

**ANOTHER WORLD IS HERE: BUILDING AUTONOMY AND RESILIENCE IN
CHIAPAS, MEXICO**

With Alberto Vallejo Reyna, Podcast #1

Hadley: Good morning, let's start this interview for this podcast. The first question reads: Could you share your understanding of the history of the Zapatista movement?

Alberto: We can say that the Zapatista movement became public in 1994, the first day of January, when NAFTA started, the Zapatistas declared war against the Mexican army and they put out their first declaration which is called the First Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle. They called on the villagers of Mexico for an insurrection to topple the government and create a new type of government. That was the uprising of the first of January of 1994.

Hadley: What was the context of this uprising? Why did the community bases of support of the Zapatista army decide to rise up in arms?

Alberto: It is a political process that started various years ago. It started, as we say, in the short term with a series of reforms and economic and political crises that affected the Mexican nation. Above all, for the indigenous farmers it was very important, first of all, the reform to Article 27 of the constitution - the constitution of 1917 that had been a product of the Mexican revolution and that in its article 27, was the article that, in a way, regulated the access to the lands to the farmers, the agrarian article.

So, at the beginning of the entrance of the government of Carlos Salinas de Gortari in 1988, started a series of political reforms. And they reformed the constitutional article 27 that basically ended the old model of collective ownership of the land and ended the distribution of the land.

Because, the farmers that didn't have land at the end of the revolution could ask for land from the agrarian reform secretary of Mexico. Through two ways they could ask for and receive land.

One was that the government would return ancestral land that had belonged to them and the villagers could bring in ancient papers from the colonial era that could prove the ownership of certain territories and the government would return that land. The second mechanism was the adoption of common lands, in that which the barren lands of the republic were given to the farmers through their adoption. And generally the process occurred through that the farmers came and they positioned themselves on land that was not inhabited or that was far from the roads and highways, as we say semi-virgin land. They came and occupied the land - so it was a process of struggle, they fought, through the agrarian reform secretary, to own the land in the manner of commons. But with the reform of article 27, it ended those mechanisms of distribution of the land. The government didn't deliver more land; they alleged that there wasn't more land to deliver.

The other big moment that brought on the Zapatista insurrection was the coffee crisis, which started at the end of the decade of the 80's and the start of the decade of the 90's. It has to do with the fact that the Mexican government changed its old system of the support for the farmers, the agrarian policy of the country. The reform of article 27 meant not only ending the distribution of the land but also ending the agrarian policy. The agrarian policy consisted of basically that the Mexican state, through various institutions, was the main buyer and collector of the products of the farmers. It bought the products of the farmers, for example the corn, beans, rice, coffee in the case of the Chiapanecan farmers for example. It bought them, as they said in those times, a guaranteed price: a price higher than that of the international market. The objective was that the farmers had resources, and on the other hand the state became the owner of the corn and the beans and everything and it permitted a food and agrarian policy on the international level. So for that there were various institutions for example the CONASUPO, it was called, international allocator of Mexican goods, which distributed corn, beans, milk - it had stores to sell goods very cheaply, and it was that institution that finished the farmers' production and bought it at a subsidized price.

We know for example that in the U.S. the production of the farmers is subsidized, with high subsidies, by the U.S. government. Well the Mexican farmers' production was also subsidized. Well that ended with the policies of Carlos Salinas de Gortari. For example, the Mexican institute of coffee, called InmeCafe, was dissolved, and what it did was buy all of the coffee production. It was the principle buyer of the farmers' products, and the Mexican government was in charge of advertising the coffee on the international market. But it guaranteed the farmers a price, a payment. Also, some supports that had been given by the rural banks ended, and they had given credits to the farmers to guarantee their production. But not only did they end the adoption of land, the possibility arose that the farmers could sell that land. The opened up the land market, so that the farmers could sell the land as property. In that way the government thought the famers could sell the land and those lands could be used for other things.

What we know now, many years later, that in those times was already the logic of the whole process, has to do with the North American Free Trade Agreement (or NAFTA), which granted Mexico a role in the economy of North America, and that was the role of manufacturing, the manufacturing that was going on in the U.S. was going to move to Mexico. In exchange, the U.S., as the country with the biggest agricultural potential of the world, the country with the biggest agricultural production, above all the Midwest where they produce enormous amounts of produce, it was the grand region where for thousands of years the herds of buffalos walked and defecated and fertilized the land. And so they are lands that are rich, and with water, the grand river Mississippi and all its tributaries. Well the U.S. is one of the big agricultural centers of the world: the principle of the world. And so in the logic of the North American Free Trade Agreement, Mexico was assigned the role of manufacturer, that is to say the farmers were to convert to the workforce of manufacturing, and stop producing food because the food supply of Mexico would be provided by the North American producers. So that was what happened, Mexico lost food sovereignty. Mexico lost, at the end of the decade of the 80's, the production of its own food. Today, Mexico, 20 years after the North American Free Trade Agreement, is totally dependent on the food goods that come from the United States through NAFTA.

