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# Maya Resistance, Native American Connections, and Escape from Guatemala: An Autobiography

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Community Leader

Abstract: Jeronimo has been an activist for Maya justice since the 1960s, and a long-time Maya leader in exile. Jeronimo in this essay will discuss his experiences with Maya and U.S. Native American alliances in the 1970s and 1980s, and the beginnings of government violence.

## Introduction

I am from Jacaltenango, a town in Guatemala, located on the slopes of the Cuchumatán Mountains, a branch of the Sierra Madre in the Department of Huehuetenango. My birth year is 1936. Growing up in the 1940s and 1950s, village life included working in our cornfields, and speaking our Maya Jakalteko (Popti'). Thanks to the Maryknoll missionaries, I could go to a seminary; then I got a scholarship to attend a national school, graduating as a schoolteacher. Later, in San Miguel Acatán, I taught at the Catholic school sponsored by Maryknoll Nuns for Mayan children who only spoke Akatec. I met there a nurse called Cristabel who was working at the Local Government Health Clinic. She had two small children Mario and Jorge and we were very good friends. I found also many years later some of my former students as Akateco refugees in Indiantown Florida. In 1967, I began working for the National Indigenous Institute. I began to understand the Guatemalan reality of the Maya People. I was a social investigator doing anthropological studies in the Mayan villages and communities, and I became very familiar with the Maya Akatecs and Q'anjob'als of San Miguel Acatán, San Rafael, Soloma, Santa Eulalia, and San Juan Ixcuy. We published our work in the magazine *Guatemala Indígena*. We also did community development, as well as promoting consciousness on the reasons behind people's poverty, discrimination, and deprivation. This was something I was able to do because of my childhood experience and my time as a teacher in San Miguel Acatán. In my frequent visits to the Mayan communities, I started talking about the right to have a better life, that we are all equal as we were during our original Mayan nations that flourished in Guatemala and surrounding regions during the first millennium A.D.

After the Spanish invasion and during colonial times, land was taken from the

original people, who were submitted into slavery, reduced into “pueblo de Indios”, considered as inferior subjects, “mules” to carry heavy loads, decimating the population dramatically by infected diseases brought by Spaniards like smallpox, influenza, measles. Imperial rule also created a special social class called ladinos who endeavored to follow the Spanish culture of the oppressors and to discriminate and exploit us using the offensive term INDIANS to name the Maya peoples. Life did not improve for us after independence from Spain in 1821, and Guatemala continued to be oppressive to the majority of the people. It was racist in theory and practice and served to protect the interests of a small, privileged group. Years later under the so-called Liberal Reform of Justo Rufino Barrios, the indigenous people continued facing exploitation; their common lands taken away, forcing people to live up in the mountains where land is poor. Legal measures forced the Maya to work in the coffee plantations created by Barrios for his friends and privileged foreigners (mostly Germans) who took over those lands stolen from the indigenous people.

In 1944, when I was still a child, Guatemalans overthrew the US supported military dictator Jorge Ubico, which was a great time of great hope for a new nation. Juan José Arévalo, a university professor exiled to Argentina, was elected president. Arévalo’s successor, Colonel Jacobo Árbenz Guzmán, introduced a radical agrarian reform program and other social benefits.

These government policies became an excuse to tag the government as Communist. In 1954, the United States, claiming to fight communism and to protect US business interests, arranged a CIA backed overthrow of the democratic government of Guatemala. The Maya continued to be oppressed.

In May 1978 in Panzós Alta Verapaz, more than 100 Mayan Q’eqchi’ were killed by the Army because they were claiming their lands which had been stolen by powerful landowners. During the late 1970s, a popular resistance movement to the military governments began to operate through a collaboration among ladinos, indigenas, peasants, labor leaders, students, journalists, politicians, and Catholic priests. In response, the army and paramilitary counterinsurgency units stepped up their repression efforts. From 1980 to 1981, guerrilla forces encouraged and sometimes coerced large numbers of Maya to join them in their armed revolutionary efforts. The army retaliated by kidnapping, torturing, and murdering people suspected of supporting the guerrillas; and scorching crops and villages. Many Guatemalans, Maya and non-Maya, suffered.

