

Speech on the 10th Anniversary of Zapatista Uprising

By Comandanta Esther et al.

January 14, 2003

[The following are the speeches delivered by the EZLN comandancia to 20,000 Zapatista supporters who marched in San Cristobal on Jan 1, 2003, the anniversary of the 1994 Zapatista uprising. Translated by laura]

Comandante Esther

Good evening comrades from the Zapatista bases of support. Brothers and sisters of Mexico and the world, from my voice speaks the voice of EZLN. We would like to say a couple of words to Mr. Vincente Fox and Mr. Luis H. Alvarez. To Mr. Fox, I only want to say that the Mexican people are disillusioned by your deceptions. In the beginning, they thought that you were going to change the current situation and that you were going to fight for peace with the indigenous people. You said that you were going to resolve the problems, primarily that of the EZLN struggle. That in 15 minutes you were going to be able to change the situation of the Mexican people, but that was a lie. You do not care about the people that worked to get you into power. What matters to you is to get along with the rich and not the poor. You go travel around to foreign countries telling them that in Mexico there is peace and the to have solved all of Mexico problems. Where is the peace? Is creating peace that the removals that your are responsible for in Montes Azules? What you want is to not provoke war so that the mountains can belong to foreigners. We want to tell you Mr. Fox and Mr. Luis Alvarez, the apparent peace commissioner, and you are really only Fox's commissioner to provoke division and disillusion in the people of Mexico. Just like Rabasa did. You send more projects from Procampo and Progresa to the communities so that they would stay quiet and so that they do not speak against you and say that, we the EZLN are accepting projects just because we allow you o pass through our territories. You also say that we are divided, that we the comandantes have given in and that the EZLN is divided. And also with Mrs. Calderona, a senator of the republic, who lies, you say that el Sup Marcos is not worth anything and that every Zapatista is off on their own. But I tell you clearly, Mr. Alvarez and Mrs. Calderon, that you are both liars and that you two solely publish your lies to the media because you believe the Mexican people and the people of the world will believe you. You also believe that everyone is on their own without knowing the truth. And that is what you want so that it can become easier to disillusion and finish with the indigenous people and non indigenous people because what you want with Fox is to win and have better with your wife without caring about those on bottom.

We want to say that the Mexican people are no longer asleep, nor are we the EZLN going to be as a leaper staying quiet with all the insanities that they say. Do you really believe that everything you say will win? Well no. Here we are again, the Zapatista to tell you out loud that no Zapatista community will accept the governments projects or the trash that government sends as supposed help. Know that were do not sell our dignity for crumbs because we know that our struggle is just for everyone.

Where are you hiding, Mr. Alavarez? You say there are no longer Zapatistas, that we are now few. That we the commanders are now lost. Do you not see, Mr. Luis? Do you need your glasses to see us well? If you want we can bring all the Zapatistas here but they do not fit because we are so many. Here we are today, a small part. Many could not come for lack of resources. We are the commanders, here we

are. We are never going to give in and we are not going to ask permission for what we do. I tell you clearly Luis H. Alvarez, that you could have chosen to be like Macho or like Rabasa and you chose to be like Rabasa who only charges money and is no good for peace.

If you really fell like men come and tell us face-to-face what you published, that we commanders are no longer here. We come to tell the truth and to defend our word. Let's see if you come to defend your and Calderona's lies. Alvarez I'm telling you that we will not allow you to enter our controlled territory. Before we let you enter because we thought that because you were older you could think well and because before, you had fought for democracy we allowed you to enter before because we thought that like that you would learn from the indigenous people and learn to respect your counterpart. But now we have seen that you only have your sneaky politician ways which are the lies you have in your mouth.

We, the Zapatistas did not take up arms nine years ago to beg. We took up arms to demand democracy, liberty and justice and that is what I came to say to you.

Long live the EZLN! From the mountains of Southeast Mexico CCCRI CGEZLN Mexico, 1 January 2003.

Comandante Bruce Lee

Through my voice speaks the EZLN. Brothers and sisters, I am going to say some words for the indigenous people of Mexico. We the Zapatistas are the ones who took up arms in the year 1994, for a just and dignified cause that for this reason we have realized that for more than five hundred years we have lived in exploitation and misery.