So, the Zapatista uprising happened in this context, in that which the agrarian policy was abandoned, the system was dismantled. It wasn't a perfect system; it was a significantly corrupt system, but at least it had maintained a politic of food sovereignty and a politic of support for the

farmers. The system was dismantled, so the farmers were completely displaced and abandoned. So at the end of the 80s, beginning of the 90s, the international prices of coffee, which is the principle commercial product that the farmers produce in Chiapas, dropped significantly on the international market. The price of the coffee went down to very low levels, and that created a huge economic crisis for the farmers, on top of the dismantling of the system. So the farmers felt abandoned and they knew they didn't have much of the future. So that was the first circumstance that provoked the Zapatista uprising of 1994.

Another factor that produced that uprising was that during the decades of the 60s, 70s, and 80s, one of the biggest assassinations of the Cold War occurred in Central America. We remember that during that time in Guatemala, El Salvador, in Nicaragua and Honduras, there was a big popular movement for liberation. And this brought on insurgent movements that had a big impact on the international level and produced a series of revolutions in those countries. We have to remember that Chiapas is on the southern border of Mexico, attached to Guatemala, so in that sense everything that happens in South America has an affect here in Chiapas. So Chiapas for 30 years was witness to everything that happened in South America with the revolutionary wars and all of the counter insurgency in the time of the Cold War. In those countries the military dictators were supported by the U.S. government. They were supported in a legal and illegal manner; it's a quite complicated story, but it brought on scenarios of counterinsurgent war, including genocide.

We know recently, in the past years, that in Guatemala there was a systematic genocide against the indigenous population on the part of the Guatemalan army. That brought on, that at the start of the 80s, many refugees came to Chiapas. More than 3,000 Guatemalan refugees crossed the border, fleeing from the massacres of the Guatemalan army. So all the famers that fled the massacres of the chemical war, because we know they were using chemical weapons in the massacres in Guatemala, they came to Mexico, fleeing to the Mexican jungle in the region where there were many bases of what now is the Zapatista army. So the Zapatistas, the famers, learned how they were reeling from the war in Central America. They had that conscience, through the testimonies of the refugees, of what were the tactics of the Guatemalan army in the repression of the indigenous famers. Also, many corpses came down through the river, of people that were born in Guatemala but whose bodies came to Mexico, so there are many testimonies of how at

the start of the 80s and in the middle of the 80s, corpses came floating down the river from the massacres that were happening in Guatemala. (1:12: 24)

So the people in Chiapas were alert, they thought it was their near future – if it could happen in Guatemala it could happen to them. So the political reading that the farmers did in 1994 with the entrance of NAFTA was a reading that the political system, economic, was going to exterminate the indigenous people. That was the political reading that the communities did, the social reading of what was happening. And a third factor that is symbolic also had to do with the year 1992 with the commemoration of the 500 years since the arrival of Christopher Columbus to the American continent and the establishment of the colonial process. That implied that the 2 of October in 1992 there was a big mobilization of the Zapatista bases here in San Cristobal de Las Casas [of Chiapas], for example, that ended in shooting down the monument of the conquistador. Symbolically, there was also a feeling of rebellion, of critique at the colonial system. And there was also a conjoint circumstance of the economic crisis, of the political crisis for the farmers. So those factors brought on that the first of January of 1994, with the entrance of NAFTA, communities decided to take action. We say in that moment, if we are going to die, at least we will die fighting. And they rose up in arms. So a bit of that was the conjuncture of how the Zapatistas rose up in arms the first of January of 1994.

Hadley: How have the Zapatistas implemented a different economy and government system?

Alberto: Continuing a bit with the responses from the previous question, the uprising of 1994 provoked a large national mobilization. The reaction of the government was repression and the extinguishing of the rebel movement. The Mexican army positioned itself in the Zapatista territories, in the head municipalities that were taken by the Zapatistas, the head municipalities of San Cristobal de Las Casas, Las Margaritas, De Altamirano, and town of Ocosingo. All these towns had been taken by the Zapatistas on the first of January '94. So the 2nd of January '94 the Mexican army came in with tanks and troops and with force to the area to recover these territories. So there was aerial bombing of civil society by the Mexican army.