### **How I Was Involved with the Resistance**

In the 70’s I thought that the way we could do something to change the status quo

was to organize ourselves, then, a group of educated indigenous people including myself started a committee of Maya people called in Kaqchikel PATINAMIT which means “to our community”. We helped Mayan fellows on legal, economic, social, cultural and rights matters. We also assisted in the formation of various farming cooperatives. These cooperatives started suffering attacks by unknown armed men. In 1976, we were able to have our first Mayan person in the congress and this was our leader Fernando Tezagüic. With his enthusiasm, we were able to visit many Indian communities around the country, promoting rights and empowerment. This was narrated by the Guatemalan anthropologist Ricardo Falla in his article called EL MOVIMIENTO INDIGENA in the Salvadoran magazine ECA (Estudios Centroamericanos) June-July 1978. We organized ourselves in a massive demonstration before the Congress in April 1976, demanding the government to act, to return the lands stolen from 22 Indian families in Uspantán Quiché by Empresa Agrícola San Francisco Cotzal (which belonged to a ladino family who had friends in the government). In addition, we asked the government to free Indian farmworkers, held prisoners in Santa Cruz del Quiché.

Unfortunately, in 1978 another military government took office--General Romeo Lucas. He tried to gain our support because he called himself Mayan and started talking in some of his speeches in Q'eqchi'. However, he deceived the people and a terrible military repression took place in his command. Lands were taken by force, abductions and murders were common of anyone politically active. In January 31, 1980, 26 Mayan brothers and sisters were gathered in the Spanish Embassy asking for diplomatic help to tell the government to cease repression and abductions of Indian people in El Quiché. But, the response of the military government forces was to bomb and burn alive the people inside the Embassy including the Spanish diplomats and Vicente Menchú, the Father of Nobel Prize winner Rigoberta Menchú. Many of my colleagues in the resistance were abducted and assassinated, but still I kept active. For instance, Nehemías Cumes of San Juan Comalapa was taken from his hometown by armed men with rifles and machine guns. He has not been seen since. Two colleagues Roque Salazar, and Antonio Mux Cumez were abducted by many armed men on October 11, 1980.

Another colleague Francisco Sisimit was found stabbed to death in his car on the highway in May 1980. The general secretary Joselino Xoyon of our Committee who was also elected mayor of Chimaltenango was killed with machine-guns by armed men in Chimaltenango on October 14, 1980. My cousin Nazario Camposeco was a university student, one evening when he was arriving at the University of San Carlos, was intercepted by armed men and taken away. His dead body appeared in a sack on the edge of Calzada Roosevelt in Guatemala City. Finally, my friend a Mohawk Indian Kai Yutah Clouds

was kidnapped by armed men in plain clothes in front of hundreds of witnesses at the park in Chimaltenango--later his dead body appeared severely tortured on the streets of Antigua Guatemala. I was very close to him working in organic farm cooperatives in the Kaqchikel Indian villages, sponsored by the North American Indian group called Four Arrows and funded by Quakers. After his kidnapping, the same men were looking for me. I was advised by the American Embassy to leave the area to look for safety. The Indian Group Four Arrows helped me to flee and gave me sanctuary in Pennsylvania; then I applied for political asylum, which was granted due the overwhelming evidence of persecution I suffered in Guatemala.

### **How I Became Involved with North American Indian Group**

Native American people from the United States visited Guatemala during the 1970s, organized in a communication group called White Roots of Peace, which began with the Mohawk Nation in northern New York. I was named by the Director of the National Indigenous Institute of Guatemala as the liaison of our organization. White Roots of Peace wanted to visit Guatemala to say thanks to the Maya Nations of Mesoamerica for the creation of the sacred grain Maize, which arrived to North American Indian Nations millennia ago to become the sacred and principal diet. From the United States, they brought baskets of North American Indian corn to present to the different ethnic groups in the Highlands of Guatemala. In other words, the Native Americans planned to meet, greet and give respect and offer solidarity to their brothers and sisters, as original people of the Americas, and in addition, the trip was to suggest a cultural and social interchange with their relatives of Mesoamerica.

White Roots of Peace later became Four Arrows, when we brought together Mayans, Mexicas and North American Indigenous People. It is important to mention that this movement of Native Americans, Native Mexicans and Mayas formed a communication group, which I helped to create. We traveled in the 70s to the United States and Canada giving lectures, bringing Indian dances, music, including live Mayan marimba to inform colleges, schools and universities about our plight of self-determination, Indian philosophy, culture and political activism. Originally, this was sponsored by the Indian newspaper Akwesane Notes and White Roots of Peace. As liaison for the National Indigenous Institute, I was an active participant in the travels and events.

