according to how indigenous one looks has an impact on economic and social mobility. As recently as 2005, a report gathered by the Mexican government's Minister of Social Development drew attention to the extent racism exists within the Mexican nation. Josefina Vasquez Mota, the minister, was herself surprised by the findings calling them a

"crude, painful and startling picture of Mexican reality" (Thompson 1). The report found that 40% of people surveyed would not want to live next to an Indian community. The report also found a high level of sexist attitudes toward women: one out of three respondents found it normal that a woman did not earn as much as a man, 20% said that women were not capable of filling important jobs compared to men and one out of four said that women were raped because they provoked men (Thompson 1).

While visiting Mexico City, I superficially assessed the dynamics of the color line. Places like banks, stores and social settings like museums and restaurants were often run/and or frequented by lighter skinned Mexicans, while the darker skinned Mexicans were either cleaning up the streets or were out in open-air stands selling pirated or useless decorations. The color line, though not blatant, was there for the observer who wanted to see it. Most of my subjects had felt discrimination. Most identified with their ethnic group and noticed the difference in treatment when dealing with institutions, starting in school, and in their dealings with authorities.

Itaq Bi Dati

Itaq Bi Dati left her small village at the age of nine. She went to the city (Oaxaca City) to work as a maid. Her fond memories of childhood in her small town quickly dissolved as she began working for a family that promised her a place to stay and access to school in exchange for her labor around the home, which included cooking, laundry, cleaning and taking care of the family's children. Itaq Bi Dati remembers that by the time she was done with her chores, she was exhausted. She had little energy to go to school. It was difficult for her to concentrate. As she got older and entered puberty, the female head of household began to blame her for everything that went wrong around the house

such as food missing from the refrigerator or things not properly put away. In school, things did not go well either. She remembers the abuse from the other children. They would insult her, pull her long braids, and poke her with their pencils. She would return crying and put herself to sleep wishing she would not wake up. Toward the end of her education she began skipping school. Her last year would be the eighth grade. The pressure had become too much. Despite receiving monetary assistance from her father, she quit school at the age of 14 and moved to Huajuapán where she would meet her husband-to-be and begin her journey on the migrant trail.

Itaq Bi Dati's experience, parallel's Jennifer Clements findings during the process of researching her book, *A True Story Based on Lies*, whose protagonist is a maid. To write the book, Clement interviewed over 30 Mexican maids and found that they often connected their skin color to their lot in life. She remembered finding lemons in the maids' depressing service quarters. The women, she said, rubbed cut lemons on their skin to try to lighten their complexion. When asked whether she thought Mexico was a racist country, Clement recited the opening line of her novel, her own interpretation of the voice of the average maid. "I am darker, much darker than the rest, and so they call me 'Fly'" (Clement qtd. in Thompson 1).

Tindu

Out of the ten subjects I interviewed, Tindu was the only one with a positive school experience. Her teacher, she recalls, was sensitive to culture, traditions and customs. There were other teachers who avoided participation with the general community. Tindu was one of the lucky few.

My subjects were not much older or younger than myself. Their childhood memories, for the most part, were full of work and the necessity to move from harvest to harvest, except for Erandi, whose father was fortunate enough to work for a bureaucracy. For the rest, the degradation of their environment, racism, the poor quality of their schools and the lack of access to adequate resources were factors that had much to do with their eventual dispossession from their communities. Powerless and with little control over their political destiny, they and their parents left home with the wish to comeback someday with more dignity. Unfortunately, the economic and political situation of the "post 9/11" world will prevent them from doing so in the immediate future.

Evangelism and Modern Day Colonization: The Cross

In this section I discuss the case of religion as a third factor that has changed the stability of formerly self-sufficient communities. Since the arrival of the European invasions and the imposition of foreign social and political institutions, religion has been used to justify invasions and massacres and to subjugate the survivors by means of forced conversions. During my interviews with my Mixteco subjects, religion was only an issue for those who had witnessed the impact of the recent wave of Christian evangelical conversions on their communities. They had no critical memory of previous religious imposition, and did not question the syncretism between Catholicism and Indigenous beliefs and values; that adaptation had occurred many generations before, and was already a part of their cultural framework. Two of the subjects I interviewed had converted to evangelical Christianity. Both were pleased with their decision despite the

conflicts it had caused within their families and communities. Before we look at the place of religion in my subjects' views on culture and community, it is first necessary to explain the difference between the imposition of Catholicism 500 years ago and modern day Protestant evangelism led by powerful organizations based in the US. How does Evangelism connect with neoliberalism and the global economy? How does this contribute toward immigration? This is what I will attempt to answer in the next several paragraphs.