A state of war grew in Chiapas, that was an international scandal, a surprise. No one knew of the possibility of an armed uprising. And we have to remember that the political culture

internationally of 1994, there was the disappearance of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991, so it was a recent question, so this was at the end of the cold war, so no one expected an armed uprising for that moment. But what it did not stop was the extermination that the Mexican army implemented, what it did not stop was the mobilization of the Mexican population. There was the answer of the Mexican population was of huge demonstrations, for example in Mexico City there was a huge protest daily in January, in what they calculated was a million people marching in Mexico City, asking for a cease fire and a political negotiation of the conflict. Why? Because they recognized as fair the causes that brought on the indigenous uprising. So there was not empathy of the civil society for the government, if not the contrary, an empathy of the Mexican civil society with the indigenous movement.

So there grew a political conditions that greatly disfavored the Mexican government. In addition, what was involved in the extermination of a movement, of the Zapatista movement that surged on the 1st of January of '94, was not militarily simple. It would have implied, really, various months of massacre and political cost that the government would have to run was high. So in that was the mobilization of the civil society led the Mexican government to implement a cease fire the second day on 1994. And from there then, we say that, what there is in this state since the second day on 1994 until today, we are at the 3rd of January, we have already 24 years that we are in this situation of a cease fire. That is, it is assumed that there is a process of recognition by the Mexican state of the legitimacy of the fight of the Zapatistas, and because of that the Mexican government does not wage a direct extermination yet against the Zapatista movement. So what has happened as a result of that?

Of that high tension of January of '94, what has happened is that the Zapatistas have entered into a process of dialogue with civil society, nationally and internationally. And in that process of dialogue, that has been significantly complex, significantly rich, has gone through many stages in the past 24 years. It has permitted the experimentation, on the part of the Zapatista bases, of many strategies to try to bring to the territories in which they are positioned, a new type of social organization and politic. In which they have organized, politically, invokes a new economy, a new politic that runs countercurrent to the politic and economy implemented by the Mexican state. They have been walking, trying to develop in these territories, new forms of political organization and economy.

In those 24 years we talk of a change with including inter-generational change. Through which they are already starting to see some results of all this process. For example, the Zapatistas in the first place, have adopted self-organization and the dialogue with the civil society. This is to say they don't receive, directly, on the part of the Mexican government, any state budget. The Zapatistas directly sell their production, they make products and they sell them, and they make their own money and resources and they generate their own strategies of using those resources. They have generated a certain bank of their own, their own system of savings, for the resources coming from their products, the coffee, agricultural products, and ranchers. And we have to think that the economy of the farmers is of self-subsistence, much of what they produce is consumed themselves, they have also created regional markets, more or less limited by their possibilities, but they have been organizing an alternative economy.

On the other hand they have succeeded in developing in their communities, public work; collective work, to bring services like electric energy, like the roads, or for the creation of schools and Zapatista health systems. They have organized, in an autonomous manner and with the support of the national civil society and international. So the Zapatistas have always been in that dialogue with the civil society in Mexico and with foreigners of the world. So, to strengthen their processes of creation, for example in their system of health, through their communities, they name the people who are responsible for the different area., Promoters of Health, for example. They named Promoters of Education, who later converted to teachers, and they create their own schools to create their own education system. (1:23:35) They have created their own education system completely independent of the national public school system, is not so much in its organization, like in its objectives, like in its contents, the Zapatista system of education has a different agenda than the national school system. (1:24:07)

And they have also created their own health system. And their commissions for the different forms of public work, like the implementation of services like electricity, potable water, the construction of roads, etc. All of that, with the support of civil society nationally and internationally. They organize assistance workshops with outside engineers, for example with members of the former union of the electric company. (1:24:13) So they supported the Zapatistas in capacitating them, in supporting them to be able to create their own small dams for production

of electricity, for example. Or with the support of doctors, nationally and internationally, they have succeeded in capacitating their promoters of health, construction of clinics, or with the support of teachers or specialists in the different areas that have succeeded in capacitating their teachers and their promoters of education in a manner that, after 24 years of Zapatista independence, the first children that were born after the armed uprising, they have been educated within the Zapatista education system. And they have, all their life, grown up in the struggle, how the Zapatistas say.

