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Extending the roads for survival: An ethnography about the ongoing Maya Diaspora

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

In

World Cultures

by

Carlos Miguel Bazúa Morales

Committee in charge:

Professor Linda-Ann Rebhun, Chair

Assistant Professor Holley Moyes

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Fall 2013

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For Enkidu and Jerónimo,

This is what I was doing when I couldn't play with you ...

And to my dear friend Fernando Motta, my partner in our Yosemite adventures

May you keep flying forever.

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“Doing ethnography in Occupy Oakland: An analysis of the use of hegemony by a ‘Democratic’ Dictatorship.” In *World Cultures Graduate Student Conference 2013*, UC Merced.
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- UC Merced. Virtual Heritage Lab. Archeological Project. Catal Hoyuk. Turkey, 2010
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- Archeological excavation in Dzibanche, Quintana Roo. Mexico. Director Enrique Nalda. June, 1994

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“Extending the roads for survival.” Encuentro Xican@ and FlorYCanto. UC Berkeley. May 9th 2008.

“The Journey: Oxkutzcab, Yucatan to Maya Town in San Francisco, California.” Presented in The 26th Annual James C. Young Colloquium. The UC Riverside Department of Anthropology. February 11th 2006.

“The Journey: Oxkutzcab, Yucatan to Maya Town in San Francisco, California.” Presented in The Ecological Society of the Americas. Ecology in an Era of Globalization: Challenges and Opportunities for Environmental Scientist in the Americas. Yucatan, Mexico. January 8-12 2006.

“A Rock on the Path” Ethnographic film presented in the Monterrey International Film Forum 2005.

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- **A day in Catal Hoyuk.** Short film about the new technologies utilized in the Neolithic site of Catal Hoyuk, Turkey. 2010.
- **The Journey: Oxkutzcab-San Francisco.** Ethnographic video about the migration of youth from Oxkutzcab, Yucatan, Mexico to the Mission district in San Francisco California. It deals with the

health issues involved with public health such as drug addiction and HIV. Filmed in Mexico and the USA. Research grant by UC Mexus/ CMHI. 2005.

- **A rock on the path.** Documentary about Mountaineering and various activities of high risk in the mountains. Filmed in Mexico, USA, Canada and Peru 2004. 80min.
- **A pause on the void.** Ethnographic video about Mexican climbers. Gdl. México, 2002. Spanish. Dur. 50min. (Libraries of CIESAS)
- **Bitter Memories.** About Mayan exhumations and ceremonies during the peace process. Northern Huehuetenango, Guatemala 1999. Spanish-Q'anjol-Chuj with Spanish & English subtitles. Dur. 30min. (Distributed by Latin American Video Archive)
- **Only what is fair.** Associated con United Farm Workers (UFW) about the strawberry industry in California. 1996-1997. Spanish & English subtitles. Dur. 55min. (Distributed by Latin American Video Archive)
- **The Children are Taking the Future.** About the children in Chiapas. México 1995-96. Spanish-Tzeltal. Spanish & English subtitles. Dur. 30min. (UC Berkeley Video Labary)

Abstract

Extending the roads for survival: An ethnography of the ongoing Maya Diaspora

By

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Ph.D. Candidate in World Cultures

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Professor Linda-Ann Rebhun, Chair

The present ethnographic research examines a diverse group of migrants from the Macro-Maya culture, originally from Yucatan, Chiapas and Guatemala. Findings confirm that there is a longstanding migration pattern in which the Maya have engaged in order to survive, and, now, the Maya have extended these roads of survival to the California Bay Area in the United States. This research aims to address the cultural, political and social migration conditions Maya from Guatemala and Mexico have face both historically and at present. The research questions that guide this research are: How have Maya from Guatemala, Chiapas and Yucatan experienced their migration trajectory northward and what are the social and economic factors that propel these movements? What are the similarities and differences in the migration experiences of my participants? How do these migration experiences support or undermine the representations of Maya that circulate in various American discourses?

I argue that the Maya migrations to the United States have been instigated by the atrocities committed against Maya in Guatemala, Yucatan and Chiapas and the economic marginalization each group has each faced create a movement toward a specific type of refugee or economic exile— a refugee that utilizes movement as a form of resistance and survival. Furthermore, my data leads to the claim that these migrations must be understood as a diaspora. Establishing economic niches and “hidden” communities in the United States, the experiences of the Maya who share their stories in this research illuminate the differences and similarities among the Maya coming from Mexico and Guatemala. Through my participants’ stories, I argue that there is no monolithic “Maya” or “migrant” and, rather, I put forth an analysis of the “unlikely Maya”. My participants share a diversity of experiences that undermines the discourses that perpetuate stereotypes permeating monolithic representations of the Maya.

The ethnography includes two levels of observation. In the micro level observations I examine the alternatives lifestyles available and desired by the participants and their trajectories and historical background. The macro level observations include an analysis of the localized struggles of the Maya migrants in relation to wider societal phenomena. More specifically, in the macro analysis their stories are contextualized in the political environment, the broader immigrant struggles and in dialogue with various discourses, such as mass media, labor and government. The Maya participants in this research are undocumented workers. In order to survive in the U.S., they need to harvest a lifestyle that ensures anonymity. Contrary to the discourse on immigration that pins migrants as the “poor rural Maya”, the

“uneducated non-English speaker or non-Spanish-speaker”, or the “victims of history”, my qualitative data shows the strong presence of a counterculture migrant community hidden from mainstream representation. The unlikely Maya is not a group of rural individuals who are defenseless against a hegemonic order, but, rather, they are rebels of a system and survivors of social and political forces. I contend that their migration can be understood not only as a result of a survival strategy but, rather, their “illegal” intrusion in to the U.S. is as a form of resistance.

Prologue

This research was the product of the social, economic and cultural factors I faced in California as one of many Latin Americans in diaspora. This research presented itself to me more than I went to look for it. My experiences in a Chilean family that survived the Pinochet regime and as a Mexican migrant in California made it easier to talk with and relate to survivors of right-wing dictatorships and other migrants. For anthropologists it is often challenging to reach out to meet undocumented people, migrants, ethnic people of color, vulnerable populations, and poor and marginalized populations. The Maya in California are part of a highly marginalized, social and economic class affected by hierarchical structures based on race and American nationality. My dissertation compiles the stories of these marginalized people. I attempt to understand the Maya migrants' ways of survival and adaptation to economic and political forces. To understand why there are so many Maya in the Bay Area is indispensable to understand contemporary history and acknowledge the invisible apartheid at work in our society.