In 1975, our first trip was to different linguistic communities in Guatemala, like Todos Santos, Momostenango, Quetzaltenango, and Coban. We shared with the Native Americans our marimba music, dances, traditional stories, handcrafts, and Indian

information, they shared with us their ways of life and thinking. We held meetings and slept in their teepees, participated in ceremonies of the sweat lodge, dances, pow wows, drum music and Indian songs and souvenirs.

These events marked the start of an Indian network with North American native people and Mesoamerican Mayas. Consequently, different Mayan groups went to the US and Canada to continue this cultural interchange visiting Indian nations, reservations, Indian Centers, Colleges, Universities, presenting art, music, cultural expressions, lectures about our culture, philosophy, survival and fights against political and economic powers foreign to our way of life. We carried from Guatemala our Marimba instrument from Todos Santos, Jacaltenango, samples of our different woven clothes, crafts but also Mayan Elders and Scholars to give lectures about our culture, philosophy and history. One of them was the great Mayan K'iche' wise elder Don Adrian Ines Chavez, native of San Francisco El Alto Totonicapán, one of the translators of our sacred book the Popol Vuh. This Native American Network was very important when the Mayan refugees fled Guatemala looking for safety into the US and Canada. My family and I arrived in late 1980 as refugees in the US at a farm owned by the Original White Roots of Peace later called Four Arrows based in York Pennsylvania.

One of the anecdotes I remember that in 1979 we gave a presentation at Humboldt State College in Northern California. Our topic was The Massacre of Panzós, which had been completely exposed by the media in this country. I was one of the two main speakers, the other one was Jesus Chacach, an elder and Mayan leader of the village of San José Poaquil, Guatemala.

Unknown to any of us at the time, the future Guatemalan dictator Efraín Ríos Montt was being "saved" a few miles away from the HSU campus at the Lighthouse Ranch on Table Bluff, just south of Eureka - HQ of the Verbos ministries (Church of the Word), a subsidiary of the Gospel Outreach organization. Ríos-Montt had met the young Lighthouse Ranch group when they traveled to Guatemala in 1976 after the great earthquake. The interesting thing is that they set up earthquake relief activity in the most affluent residential area of Guatemala City.

One year later, I was the only surviving member of the group, who had traveled to HSU in 1979. Chacach had managed to escape to Honduras, but word got to him that the soldiers had captured his son in San José Poaquil, and the old man returned to attempt to save his son, but he was captured, tortured and murdered by the army. In the States, I was working to organize and assist surviving Mayans who had escaped, and I also worked along with others to try to get the media to pick up the Mayan refugees' story. One of the friends I met at HSU said, "I was trying to get more information on the Lighthouse

Ranch - something that we could prove a connection to the US government - anything. I met with a man in Eureka who had been investigating the Lighthouse Ranch for a few years, and he told me a chilling story. The Lighthouse Ranch compound was security fenced had heavily guarded - like a military compound. He persisted, but one day he was making copies at Kinkos and he was accosted by a Verbos guard and threatened: "We are watching your every move!" I moved to Florida because the Akwesasne Notes asked and sponsored me to assist lawyers and help my Guatemalan fellows and my Mayan brothers and sisters who came as refugees of the Military Repression in Guatemala in the decade of the 80's.

When I was still in Guatemala, news reports announced that there would be a big miners march from Ixtahuacan Huehuetenango to the capital in November 1977, three hundred kilometers to protest against mistreatment, exploitation and discrimination suffered at the hands of the mining company. The march was a last resort to petition the national government to intervene and resolve the labor problems. The authorities never listened to these calls for justice because of the pressure from the military and from company executives. The reports also said that the organizer of the march was Mario Mujia Cordova (Wiwi) one of the sons of my nurse friend in San Miguel Acatán Cristabel Cordoba. Mario continued his struggle in behalf of the campesinos but in July 20, 1978 in his legal help office, unknown armed men assassinated him with a burst of machine-gun fire. Days later, his brother Jorge who was a radio announcer in Radio Nuevo Mundo was kidnapped and was surely assassinated, because he never reappeared. The assassins did not rest; they continued to bring pain to this family. Cristabel's youngest daughter, who was born after I left San Miguel in 1960, was also kidnapped, tortured, raped and killed by the same sorts of men who had killed her brothers. There is proof that the military of the Base Armada of Huehuetenango committed these crimes with impunity, dressed as private citizens.