Traditional Mixtec communities practice Catholicism in a syncretistic fashion; despite the calendrical observance of Catholic holidays, the Catholicism of their ritual icons and structure is only superficial, while the underlying and more profound significance are Indigenous. This structure serves to protect many aspects of Indigenous culture that are pre-Hispanic in nature. The Spanish invaders were primarily concerned with resource extraction and labor exploitation. Secondary was the conversion of Indigenous populations and utilization of collaborative indigenous people to handle internal matters. The new generations would passively accept things since indoctrination began early and was required by law (Starr 6). As war proved to be costly, new ways to integrate indigenous populations arose with the help of the religious institution. The notion of religious syncretism became advantageous for both the invader and subjugated populations. It slowed the violent impact of the invasion through mass conversions, which allowed Indigenous people to recuperate from the onslaught that had befallen their societies. It also allowed successive generations to passively adopt the new political and religious order and to, thereby, retain some major aspects of their original social life and structure. Within the new religion, the natives managed to retain symbolism that only some could recognize and carry forth into the future with uncertainty and perhaps with

the hope of reviving the old spirituality as has occurred in some parts of Mexico and the United States. Thus, communities managed to keep some resemblance of communal life, customs and economic equitability through the cargo system (sponsored events by the most economically successful individual or family of the community) as well as structures of authority that were flexible vis-à-vis the repressive policies the invaders imposed at will throughout the colonial period.

Today's evangelical Christians seek to bring converts to a constructed notion of Christ. This is their stated mission. With their rhetoric of salvation comes financial assistance, which reinforces their evangelical word through apparent good deeds: housing, food, and education. But close analysis of these programs reveals that they have often led to conflict, which has sometimes turned violent, particularly in southern Mexico (Dow 840). Regarding recollections of Evangelism during the interviews, my subjects did not experience violence, but did sensed tension in their communities.

Protestant evangelical efforts in Mexico began at the turn of the twentieth century, and slowly gained ground in the Northern part of the country. Yet it was not until the 1970s that it began to grow at a tremendous pace (Dow 828). Today, protestant evangelical conversions are gaining ground in Latin America like never before. Eric Patterson writes:

Since about 1970 between fifteen and twenty-five percent of the populations of various Latin American countries have converted to Protestantism. This 'neo-Reformation' seems to have the power to reshape not only the spiritual experience, but also the social, political, and economic lives of its adherents. Mexico has long been conservative about religion. During the past decade the number of Mexican Protestants has doubled and will likely double again by 2010. Thus, in a time of rapid political, economic, and social change, Mexican society is experiencing a religious pluralism unknown in the past (Patterson 1).

For my subjects, exposure to the concept of “progress” and their gradual integration into the new global economy brought challenges to their belief systems that are at the core of their individual and community identities.

Taachi

Taachi experienced exposure to evangelism soon after a paved road was built near his hometown. The first evangelists in his community were Jehovah’s Witnesses. Some of the townspeople took to them and the good deeds they displayed; Taachi was one of them. He saw the evangelists as people who wanted to protect Indigenous traditions by preaching in their native tongue and instilling a sense of pride of being able to speak one’s tongue. As he formed closer relationships with the evangelists, he began to quit drinking and smoking. He began putting more effort into becoming a better father. In Taachi’s opinion, the evangelists helped alleviate poverty through their efforts in the community. He personally believed that poverty-caused-crime and parental neglect were closely linked to his “vicios” (vices).

Xary

Xary and her family experienced tension within their community due to their decision to convert to the Jehovah’s Witnesses. It was her husband who introduced Xary and her extended family to evangelism in Oaxaca. Once arriving in the U.S., Xary’s family was able to access assistance from her church like counseling, teaching and overall support. She believes that this has helped them to adapt without incident to life in the U.S., even though she can see major differences between her own family and the Anglo families at her church. Xary’s husband’s mother, however, who is a devout

Catholic, has had difficulty with their conversion and had accused Xary's husband of creating tension in their small town previous to migrating to the US.

Of my ten subjects only these two, Taachi and Xary, had converted to Protestantism, specifically Jehovah's Witnesses. The other eight had strong negative opinions about evangelicals.

Tindu

Tindu considers herself Catholic. Her rancho, or community, is primarily Catholic. Their customs and celebration are associated with the Catholic Church and have never been seen as something pre-Hispanic. Those who did practice certain rituals outside church observance or celebration were seen as different, but in a neutral manner. These individuals were elderly types who were asked to come and bless a birth or to conduct a blessing before the planting season got underway. As Tindu grew up there was no push to understand these traditions or to maintain them. As a child she saw them as irrelevant and strange.

As the evangelicals arrived in Tindu's hometown in Oaxaca, tension began to increase. Today only one family in the whole town converted to Protestantism. They live isolated from the rest of the community and do not participate in the town's traditions and celebrations. There have been several attempts by evangelical groups to gain converts in the community, but these attempts failed to the point that evangelicals have been practically banned from the town. In one instance, said Tindu, four missionaries arrived and were received by the Catholic priest. He told them that they were welcomed and that as long as their teachings were focused in worshipping God, religions were not what mattered but rather one's faith.