This research was conducted in the years previous to the so-called "end of the world" predicted by the "Maya Prophecies of 2012." Institutions in Guatemala and Mexico took advantage of these years to promote (and, in turn, exoticize) the Maya¹ and its culture as a tourist attraction of marvelous "wonders" ultimately for economic profit, while, at the same time, they ignored the current-day Maya diaspora. Nonetheless, Mayanists and other academics have continuously criticized the false nature of these accounts and explained the accurate decipherments of the Maya Calendar (Van Stone 2010). In the Bay Area, there were many events held in anticipation of this date. Interestingly, none of them included the participation of any of the Bay Area Maya Organizations or called upon the participation of any of the Maya that I have met. The Maya participants of this research never expressed interest in this date and the conversations related to this subject did not make it into the final narrative. In this work, I aim to show how the hegemonic structure imposed on the Maya creates many forms of resistance and their lack of participation commercializing this "end-of-the-world" prediction is only one of the many ways in which the Maya who participated in this research continuously reject false representations of the Maya in the American mainstream.

1) Introduction

1.1) Research Overview, Research Questions and Theses

The present ethnographic research examines a diverse group of migrants from the Macro-Maya culture, originally from Yucatan, Chiapas and Guatemala. Findings confirm that there is a longstanding migration pattern in which the Maya have engaged in order to survive, and, now, the Maya have extended these roads of survival to the California Bay Area in the United States. This research aims to address the cultural, political and social migration conditions Maya from Guatemala and Mexico have face both historically and at present. The research questions that guide this research are: How have Maya from Guatemala, Chiapas and Yucatan experienced their migration trajectory northward and what are the social and economic factors that propel these movements? What are the similarities and differences in the migration experiences of my participants? How do these migration experiences support or undermine the representations of Maya that circulate in various American discourses?

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The ethnographic approach to the Maya diaspora I employ helps shed light on the under-analyzed effects of economic marginalization, violence, and the economic crisis, while, at the same time, it captures the growing presence of Maya cultural practices and languages. The analysis pays attention to the diverse power relations that force these individuals to find economical niches in a world where they have always been discriminated for being indigenous and poor. By contextualizing their historical background with contemporary politics, the ethnographic narrative portraits their struggle of survival explaining the different paths they have taken to get to the Bay Area.

The concept of *imagined communities* from Benedict Anderson (1983) provides a theoretical framework to understand the complex relations that immigrant networks create among themselves. Anderson's concept alludes to the way nations were invented through the use of nationalistic ideas, icons and symbols disseminated mainly through the printed press. He explains how we, as individuals, position ourselves inside the world and imagine ourselves as being part of a national community. Anderson explores the essential links between state, language and culture dismantling the complex web of meaning and significance that different populations give to determine geographical areas. As individuals, we will never know the millions of people who constitute our nation. Nonetheless, we imagine that there is a "we" and "we" are all part of the imagined Nation.

When we think of an imagined community we have to understand that it is not a permanent and homogeneous group of people static in a determined location or place. Ethnographers who analyze the world of immigrants need to pay close attention to the imagined community of the immigrants. Many individuals lack legal status and could be persecuted under the law. For this reasons immigrant communities are harder to examine, because migrants intentionally disguise themselves as hidden from the rest of the population. I utilize Anderson's concept of imagined communities to formulate what I will call "hidden communities" or the diverse network of migrants that exist under the radar of the mainstream.

The Maya hidden community comes together during events such as soccer tournaments, gatherings in parks, Native American ceremonies and churches as well as in the confines of their homes and workplaces. While Maya in the United States are officially counted by the U.S. Census it is significant to note that they are not recognized in any official legislation as Native Americans. In 2010, the U.S. Census was modified to include Maya as an ethnic group. Nonetheless, the U.S. Census uses "Maya" without distinguishing between their drastic linguistic and cultural differences or country of origin.

Most of my participants are all highly marginalized and discriminated in their home countries and have difficulty finding work. Yet, these participants have managed to find economic niches in the Bay Area. The community that I analyzed is part of a macro-Maya Diaspora, meaning that they are part of thousands of Maya who have left their homeland and found economic and cultural survival throughout the United States. These individuals are establishing hidden and diverse communities in the new country as opposed to a more full time, open, and homogenous community in the native country.

It is important to take into account that the idea of a "community" in the homeland. The idea of a traditional Maya community can be understood as the village or town that has remained attached to its traditions and customs and synchronized to the agricultural calendar and religious festivities. As I will show, the times that these community comes together is when it creates a shared common knowledge and experience, to imagine itself as a coherent group of Maya residing in a new land. Through these new "hidden communities" in the United States, the Maya are recreating their homeland cultural practices in their new migrant context and maintaining a sense of their respective Maya identities while continuously in the process of shaping a new one.

1.2) Why study the Maya Diaspora in the San Francisco Bay Area of California?

As the outcome of twenty-five years of negotiations, on September 13, 2007, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). This recognition of indigenous people all over the world offers a framework in which the present ethnography can be understood as playing an important role in the struggle for human rights and indigenous recognitions and in demanding a better quality of life for thousands of Maya survivors of

the 21st century who are now in the Bay Area. This investigation demonstrates the cultural diversity existing within diverse migrant groups coming from different ethnic and linguistic regions that have experienced the same negative effects of the colonial and imperialistic histories of Mexico and Guatemala, but, at the same time, share the same cultural traits and languages of resistance.

As demonstrated by the extensive research presented in *Indigenous Mexican Migrants in the United States* (Fox and Salgado 2004), longstanding migration patterns have enormously diversified in the past two decades. Fox and Salgado show a clear and emergent multi-ethnic migration from various areas in Mexico and Guatemala, forming a growing number of Maya migrant communities in the United States. So far, little ethnographic research has been performed in the San Francisco Bay Area (Aquinno, 2010; Mancina, 2011). Preliminary research suggests that there are more than ten different Maya languages spoken in the Bay Area alone by a growing Maya migrant population. To facilitate the provision of health and social services in these diverse languages, researchers can identify and research the various Maya groups in the area. My research analyzes the diversity of the Maya migrants and their life experiences and shows these migrants organize hidden communities to survive- from their economic and cultural niches to how they utilize community organizations, rituals or sports activities to cope with diverse social and public health problems. In sharing the migration experiences of the different waves of Maya migration to the San Francisco Bay Area, I claim it is vital to recognize the historical continuity of oppression that these populations have experienced.

