

# Where are the Maya today?



## The Maya from the Spanish Conquest to Today

Presentation created by Lori Riehl, November 2008

# Do Now



- ✓ Assume that the Maya moved into the jungles and villages surrounding former cities.
- ✓ What challenges might bring them back together as a society? What cultural connections might they still have? List 3-5 ideas.



# The Spanish conquer the Aztecs

- ✘
- ✓ What does “indigenous” mean?
- ✓ Spanish conquered Mexico’s Aztec rulers between 1519–1521
  - ✓ Survival of “New Spain” depended on *indigenous* knowledge and labor: “Without the support from indigenous allies it is doubtful that Spain would have been successful in conquering Mexico.”\*
  - ✓ Spanish took on paternalistic (fatherly) and protective role with indigenous people
  - ✓ Indigenous populations included Maya & Aztecs
  - ✓ The Yucatan was not conquered until 1542\*\*

# The Maya in Mexico in the 20th century

- ✘
- ✓ Mexican Revolution (1917) to 1970s
  - ✓ In 1917, 62 languages were spoken in Mexico
    - ✓ In 1950: 65% spoke Mayan; 2000: 37%\*
    - ✓ Today: some villages speak almost entirely in Maya dialects\*
  - ✓ 12 million indigenous people (11-12% of population)
- ✓ How are indigenous people treated by governments? Society?

# Challenges faced by indigenous Maya

- ✘
- ✓ Social exclusion
- ✓ Land struggles
- ✓ Poor health conditions
- ✓ Natural disasters
- ✓ Restricted political activity through civil rights abuses and military presence in Mayan regions
- ✓ Language discrimination (as recently as 2002 courts used Spanish and did not supply interpreters for non-Spanish speakers)

# Indigenous Land Rights



- ✓ Indigenous people needed to retain their land
  - ✓ Why is land ownership important?
- ✓ The Spaniards generally recognized the rights of the indigenous people to the land until 1940



# Changes in Land Rights



- ✓ In 1940, the Autonomous Department of Indigenous Affairs formed to assimilate Indians into Mexican culture
- ✓ Mexican government began privatizing agricultural lands populated by Indians
  - ✓ What effects might this policy have on the Indians?

# How did the Indians react?



- ✓ Indians called for mobilization and political participation
- ✓ Asked the government for
  - ✓ Land
  - ✓ Fair pay
  - ✓ Natural resources
  - ✓ Defense
  - ✓ Right to self-determination



# The Zapatistas



- ✓ From the 1970s to the 1990s, government reforms continued to compromise Indian land rights.
- ✓ The Maya and other indigenous groups were represented by government agencies but progress to gain rights was slow.
- ✓ In 1994, the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) formed in Chiapas to advocate for the rights of the Maya and other Indians in southeastern Mexico.

# Zapatista resistance

- ✘
  - ✓ From the 1980s to the 1990s, several skirmishes occurred between the Zapatistas and the Mexican military—mostly in Chiapas
    - ✓ January 1994: Zapatista uprising in Chiapas included the assassinations of Mexican leaders
    - ✓ December 1997: Massacre of 45 indigenous peasants in Acteal by the Mexican military
    - ✓ Several violent, deadly clashes between EZLN and the military along with armed civilian groups

# Demands made by the Zapatistas in 1996



- ✓ Demands presented in the San Andrés Accords:
  - ✓ Regional autonomy and self-determination
  - ✓ Investments in social services for indigenous populations
  - ✓ Anti-discrimination legislation
  - ✓ Conservation of natural resources
  - ✓ Demilitarization and removal of military groups from Mayan regions

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\*En las familias con apoyo para adultos mayores, el monto máximo bimestral aumenta \$540 por cada adulto mayor.

Si tienes alguna duda, pregunta al Promotor Social de Oportunidades

\*El monto: A partir de la entrega del bimestre mayo-junio de 2008

# Peace reached

- ✘
- ✓ In April 2001, the Mexican Congress passed the San Andrés Accords with revisions opposed by the EZLN.
- ✓ In 2003, Zapatista leader, subcomandante Marcos, announced that indigenous communities should take steps toward self-governance.
  - ✓ Chiapas is one of the more autonomous states in Mexico; San Juan Chamula is an autonomous community within Chiapas.

# Will the Zapatistas rebel again?



## ✓ Reasons for "Yes"

- ✓ Protests persist
- ✓ The Maya are concentrated in a few key areas
- ✓ The EZLN is highly organized and cohesive
- ✓ The new President, Felipe Calderón, won in a contested election and could change Fox's policies

## ✓ Reasons for "No"

- ✓ Increased democratic stability in the region
- ✓ President Fox's administration was committed to meeting indigenous demands
- ✓ Public support for indigenous peoples has increased
- ✓ Lack of serious conflicts in Guatemala

# Where are Maya descendants today?



- ✓ About 60% of Maya in Mexico live in Chiapas
- ✓ Maya also live in the states of Quintana Roo, Campeche, and Yucatán among others
- ✓ Principal Maya tribes are Maya, Tzeltal, Tzotzil, Chol, Tojolabal, Zoque, and Lacandón, each with its own language

# What Maya customs remain in Mexico?



- ✓ Hetzmek remains the Maya baptism
- ✓ Weddings: Offering of the Mu'ujul en Bacabchén
- ✓ Thatched-roof huts
- ✓ Weaving and textiles



# Why do the Maya move?

- ✘
- ✓ Based on 2008 data from one city with many Maya descendants, people moved for...
  - ✓ economic reasons (74%)
  - ✓ the "adventure" (25%)
- ✓ "What's amazing is that most [recent immigrants] maintain [a] sense of hope-that [the move] will improve life for their families."\*

# Where do the Maya move today?



- ✓ 76% moved to another city in Mexico
- ✓ 24% moved to the United States
  - ✓ 64% to San Francisco; 25% to other California cities
    - ✓ In 2002, Mayan population in the Bay Area was estimated at 5,000\*
- ✓ “People don’t come to the U.S. simply looking for work—they go where they know someone [who] has told them there is work.”\*

# Where do Maya immigrants work?



- ✓ Many Maya immigrate to the United States to work in
  - ✓ Construction
  - ✓ Agriculture
  - ✓ Service industry
- ✓ Send money and bring job skills back to Mexico



# Do Mayan cultural values transfer?



- ✓ “Depending on where they come from, a lot of the Mayan communities in southern Mexico bring their cultural norms and values with them.”

Renee Saucedo

San Francisco Day Labor Program



# Today's Exit Tickets

- ✘
- ✓ A completed note-taking organizer
- ✓ Responses to three questions:
  1. What does *indigenous* mean?
  2. What is the main issue around which the indigenous Maya are politicized today?
  3. What is one question you have about what you learned today?