

WHAT IS ZAPATISMO?

6 QUESTIONS AND 6 ANSWERS ABOUT ZAPATISTAS

EVERYTHING YOU WANT TO KNOW ABOUT ZAPATISTAS

1.- Who are they?

Zapatistas have said, “we are the result of 500 years of fight, first against slavery in the Independence war; then, to avoid being absorbed by the north American expansionism, then for promulgating our Constitution and to drive out the French empire from our land, then the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz denied us the fair application of the Reform Laws.

...we are the heirs to the real creators of our nationality, we are millions of dispossessed” “... the commands and troop elements from EZLN are mostly indigenous people from Chiapas, it is like this because the indigenous people represent the most humiliated and dispossessed sector in Mexico, but also, the most praiseworthy, we are thousands of natives who have taken up arms, behind us there are dozens of thousands relatives of ours. That’s the thing, dozens of thousands of indigenous people are in the struggle.”

2.- Why do they struggle?

“TODAY WE DECIDED - enough is enough! ...for not dying of starvation in the view of a dictatorship of more than 70 years, led by a group of conservative traitors. They are the same people who opposed to Hidalgo and Morelos, the same people who betrayed Vicente Guerrero, the same people that take everything away from us today.”

3.- Why did they take up arms?

EZLN wrote to the kids in Jalisco in February 1994 “...we do not take up arms for the pleasure of killing and dying... For our boys and girls there are no schools or medicines, there are no clothes or food, there is no decent roof above our heads. For our kids there is only work, ignorance and death. The land we have is useless. Our kids have to go to work since very young so they can get some food, clothes and medicines... they eat the same food we eat: corn, beans and chili. They cannot go to school to learn Spanish because work kills all day, and illness kills all night. That is how our kids live and die since 501 years ago. Us, their fathers, their mothers, their brothers and their sisters, we didn’t want to carry the guilt for doing nothing about our boys and girls. We searched for peaceful ways to obtain justice and we found death; we found pain and sorrow every time. And then we had to find the way of the war, because what we asked for with voice was not listened to.”

4.- What are the Zapatistas asking for?

“...We do not beg or ask for charity, we ask for justice: a fair salary, a piece of good land, a

decent house, a school of truth, medicine that cures, bread on our tables, respect, freedom to say what comes up to our mind and opens the mouth so the words unite us to others in peace and without death. That is what we always ask for, boys and girls in Jalisco, and they did not listen what our voice cried for.”

And the Zapatistas have also said - “...our problems, and the problems of our entire homeland, can only be solved through a national revolutionary movement around three main demands: freedom, democracy and justice.”

“...the situation we are going through happens not only in one state or only in some towns but in other states too, we know that our brothers and sisters are suffering in other towns and other states, as much as we are suffering where we live”.

5.- How are they organized and who makes the decisions?

The Zapatistas have a leadership called the Comité Clandestino Revolucionario Indígena (Indigenous Clandestine Revolutionary Committee), which is large group that take decisions in a collective way, according to what they decide, organized by ethnic groups and regions, and elected by the indigenous base “...the Directive Committee is formed by tzotziles, choles, tojolabales, mames and zoques, the main ethnic groups from Chiapas.”

“...each village has elected its representatives, its leaders ...the villagers propose the people who are going to lead those organizations.”

“So, going from town to village, there was time, then, to appoint the delegates. That is how we got to be the CCRI (Indigenous Clandestine Revolutionary Committee)”. “...what the people said is what we try to accomplish. The plan is made according to what the people want”.

“Therefore, if any member of the CCRI does not do his/her job, or does not respect the people, we say: Well, my friend, this is not the place for you... That’s how the committee is constituted, in a democratic way.”

“Meetings are held in each region, so people’s opinion is required. Then, all the opinions are gathered from the different communities.” “We also go to inform them... That is why we want to reflect on every step we take, as well as on every proposal from government. We cannot go take what we do not know.”

“...we have to consult everything with the people ...We cannot dialogue and negotiate just like that, first we have to ask the people”.

6.- Why are they called Zapatistas?

“And the oldest amongst the old people in the communities say that there was someone called Zapata whose voice raised for his people and that his voice sang, more than shouting: Land and Freedom! And these old men say that Zapata has not died, that Zapata has to come back. And the oldest men say that the wind and the rain and the sun tell the peasant when he must prepare the land, when he must sow, when he must reap. And they say that also hope is sown and reaped.”

“...April 10, 1992. Outside, the indigenous countrymen from Ocosingo, Oxchuc, Hustlán, Chilón, Yajalón, Sabanilla, Salto de Agua, Palenque, Altamirano, San Andrés, and Cancuc, dance in front of a huge Zapata’s picture, painted by one of them, they declaim poems, sing and say their words ... The countrymen shout that Zapata lives and that the fight continues. One of them reads a letter directed to Carlos Salina de Gortari where they accuse him of having ended with the zapatistas’ accomplishments on agriculture, of selling the country with the Tratado de Libre Comercio (Free-Trade Agreement) and also of bringing Mexico back to porfirismo...”.

“There was a man that, walking his Word from far away, to our mountain he arrived and spoke the language of the true men and women. He was and was not from these lands on his way, in the mouth of our dead beloved ones, in the voice of our wise old men, he walked his word up to our heart...”

“Votan Zapata, light that came from far away and that was born here in our land... Votan Zapata, timid fire that in our death he lived 501 years. Votan Zapata, name that changes, man without a face, tender light that protects us... It came coming Votan Zapata. Name without a name, Votan Zapata saw through Miguel, walked in José María, was named in Benito, flew in a little bird, rode in Emiliano, shouted in Francisco, visited Pedro...”

“He is and he is not everything in us ... he is walking ... Master of the night ... Lord of the mountain ... us ... Votan, people’s guardian and heart. One and too many he is. Nobody and everybody. He comes being. Votan Zapata, people’s guardian and heart.

From www.cedoz.org/

A short animated video telling of Zapatismo for beginners:

<http://diarreaverbal.blogspot.mx/2013/03/zapatismo-for-beginners.html?m=0>