My main participants were mainly young undocumented Maya migrants who do not belong to any formalized (non-Maya) community affiliation or Church. They are the type of young migrant who usually goes undetected by the census and health or education focused studies. I set out to find the young and faceless population that composes the core of the Maya migrants. Community organizations like the Grupo Maya of Oakland, which organizes an annual soccer tournament and Maya rituals all through the year, and Grupo Mayaab of San Francisco, were elemental organizations that encouraged, promoted and helped facilitate this research.

1.3) Methodological approach

"Our anthropological productions are our stories about their stories; we are interpreting the people as they are interpreting themselves" (Bruner 1986: 10).

This research draws on the classic methodology of creating rapport, doing participant observation and conducting formal and informal interviews with different members of the Maya communities. Research was carried out using archival research and ethnographic fieldwork. Audio and video recording were used to capture the diverse narratives of the Maya that helps highlight their ways of adaptation both into American society. An ethnographic approach best captures how individuals recreate their culture through daily practices, community events and religious gatherings. A socio-historical analysis gives insight to the socio-economical and political factors at play in migration. To achieve a comprehensive historical context for the investigation, I draw on U.S. Census data and government reports from Guatemala, Mexico and the U.S. The existing data provide support for the social phenomena that I observed and interpreted during the fieldwork.

I carried out my fieldwork mainly in the Bay Area of San Francisco, California. Interviews were conducted at the soccer tournament, in churches, community events, fairs, parks, and, when appropriate and only when I was invited, most often in the homes or workplaces of the informants. Some interviews took place in the offices of different Maya organizations in the Bay Area such as the Offices of Maya Group, or The Mayaab organization or the Chan Kahal Group. Other interviews were conducted in public spaces such as the Berkeley Marina, Golden Gate Park, the Picklewood Community Center in San Rafael, Point Reyes and Golden Gate Park. It was hard to predict where I would carry out interviews because I was dependent on what the study participants wanted as a location and where participants felt comfortable.

Since the advent of postmodern anthropology, ethnographers have had the goal of giving a "thick description" of the community we are researching (Geertz 1973). To obtain a "thick description," or a semiotic interpretations life or what we call "data," an ethnographic approach is best suited as it allows for an attempt at "constructions of other people's constructions." (Geertz 1973:9). These communities are hidden, invisible to the eyes of state officials and the general public. For that reason, I had to immerse myself in the immigrants' hidden, underground world in order to perceive it.

I used immigrants' reported experiences to analyze the political and socioeconomic processes that prompt young individuals to change their rural lifestyle and settle in the urban, cosmopolitan and industrial labor market of the San Francisco Bay Area. My data points out the existing difficulties for survival within the current labor market, as well as immigrants' limited access to information, services education and healthcare. I take into account the geopolitical realities of both sides of the border as well as the repercussions of being undocumented in the U.S and discriminated against for being indigenous in Mexico and Guatemala.

As a qualitative researcher, I did not seek to quantify data. I carried out two different types of interviews: formal and informal. I had key informants for the informal interviews. With these informants, I sought to draw out a qualitative description of the Maya migrant experience living in the United States. I carried out these more personal interviews while talking and socializing with the participants.

For the formal interviews, I acquire information to describe the diversity of Maya languages spoken in the Bay Area and to understand the conditions that led them to migrate. These short interviews consisted of five questions:

1. Where are you from? What town? Which state (Mexico) or department (Guatemala)?
2. What languages do you speak?
3. How many people do you know who speak that same language here?
4. How long have you been here?
5. Why did you come?

I randomly asked Maya people what languages they spoke. In this way, the questionnaire functioned as a sample of the language group. Of forty preliminary interviews (based on solely what language they spoke), I found fourteen different Maya languages spoken. When I obtained a speaker of a language not yet represented, I conducted the full formal interview. Hence, one full interview per language group was carried out bringing the total number of formal interviews conducted to fourteen. In this way, and unlike the U.S. census which clumps all Maya language speakers together, I was able to obtain the responses from a diverse population of the Maya here in the Bay Area.

Because the reader may assume that many Maya have come to the U.S. without proper documentation, I must clarify the precautionary steps I took to prevent any repercussions for participating in the study. All the members of the community organizations with whom I networked were legal residents or U.S. Nationals, although, the majority of the participants from the Maya community in the Bay Area are undocumented individuals. For that reason interviews did not inquire about legal status. Thus, to protect study participants, I used pseudonyms for all participants.

My conversations and interviews were in open and public places where the individuals of these communities gather on daily and weekly basis. I interviewed participants that did not have a tenuous legal immigration status. Some of the study participants may have been involved in illegal activities such as drug use or other crimes, but my interviews did not collect extensive or specific information such activities. Because most people with whom I worked have full-time jobs, it was hard to interview them during work hours. An important part of the participant observation took place during the time spent with individuals in their leisure time. The groups and individuals with whom I followed had a tendency to drink in their spare time, especially in social events or gatherings. I did not interview participants in the cases that participants overdrunk.

Interviews were conducted in Spanish. I never had the impression that any of my participants were not able to speak proficiently in their second language. Participants were all bilingual; meaning that they spoke a Maya language but also appeared to feel comfortable speaking in Spanish. For the narrative and through the process of data analysis, I choose to translate all interview data to English myself. Hence, the participants' experiences have gone through a double lens. From the initial transcription in Spanish, I chose to translate the sections that I would use for the English narrative. In instances in which it was difficult or intrusive to record, I obtain narratives from my field notes taken immediately post meeting.

1.4) Participant Overview

I held informal conversations with about a hundred individuals; of these, I selected forty to interview more formally. Scholars have identified more than 30 different Maya languages. I tried to interview the most diverse sample I could. As mentioned in the previous section, I found speakers of fourteen Maya languages: Yucatecan, Chol, Tzeltal, Tzotzil, from Mexico and Mam, K'ichee' (Quiché)ⁱⁱ, Kekchi' (Q'eqchii'), Kaqchikel, Akateco, Popti' (Jakalteco), Q'anjob'al, Chuj, Tz'utujil,

from Guatemala. Some participants, however, claimed that there are more languages in the Bay Area. Of the forty interviews, I selected twenty from Guatemala. All of them spoke Spanish and about half of them spoke fluent English. Of the remaining half, one-fourth stated they understood some English and one-fourth stated they had elemental English skills or were in the process of learning. Eight participants spoke Mam and four participants spoke K'ichee'. Q'anjob'al, Kaqchikel, Chuj, Akateko, Popti', Kekchi' and Tz'utujil each were represented by one participant. I selected twenty participants from Mexico; of these, fifteen participants were from Yucatan and five were from Chiapas. The Yucatecans all expressed that they spoke "good enough" English and they attributed their fluency to practicing before coming either in their hometowns or having worked in the tourist areas of the Caribbean before migrating. A few participants mentioned that English and the Yucatecan Mayan have a similar pronunciation. The Chiapanecans, on the other hand, reported struggling with the English language.

