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Introductory Note to Issue 3, 2020

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Introductory Note to Issue 3, 2020

Maya America is honored to present this special issue in collaboration with Yax Te' Books. Presenting a trilingual compilation of narratives from the town of Parramos and neighboring villages in the central highlands of Guatemala, the book in three languages underscores how challenges inherent in language maintenance also represent opportunities for affirming cultural values and practices.

Stories are fundamental to indigenous modes of learning, and oratory remains a particularly valued skill for the Maya. Nearly 30 Maya languages exist in the world today, though some languages have a dwindling number of speakers. For five centuries, Spanish has represented the language of power in much of Latin America, even as English is rapidly becoming a dominant mode of communication across the hemisphere, particularly in the United States. Whether in communities grounded in cultural homelands and long histories, or in those that are emerging in a widening and rapidly changing world, narrative accounts and stories foster intergenerational and intercultural interconnections.

The current issue, then, exemplifies the objectives of *Maya America*, an open-source journal that launched two years ago to broaden knowledge and encourage collaborative endeavors through essays, investigation, and community commentary. This special issue is also a belated acknowledgement of the work and life of Fernando Peñalosa, a sociolinguist who was the first to address language shifts and trilingualism among recently arrived Maya refugees in the United States. Fernando dedicated years of service to the Maya community in Los Angeles and in Guatemala, including as founder of Yax Te' Books. His legacy is also reflected in the work of Gaspar Pedro González, author of the first novel published by a Maya author, whose most recent novella *Los Mayas Migrantes* was published in this journal. These pioneers, along with others who are becoming involved in this journal and through their own writing and work, share a common commitment to nurturing the heritage and wisdom throughout indigenous and immigrant communities across the Americas, and perhaps most especially to the inclusion and wellbeing of youth.

We invite community members, readers, students and authors to use and disseminate the scholarship and the teachings inherent in the journal, as well as the materials published by Yax Te' Books. The forthcoming issue of *Maya America* will feature original essays and commentary on the Maya of the Yucatan.

James Loucky