Basically, what appeals to the Zapatista organization is that through dialogue with civil society, they can equip themselves with their own services, their own system of education, their own health system. Even if they are part of society, they are marginalized in a sense that they do not have doctors, they do not have engineers, they don't have specialists in the different disciplines. In dialogue with the rest of civil society that yes has those specialists, that they have succeeded, little by little, to get knowledge, practical, theoretical, that allows them to develop their own projects. Today, even with the dialogue that we have in the Zapatista communities, it is a significantly complex and hard process, because the resources they have access to are also limited, like the resources in terms of land, like the resources in terms of territories, like the economic resources that they have access to from the products that they produce, and that they can commercialize, it's hard to achieve a lot of development. Despite this, they have better conditions in general, that the farmers that are not organized in Zapatismo. The farmers that are their neighbors, their relatives, that are in the same communities, but that aren't part of the organization, and therefore receive aid from the Mexican state through its institutions, from the secretary of education, or health and all that. Well really, what they see is that charity doesn't fill the real needs of the communities (1:27:23), that what they generate is a politic of clientilism, that is to say, the resources come, through secretary of education, through secretary of health, through secretary of social development, and those resources are basically money that comes to the communities to buy consciences to buy electoral votes. But that really don't allow the communities to develop themselves, in social terms, in intellectual terms, in political terms. On the contrary, it keeps them dependent on the money from the state.

That is a big teaching of how the Zapatistas, as a very marginalized part of the society, have succeeded in maintaining themselves, throughout more than 24 years, growth and development.

But not everything is hunky-dory. It is a social process, it is a political process, which like all of decolonization implies a change in mentality, an apprenticeship, that the Zapatistas are in.

It also has not been easy because the government has tried to break up the movement through different tactics. By using military police, with the mobilization of paramilitaries and soldiers in Zapatista zones which try to generate provocations, and judicial situations imprisoning some leaders of the Zapatista leaders and others. Or organizations that are not Zapatista, but are also not pro-government, they are not in support of the government, they have generated an environment of low-intensity warfare in the Zapatista zones. In that which, have the political component of police and military but also have the civil component through the public money that comes through the secretary of social development in programs like, “Programa Sin Hambre”, the “Without Hunger Program”, that through the distribution of waivers, money, and scholarships, call on the farmers in order to try to disorganize and break the social organization and generate a hostile environment for Zapatismo. Also the political parties come with money, with a budget and there are leaders that coopt the leaders of local societies, through money, to break up the community organization.

So all that, what we see is that it is all a strategy of low-intensity warfare. The objective of the government is to break up the Zapatista movement and stop its growth. Stop its successes, stop its successes from being bigger and better. They try to do this, above all, through dividing the communities and generating political cultures, for example, with the Mexican army encamped in the communities, a presence accompanied by prostitution and alcohol. Because the military logic implies an environment of male chauvinism, of aggression, and implies sexual services women for the soldiers. (1:31:09) All of that generates the entrance of drugs, an environment of prostitution, of alcohol, of drugs, of violence against women, that is always around the military encampments. So all of that is part of what is called low-intensity warfare, and it is a strategy of the state. And within that hostile environment, over 24 years, the Zapatistas have been able to generate the development of their communities. It is an economic development in terms of public services, and in psychological terms, of better education, or better health systems, better roads, better commercialization of their products. So if you compare the economy of the Zapatista farmers with the economy of the farmers that are not Zapatistas in the same regions, you see that

the Zapatistas have a social development, a cultural development, and an economic development that is better than the rest of the communities.

Hadley: Let's start with the third question: In what manner does the Zapatistas' struggle represent a change from colonial domination to autonomy?

Alberto: Essentially, that is the objective of their struggle. The objective of the Zapatista struggle is that an organized civil society organizes to provide for its own needs, of all their services, that is, of their education, of their health system, of their system of defense, of social security. The Zapatistas have also generated a constant intercultural dialogue with the national and international civil society, which has succeeded in generating a culture of music, painting, theater, they have written plays, music, in different languages, in different musical genres, that are a result of all of this social and cultural process implied by the Zapatista process of autonomy. The society is organized and has sufficient cultural and social capital to provide for itself all that is necessary for a good life, the "Lekil Kuxlejal in the native language."