### **Who were the original Mayan Refugees?**

The Indigenous people were not willing to leave their community, their family, their fellow neighbors and their lands. There is an ancestral attachment to them. But they did not have a choice and were forced to abandon their home, their livestock and their cornfields fleeing to Mexico and the United States looking for safety. Beginning the late 1970s and 1980s, some went to the refugee camps, others to settle in Tabasco 2000, Villa Hermosa the State of Tabasco Mexico, others northern Mexico working on the vegetable fields, where they met some traditional migrant Mexican farmworkers who



come to the United States seasonally. That was the way many Akatecos and Q'anjob'als came to Florida, North Carolina and other agricultural states. People escaped with their families, many villages were destroyed, with bombs and fire or mass executions, mostly in the areas at the border with Mexico: Ixcán, Nentón, San Miguel... Barillas. So, the first refugees were families mostly with small children and women. Then after the Peace accord, the immigrants mostly were men, young and older, with a mix of ladino people.

Due the inclination of the terrain and the cold weather in the altitudes, in every rain season there is a lot of erosion and the land can only produce one harvest a year of corn, beans, squashes, wheat. According to Juan Gaspar of San Miguel, one of the Refugees who came into the U.S. in the 80s told me this: "One of the great economic problems we have is that our lands are not productive enough, there is a lot of stones and are on the slopes of the mountains, therefore we went to look for temporary work in the lowland plantations" (personal dialogue April 1992). Thus, although the damage done to Maya land by climate change is well known in 2019, in reality the availability of good land to the Maya has long been a problem.

Juan Diego from San Rafael, in one of his trips, in the early 1970s, met a Mexican who told him about economic opportunities in the United States. Afterwards they decided to go to Los Angeles: but the cultural shock, the language barrier, away from his family and community, unprepared for the work he found in a garment factory, made Juan Diego's life very difficult. Later on, he helped his friend: Jose Francisco Aguirre (Chepe) from San Miguel to come to Los Angeles. In the 1960s, when I was a teacher at the Akatec Parochial School of San Miguel, one of my colleagues was Antonio Lopez Aguirre, a native from the area. Chepe also at that time was a teacher.

During the Guatemala earthquake, February 4, 1976, many houses and villages were destroyed, about 25,000 people were killed mostly Mayans of the Highlands. The aftermath of the tragedy left people homeless, unemployed and facing a harder economic crisis. In the case of the Acatecos, some of them left their village to nearby Nenton, Jacaltenango, to lease lands along the Mexican border; others went to do service work in Guatemala City.

Chepe returned to his hometown from Los Angeles worried for his family and community due to the earthquake. After all, people approached him to get his help to travel to California because they heard about job opportunities there and that he was prepared to return to the US. So when Chepe again left for Los Angeles, he took with him Antonio and three other friends. At the end of the 1970s, there were in Los Angeles about 30 Akatekos. So, a network of Maya people was created in the U.S. West Coast.

Violence and war increased from 1980. Looking for safety, the Maya made a



decision as a group to leave their homeland to neighboring countries and to the U.S. They abandoned family members, community, the mountains, their lands, the sacred places, their roots. These events motivated a movie director to make the film *El Norte*, which was very successful in that decade: my personal experience on the matter was that in 1984 I went to Los Angeles to visit Migueleño refugees who were my friends. I met in LA the Xuncax family and their young members Efrain, Thelma and their younger sister. They told the story of their persecution in Guatemala, their difficult transit through Mexico and their arrival to the U.S. through Tijuana and San Ysidro California. The *El Norte* Movie is based on their personal story. I know it also because I met Mr. Kenneth Veronda and his wife; they have a private school in San Marino California, they met the Xuncaxes and some Q'anjob'al children who were attending the school. The Verondas are very close friends to Gregory Nava and his wife and they told me about the Movie.

It happened that the Mexican farm workers colleagues of the Mayans in Culiacan were frequent travelers to the U.S. Florida farms during the harvest season. So, they invited the Guatemalans to come with them crossing the border and the Arizona desert without inspection arriving to Indiantown, Immokalee, Fort Myers and Lake Worth... These were another transnational networks originally farm laborers, created by the Mayans.