Why is there a general distrust of evangelicals? What is the evangelical agenda? Why consider evangelism as a threat to culture and collective identity? How is it connected to immigration? To answer these questions we have to consider the positive experiences of Taachi and Xary as well as the negative experiences and reactions of my other subjects.

What is the evangelical agenda? An article by Amy Sherman in *First Things: A journal in religion, culture and public life*, titled “Where You Lead I Will Follow?” compares the different perspectives of Protestant missionaries doing work in Mexico and other Third World countries with those of the donors who support them. The donors are made up of the laity and concerned church-goers. The missionaries, Sherman believes, have a general understanding of the connections between the First World’s exploitation of people and resources and the poverty suffered by inhabitants of the Third World. They are active in trying to teach and make the donors understand about the role they play in the roots of this inequality. The donors do not see this, however, and instead choose to blame corruption, economic structures, religious (Catholic or animist) and cultural attitudes and values at the local level as barriers to economic advancement. The missionaries want to bring communities economic opportunity as well as evangelical teachings by utilizing donor money. On the other hand, the donors want to evangelize first, believing economic opportunity will follow. Sherman continues: “Seventy percent of the donors believed that if a person converted to the Christian faith, it would help lift himself out of poverty... Most affirmed that converts who put into practice biblical attitudes toward work and the use of resources would experience economic advancement” (6).

What is the relationship between evangelical teachings and neo-liberal models of economic development? In an earlier chapter, I discussed how Adam Smith's economic theories have been distorted to justify the gains of a few in today's neo-liberal economic system. Max Weber, the late nineteenth-century German sociologist, is another thinker whose writings have suffered similar deformation. Weber's "Protestant work ethic" is perhaps the best-known sociological concept in the United States. It holds that hard work and savings have been responsible for first world economic development. Weber's dissertations have been adopted and distorted to push for the homogenization and integration of small-scale cultures into the larger monoculture of consumerism and commercialization, in part through Protestant evangelism in areas such as Oaxaca. Acceptance of this doctrine might be why Taachi and Taquil have more positive views of the U.S. than many of their peers. They see the U.S. government as a benevolent administrator of the public good. Taquil sees little corruption in U.S. culture and government compared to his home country and, as an Indigenous person in Mexico and a migrant in the U.S., has not noticed class or racial discrimination.

Contemporary sociological and anthropological research has reached some initial conclusions regarding the impact of the "Protestant work ethic" that is supposedly being proliferated by mass conversions to the evangelistic faiths. Some scholars are critical, while others are waiting to see the advantages. James Dow believes that the evangelistic efforts are breaking up the cargo systems that are supported by the Catholic Church, which was set up during the initial colonial period. Dow further states, that the cargo system arrested real economic development, and integration into the global economy, which in turn, has deprived communities of access to high-energy consumer goods (842). On the other side of the coin, Christine Kray concludes that some types of evangelical

teachings have actually pushed new converts into a highly competitive labor market characterized by low wages and exploitation, while at the same time alienating these individuals from their communities. Converts are taught to deal with their inability to successfully enter the global economy by accepting their plight, however unjust and exploitative. This is similar to the Catholic teaching of accepting one's position with the promise of reaching heaven. As Kray writes:

The Pentecostal church of God of Prophecy in Yucatan, Mexico is uniquely suited for manufacturing laborers because it teaches time –discipline, work diligence, obedience to non-kin and because it dissociates the person from kin and community ties and also the products of his/her labor. The faithful reject this material and social “world”, and wait expectantly for the Second Coming and a better life in the world to come. (10).

I would like to return to Edinger's *Road to Mixtepec* and some of his conclusions, which shed light on the underlying and, to an extent, subliminal consequences of evangelistic efforts in less than fully integrated communities. Oaxaca has gradually been penetrated by modern market forces, large multi-national corporations have displaced local merchants and producers, replacing their products with goods manufactured outside the community. This has occurred over a period of 150 years. In the name of development, the government has facilitated this displacement by providing infrastructure and subsidizing the entry of large industries, for instance through road construction and taxation structure. Edinger uses the beverage industry as an example to show how this happened in Mixtepec, describing how large companies drew on government support to shut down local soft drink and liquor producers:

So long as the local outfits [beverage producer] persisted, they posed an obstacle to the expansion of (outside) beer, liquor and especially soft drink sales—and the tax revenue generated by these sales. Both industry and government stood to gain from the shutdowns. The strategy involved tax laws, health regulations, threats and a cut-off of gas for carbonation (108).

As noted earlier, Taachi came into contact with evangelists around the time of the first paved roads. Though the road and the evangelists are seemingly unconnected, both are phenomena linked to the idea of “progress.” As capitalist penetration accelerates in rural communities, evangelists have followed, promising both material advancement and, simultaneously, salvation from the excesses of materialism as well as from poverty. While promising a better life to those in need, the missionary phenomenon has in fact served, in large part, to further dislocate families and destabilize Indigenous communities. In simplistic terms, evangelical Christianity promises not only salvation but the possibility of opportunity to better one’s economic and social standing by letting go of one’s community and one’s responsibility to that community. In the case of Taachi, he no longer saw his community as viable and was shunned once he had converted.