Inevitably, those who shared time with me and wanted to tell their stories or to make friends are participants that were interviewed extensively for this research. Thus, the participants of this research do not represent a homogeneous "Maya" point of view but rather they offer perspectives on the diversity of Maya immigrant experiences. This ethnographic approach parallels the postmodern anthropology conventions in which the ethnographer creates a narrative interpreting a social reality (Rabinow 1977, Clifford 1983, Bruner & Turner 1986, El Guindi 2004).

The participants in my research make a living through a variety of skilled and unskilled occupations. The most common jobs that my overall Maya participant group hold are gardeners, carpenters, kitchen workers, janitors, maids, electricians, plumbers, teachers, nurses, and nannies. About half my participants mentioned in this dissertation hold such occupations. The biggest distinction among Maya migrants is whether they resided continuously before or after 1982, the date stated as the final year of inclusion in the reforms of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986. Of about 2.1 million immigrants legalized, 59,863 are Guatemalan but not necessarily Maya. The U.S. census of 2010 found 900 Maya speakers in Oakland, although it does not specify which Maya language they spoke (Census 2010).

For many participants their identity as Yucatecan, Chiapanecan or Guatemalan immigrants or as Latinos superseded their identification as Maya. Alberto Perez Rendón, a young Yucatec professional and founder and current director of the Grupo Mayaab, explained to me: "We only use the concept of Maya, I mean the term Maya, when we are writing grants, it's a cultural weapon. It's an issue of turning what was used against us to our benefit to be able to ask for money to work with or communities." Through the interviews it became apparent that the majority of those who identified primarily as Maya were undocumented.

Most participants first reaction was to identify as Mexicans. Some of the Guatemalan immigrants also identified as Mexican as a way to protect themselves in the case of deportation as most Guatemalans prefer to get deported to Mexico than further south to Guatemala. In their homelands, Maya tend to identify with their hometown and native Maya language while nationality is understood as a much weaker marker of identity (Manz, Castañeda & Davenport, 2002). However, claiming a Mexican identity in the U.S. becomes a strategy of survival more than an affiliation with a culture. It often required time, building trust among participants and in-depth interviewing to pinpoint the actual origins of the participant.

Two methods employed for obtaining participants was through visible identification and location of residence. One visible way to discern a Maya in the Bay Area is by their use of traditional Maya clothing used mainly by women, who still use their distinctive *trajes* [traditional clothing] on a

daily basis. In the streets, I recognized Maya men because of their *morrales*, a kind of carry bag, distinctive in woven patterns and colors. Yucatec are more distinguishable than Guatemalan or Chiapanecan Maya because they live in defined geographical areas, like the Canal neighborhood in San Rafael or the Mission District in San Francisco. Most of the interviews were with men. Some interviews with Maya women were conducted but were impeded by complex issues of gender relationships. Thus, my sample favors a male perspective. Despite obtaining a small sample of Maya females, the data lacks depth usable for this research.ⁱⁱⁱ

Undocumented Maya immigrants' views of governmental institutions are shaped by their institutional experiences in both the United States and their home countries. Due to the centralized development of the Mexican and Guatemalan nations, all important government institutions are in the capital city, forcing any person living in the rural areas to make a time-consuming and expensive trip first to the capital of their department, then to capital City to conduct any business with the government (cf. Wallerstein 2004). Participants in my study described inefficacy, inaccessibility and disinterest and even open hostility in their interactions with their respective governments. When I asked specifically about the consulates in San Francisco, most impressions conveyed mirrored their homeland experiences. Highly racialized class and ethnic divisions are still prevalent in Guatemala and Mexico alike (Warren 1998: 50-51, Nelson 1999: 229). Participants' status as low class and of Maya ethnicity shaped a different reality compared to Mexican and Guatemaltecos of a higher social status. The class dicotomy that plays out in the U.S. seems to reflect the same divisions migrants experiences in their home countries.

1.5) Contextualizing Migration as Diaspora

Through the data of ethnographic fieldwork that illustrates a myriad of Maya people in the Bay Area of California, I argue that a Maya diaspora exists and assert the need for the recognition of this diaspora to better the living conditions of these vulnerable populations. I have not found any ethnographic research on Maya communities in the Bay Area of California that analyzes the Macro-Maya settlements. A strong presence of a diversity of Maya shown through my research corroborates evidence put forth by reporter Grace Burke. She claims that there is an increased Maya population in the Mission District in San Francisco (2004 in Fox and Salgado). Aquinno (2010) and Mencina (2011) have examined the Tojolabales and Tzeltals respectively, however, they do not explore the Maya diversity in the region. In 2006, I produced an ethnographic documentary entitled *The Journey: Oxxutzcab-San Francisco* about the Yucatec Maya migration to San Francisco. This film was a starting point in addressing the issues of Maya migrations to both scholars and to the mainstream American population. This research provides the first detailed discussion of these hidden Maya communities.

By using the term "Maya migration" or "indigenous migration," we run the risk of minimizing the repressive reality of the present. The concept of migration is widely understood and accessible in social, cultural and institutional contexts thus I employ the term at the same time I critique it. The concept "diaspora" more accurately captures the realities of the lived Maya experience, more specifically the violent attacks and the dispossession of land they have faced.

Etymologically "diaspora" comes from the Greek verb *speiro* (to sow) and the preposition *dia* (over). Ancient Greeks thought of diaspora in the context of colonization and migration. Over time the meaning shifted and diaspora came to describe collective experiences of exile and uprooting such as in the case of Jews, Africans, Armenians and Palestinians (Cohen 1997). In this sense, I would like to use the concept of diaspora to refer to the forced uprooting of people from their homelands. It is also pertinent to make the point that the diaspora experience is, in itself, the outcome of a system of power

relations imbedded in a social hierarchy founded and maintained by a colonial legacy. Our society today is the product of a racist social system that violently repressed the Native Americans in their own land forcing them to move around a certain geographical area to ensure survival. In the context of the Maya, diaspora refers to the outcome of displacement, invasion, repression, murder, and genocide, as well as the product of survival strategies and the incredible will of the human heart.