While the political violence continued, many Akatekos and Q'anjob'als arrived either in L.A. working at the garment factories, or at the labor camps of San Joaquin Valleys CA, or Florida as well, directly from Guatemala, from the refugee camps, from Tabasco 2000 or from the vegetable farms of Northern Mexico.

"They came from remote, mist-shrouded hamlets deep in the heart of the Cuchumatanes Mountains, where Indian villagers speak a Mayan tongue and follow pagan shamans where women wear T-shirts saying Miami Vice and "Indiantown" over elaborately woven skirts and the young dream of leaving behind a life of poverty and civil unrest to joint relatives in a distant land called Florida or California" (Palm Beach Post June 24, 1990, opinion section E).

## Indiantown

I also fled during October 1980 with my family to the U.S. Fortunately, I had previous contact with a North American Indian communication group called Four Arrows formerly White Roots of Peace and stayed at their Farm in York Pennsylvania.

In 1983, the Indian Law Resource Center based in Washington D.C. asked the Mohawk News Paper Akwesasne Notes editor José Barreiro to find a Maya who speaks

Q'janjob'al and English to serve as an interpreter to assist the defense lawyers for a group of Maya Q'anjob'al in Indiantown, detained by Immigration Authorities to face deportation. José called me because he thought I could help for my experience as an asylee, and because I am a member of that same ethnic group and because I am fluent in both languages. I agreed, then, Akwesasne Notes sponsored my trip and I moved to Florida.

In Indiantown, Florida, the Quakers, the Holy Cross Catholic Church with its pastor, an Irish Priest Fr. Frank O'Loughlin and others had organized immigrant farmworkers to teach them about their rights and defend them from any employer and authorities' abuses. This group was called "Santuario" (sanctuary). When the Q'anjob'al Maya came to Indiantown, they were fortunate that a team of lawyers, church advocates, the Quakers of AFSC, worked together with Mayan Leaders. Later on, I contacted Dr. Shelton Davis, an anthropologist who was the director at that time of the Anthropology Resource Center (ARC) based in Boston. I met him years ago in Guatemala when he was doing research in Santa Eulalia. He learned about the culture, land tenure and the Q'anjob'al Language. Lately he had become an advocate, a collaborator and an expert witness for the Kanjobals in their plight for political asylum assisting the dedicated lawyers of FRLS George Carr and Rob Williams. Also as part of that team were the AFSC Lawyers: Bartolome Colon, Peter Upton and Juan Gomez.

The Holy Cross Service Center in Indiantown, a social services office sponsored by the Palm Beach Diocese, was our base to assist the Mayan refugees who were arriving from Mexico and Guatemala. Even from other places of the United States: California, Idaho, Iowa, Oregon, Georgia, Arizona, and North Carolina, where they previously settled after they fled Guatemala.

Sandy Davis, father Frank, some leaders and myself, felt the need to create an organization to assist the Mayan Refugees; then, after some deliberations we created the Corn Maya Inc. in late 1983. We also saw the same needs in Los Angeles, where many Acatecos there were related to the Q'anjob'al of Florida, and because there were many refugees from the Cuchumatanes Mountains. We started then, the Integration of Indigenous Maya in Los Angeles: IXIM. This organization assisted the people on their immigration claims and helped to practice their traditions, cultural celebrations, keeping their identity to be strong in a new environment and to provide social services. Ixim had many accomplishments, for example organizing San Miguel Fiestas, the creation of a band with Q'anjob'al musicians, with a lot of success, producing commercial CDs with great marimba folk music. One of the great collaborators was Dr. Fernando Peñalosa, a University Professor, who edited many tales and stories of the Q'anjob'al and wrote

books and articles about the refugees through his press editorial Yax Te', which means green tree probably because he is from Palos Verdes CA. The original founders were: Antonio Lopez Aguirre, Juan Gaspar, Efrain Xuncax, Father Jim Curtin, Shelton Davis, Jeronimo Camposeco: one of the first directors was Dr. James Lucky, then Dr. Fernando Peñalosa, Juan Gaspar, etc.

Back to Florida, the word about the Mayan Refugees went around the States and the Country; and many good citizens, scholars and students came to Indiantown to help. Dr. Duncan Earle, a friend I met in Guatemala years ago and who was a professor at Vanderbilt University in Nashville TN, came to Indiantown and Immokalee with his students during the Spring Breaks to do social services and assist the refugees in their emergencies after their arrival from Guatemala crossing Mexico and the Arizona Desert. Dr. Earle suggested that instead of going to enjoy the beaches and have fun on their annual spring breaks, students could do something useful and different serving and learning from a community in need like the refugees.