How does this all relate to immigration? Increased market penetration go hand and hand with conversion and/or acceptance of Evangelicals as part of the community while, at the same time, the adoption of Protestant beliefs encourage acceptance of capitalism and its consumerist value system. This is not to dismiss the many forms of oppression that Catholicism and the State have imposed upon these same communities. The communities have done their best to maintain their value system by adapting to successive foreign impositions. Some community members, like Xary and Taachi, have adopted the beliefs of the evangelists in order to face these changes, while others maintain their allegiance to Catholicism, an earlier foreign imposition. Each subsequent wave of cultural and market penetration requires the population to adapt to the changes it produces. In my opinion, these are massive blows, similar to those of the initial colonization phase. Edinger further observed that the introduction of new consumer

goods, required higher labor exchange. The community as a whole did not provide the opportunity to earn and therefore, people were forced to leave in search of work in order to exchange their labor to acquire goods (134). The consequence of this was the adoption of new ways to define social status. Those who migrated and returned in better economic position through their display of material possession were further supported by the protestant evangelical view.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The last 500 years of European colonization, many people believe, has benefited humanity as a whole. In proper perspective, the majority of the people in this planet are struggling to survive. “The age of discovery” has benefited people, but only those lucky enough to live in these safe-economic-regions we call the First World. These First World societies boast of the “progress” we have made. They particularly point toward technology as evidence of these great advances. I want to touch on this subject and put it in the context of this thesis briefly. I think technology has served a narrow part of the world population. Its usage has been applied to dominate and control instead of liberating us from the constraints and challenges of everyday life.

Speculating on the Role of Technology

Technology seems beneficial to most of us who use it today. After all, its promises are exciting, particularly when it comes to making our lives easier. The subject of technology and its impact on our societies is very broad and a critical overview would require much space. I do not have this luxury. However, I believe that technology has affected my subjects and I want to paint a clear picture of how this has happened.

Many of us believe that we should embrace technology and accept it as part of “progress.” To criticize it even superficially is to invite the wrath of its defenders and to be criticized as an enemy of progress, ultimately leaving no room for critical discussion. If we were to ask people in the street at random what they think technology is, we would hear answers that might vary, but would probably focus on electronic gadgets that deliver

efficiency, excitement and entertainment. Technology, in my opinion is the amalgamation of ideas applied to materials, which then become tools. Today, it is more complex than simply stating that technological gadgets are simply tools. Technology and its driving force, called innovation (which seeks to improve these tools), have been used to dominate and exploit people and land, leading to states of tension and war.

Before we move on, let's look more closely at what technology encompasses. A rock to open a shell to access food is a technological innovation. A computer that can beat all but one person in the world at chess is a kind of technology at the fringes of innovation. What about everything in between? The birth of modern technology, it can be argued, has brought forth certain benefits, but only to those who can access it. But what happens when technology is used to attack an already vulnerable people? Though refined steel and other metallurgical weapons are innovations of the past, how are they much different--in terms of their impact on populations--than today's television, water pumps that bring water to inaccessible places, or roads that open the way to previously inaccessible towns? Let's bring in a bit of historical background to construct a better picture.

The European invaders of the 15th century brought to America many technologies that reflected the reality of their societies. The permanent state of war described by Thomas Hobbes in his classic 1651 treatise *Leviathan* was a reality across Eurasia. "Progress" in methods of war and subjugation had become an art form. Hence, their gadgets revolved around effective and refined forms of killing, destroying and terrorizing enemies of "god and progress." Whatever peace existed was soon interrupted by disease and other natural phenomena that flourished due to conditions already set up by previous

armed conflict. David Stannard describes it in this way in his book *American Holocaust: The Conquest of the New World*:

The Spain that Christopher Columbus and his crews left behind before dawn on August 3, 1492, as they sailed forth from Palos and out into the Atlantic, was for most of its people a land of violence, squalor, treachery, and intolerance. In this respect Spain was no different from the rest of Europe. Epidemics and famine were common. Malnutrition was the norm. . . . Most people never bathed. . . . Almost everyone had his or her brush with smallpox and other deforming diseases. . . . Because of the dismal social conditions and prevailing social values, it "was a place filled with malice and hatred. . . . In rural areas in general, between half and 90 percent of the population did not have land sufficient for their support, forcing them to migrate out, fall into permanent debt, or die. . . . Throughout Europe, about half the children born during this time died before reaching the age of ten. . . . One of the causes for such a high infant mortality was abandonment. Others were sold into slavery. The wealthy had their problems too. They hungered after gold and silver. . . . Thus, gold had become for Europeans, in the words of one Venetian commentator of the time, "the sinews of all government . . . its mind, soul . . . its essence and its very life." The supply of the precious metal, by way of the Middle East and Africa, had always been uncertain, a cheaper supply was needed. . . . Violence, of course, was everywhere. . . . Other eruptions of bizarre torture, murder, and ritual cannibalism were not uncommon. . . . In precisely those years when Columbus was trekking around Europe in search of support for his maritime adventures, the Inquisition was raging in Spain (57).