What are we to understand from the concept Maya Diaspora? In the intellectual and academic circles in the U.S. this term is explored in the book *The Maya Diaspora; Guatemalan Roots, New American Lives* edited by James Loucky and Marilyn M. Moors (2000). This volume is a collection of sixteen essays that research and explain the forced and violent exodus of the Guatemalan Maya. The collection of articles encapsulates the Guatemalan Maya experience through a historical and anthropological perspective as well as an underlying intellectual and humanitarian work that advocates for human rights. Nonetheless, it is important to point out that when they refer to Maya they are talking about the Guatemalan Maya without any reference to the Maya from Mexico (or Belize, Honduras, or El Salvador for that matter). Therefore, the term “Maya diaspora” as it appears in scholarship, seems to be exclusive to the Maya experience in Guatemala. This research will contribute to expanding the notion of the Maya diaspora.

When the U.S. CIA-sponsored military coup overthrew the democratically elected government of Jacobo Arbenz in 1954, it marked the beginning of the 36-year state of war that reigned in Guatemala until the end of the 20th century. During this Civil War (1960-1996), and, specifically in the 1970s and 1980s, the governments of Romero Lucas García and Efraín Ríos Montt focused military attacks on the extermination of 626 Maya communities (Loucky & Moors 2000:3). Through her research, Beatriz Manz calculated that during the 1980s alone two million refugees fled the violent conflicts of Central America where U.S.-sponsored civil wars also raged in El Salvador and Nicaragua. Of these refugees, at least a quarter of a million were Guatemalan, most of them from Maya speaking communities (Manz 1988:7).

The civil war atrocities in Guatemala only represented an escalation of abuse that Maya communities had suffered since earlier U.S. interventions in their territory in the middle of the 20th century. Inhabitants of the highlands areas of Guatemala were dispossessed and forced off their lands by multinational corporations acting together with military dictatorships financed by the U.S. (Loucky & Moors 2000:3). This event is an illustration of the unequal power relations, the cores and peripheries of the world system, that will follow in the later chapter. Migrants lands were used for mining, oil production and cattle rising. The vast majority of the Maya families were left landless or forced to work for others (García 2006: 26). Since 1954, the Maya populations have been specifically targeted by the military. However, it was the “scorched earth policy” of the 1980s that created conditions that forced thousands of people to literally run across national borders to flee their persecution and execution by the Guatemalan Army.^{iv} This massive flow of Maya escaping murder by the Guatemalan State is what the contemporary term Maya Diaspora captures.

Researchers have come to agree that migration has been a way of survival for Maya since their own historic and mythical accounts (Lutz and Lovell 2000:11). This notion takes into account the national and international factors of the world system that are responsible for the dispossessions and genocide of the Maya people. Charles D. Thompson Jr. explains in his ethnography of the Jakalteek (also known as Potpi) Maya that colonial and imperialist forces have besieged this population since the 16th century. For that reason, the mobile way of life of migrants has been essential for their survival strategies (Thompson 2000). By contextualizing migration as a diaspora we are highlighting an

atrocious state policy that targeted Maya peoples for extermination in the last decades of the 20th century creating a flow of thousands of Maya out of their homelands.

Following James Loucky and Marilyn M. Moors (2000) and Victor Montejo (1999), I draw upon the term “macro-Maya Diaspora” as a useful lens in my study in order to really grasp the complexity of the forced migration of the Maya population. By explaining the difficulties that these populations have had in their home countries as well as in the U.S., and by emphasizing the forced nature of the immigration that these Maya individuals have experienced, I draw the distinction between migration and diaspora. It is important to take into account the rising difficulties of the undocumented immigrant populations in the U.S. of which the Maya are only a small part. The current political hostility toward undocumented immigrants that permeates the American media and U.S. right-wing politicians has attempted to criminalize Latino/Hispanic immigrants. The anti-immigration discourse calls for legal repercussions for undocumented migrants as illustrated by new anti-immigration legislation such as the Arizona Law known as SB 1070, implemented in 2010. This piece of legislation is the strictest measure in generations making the failure to carry immigration documents a crime; therefore, giving authorities the right to detain anybody on simply the grounds of suspicion of being illegal through racial profiling.

Being an undocumented migrant today in the United States is a segregating experience. Joseph Nevis (2002) explains that the lack of documentation in the midst of the growth in inequality throughout the world has led many analysts to use the concept of “global apartheid” (Nevis 2002:186). This social system is characterized by a hierarchical order established by force and socioeconomic divisions that usually correspond to ethnicity. Consequently, the outcome of such measures is the racial profiling of the Latino communities as “illegal”.

In the past few years the Mexico-U.S. border has become a no-man’s land. This lawlessness has been exacerbated by the present drug war that the Mexican state is enforcing to try to combat the regional power that drug cartels have built over decades. When president Calderon assumed the presidency in 2006, the statistics showed that Mexico had reached the lowest levels of violence in its history (Aguilar & Castañeda 2012:70). By contrast, the next six years would prove to be the most violent that Mexicans had ever lived. The National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) asserts that the violence skyrocketed with Calderon's presidency and the war he initiated. Statistics in border states such as Chihuahua show that, in 2007, there were 518 murders, and by 2010, this number rose to 6,407 (Aguilar & Castañeda 2012:72). According to William Booth’s article, published on November 29, 2012 in the *Washington Post*, so far, this war has left approximately 25 thousand missing and 100 hundred victims of homicides.^v

There is a close relationship between the U.S.-Mexico Plan Merida and the expansion of Mexico’s drug war. In June 2008, the U.S. Congress passed legislation to support the Merida Initiative^{vi} (Plan Merida) by providing Mexico with \$400 million to combat the drug cartels. Under these circumstances, the immigrant workers suffer from the consequences of the bad press that the war on drugs has created and the climate of lawlessness that is portrayed on the news nearly everyday in the last couple of years. This situation has led the U.S. State Department to issue repetitive warnings for discouraging Americans traveling into Mexico. By stereotyping all drug cartels as being inherently and exclusively Mexican, Latino or Hispanic, the immigrant worker who is attempting to come to the U.S. to look for work becomes an easy scapegoat. By linking immigrants to drug cartels as part of the same problem, the criminalization of all Mexicans, Latino or Hispanic as a homogenous group of people becomes part of the nationalistic rhetoric used by the right-wing media that insists that “they are all breaking the law” (Parsons 2011). Without a clear explanation of the complexities of the immigrants

situation to that of the drug flow into the U.S., the war has drastic consequences for the individuals who “look Mexican”.