We the Zapatistas clearly state that our struggle is not only for us the indigenous. It is for all the indigenous and non-indigenous. And I especially direct our words to our indigenous people. We call for all to truly organize. That it not be just words and that they truly show it in their acts. It is now time that we all organize and that we form our autonomous municipalities. We do not have to wait until the bad government gives us permission. We should organize as true rebels and not wait for someone to give us permission to be autonomous, with or without a law. It is in this manner that our authorities in rebellion should function and in this way be able to govern ourselves. Only like this can democracy inside a municipality truly function. But we also state that we must not only resist, not only receive crumbs, but rather that we must resist all the mockeries and persecutions that persist on the part of the enemy that we confront. It is these bad governments which for hundreds of years have manipulated through governing. Today, that does not matter to us. We are now a rebellious organization and we know how to govern ourselves without needing to be taught. Let's not wait for a change in the situation on the part of the powerful and their political parties that are alert to what is coming or to the great consequences against all of Mexico like NAFTA. On their part, the countryside, only benefits the rich.

They want to deceive us. These are complete lies because the truth is that they want to destroy and exterminate us, but they won't. We won't allow it. We will defend ourselves at all costs so that the land belongs to those who work it and because of this we are right. Because we have the right to live and our children and the children of our children, because to us, our lands are our mother, because we will never sell our mother, much less allow some son of a bitch to take them. Dead first before allowing it. Let's not fall into the traps camouflaged as truth and carefully armed in order to not be detected. But those dumb poor people and we the Zapatistas cannot be deceived much less conquered. Long live the EZLN! Long live the indigenous people! Long live the campesinos!

From the mountains of Southeastern Mexico, CCRI/CGEZLN Mexico, 1st of January 2003.

Comandante Fidelia

Good night sisters. Through my voice speaks the voice of the EZLN. Sisters of the fields and of the city, I'm going to tell you these humble words that you're about to hear. It has been many years that we women have been suffering discrimination, exploitation, and neglect at the hands of the bad governments. This also happens in our homes but we administer it and know how we live. We don't have education, we don't have food. Sisters, we wake up at three in the morning to make food for our children and when we finish, we have to go to work in the fields to help our husbands. We have to plant the corn, we have to carry the sickle and the machete. After the product comes, we have to cut the corn and everything that the fields give, including coffee.

Sisters, for all these many exploitations and injustices, there are many sisters that immigrate to the city but they are also exploited. There they are used as babysitters, as washers, as moppers, they are even put in the street to sell and to sell in the market. They are used to make tortillas from three in the morning and are not allowed to leave until eight in the evening. Then, they say "take these ten pesos because there is no money". "The situation is difficult," that's what they say. Also, the women who go to the big cities as accountants, secretaries, they go to the banks of the rich, they go to the hospitals, they go to the insurance companies, to the big factories, and also there they are exploited and discriminated against. There are moments, when they are even raped.

Sisters, we will no longer allow this. Look, today, the man with the boots, SeÑ±or Vicente Fox, with his cabinet of lizards, is going to raise the minimum wage. What are we going to do with that tiny bit, the 30 pesos that our husbands earn? With that tiny bit, that increase in the minimum wage, the women of the fields and the cities will begin to be deceived. One with her ten chickens, one with her pig, with her two aluminum sheets, with that opportunity to forever deceive those who have never wanted to awaken.

Sisters, I also want to make a call to women to organize so that we can together defend our rights and also so we can have equality. Sisters, let's no longer allow the government and the president of the Republic to continue deceiving us because there are many things that fall upon us as women.

From the mountains of the Mexican southeast. The EZLN. Thank you very much.

Comandante Omar

Through my voice, speaks the voice of the EZLN. Brothers and Sisters, I am going to say a few words for the youth of Mexico and the world. Once again, we have come to say that we are alive and that we continue. We have not given up. We have not sold ourselves. To the contrary, we are stronger and firmer. We have come to the plaza of San Cristobal to tell you the truth about what is happening in our country and throughout the world. We have also come to demonstrate that we are not divided, nor is there conflict between us. Why would we fight amongst ourselves if we still have someone to fight against. You are all aware of the lies perpetrated by those who are known to be liars.