The conditions of fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth century Europe are similar to the conditions one can find in the Third World today: famine, rampant crime, the slave trade, dollars (instead of gold), riots, and population displacement--euphemistically called migration. Though the focus here is technology, let's pay attention to how Stannard describes the circumstances that Europeans faced at the time: The wars in Eastern Europe had nearly emptied the Continent's coffers. A new supply, a more regular supply--and preferably a cheaper supply--was needed (57).

The European culture of war, as it unleashed violence and disease around the world (particularly in the Americas), devoted its energy to developing technology in order to make war. Once the areas were pacified, these technologies and their accompanying support systems were used to enforce an unequal distribution of resources

for the benefit of the dominant European minority. As Europeans began to settle in the Americas, they began displacing the Indigenous populations by means of war and disease. As the centuries passed, we can still observe today, the consequences include shorter life spans and a lower quality of life for the majority of people of Indigenous descent across the board.

We know that technological innovations of that era (invasion and conquest) were put to use to dominate and destroy cultures, which are not much different from our current wars in resource-rich nations like Iraq. What about my Mexican subjects? How has technology impacted them directly or indirectly? In what ways has it led to their forced abandonment of their lands and to the loss of their traditional culture? This is not easy to explain, due to the many hidden and manipulative ways in which technology is used to continue to destroy cultural values of not only indigenous people, but of all people.

Technology is the consequence of the integration of ideas applied to what is perceived as a problem. This is expressed through tools that are mechanical or ideological which serve to dominate, and ultimately change a culture for the worse; therefore, we cannot consider technology a neutral force within modern societies. Examples of this can be the domestication of high yielding crops (corn, wheat, rice) several thousand years ago (Manning 4). More recently, the invention of the printing press (which disseminated information to the masses), and the clock (which normalized our understanding of time according to the needs of the workplace), contributed to the exploitation of newly displaced agricultural populations (Postman 14-15). This population migrated to cities and worked in factories, thus permitting the development of modern day capitalism. We also have seen the impact of television and how it

manipulates the masses to accept a narrow view of society (Postman 8). Hence, technology's influence is to be questioned, but often it is not, particularly in technologically advanced societies such as the United States, which embrace it as part of its cultural ethos.

Advocates of technology argue for its benefits in numerous ways. What I am attempting to do here is to present the underside of this point of view that the powerful and affluent thrust upon the general public in the form of new gadgets that will supposedly make life more efficient and interesting, at least until the next round of gadgets is produced to take their place in a cycle of continual consumption. There is no doubt that there are some benefits to some technological developments, but these often do not outweigh the negative impacts on the society and the natural environment. Those who benefit are most often the affluent, while for the rest of society it has become a struggle for survival at every level: social, occupational, governmental, familial and humanistic (Postman 10).

For Indigenous people, their adoption of, for example, chemical fertilizers and gas-run water pumps helped them survive the assault upon their livelihoods and territories; therefore, do not reject technology as a whole. Today, Indigenous people have used technology to an effective degree. The Mayan indigenous movement (the Zapatistas or EZLN) of southern Mexico managed media technology, such as the Internet, to capture the world's attention and mobilize national and international solidarity. This helped them survive and resist the more powerful and better-equipped U.S. supplied Mexican army as it attempted to crush the rebellion in Chiapas, Mexico. This strategic move forced the government to sit down and begin talks of reform that to this day continue with little progress.

Let us now focus on the main difference between the benevolent introduction of technology into traditional cultures with little to no scrutiny and, on the other side, the use of technology as a “tool” with little consequence for cultures that adopt them. Those who are forced to adopt foreign technology see the beginning of the end of their traditional cultures, as observed by some scholars. In twenty-first century Mexico there has been much pressure to embrace and accelerate the pace of technological application in all areas of economic and social activity. The price has been high, the losses great. Each effort has led to greater social tension, and civil unrest.

Indigenous people who initially escaped the genocides of previous centuries by fleeing into the most inhospitable areas of the country began, in order to survive, to adopt some of the new techniques and non-native animals (goats, cows, pigs, chickens) brought by the invaders. As the native population began to recover, environmental pressures and shrinking resources would push people to adopt and integrate themselves into the global economy. The Mexican government embraced and invited foreign investment and did little to enforce local laws and policies designed to protect working-class populations and the environment, all in the name of progress and development. Things like the railroad, electricity and the use of petrochemical farming have devastated traditional communities. Subsequent generations, thus, began embracing modern economies because there was nowhere else to go or escape to. In turn, their assimilation into the dominant cultures began by economic necessity. In short, my subjects are the inheritors of social and technological changes imposed upon them since the conquest. Similarly, Steven Edinger observed similar changes in the Oaxaca region of Mixtepec:

Cement houses are considered “better-looking, stronger, better-built,” even though there are serious shortfalls when compared to adobe or wooden houses. Flat cement roofs absorb rain and moisture. There is no attic to store grain, so

residents have to put their extra corn and beans in a dark corner of the house for protection. Cement houses are more brittle than adobe or wood and fare badly in earthquakes. “The new houses are of little function for the climate and way of life of the town.” wrote Marta Guidi, “but their urban style and high cost make them seem superior” (94).