Tzvetan Todorov (1982) focuses on the various issues of representation and power relations dealing with the moral and ethical questions proposed by intellectuals. He dedicates the book to a Maya woman who was eaten by Spanish war dogs in the first encounters of the 16th century. His point is that the atrocities that have been committed in the past should not be forgotten. Unfortunately, atrocities towards Maya people are not something from the past, but something of the present. Nonetheless, as Todorov suggests, scholars must analyze and explain the ways in which international and national power structures use their laws to repressive ends. By recognizing the historical plight of these populations, we can better understand the need for granting the legal status of thousands of Maya families that live in the U.S. My ethnographic research conducted among the diverse Maya populations in the Bay Area of San Francisco, provides evidence of the conditions in which these Native Americans survive.

The issue of international law is pertinent for the discussion of the Maya diaspora. This ethnographic work offers support for the need to recognize Maya people as members of a community who have been affected directly by the development of an export-driven economy in their home nations and to abusive and exploitative conditions that have deprived them from their lands and subjected them to poor economic conditions. The Director of Grupo Maya in Oakland California is a United Nations representative for indigenous rights. Since the 1990s, indigenous organizations, along with the International Labor Organization^{vii} (ILO), have advocated in the United Nations that indigenous people who work abroad should receive workers' rights through international law. Grupo Maya places special importance in these activities to promote and advocate for the recognition of this international law. The main argument is that the U.S. needs to perform an immigration reform that acknowledges the international laws supporting the rights of immigrants, international workers and indigenous people. In September 2007, the Declaration of the United Nations on the Rights of Indigenous People was signed.^{viii} This international legislation aims to better the conditions of life by acknowledging and addressing indigenous people's struggles. It may be a matter of time before the United States signs this agreement allowing the Maya in the U.S. to live protected by international law which will, in turn, undermine measures such as the Arizona Law SB 1070.

Chapter 2: The Representation of the Maya

2.1) Who are the Maya?

In what follows, the concept of Maya is examined to better understand the complexity of misrepresenting a diverse group of people. Emphasizing the complexity of the term “Maya” illuminates the difficulties of categorizing people without understanding their historical, cultural, and linguistic diversity, and that the term Maya applies to a wide range of distinct people. The representation of the contemporary Maya becomes important to deconstruct because it romanticizes their past and ignores their present-day plight. The term “Maya” makes reference to two different concepts. On the one hand, it refers to the Maya people, the contemporary group of native inhabitants of Southern Mexico and Central America. On the other hand, the term Maya is used as the name given to the archaeological findings of the pre-Hispanic cultures of that same geographical region. Who are the Maya? For this research, I draw on the sociopolitically driven concept of Maya as put forth by John Watanabe:

Those people whose communities of residence or reference resemble one another in their differences from the national societies of Mexico and Guatemala. These communities speak some thirty related languages and exhibit cultural practices in common, as well as political subordination within Mexico and Guatemala that Maya activists on both sides of the border seek to rectify (2004:39).

Allan Burns explains that the Maya are the largest group of people who live in their traditional lands in Central America and Mexico. The Maya reside in Honduras, El Salvador, Belize, Guatemala, and Mexico. Because of recent migrations, at present the Maya diaspora stretches into the United States and Canada (Burns 1993:1). It is estimated that there are sixty-two indigenous languages spoken in Mexico. The number of Maya speakers in this country is more than two million. Spanish, Nahuatl, and Yucatec Maya are the most widely spoken languages.^{ix} Since 1994, there has been constant tension between some Maya groups that are not Yucatec Maya and who follow the Zapatista Army of National Liberation's demands against the Mexican Government (Womak 1999, Nash 2001, De Vos 2002). In Guatemala, there are twenty-three indigenous groups. Approximately six million from the indigenous population are Maya, making up half of the country's population. Throughout the thirty-six year war (1960-1996), Maya populations were particularly affected (Lovell and Lutz 1996). There are seven indigenous groups in Honduras, which represent close to thirteen percent of the total population of the country. Among them there are between 1,500 and 2,000 Chorti-Maya descendants who have not received much attention despite their activism and demands for property in and near the archaeological site of Copan.^x This uprising of the rightful descendants of the founders of this famous Maya city did not really make many headlines, even though they took over the site again in 2008. Honduran authorities were able to negotiate a peaceful resolution to a volatile situation. Both El Salvador and Belize have a comparatively smaller Maya presence. Their cultural and historical continuity as well as present struggles are far too complex to comment on in this research. Notwithstanding, the Maya are and have been in a constant struggle for survival within their own nations.

Linguists breakdown the Maya language family into five sub-families: Ch'ol-Tzotzil, Huastecan, Chujean-Kanjolal, Quichean-Mamean, and Yucatecan. All of these languages are spoken both in Mexico and Guatemala. Maya languages are natively spoken in seven states of Mexico: Veracruz, San Luis Potosí, Tabasco, Campeche, Quintana Roo, Chiapas, and Yucatan. The 1996 Peace Accords that ended Guatemala's 32-year civil war recognized 22 Maya languages present in Guatemala. Burns argues that there are 26 distinct Maya languages in Guatemala and that they are as different from each other as French is from Spanish (1993:8). Víctor Montejo explains that according

to linguists today, there are actually 31 Maya languages (2005:17). Concurrently, these sources show the great diversity of languages that are spoken by Maya people. Today, through new patterns of migration, thousands of people living in the United States speak these languages (Burns 1993, Montejo 1999, Loucky and Moors 2000, Thompson Jr. 2001, Fink 2003, Adler 2004, Fox & Salgado 2004).