Youth of the world and of Mexico, students, unemployed youth, young artists and athletes, punk rockers, young painters, chavos banda, young workers, youth of different social sectors, youth of different countries of the world, those who have struggled along with us, who have respected us and who have worked hard, we continue to tell you to keep struggling wherever you find yourselves and don't stop because we the Zapatistas will not forget you because they will never defeat us.

Although they are killing us, others are being born. But, don't let yourself be lied to. We are here with the small bases of support of our pueblos in resistance to demonstrate and to expose the lies that have been told to all of Mexico and to the world. Young people, do not let yourselves be fooled any longer. Already, we have been lied to for too many years. What hopes do you have with all the political parties if they only take advantage of your votes and then later persecute you, they rob from you, or they threaten your family? And, only for dancing and singing as you want to or for cutting your hair or

dressing as you like, only for that, they suspect you or accuse you to be a terrorist or a criminal. They don't respect your customs or your culture.

Don't let yourself be led by those vampires that only suck blood from the workers and leave nothing. Let's fight to stop those parasites of Mexico and of the world since we are the majority. Then, you can choose the path of our future in this world where we will have a place for all of us. Let's talk and unite our voice to say what we want and what we don't want so that we will learn our rights. Although the bad governments create obstacles for the struggle, the EZLN will continue forward.

Any political struggle that serves our people and the society of our country and of the world, we are there with you, supporting you. It is worth it to risk ourselves in the struggle even if they are killing us, so that we leave a path in search of a better life for our children before we cease to exist, so that we have a future and put an end to the unfulfilled promises and the theft of all types of national natural wealth.

Mexico January 1st, 2003

Comandante Mister

Brothers and sisters, with my voice I speak the voice of the EZLN. I am going to say a few words to all the people of the world who struggle for their liberation, to all who struggle for justice, democracy, and liberty for the whole world. We are the Zapatista rebels. We struggle together with you and your struggle is our struggle also. Because of this we say that we will always struggle in Mexico and in the world until we obtain a dignified place in the life of humanity. These bad governments think that we the indigenous people don't think about the international. But we the indigenous people, we do think the international, and we the indigenous people, we do have the right to form opinions and decide what it is we want to do.

Also, these racist governments think that we the Indians don't know the world. Know that we understand and know about your plans of death against humanity and we also understand and know about the people struggling for their liberation. We know the world and we even know Japan. Because we know the men and women from all the countries that have come to our communities and they have talked with us about their struggles, of their worlds and about everything they do. In their words we have traveled and we have seen and known more lands than any intellectual. We know the Spanish, we know the Basques, we know the Italians, the French, the Catalonians, the Americans, the Argentinians, the Austrians, the Chileans, the Nicaraguans, the Guatemalans, the Koreans, the Japanese, the Peruvians, the Canadians, the Norwegians, from Belgium, Swiss, German, Greece, from England, from Australia, from Africa, and others that I cannot recall now.

Because of this, we say to the powerful of the world that if they unite to globalize with the globalization of death, then we too are going to globalize for liberty.

We tell our brothers from the Basque country, Don't believe what the bad governments say. We tell them that they Subcomandante Insurgent Marcos says that he supports the political struggle of the Basque pueblo, he wants to tell all the Zapatista men, children, elders and women, that we support them in their struggle because because their claims are of justice, liberty, and democracy. We are not ashamed to support the just struggle of a pueblo that struggles like you, the Basque pueblo. We are even less afraid to speak of the struggle because we the Zapatistas, if there is anything we do not possess, its fear. Because we are dignified, we deserve a dignified place in the world.

It is not important to us that the threats come from where they come. To speak the truth is our duty and we know to say that it does not make us fearful to speak of political and social struggles in the world just as we speak of the struggle of the rebellious pueblo of Argentina. And here we send a greeting from us, the Zapatistas. Also to the disobedient Italians and to all the brothers and sisters Zapatistas in

Europe and the world.

Also we raise our indigenous voice to ask respect to the sovereignty of the country that is Venezuela. And that Venezuelans decide what they want without the meddlings of other countries. In Mexico, we send a special greeting to the brothers and sisters of the autonomous municipality of Atenco. Also to the compañeros and compañeras of the FZLN, and to all the rebellious teachers and to all farmers, our brothers in struggle for the land, and to the workers and employees.