Edinger also writes:

After years of subjugation, The Mixtec peasants had developed an inferiority complex about their own arts and traditions. “The rulers had convinced them that anyone would choose the civilized life if given a choice. The Mixtecs became convinced that their language was but a “dialect,” that their clothes were merely “things,” that being Indian could only mean the same as being poor, second-rate and on the bottom of the heap (73).

The introduction of commercial goods or techniques comes in not as neutral “tools” to make life easier and more convenient, but also to dismiss anything that existed before.

Postman helps conclude:

Technology imperiously commandeers our most important terminology. It redefines “freedom,” “truth,” “intelligence,” “fact,” “wisdom,” “history,” --all the words we live by. And it does not pause to tell us. And we do not pause to ask...a new technology becomes an elite group that is granted undeserved authority and prestige by those who have no such competence. (8-9).

When technology passed from being a tool to being a way of living, we stepped over a boundary that dehumanizes those who have access to it and those that do not. A case in point is the use of military technology, which allows nations like the U.S. face their “enemies” without facing them face-to-face. Technologies hide the fact that there are human beings being exploited. Technology paradoxically creates efficiencies with the intent to locate and disseminate resources, and at the same time it concentrates them in the hands of those who do not necessarily need it.

Technology redefines everything of value to us. We have become its tool for its survival. As of today it thrives in every place in our society. Though technology’s supporters argue for our ability as humans to adapt to a constantly changing environment,

and claim that those left behind are left by their own will and stubbornness, they do not stop to think of the consequences all of this technology brings, which is often the multiplication of the very problems it was supposed to resolve. Take, for example, the plastic bucket. It is light in weight, has a plastic padded handle, a large area and volume, and can be used in multiple sites across society. But where did the plastic come from? It is a petroleum-based product. What processes were used to manufacture it? It is a process that contaminates the air, water and soil. How many local manufacturers or skilled laborers did it displace? In Oaxaca, traditional manufacturing of earth wares for everyday use is now limited to the making of lawn and home decorations for commercial sales. The former potters, uncounted and unnoticed, perhaps went to the cities and became laborers somewhere in the north. This is just one example of many that could be put to analysis. I do not object to technological innovation, but we should measure its impact closely, especially when it is introduced to places, already vulnerable to environmental degradation, in other words give the people a choice in the implementation.

I have speculated about technology due to its encompassing complexity. My attempt at humanizing and answering the question as to “Why do they come here?” Only opened up tangents in this vast conversation. But to me it is simple that an issue like immigration should be an introduction to tougher questioning of our roles in it rather than to exclude ourselves from it.

Ignorance and Progress

Most people including indigenous people and westernized Latinos have bought into the notion that US is a land of immigrants. Few understand that it is occupied illegally in the sense of human rights violations and systematic genocide of a people and

their cultures. Worse there is no sympathy toward immigrants, as history indicates. The façade that America is the land of opportunity and all are welcome is a myth that attracted cheap labor to its shores to enrich the upper economic classes. This was done successfully and it even served the purpose of manipulating global politics. In 1997, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, known today as the USCIS (US Citizens and Immigration Service), conducted a raid on Fircrest Farms chicken processing plant in Creswell, Oregon. Thirty-four immigrant workers were detained, resulting in the deportation of 22 men and eight women (Stephens 6). In 1998, two further raids at the plant resulted in detainment of twenty-three workers, most of whom were women and mothers who were separated from their children due to their detention and deportation status, which is becoming more common place (Stephen 7). In 1999, in the Yakima Valley in eastern Washington, 560 workers in fruit packing warehouses were fired after the INS audited their immigration documents and found that they were forged.

Progress, But Not Enough!

Several years have passed since I last spoke with the families that I had interviewed for this thesis. Most of them still reside in Oregon and still struggle with the English language. Their children are bilingual in Spanish and English and the native tongue is now a thing of the past. Their children's lives are very different than what they faced and experienced when they migrated north. Back in October of 2004, a new office had opened up and I had the opportunity to attend the blessing of this office. This office would provide services for Mixtecos and other indigenous people who faced language difficulties and other social hurdles in their new communities. The organizers were Mixtecos. One of my university colleagues led the effort in opening up of this office.

