

Opening Words at Meeting with Indigenous Organizations & Peoples [incomplete translation]

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Opening Words by the EZLN
For the Second Preparation Meeting for the Other Campaign
Indigenous organizations and Indian peoples

Saturday, August 13, 2005
Community of Javier Hernández

Words of Welcome from Comandante Gustavo

Good day to everyone. Welcome, indigenous brothers and sisters throughout Mexico. In the name of my *compañero comandantes* from the Clandestine Revolutionary Indigenous Committee, General-Command of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation, I would like to thank all the Indian peoples of Mexico who have come here to this place at the invitation of the Sixth Declaration of the Selva Lacandona.

Welcome to all the indigenous organizations who are here with us. We are here to listen to your words, in order to inform the peoples where we work and the rest of the Clandestine Revolutionary Committee... We hope that you will be happy, even though we have received you with but little, but we are very happy to have you. That is all for today. Thank you. We will turn the word over to Comandanta Kelly.

Words of Welcome from Comandanta Kelly

Good day to everyone. In the name of my *compañera comandantas* from the Clandestine Revolutionary Indigenous Committee, General-Command of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation, we are welcoming most cordially all the women of the Indian peoples of Mexico. We are greeting you all and all of us as women, we have the right to participate, to engage in any kind of work; the right to govern ourselves and to organize as women; to have our cultures respected, our languages as the women we are. Let us learn to struggle together, to walk so that in that way we will have the strength to do our work. We demand that our rights as indigenous be respected. That is why we are fighting for the thirteen demands. That is why we are organizing the Sixth Declaration of the Selva Lacandona, so we can walk together. We hope you will be happy and pleased. We are here to listen to your words and opinions. That is all. Thank you very much.

And we are also giving the word to *compañero*:

Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos

Good day. Welcome to everyone...

...Well, *compañeros, compañeras*, who come from various parts of the Republic and from various indigenous organizations. We would first like to talk to you about this place where we are. This was a *finca* prior to the '94 uprising. It was called San Juan. The *finquero* put the peons to work, to clear the land in order to make a field, and he said he wasn't going to pay them until he saw the [finished] work. So then the brothers cleared the mountain. The *finquero* took a long time getting back, and when he returned the growth had reappeared. Then he told them: no, you didn't clear it well. And he didn't pay them, and there had been days and days of work, and so this *finquero* just cheated them. Since there wasn't any water, the *compañeros* had to make a well in order to get water. The *finquero* wouldn't let them walk through the land, making them walk through a ravine. Then he left them without water, and he also treated them like animals, worse than animals, because the animals didn't even have to go through that ravine. He then forbade the people there from crossing his land, and he ordered the *vaqueros* to pursue the people of the village who

entered his land, or he passed through it. And, see, there were a lot of pigs there, in the village. And sometimes they went on the *finca* land. The *vaqueros* grabbed the pigs, they killed them and they ate them. There wasn't any indemnification or anything of the kind.

In 1994, on the first of January, the *finquero* fled. The *finca's* status remained uncertain until it was known what accords the government was going to reach. Finally, the San Andrés Accords were not fulfilled, and the Agrarian Commission of the Rebel Zapatista Autonomous Municipality, the municipality called Francisco Gómez, divided up the land to *campesinos sin tierra* from several villages, and they named it Javier Hernández. Javier Hernández was a *compañero* from here in Carmen Pataté, a Militia sergeant for the EZLN who disappeared during the combat in Ocosingo in January of 1994. He's one of several *compañeros* who we presumed died, and he was one of those who appeared in the first photos in '94, shot in the head. The federal government never said what happened to those *compañeros*. He has been disappeared ever since then. We assume he died in combat, and his body was buried in a common grave. That is the history of this place where we are, *compañeros*. Welcome, then. The name, I remind you, is Javier Hernández. It was a *finca*, and now it belongs to the *campesinos*.