Also we tell all you brothers and sisters of the world that we do not have to ask permission from anyone because to do good you do not need permission from anyone to tell the truth. Because of this, rebellious brothers and sisters of the world, we support the struggle of the pueblo and we are fighting for a dignified place. We are fighting for democracy, the liberty and the justice for all the pueblos and nations of the world. Because the life of humanity is sacred and as such we are deserving of having a more just life, more dignified and human than other place you can find in the world. Because the resistance has demonstrated far and wide that this world that we have been able to survive by organizing ourselves as we see fit and we have never asked anyone permission for what we have to do and much less what we are going to say.

Brothers, fighters of all the world the insults of the bad governments in the world have not been few. They say they fight for human rights but this is not true because those bad governments fight for death and disappearance, for hunger and misery, with illnesses they themselves created. That is how they want to kill us, and that is how they want to disappear us in the life of humanity. To those bad governments and their successors we say that we will never be able to finish us. Not by hunger or sickness and much less with its projects and treaties. Rebellion has existed in all of the existence of humanity. The Zapatistas, our duty is to fight for humanity and against the plans and treaties of global neoliberalism that don't know or respect borders. SO this is how our struggle for justice and liberty has to be. This is why we are going to fight for life and humanity, and against death. We are going to fight for our true human rights against oblivion. We are going to fight for our existence against extermination. Like this we are going to continue fighting with the true word. We will continue like this until all of us together attain and conquer a place for all of us in the life of humanity. That is why brothers and sisters of all the world we ask you to sustain your struggle and to continue fighting for as long as necessary. Because we the Zapatistas are not going to betray all the political and social fighters of all the world, and to fight in the world we will not ask anyone permission, much less accept that the government tell us what we should do or what we are going to say. But it is certain that we support all the social and political fighters of the world, because we have hope that all the struggles of the world, that we're going to win because our demands are just. Long live Argentina Rebelde! Long live the political struggle of the Basque people! Long live the rebels of the world! Long live the EZLN. From the mountains of Southeast Mexico CCCRI CGEZLN Mexico, 1 January 2003.

Comandante Tacho:

Through my voice speaks the voice of the EZLN

Brothers and sisters, we have some words for the Mexican politicians and intellectuals on the right.

Ladies and Gentlemen of the main political parties in Mexico and also to those who criticize us for our words and initiatives: first, we want to say that we do not accept orders from anyone who is not from our communities. It seems that those that want to order us around want to take the place of the big landowners because these masters are used to giving orders to their peons, of course if any of the critics or experts that now abound think they can do a better job at this or have more capacity than us, the Comité Clandestino Revolucionario Indígena (the Underground Revolutionary Indigenous

Committee) we tell them to come with us. We are not going to ask you to endure all that the Sup [Subcomandante Marcos] has endured in the time he has been with us. We are only going to ask them to endure one tenth of this and from there we will teach you what the Sup has learned from us, from which he has become the Stainless Steel Subcommandante. We are going to have patience with you and we are willing to share our baked tostadas, sour pozol and the trucks in the night under the rain with a little weight of 20 kilos on their backs and, to make up for what they are lacking, they carry the mosquitos and cobras.

We only tell you this small word. But apart, how you criticize that we are not with the political parties....it is not that we are against the political parties of the world, surely there are political parties that have engaged with those they represent and that haven't been corrupted but we know to tell you that in our Mexico there is not one good one, they have demonstrated this with their actions. The three political parties of Mexico that are the PAN, PRI, and PRD have mocked all the indian communities of Mexico, all the people that support the full recognition of our rights, and all the people all over the world who have also supported us. Like this, they have closed the door to the hope of millions of men and women of Mexico and the world because they have closed the door to dialogue in Mexico and they want to edge Mexico to war another time. They have demonstrated that they don't have any interest in the people other than them obeying the interests of their master and giving us their back.

Because of this, brothers and sisters, we are going to tell you what happened: the PRI is pissed off because we incited their defeat. Remember that in 1993 Carlos Salinas de Gortari was the most powerful man in Mexico and of international prestige, clearly because he sold out his homeland, of course because of this, with the very strong party, the PRI, the most important party, authoritarian and corrupt as they are. The PRI, the only one who inhabited all the national territory, governed the majority of the states and municipalities and the majority of the people bowed down their heads and said the government is very strong and theres nothing anyone can do. And in 1994, rebellion seemed impossible and, in this situation, we did the impossible. Remember that many bowed down their heads in front of Salinas and the PRI government and no one could tell them anything, it was only them who could say anything, no one else. But only until there was someone that, one dawn of the first of January of 1994, lifted up their head in order to say "Ya Basta!" and this someone has a first name and last names and is called the Zapatista Army of National Liberation.