The primary mission was to have an office that was culturally sensitive for this special population with finite needs. In Mexico, creation of the Federal Department of Bilingual Intercultural Education (Coordinación General de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe) in 2001 was a big step forward, according to Natalio Hernandez, one of its Directors. Before that, the government's National Institute of Indigenous Affairs, founded in 1948, had operated with the underlying agenda of assimilating ethnic Indigenous groups into the national mainstream. Over the last several decades, independent groups began challenging the institute's aim and strategies. Beginning in the 1980s some agencies began to take a more proactive approach toward incorporating Indigenous people into national life without forcing them to give up their cultural identities. Though much work remains, there has been progress at the institutional level with the take-over by Indigenous people of the Institute's head positions (Hernandez, 1).

The majority population is disconnected from the reality of farm labor in several ways. Even when we are selecting picking the juiciest or fairest of the harvest at our local grocery store, we seldom think of those whose labor makes these products available for our consumption at low prices. Yet, if we pay close attention, next summer we can be assured of seeing the Mixtecos at work on either side of the I-5 corridor picking our fruits and vegetables. By seeing these supposed strangers in a similar manner as we see ourselves, we may begin taking different attitudes, which may translate into long-term policy changes. We also need to pay attention to our distorted version of history, and understand who the players are in our international setting, yesterday and today. These distortions are often used to define policy, to pass and uphold racist laws, and to justify racist attitudes at school, work and throughout our society.

Some of my own personal efforts started the first year of my master's program when I taught first year Spanish at Oregon State University to a class made up primarily of incoming freshmen. I decided that instead of creating an assignment for extra credit, I would take these students on a field trip to some of the places I had acquainted myself with. They too were surprised at what they saw. During my period of study, I observed that conditions varied from camp to camp. Some camps accommodated families, and others just men. The ideal conditions sought were gradually taking place thanks to the efforts of Pineros Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste or PCUN, who were leading the way in developing low-income housing, targeted at migrant workers. Housing projects in Woodburn, Oregon such as Nuevo Amanecer and Esperanza Court are good evidence that things can improve by sustaining the struggle in the fields and holding the agricultural industries accountable to public scrutiny.

Epilogue

This work took a longer route in order to be completed. The thesis had to age with its writer. Otherwise it would have been trapped in the ideals and sensitivities that this writer held upon completing the required classroom preparation. During this time, my ideals were someone else's ideals-intelligent thoughts that were not my own. As this writer left the confines of the university environment and went to the world to search for my subjects, I realized that I would have to forge my own path. As I began the interviews, I found myself attempting to fit my subjects neatly into a box, which others had attempted to do through books, essays and reports. I soon found out that through my own individual experience and the exercise of writing down my subjects' thoughts, I would be challenging my own view of the world, and as it turns out, it was a wonderful

eye opener. This intellectual exercise was my own to develop and finish. I have had the opportunity to organize other people's thoughts and create something new for myself and potentially for others with similar sensitivities. Hence it was necessary to not merely intelligently criticize the world from others' perspectives, but to form my own base from which to write this thesis and, at the same time, to begin to create spaces of dialogue with others to address the many issues we confront as a community. I also realized that despite the many things wrong around us, the society I criticize from a socio-historical perspective was slowly and cautiously evolving in the eternal "one step forward, two steps back" condition. As I put together this work, I realized that we are equally guilty and responsible for what we are doing in our communities. At the same time, we are also powerful as individuals and as groups and there is opportunity to contribute toward positive change at every corner.

Though I wanted to bring to light the plight of my subjects and their unjust experiences, they do not consider themselves victims. They choose to engage with what little they had. They do what was necessary to survive so that one day they can watch their children carry on the hope that things are going to get better. This sense of optimism was present during my interviews, though the thesis fails to disclose it.

I still hold harsh opinions about the society we live in. My energies, though, are spent in contributing and engaging my community. I consider this opportunity a privilege to openly criticize and reflect on my actions and their significance. I also recognize this privilege as one granted by those who did the same before me, which is to engage their communities.

I continue to have concerns about how we handle the generation of children who are passive recipients of a deeply flawed system and its institutions. The very nature of these institutions provide few spaces for dialogue at this time. There are individual efforts by administrators, schoolteachers, social agencies and Migrant Head Start Programs, but there is little collective effort, which could go along way, as exemplified by the previous decades of the 1960s and 1970s. I also recognize, that in various degrees I hold attitudes of unearned notions of privilege. Our society itself is racist by the very nature of its hierarchy, both economically and ethnically. There is a continual denial of this by the majority of the population. There is rhetoric that things have improved; cosmetically I would say this is true. Our community resources are not invested in changing such attitudes; instead they are put forth to exploit and support the powerful interests that seek to dominate what is left of our natural resources.

This body of work is my first attempt at putting in order my interpretation of the world through my eyes and the help of many people who I know and do not know. I want to continue to build upon it by sheer action and when my body slows, maybe in ink.

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California Institute for Rural Studies P.O. Box 2143 Davis, California 95617. 1993.

