

What is the Significance of the Chiapas Uprising for the Continental Indigenous Movement?



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First, to be sincere, on the Atlantic Coast we are very isolated from all international news, and even local news hardly makes it to the interior. In Puerto Cabeza we only have one radio station. We have heard very little information on the situation in Chiapas. But as Indigenous people we understand that this situation is part of the Indigenous reality. The people of Chiapas had been suppressed by the ideas of others, and it was too much. We as a people say enough. We are a people with many valuable experiences, and we want to participate in the decisions. It is also time that we make our situations known to the world, and stop living as devalued citizens within the national societies. Chiapas was one of these situations. From this perspective, we are clear in our solidarity with the people's struggle in Chiapas.



ATENCIO LOPEZ, secretary, Kunas Unidos por Napguana

The struggle of Indigenous peoples... has always been obscured by non Indigenous political groups, especially by guerrilla movements that have swept it under their ideological class struggle. No colonizing ideology has served the liberation of Indigenous people. Christianity had to take root in Abya Yala by blood and fire, then the supposed "caudillos" kept Indigenous people as slaves in their haciendas while they proclaimed themselves "liberators of America". Then liberalism, and now neo-liberalism continues by profiting from our misery, selling lands to transnational corporations and landlords.

That is why for us the armed uprising of our brothers in Chiapas was not a surprise nor by chance. It was the explosion of repressed feelings, an explosion of a culture denied for more than five hundred years. Some nation, among the forty million voices, had to shatter the silence and move against capitalism and modernization which day by day confronts us with greater indifference.



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In my view the most significant issue arising is that the governments of Canada and the USA which so publicly espouse the principles of democracy worldwide, are in a partnership with a government which has a long history of perpetrating terrorism, armed oppression, and exploitation of peoples and natural resources. It is a government which has used and continues to use political and military violence as weapons of repression to maintain a system of elitism. A system which has and continues today to perpetuate racial-genocidal policies and practices against Indigenous peoples.

The North American Free Trade Agreement between the USA, Canada and Mexico can only heighten the necessity for stronger measures of control to protect the vested interest of the elite classes of all three countries. Perhaps most apparent is that, as long as the "conflict" is portrayed as a "domestic" crisis, then those two governments who are complicit in such serious human rights violations, can continue to maintain a pretence of innocence. The responsibility falls then on those who espouse true democratic principles, to expose the blood on the hands of these governments and the multinational corporations that they play hand maiden to.