We are remembering this now because there it seemed that this was the only man, the only party, and today completeing nine years of our war we return to say another time that they can't do anything as if they were the only governments in this country, Mexico. And then theres this Mr. Priista named Manuel Bartlet who made a law against the indigenous communities so that the gringo government would excuse them from the accusations of narco-trafficking that the USA has. Behind him were all the senators and representatives of the PRI. And the PAN party... from who they knew that PAN was going to vote against the indian communities because it is a racist party. Because the PAN only like to see the indigenous in their houses like servants or asking for charity. So they can't respect indigenous rights and culture because the Panistas are the inheritants of those Spanish conquistators that spread terror and death in the Indian lands of Mexico. And the Panista, Diego Fernandez de Cevallos whom is a lawyer of criminals, put a law against the Cocopa law because, yes, they were going to pass the Cocopa law, peace was going to arrive, the Fox government was going to stay a strong government and Cevallos wants Fox to be weak because he wants to be president of Mexico, even before the year 2006, and he wants to convert the whole country into a big ranch.

As for the PRD party, they tell us with alot of shame that they didn't support the Cocopa law that is a law supported by the people of Mexico and in all the world like no other law and the senators and the leadership of the PRD didn't vote for the Cocopa law for a reason. Because yes it would have passed and peace would have arrived and then the Zapatistas would have been left to do their politics openly

and this is what they don't like because they think their clients will quit and they'll be left without their jobs. I'm reminding you of this because up until now the PRD has walked around saying that the indigenous problem is very important. Maybe they think we've already forgotten what they did but we Zapatistas have a really good memory and we remember that Jesús Ortega and Demetrio Sodi defended this law that doesn't serve for anything even when Cevallos nor Bartlett defended it anymore because the direction of the PRD. When they saw in the march that many people were supporting the EZLN, the leaders agreed to do everything possible to avoid a situation where the Zapatistas would be able to make themselves into an organization with open politics, and so the PRD did it like that. Even those that one supposes to be more to the left of this party voted against the Cocopa law so that Zapatista senators wouldn't appear. The first of the vote is the Michoacán governor and don't think that this didn't hurt us because until then we thought that, yes, there were people engaged in the high posts of the PRD.

We thought that Mr. Cardenas knows that what is most important is the principles of what the rest say and we didn't wait fifteen days, we waited more than a year because we thought "they will come and ask us forgiveness, or if not they will explain to us why they did that", we would have understood if there had been good reasons but it seems we didn't even deserve an explanation, of course it has to be recognized that the Members of Parliament of the PRD and those from the PT and those of the Green Party voted against the House but the damage had already been done. Everyone knows that it would have been enough if the PRD had opposed the senate even though they were the minority so that the law would return for discussion. Only one senator saying no would have smashed the government strategy to edge us into war, but no, the PRD preferred to continue with their cargo instead of engaging themselves with the people of Mexico, especially with the indian communities. This is how it went. The political parties closed the doors to the political solution in Mexico, they did it for one thing called stinginess and another called fear. Because it is good that everyone knows that the law called Cevallos, Bartlett, Ortega is a law that is a war against the indigenous communities. These are the political parties that they call all of Mexico to vote for because now they are going to choose new legislators...perhaps we don't have memories of their treasons. And also they are accompanied by the Supreme Court of Justice.

Even though there were some judges that were brave and honest, the majority ended up being cowards, and they did whatever Fox and his cabinet said, everything that was possible to stop the Cocopa law because they were frightened of the March of the Color of the Earth. This is how the three political parties of the executive union, the legislature, and the justice system denied the political and peaceful solution to the demands of the indigenous communities of Mexico. So, brothers and sisters, like this they say they struggle making laws in favor of the people, but it is not really like this, now they pass a law and they divide up more money for their electoral campaigns.