To understand the historical continuum of the Maya is important because most of the popular representations of the Maya are romanticizing and focus exclusively on their pre-Hispanic past. Behind this romanticized representation of the Maya hides the social marginality that Maya people experience today. In their respective nations, they are excluded from the national project. In the U.S., they are invisible as a distinct group of indigenous people who become labeled as illegal aliens and who are not associated with any type of Maya pre-Hispanic past. Moreover, when analyzing Maya international diaspora to their current geographic areas of settlement, it becomes more pertinent to inquire about the ways they are misrepresented. These misrepresentations take form at various levels, through the nation building discourse and in the mass media, themes that I will explore in the following lines. Mexico and Guatemala have only recently institutionalized the notion of multiculturalism. However, until the end of the 20th century, both countries constructed the idea of “mestizo nations” and have used the pre-Hispanic past as cornerstones for their nation building discourse, while largely ignoring their contemporary indigenous population.

2.2) The Macro-Maya Culture

Victor Montejo, a survivor of the massacres perpetrated by the Guatemalan Army during the early 1980s, is now an anthropologist and Professor of Native American Studies at the University of California, Davis. He explains, how, for centuries, the Guatemalan government and Guatemalan society have created and perpetuated the denigrating concept of *indio* (Indian) as being a second-class citizen. Yet, at the same time, the ancient Maya culture has been used and misused for nation-building and in the establishment of a Guatemalan national identity. Montejo explains:

The systematic discrimination against the Maya by some ladinos has been an ideological instrument codified in the concept of “the Indian.” In this concept, indigenous people are represented as “backward beings condemned to disappear or assimilate in to the ladino and hegemonic Guatemalan culture. The anti-Maya, racist attitudes of many ladinos towards indigenous people is really a polemic against what is considered “Indian” and not against what is Maya. The dominant class and its servant, the Guatemalan Army, have always been disgusted by the current “Indians,” while at the same time they have used the classic Maya culture to promote their nationalism. (Montejo 2005:1)

In parallel with Montejo, I argue that by distancing the present-day Maya from their “glorious” ancient past the Maya constantly face a process of romanticization through a similar “double construction” vis-à-vis institutions. While the elites construct a national identity through the valorization of the indigenous population’s exoticized past they economically benefit from the archaeological and cultural sites as tourist attractions. Institutions and the Guatemalan elite are able to control, to some extent, the process of representation of the Maya people through the authoritative discourses. However, Montejo explains that after centuries of ideological, political, and economic repression of the Maya population of Guatemala, they are no longer passive about the representations that come from the Guatemalan elite and, most importantly, from Western mass media and academic institutions.

Montejo explains the intricacies of the Pan-Maya movement in Guatemala, which emerged in the last decades of the 20th century. The movement can be understood as the resurgence of the Maya culture in response to a state policy of genocide (2005:16). Pan-Mayaism emerged in the context of the revitalization and resurgence of the inhabitants of the Mayab (the Maya-speaking region) who recognize aspects of a shared Maya culture and trace their common ancestry to the ancient Maya in a very simple way: "The Maya culture lives on, because we, its descendants, live on" (2005:22).

Montejo points out that since there is not one group that represents the Maya. We must understand Maya culture as a complex system of ethnic groups, each forming a subsystem both distinct from and partially interrelated to the other Maya groups: They call themselves Maya. They are different ethnic communities, each with their own specific cultural characteristics within a great tradition of shared culture. Thus, the Maya culture is pluralist at the microlevel while maintaining its unity in its macrolevel manifestation. (2005:19)

By recognizing this complexity, we can begin to comprehend the concept that Montejó describes as the macro-Maya culture and the need to study both its particularities and its differences. He elaborates: "My focus on the pan-Maya cultural renaissance movement now taking place in the Maya region is predicated on the idea that there is a shared or based Maya culture on a macrocultural level" (2005:36). From this perspective, could we think of a macro-Maya migration? I argue that, following Montejó's explanation for the need to understand the Maya as a macro-Maya culture, we should refer to all migrations of the Maya, past and contemporary, as the macro-Maya diaspora. In this way we can grasp the meaning of the power relations embedded in the historical continuity that has shaped the present hierarchical structures of power, as well as the reality of the violence, displacement, abuse, suffering, resistance, and courage that are involved. In conclusion, the macro-Maya diaspora is a social phenomenon that must be recognized.

2.3) The Orientalization of the Maya^{xi}

Maya migrant communities come from these specific political and economic situations in their respective countries into a U.S. society that has, for centuries, developed diverse attitudes towards their neighbors from the south. Their identity as Maya becomes unseen, as they are leveled in a generic term such as Hispanic or Latino migrants. The concept of Maya comes to mind only as the representation of the ancient past of the pre-Columbian cultures. These themes of the ancient past have been studied by western academics since the middle of the 18th century. Some of these inquiries have emphasized the archeological remains of a glorious, imperial past (Stephens 1843, Maudslay 1889, Morley 1910). Others focused on the researchers' observations of the present-day conditions of the Maya and their history (La Farge 1931, Redfield 1934, Farriss 1984). Nonetheless, the ones that draw more attention in the mass media and academic circles are those that allude to the great mysteries of the collapse of the Maya civilization and their great architectural achievements. The focus on the great Maya ancient cities has resulted in a fascination that draws millions of tourists and travelers to see the archeological attractions situated in beautiful jungles, beaches, rivers and lakes.

The Maya romanticized view of mystical pyramids in the jungle attracts an international community of backpackers who travel from one archeological area to another in Mexico and Guatemala in a type of spiritual quest of Native American knowledge. Exploiting the romanticized ideal of the "primitive" native cultures and their pre-Hispanic wonders, these travelers have had an intensive

countercultural effect on the region. These “Orientalists of the Americas”- are travelers who romanticize the past and the indigenous condition from their linear understanding of the evolution of time and where native and primitive are synonyms for an idealized society frozen in time. They travel from all over the world to experience the mystical and spiritual road of the Native Americans through what they see as the “plants of the gods,” meaning mainly in Mexico mushrooms and peyote, considered illegal drugs among the western cultures. These travelers are very different from the more common, wealthier type of tourist who arrive in company buses, go into a historical site and get back in the bus to return to the nearest city to sleep in a hotel.

The road of tourist attractions throughout the Maya region was developed with better infrastructure connecting various Maya contemporary towns, natural wonders and archeological areas that existed in residential areas. Both Guatemala and Mexico then proceeded to advertise their Maya region as a great, fun, mystical, adventurous tourist attraction called “The Mayan Route.” And, as I have described, regardless of the implications of ignoring the social problems, millions of people travel through “The Mayan Route” because it is a great place to have any type of adventure.