APPENDIX A

Interview questions

1. De donde eres? (Where are you from?)
2. Cuantos anos tienes? (how old are you?)
3. Cual es tu herencia etnica? (What is your ethnic heritage?) Describe tu comunidad? La gente que vive alli (describe your community?)
4. En que esta basada la economia?(What is the main economical base of the community).
5. Que clase de recursos hay? (What kind of resource are there)?
6. La mayoría de la gente en que esta empleada? (what people do for work?)
7. Como esta dividida la comunidad socialmente? (Describe your community socially?)
8. Adaptas a considerarte mas hispano, Mexicano, Latino o indigena? (Would you consider yourself more hispanic, Mexican,or indigenous, How do you answer when the topic comes up?)
9. Que clase de experiencias tuviste de chico que te diste cuenta que eras indigena? (What kind of experiences did you have in your childhood that made aware that your were indigenous?).
10. Did you go to Watsonville?
11. Did you go to school? Yeah, How was it? I felt very isolated. Why? I only knew how to speak Mixteco. You did not know Spanish? No, How about your parents? None of us did. So in class I would sit by myself.
12. Were there Mexican kids there?
13. Cuando viniste a los Estados Unidos? (When did you come to the U.S.?) When I was seven years old.
10. Y como adulto? (And as an adult?)
11. La dinamica de tu familia, como clase economica y sus sentimientos acerca del racismo contra las indigenas? Miembros etc? (Your family dynamics like social class and their sentiments towards racism., members etc?)
12. Do you all get along? Yeah, there is unwritten rules on our family behavior. Like what? Well it is a facial expression, that tells one that the other person is becoming frustrated and that they should back off. Its primarily the eyes.
13. Quien hace las decisiones? (Who makes the decisions?)
14. Cual es son las costumbres y obligaciones entre los miembros de tu familia? In our family which includes our extended family, like my grandfather and my
15. Como se llevan los miembros de tu familia?(How do your family members get along?)N/A
15. Cuanto utilizas tu language y en que circunstancias, entre tu familia, amigos? (How much do you utilize your native language and under what circumstances, between family, friends etc?)
16. Tus familiares? (Your family members?)N/A
17. Que clase de perspectiva has obtenido de vivir aca en los estados unidos acerca como la gente ve a Mexico? (What kind of perspective have you seen since living here in the United States of how people see Mexico?)

18. Comparandote a tus familiares, especialmente a los mas de edad, que te separa culturalmente o socialmente? (Comparing yourself to others in your family, especially your elders, what separates you from them culturally and socially?)
19. What do you mean?. So would you marry a woman from your background under this traditional setting?
20. Cuel es tu opinion de la gente mestiza?(Whats your opinion of mestizos?)
21. Do you personally see them different than you?
22. Have you been discriminated against by meztisos?
23. Los criollos?
24. The gringos?
25. Compara como ve el mundo el Gringo a una persona Mixteca?
26. Los mencionas mucho a los evangelistas como ellos tocan este punto de la corrosion cultural? (You mention the evangelist what role do they play in this topic of cultural erosion?)
21. Como ves la corrosion cultural?
22. Do your brothers and sisters have shame or see importance in learning Mixteco?
23. Has visto esto en tu comunidad? (Have you seen it in your community?)
Why? Because they did not celebrate what was traditional there. So there is tension and conflict; then eventually action.
24. Ves la importancia y los beneficios de asimilarte aqui o en Mexico? NA
25. Como vez acerca de la importancia de retener tu cultura indigena? (Do you see the importance of retaining your indigenous culture?)
26. Que vees de importante en asimilarte a la cultura nacional? (What do you see as important in assimilating to the mainstream culture)
27. Cuales son los costos y beneficios? What are the costs, and benefits?) NA
27. Que piensas de la situacion desde que se desolvio la proteccion de tierras comunitarias-indigenas? (What do you think of the dissolution of protection of communally owned land Hay division o solidaridad entre tu gente y otros grupos indigenas? (Are there divisions or solidarity between your people and other indigenous groups?)
28. Que caracteristicas culturales crees que son importantes retener y pasar a la siguientes generaciones? (What cultural characteristics do you believe to be important in retaining and passing on to future generations?).
29. Crees en tu opinion que entre mas chico se pone el mundo, mas personas indigenas van a hacer forzadas a adaptarse a ser hispano o adoptar esas maneras? (In your opinion do you think more indigenous people, as the world shrinks are forced to adopt hispanic ways?) NA
30. Ves progreso acerca del preservar el indigenismo comparado al pasado? (Do you see progress in preserving indigenous culture today compared to the past?) There is

- progress but its not very effective. Do you see economic forces playing here somewhere?
- 31.** Te vees afectado de una manera o otra? Tu familia? Tus amigos? (Do you see yourself affected by this? Your family? Your friends?)
- 32.** What about the land do you see it as important to an indigenous identity?
- 33.** Que piensas de NAFTA? (What do you think of NAFTA?)
- 34.** How is this related toward the erosion of culture?
- 35.** Como te ves afectado tu y tu familia? (Have you or your family members been affected in a positive or negative way?)
- 36.** Chiapas? I like to go there. Why? Theyre fighting for their way of life.
- 37.** What do your parents think?