This is what they did with the Cocopa law, like how no other law has had so much support, like this they made treason and now they want to deceive the people and trick everyone because none of them care about the people. What they care about is staying in their posts and they don't care that the country breaks into pieces. They thought that it didn't matter what they did because the people forget quickly and also there is no other option, but they haven't forgotten and yes there is something else, because this history of treason doesn't end with them defeating us. We Zapatistas continue looking for paths so that the people can survive and so that what was obediently sent is finished, like this they will continue knowing about us, and above everything they will continue knowing that the Zapatistas do not forget, that we don't lower ourselves, and we don't sell out.

To end, we wanted to say some words to the journalists, everyone knows how important the press has been in this struggle that is the struggle for democracy, liberty, and justice. It doesn't matter that some speak badly of our EZLN, of our cause, or of our history, all of them have contributed to opening up a

space of information and discussion that didn't exist before, if this space exists it is thanks to the communication workers and to their struggle and sensibility and not because the government or the rich have wanted it. So we wish all the communication workers a happy new year and we hope that you inform with the truth and that your rights as workers are respected by the companies in which you work.

There's something else to say: Some days ago a media communications company known as CNI Channel 40 was assaulted by orders from Mr. Ricardo Salinas of TV Azteca,. Everyone knows that the commentators and presentors of CNI Channel 40 add up to the unjust criticisms we have received because of course we support terrorism. It doesn't matter, we respect the thoughts of each and everyone and yes, they say lies, well that's already been realized, but whatever, we can't see the authoritarianism of money being imposed and stay quiet. Here we wanted to demonstrate our solidarity with the communication workers of CNI Channel 40 and to renounce the aggression that they have suffered, it already looks like the only law that leads us is that of money and we see it like a power that wants to swallow up a business that was small but made an effort to inform the people, like that all the reporters made an effort, no matter in what business they worked in, they walked from one side to the other looking for news to give to the people. If it wasn't published it isn't their fault, it is because of the bosses interests. If today we remained quiet before this evil, tomorrow there would be other communication businesses attacked and then the only ones to remain would be, not the best ones, no, those that have the most money. And like this they would go shutting off all the voices until only one voice remained and not one honest person can permit this.

In the world and in Mexico what the Zapatistas want is not to gain money, no, but reason and an independent press that will be respected.

These are our words. Viva the Zapatista National Liberation Army! (viva!)

From the mountains of Southeast Mexico, the Comit  Clandestino Revolucionario Ind gena (Underground Revolutionary Indigenous Committee), the General Command of the Zapatista National Liberation Army, Mexico, January 2003. Thanks.

Comandante David

Good night to all. Through my voice speaks the voice of the EZLN. Brothers and sisters we are going to direct some words to all those who are part of the EZLN squadrons. (Tzotzil) Comrades, bases of support, representatives of the communities and regions present in this great demonstration. (Tzotzil) We commend everyone for your decision and courage to have mobilized without caring about the consequences. (Tzotzil) Comrades, of all the communities, of all the Zapatista regions, and from anywhere that you find yourself but that could not come, that could be present in this demonstration for many reason we salute you. (Tzotzil) We wish that you continue forward with firmness in the struggle. (Tzotzil) To the military comrades, men and women insurgents, militia people of all fronts in your respective military post, those of your names to the Revolutionary Clandestine Indigenous Committee (CCRI), we, the General Command of the EZLN salute you militantly. Receive our special congratulations for having completed nineteen years of existence and now nine years of war. We hope that you will stay firm in your convictions and in your revolutionary moral. (Tzotzil) Special greetings to our comrade bases of support that have resisted the political, economic, and ideological blows of the government. (Tzotzil) Those who suffered and resisted the pressure and aggressions of the military and the paramilitaries. (Tzotzil) that have suffered the displacement, the persecutions, the imprisonments and the fall or your family members in this struggle. (Tzotzil) Greetings to all the Zapatista Civilian comrades wherever you find yourselves in the fields, in the cities and in whatever state of our country and in other countries of the world.

Comrades, like all of you know, since the executive powers, legislative and judicial, approved a law

against the Indigenous people of Mexico, we the Zapatistas have refused that law and as a result of that we have lived a period of silence and of resistance. Almost two years have passed since our initial indignation with the betrayal of the governmental powers. Those powers and their allies have taken advantage of our silence, to say a bunch of lies and calamities. They have prepared political and economic strategies covering them up as projects of development in the indigenous communities.