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As this is the meeting of Indian peoples and indigenous organizations, we are going to try and talk about what our way is like, among the indigenous, among the Indian peoples. And a small part of that is the history recounted by our Mayan ancestors as to how the entire world began. They said then, so our old ones recounted, that in the beginning there was nothing, and in reality the world began to run, started to run, when the word appeared. But the word did not appear just like that, the word, so say our old ones, began by being thought inside oneself, by, they say, reflecting. By using the word, the first gods, those who made the world, began consulting among themselves, they spoke, they reached agreement and they reflected.

And then, since they had made accords, they joined together, joined their thoughts, and that is when the world began to run. That is how everything began with the word being thought within, or being reflected in the heart, which is mirror within, for us to look at what we are. And therefore then it was the word that met with other word.

The first word did not fight, it did want to dominate, not want to conquer another word, and that is because the first word which came out met a word that was like its sister, because it was equal yet different. Or as if they had the same root, but it was branch or leaf of the tree of the world. Or as if the first word was not alone, but there was another word, and, according to this way of thinking of our Mayan ancestors, the world began being birthed when that one word and that other word met each other and they did not quarrel, rather they met and reached accord because they each respected the other and they spoke and they listened.

Then there was accord, because the first word was not born alone, instead it had ear, and with the ear, by listening, is how the first words began to grow because they made accord, and the first words which found each other reached accord and first they thought up the world and then they made it. As if they did not just set about making the world with its rivers, its mountains, its animals, its night, its day, its sun, its moon, its maize, its men and women, instead the first words first thought and then they made.

But then it came to pass that someone said he was better than the rest and he wanted to rule, he wanted to have more and better than the rest, and then the one who wanted to rule more, he stole from others, he took what they had away from them by force, he took away from others what was theirs, or as if, as is said, he deprived them, which means he took away from them what they possessed. And then he also dominated them and dominated their work, he divested them of what they produced, or as if, as is said, he exploited them. And that is how the one who has more and better was born. He was not born because he just arrived, but because of the depriving and the exploitation. And thus began, as is said, the problem. Because, as that is how the one who wants to dominate and dominates came forth, so the one who did not allow himself to be dominated also came forth. And so the history of the world is the history of that struggle between those who want to dominate in order to impose their word and their way, taking away from others their wealth, and those who do not allow themselves to be dominated, those who rebel.

And these who rebel, who are called rebels, they do not want to be the ones who dominate, instead they want everyone to be even, without there being those with more and those with less. Without there being

those with reason to rob and exploit and those with no reason to be robbed and exploited. These rebels want us to be branches and leaves of the tree of the world, each one in their own place and in their own way. That is how our Mayan ancestors so recount. The Mayan indigenous who were the very first to people these lands. And so this way was passed down to their sons and daughters, to the grandsons and granddaughters, and so from one time to another, which means from one generation to another, and the way then remained among the Mayan indigenous who have various names and whose house extends to Yucatán and Guatemala, Campeche, Tabasco, Quintana Roo and here in our state which is Chiapas.

Then what came to pass is that way remained with us, as they then said, and so we the Zapatistas, or neo-Zapatistas as they call us, or we are like new Zapatistas, we also have this way that first we think up the world which is and what to do from within, and then we take out the word and we seek other sister words and we look to find if there is accord speaking and listening, and so the word is made large and thus the world we are dreaming is also made large. But now the beginning of the world is not up to us, but what is up to us now is that there are those who divest and exploit and there are those who rebel and want liberation and then we chose to be by the side of those who are struggling for liberty, the side of those who are dominated and who are stolen from and are exploited.

And therefore then this history. The *compañeros* and *compañeras* from indigenous organizations already know it, because we have been walking together for a good while. And together we saw that we must join together and reach accord and that was how what is called the National Indigenous Congress was born. And accords and marches and mobilizations were made, and those who rule and dominate did not want to recognize our word of how we are. Then each one thought once again, and new struggles were born to put our way in place, even if they did not recognize the laws of the rich. And that is what we hope we shall talk about a bit with the brothers and sisters who come from other sides, from other Indian peoples and from other indigenous organizations.

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