Thus, they demonstrate that the state is not necessary, in a sense. That it is not necessary, or that there is another way to organize, because ultimately the Zapatistas have organized their autonomous municipalities. They have organized in more than 30 autonomous municipalities. That is, in which, they self-govern. They take political, social, and cultural decisions through the participation of all of the community bases. From the children up through to the elders, all participate in the discussions and the decisions (1:38:02). Obviously those discussions, those decisions, are of very diverse nature, but the process in that the organize generates a form of self-governance, based in that community organization. It is a new form of governing. Well, it's not entirely new, it existed in other eras of human history, but we say that it runs countercurrent to the system imposed by a bourgeois representative democratic system of political parties. That in reality, delegates the political responsibility to experts of politics. They are the politics in which the political parties participate, who receive huge salaries and more to guide society.

It is a system that has generated corruption, crime, in the entire world. It is a system that has operated in the entire world, and which is a system that doesn't create a good common society, but brings on a caste of specialized politicians that appropriate collective decision-making. On

the other hand, the Zapatista system runs countercurrent to that model, calling for the participation of all. Good or bad, at times they can make bad or mistaken decisions, but they are decisions of the community.

So it is a learning process. As the years pass, they are making better decisions, people create better education, better health, and a better vision of the world, through which process, their decisions can become wiser. But in the end it is a process that is countercurrent to depending on the specialized political caste. So in that sense, this self-organization comes with the control of their own resources; a control of a social project towards the future. We could talk about this in terms of cultural control, as in the end it is the society itself that decides. Finally the society has grown. What cultural elements will be mobilized to finish their ends. (1:40:39).

So those cultural elements can be local or they can be international, of whatever part of the world. For example the use of computers, the use of technologies...but who makes the decision? Only the communities. And how do they use whatever technology. What is important is that it is their own project. So it is a politic of cultural control, that is to say, they make their own decisions about their cultural elements. And those could be cultural elements of their own making or external cultural elements, but the decisions about those cultural elements and their use and how they will be used, and for what they will be used, are decisions that they make in a collective way. How to use the patent medicines, how they will use communication technologies...and so on. It is a countercurrent politic. (1:41:38)

Such a process runs countercurrent to colonization, because it includes a religious element also, they favor that they spiritual decisions are made by local leaders, not from politicians that come from outside. So we say in that sense, the colonial domination is a system in which the decisions of cultural consumption – how they political, economic decisions are always external, they are made by government people who are external to the communities. And in this case it is the communities that, little by little, are assuming the control and capacity to make political and cultural decisions on their own. So we say that that is how the fight against colonial domination works.

Hadley: What type of new relationships do you think that we need to create within ourselves, with each other, the land, and the galaxy, as a base from which to change from colonial domination and to heal ourselves as a collective?

Alberto: Well, I think that within the manner in which the Zapatistas have generated a process of dialogue with civil society, nationally and internationally, there has been a mutual learning process. Both civil society and the Zapatistas learn things, but the Zapatistas explicitly seek out the other to learn from. They summon the other, they summon civil society, nationally and internationally. They summon them, they want to listen and learn from them, they want to know them. Or they go and they look for them, like when they organize their outings/trips, like when they made the “Other Campaign” in 2007 and traveled throughout the nation. They go and they seek, look. Or when in 1997 they sent a thousand one hundred delegates to the city of Mexico. They go and seek encounter with the other. So the Zapatistas have as a method: dialogue with the other, with other men and other women, with otherness and diverse others, both of Mexico and the world, to find out what they have in common with others in the search of alternatives to this capitalist predatory system. They are searching for alternatives and so they dialogue, and from that dialogue there is much learned. The Zapatistas, as we say, are ready and willing to learn. To learn and to put into question their own ideas. In that sense they generate a cultural change, a cultural, spiritual, and political growth.

And civil society, in a way, is also learning, for example in the manner in which when the Zapatistas organize “La Escuelita.” Because suddenly the Zapatistas realized that in this process of dialogue, that civil society in a way idealized them. Why? Because they only knew them from the larger encounters, for example, through conferences like “ConCiencias,” so in events where is a certain logistic. But the outside world did not know their everyday reality. So, the Zapatistas organized “La Escuelita de la Libertad Según Los Zapatistas,” [the Little School of Liberty], where they invited people to go to live in their homes, with families, so that they could learn, throughout a week, experience the day to day life of resistance. So there grew a pedagogical role with civil society for them to know, to learn how the [Zapatistas] live day to day. To not idealize them, because in a way the civil society idealized the Zapatistas and the Zapatistas said to them, “We are not perfect, if not much less [than perfect]. We are still carrying many cultural guidelines that come from the colonial situation and the hard economic system in which we are

all trying to survive. So we are not already like the ideal Che Guevara's notion of "new men and women." We are still constructing our new roads. And so we see that what we are lacking most is to learn to learn from others. (1:46:22) To be able to transform ourselves, transform our way of life, to live with that openness to diversity. We have to seek out diversity, glean learnings, strategies, ideas, learn languages--languages of all types, both in linguistic terms, like languages, but also artistic languages, spiritual languages, symbolical languages, and for that we have all of humanity, we are in an era of information, through technology and education, where we have access to a lot of data and information, from all the world and from many epochs. (1:47:29)