But in reality those “supports” the present government spoke about are no more than crumbs, like always. It is no solution for the misery in which we live and much less is it a response to the just demands of the Indigenous peoples. Our silence has been used to say that the Zapatistas are finished, that we divided, that the leaders have given up and have sold themselves and that leadership has been left alone, and that the Zapatista communities have gone with the government. Through all of these sneaky ways the government and the political parties have used to attempt to confuse the communities, to debilitate the struggle and the indigenous resistance. To make us happy, so that we settle, they offer words and small contributions to a few communities. For the New Year they can say that now we are at peace because the Zapatistas accepted the support of the government and abandoned the ranks of the EZLN. But, if it is so, then who are we that are present here today? The thousands of men and women, youth and children and elders who are here today, demanding, aren't they Zapatistas? Aren't they also Zapatistas, the dozens of thousands of people who stayed in their communities, who could not for lack of financial resources and transportation could not come to this demonstration. Are these thousands of men, women, youth, elders and children Zapatista fighters willing to give themselves? I ask you, are you willing to humiliate yourselves, before the people who have for centuries humiliated you, ravaged our wealth, have discriminated us, forgotten us and tramples our dignity. I ask you sisters and brothers are you willing to sell yourselves for crumbs and to betray the blood of our fallen ancestors and of our heroes and of our martyrs. I ask you compañeros, are you willing to sell yourselves? Are you willing to leave the struggle while we have gotten no real solution to our just demands? Are you willing to sell your dignity and to leave the inheritance of only hunger, misery and forgotten existence for our children? Compañeros and compañeros, today completes nine years of our armed uprising and breaks the silence that we have had for almost two years. The hour to speak has arrived once again and to tell the truth about ourselves the Zapatista indígenas. We do not raise arms to ask for charity, so that they keep laughing at us, like the government until now has done and offer us lies and crumbs to buy our consciences.

Our indigenous Zapatistas pueblos do not need government support with its negotiations or to send us food. What we, the Zapatistas, ask for and demand is they constitutionally recognize the rights, autonomy and self-determination of all indigenous pueblos of Mexico. We demand to be treated with equality and justice. Therefore we don't accept that they make fun of us or that they shamefully offer us their “crumbs” or their garbage. We the indigenous Zapatistas are impoverished but not beggars and not delinquents. We are rebels against injustices and forgetfulness. We have dignity and we have reason to struggle with our “arms” and this is what we want the whole world to understand, that the indigenous are not animals that the rich and powerful throw their garbage to. Because we are pueblos with a long history.

Because of this we are willing to follow the struggle until we see that all the indigenous pueblos in our homeland are respected. And taken into account as pueblos and as citizens with all of the rights. We want to tell all of Mexico and the World that what began a few days ago through the voice of Subcomandante Marcos. It is a risky initiative but we think that it is worth it to attempt it for the good of all. Because it is still an initiative of pacific solution that we are attempting to open a door that the Mexican politicians have closed us behind. This and other things we will continue to talk through our spokesperson Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos. Comrades, we would like to tell you that our struggle has just begun. That is why on this ninth anniversary of our uprising we come to this center of

exploitation that is San Cristobal de las Casas to protest and to tell the truth. For this we had to cross checkpoints and break military fences to come and say, "we are here". We are here with sincere and truthful words. We reaffirm our promise to continue to struggle for democracy, liberty and justice for all. Comrades since January 1st, 1994 we have lit a small spark of rebellion and dignity, and this light, the powerful have tried to burn out. But they have not succeeded nor will anyone succeed to put it out, because it is the light of hope for all of the Indians and non Indians of Mexico and the World. That light symbolizes a force and protection in this larger struggle for democracy, liberty and justice. That is why we should make that light bigger and stronger so that the people and nations can see that we have maintained alone this Zapatista rebellion.

Comrades, prepare yourselves in this moment to light your flames.

Comrades, to all of those in the back making the bonfire, we have not yet given the order to light the ocote wood. Comrades, wait, we will give the order soon.

Comrades, please lift your machetes and light your fire.

Comrades, keep your ocote on and lift you machete or ax and then we will give you directions. For right now please light your fires.