Also Dr. Allan Burns showed up with his students from the University of Florida Gainesville. He spent a long time living and studying the culture, history and the languages of the Maya of Yucatan, Mexico. Allan came to do applied anthropology with the assistance of different students working as interpreters, on health, advocacy, transportation, law, English classes, women and children care and education. Allan produced two video documentaries: *Maya in Exile* and *Maya Fiesta*: with this Allan and I participated in an Ethnic Film Festival called *Mundos en Contraste* in Grenade Spain in 1992. I also wrote the introduction of Allan's Book "Maya in Exile" which talks about the Mayan refugees of Indiantown in Florida in the 1980s.

Most of the original refugees came as families because in the rural areas of Guatemala, the Army practiced a Scorched Earth Program, and without preparation, people left suddenly looking for safety, including women, children, and elders. In that way they traveled together until their arrival to the country of destination. If a family and community members move together, it is easier to practice costumes and culture, talk at home and at the community gatherings with their mother tongue, there is a traditional respect to the elders, they cook their own traditional food, women can still wear their traditional clothes, etc.

But they also found great differences: in the matter of shelter they have to pay rent and because of the high cost, they share it with other people. They have to use electric appliances, they no longer can cultivate and prepare the corn for the tortillas, many food items have to be bought at the supermarkets, they have to work for others and get pay for it. They no longer have a land to cultivate their corn, their beans, their herbs and their

own vegetables and fruits. Sometimes they use the backyard of their apartments or houses to plant Mayan Herbs to eat Tx'ab'in (chipilin), blede, momon, tzuy, moch' or chiltepe and other medicinal plants.

The family status also changed, the women who traditionally is the home administrator who also is the house wife, cleaning, cooking, taking care and educating the children, and in their spare time weaving traditional clothes or doing hand crafts. Now they have to work in the fields or nurseries but also do the cooking, cleaning and doing children's care. She has to get up early in the morning 4 or 5 am. Make the tortillas and prepare the meals for herself and spouse even for other workers who live with them. Prepare the children for the school, then to go to work.

### The Original Job

In Indiantown, there were different labor contractors or crew leaders from Mexican American origin working for the different farms in Martin and Palm Beach County. Also at the end of the seasons (May, June), they made contacts and contracts with the farms of North and South Carolina, Georgia and elsewhere. They were accustomed to have farm laborers from Mexico, and Puerto Ricans and African Americans. Now they were pleased to have Guatemalan Mayas because they were said to be docile, and "do not complain, work hard, and are very quiet". In those days of the 1980s, work was difficult for the Maya. Occasionally, I met some who did relatively well at hard work, making good money for a wage. I met Magdalena a young girl from San Miguel, she was by herself but she missed her grandfather who stayed in their homeland. She was very fast and very skilled, with a lot of energy; according to Jacinto she made 600 or 700 dollars a week, to harvest jalapenos, cucumbers, green peppers, tomatoes...One thing the Q'anjob'al Maya couldn't do well, was picking citrus, mostly oranges. The workers need long ladders, to carry and climb, to reach the oranges and put them into big sacks. The ladder is very heavy and the orange filled sacks are also heavy, provoking sometimes the falling of the worker down to the ground. Secondly, this is a contract that they are unable to accomplish because they cannot work fast enough to make a decent earning during the day. So, employers preferred Mexicans, African Americans, and Puerto Ricans, to do this kind of job.

### Postscript

I became a resident of the United States almost 40 years ago. In Florida, the Maya population is large and active. Certainly, there remain many complications, and although

Maya organizations have flourished, there are plenty of divisions as well among the people. The future of Maya in the United States seems uncertain, in particular on how the new generations will view their Maya heritage. In the next issue we can explore the continuation of efforts to connect with U.S. Native Americans, and to discuss efforts to become recognized legally as Native American by the U.S. government.

### **Last Thoughts**

“During 1980, we, the Maya had our own holocaust with ethno-genocidal characteristics, causing the exodus of many as the only alternative to spare life, producing suddenly our arrival in the U.S... our dream as uprooted people is the need to re-invent our culture envisioning the search for our own space into the scenery of the North American Indian Nations”.