And so I think that what the Zapatistas teach civil society is that we all need to seek the encounter with the "other", all others. In the actual world like the history, look in the past to learn also of other regions, of other communities, of other cultures, and not only look for that encounter, but allow it to change our lives. We cannot continue to live how we live. We have to transform ourselves, through learning from the other. And so, that is the lesson. That is the principal moral, or the principal legacy that the Zapatistas are giving. It is learn from the diversity of the other. And that will change us, necessarily. And so not only seek encounter with the other, go to look for the other, search for the encounter, we have to make ourselves specialists in creating encounters, we have to go look for the other that moves us, that shakes us from our complacency, that takes us out of our routines (1:48:38), that does things totally differently from how we do them, and we have to develop within ourselves a strength of comprehension, and of critique, and come back to ourselves. But that "us", we will be transformed, different. And so, little by little, through that attitude, through developing that attitude, we can continue changing and encountering, each one, our strategies of transformation.

Transformation from an inherited patriarchal system, that colonial system, that racist system, which we have internalized...we need to transform the system that we have internalized. (Audio distorts here.)

So that is hard, it is an art, it is a human art and it is something that is also a learning process and an effort to develop this strength. Above all, it is a strength that implies for us a strength of comprehension and of getting close to what is different from us. And in that sense we can continue to change. I think that is what I would say is the most important, because that includes

not only human beings, it also includes nature. We also have a lot to learn from animals, from plants, from the territories, from the mountains...we need to generate a sensibility that will allow us to learn from that which is different from us, (1:50:33) from the animals, from the plants, how they grow, how they survive, how they grow. And we have to learn from the diversity, in all ways.

And let ourselves touch, that is not enough just to go and look at the other and study it and appropriate it and continue as if nothing happened. On the contrary, that encounter with the other has to transform us. In that way it is an alchemical transformation and growth. We are going to transform, we are going to stop being who we are and at the end of our lives, we don't know for how long we will live in this world, we will be something different. Always, with the encounter with the other as a constant, we will always be something different than we were at the start. Well, that is what I think one can learn. (1:51:29)

Hadley: How is the history of the Zapatistas' struggle important to inform activists to support change locally and globally?

Alberto: I think that this question has to do with what we talked about in the previous question. We have to open ourselves to the other man, the other woman...And everything with its contradictions, like with the Zapatistas, we are all human we are not perfect. We are imperfect beings with contradictions, with problems, but that is the legacy of humanity, that is the politic and heritage of humanity, the Paris Commune in the 19th century, for example, is another legacy another history that we need to learn. Other encounters that we need to search for. So in that sense, why is learning from the Zapatistas' struggle important for empowering and informing activists?.. because they are legacies of humanity. Because life has not just put us here. We are witnesses of history. We have that privilege of being able to see something that is happening, and that is part of ourselves, as humanity. It is an answer, it is an alternative, it is a force that some people are realizing is quite valuable.

We say that in that sense, this is what is important. It is a cultural heritage and we must take care of it like all of the cultural heritages of humanity. All that allows us to be social, cultural, spiritual, we take care of it. They are processes of history, of humanity. In spite of all the

contractions, of the problems, they are reflections of human learning. How they were also, with all the bad things that happened, also a lot of things that happened that are learnings for everyone. We have to remember history. It is also part of our heritage.

In the end, we can extend ourselves a lot in that way. I think in the case of the Zapatistas that is something that is right now alive, that is in growth. It is something that one has to learn. We can learn lessons, important lessons of life. And it is important to learn it.

I would repeat that I think the most important part of the Zapatista movement is that pedagogy of encountering with the other that they lead. These 24 years, since they rose up in arms, they have not tired on convening the people, of organizing themselves, of raising questions, or raising problems. For example right now the next encounter is of the women of the struggle, that is in March. It is another strength. They are convening the women of struggle in the symbolic context of the international day of the working woman, which is the 8th of March. Why did they choose the international day of the working woman? Well for the struggle of the women in textiles in the United States were massacred, well they were fighting for the rights of women workers. It is to recount those struggles. So the Zapatistas are in a sense convening the ancestors of struggles.