I use Edward Said’s concept of Orientalism (1978) to get a better grasp of how these perceptions of the past affect the realities of the present and to show how the romanticized concept of “Maya” alludes to the embedding of identities related to power relations that shape the economic hierarchies of the present day. Said wrote about how the representations and images of “the Oriental” in art and literature shaped the imperial hegemony in the context of the development and establishing of European colonialism in Asia and the Middle East (Said 1978, 1981, 1993). Those nations that were venturing into new lands and controlling new markets told the story of their explorations and discoveries, producing a great body of knowledge about “the other”--the foreign and the newly acquired lands and markets. Colonialism twinned military domination in the writing of histories for their own consumption and self-gratification perpetuated the justification of their continuing European domination. While Said was writing in the context of European colonization in the Orient, his analysis is useful to understanding what has and is taking place in the Americas, more specifically, in power relations affecting indigenous populations. Travelers, reporters and academics who write and produce Maya history, are laboring in an ethnically-based social hierarchical similar to that of Oriental history in the past. These contemporary orientalist, comprise a handful of writers, largely funded by the American government as well as transnational corporations that control “the manufacture, distribution, and above all selection of news relied on by most of the world” (Said 1993:292). The production of representations of the Maya are produced by non-Maya, who in consequence act as the producers of the Orientalization of the Maya. Maya archeology is shaped into a specific marketable product that explains and sells a specific version of history, a “motivated myth” (Barthes 1972:109-137), shaped by the perceptions, prejudices and necessities of the reporter. American media, by creating and circulating images, reinforces political and economic decisions that allow its population to be supportive or ignorant of the subordination of weaker states and people around the world. Therefore is imperative to analyze how U.S. mass media portray Maya culture both in the past and present and how that shapes the situation of contemporary Maya.

In his influential work, Said explains that by Orientalism he means several interdependent things: Firstly, the term refers to an academic field or institution for scholars who research the Orient. Secondly, “Orientalism is a style of thought based on an ontological and epistemological distinction made between “the Orient” and (most of the time) “the Occident” (Said 1978:2). Thirdly, the term refers to the large body of knowledge produced in texts during the colonial empires of Great Britain and France and later of the United States. In regards to the third point Said further explains:

I come to the third meaning of Orientalism, which is something more historically and materially defined than either of the other two. Taking the late eighteenth century as a very roughly defined starting point Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient. (Said 1978:2)

For this chapter, I use “Orientalism” to refer to the representation, the imitation, or the depiction of aspects of Eastern cultures in the West by scholars, writers, designers, artists, and politicians who reinforce this duality. To understand the concept of Orientalism, we must acknowledge the relationship between those who are able to write, reproduce, and diffuse their ideas versus those who are not. That is why, there are, as Said explains, varying degrees of these complex hegemonic practices, characterized by the relationships of power and domination (Said 1993: 31). One cannot approach the subject of Orientalism without considering the political sphere of the international world market and its effect on the people in the lowest stratum of the social order. Consequently, as Said explains, the process of Orientalization has deeper implications than just misrepresentation. Its unveiling leads us to grasp the reality behind the modern global hierarchies of power and economic imperialism. Here, I will discuss the present situation of the Maya in Mexico and Guatemala, how it has been affected by U.S. policy, and how this history responds to Orientalized images of Maya people.

2.4) Representation of the Maya in Context: Mexico

Both the Guatemalan and Mexican States have denigrated, abused, and excluded their indigenous populations for centuries. Mexican anthropologist Guillermo Bonfil Batalla explains how only at the end of the 20th century Mexican institutions began to recognize that the indigenous populations had been left out of the national building process by economic marginalization and exclusion from modern life. His work *El México profundo, una civilización negada* (*The Deep Mexico*, 1987) examines how Mexican society is divided into two groups that have distinct conceptions of life, with one ruling over the other. They each look towards different cultural and social spheres for developing their society. The society that rules looks to the west as a way of life and desires to be part of the worldwide market and cultural sphere of Europe. The other, the deep Mexico that has roots in the Mesoamerican world, looks towards its native ways of social organization and survival strategies. Through their knowledge of community organization and farming, indigenous people were able to settle in the most remote areas, evading, direct political and cultural control from the capital and regional cities. This deep Mexico persists today and comprises 62 distinct languages through the national territory, permeating mainly the lowest levels of economic development. Batalla describes:

El brutal abatamiento de la población durante el siglo XVI, debido a enfermedades antes desconocidas, a guerras y a las duras condiciones de trabajo impuestas, condujo a la desaparición de pueblos enteros y al despojo de sus tierras y la terca voluntad de mantenerse libres, arrojó a muchos grupos hacia regiones inhóspitas distintas de su medio original” [The brutal depression of the population during the 16th century, due to the spread of unknown diseases, wars and the imposed harsh working conditions, led to the banishment of entire towns and the displacement of previously populated regions. The dispossession of their lands and their stubborn willingness to remain free, forced them to look for inhospitable regions distinct from their original lands]^{xii} (Bonfil Batalla 1987:52).

Living in rural areas dispersed throughout a remote geographical region, the Maya have remained culturally and linguistically diverse and partially isolated from the development of the infrastructure emblematic of the modern world. Despite that throughout the 20th century Mexican cities grew from rural migration, many indigenous communities have managed to find economic niches that allow for the continuation of their ways of life. Today, a multicultural Mexico can be seen in towns all over the nation, still celebrating their local traditions, music, knowledge and languages distinct from each other. Through the process of nation building, Mexico, especially at the beginning of the 20th century and after its revolution, began the process reinventing itself through the ideas of socialism and public education for all. This mission was instructed from the top revolutionaries who assumed power and formed what is known today as one of the most important political parties of Mexico, the Institutional Revolutionary Party. One of the great minds and builders of this idea was the intellectual José Vasconcelos (1882-1959) who through education and culture faucets developed the idea of the *Mexican mestizo*, defined as the sons of the cosmic race or the natural evolution of the mixture between Europe and Mesoamerica. Nonetheless, the qualities of the Europeans were always privileged. Europeans were perceived as superior as a result of their modern practices and industrial ways, while natives were perceived as savage as a result of their underdeveloped infrastructure. The nation builders of the early 20th century were concerned with modernizing and westernizing Mexico. For such purposes, the concept of *mestizo* allowed indigenous-looking people to become “acceptable” if they remained within the desired cultural traits of the Spanish descendants. This modern perspective considered indigenous people as primitives whose “awkwardness” and “futile attitude” needed to be changed and improved in order for them to become “real” Mexicans and productive citizens of the growing industrial nation. Vasconcelos founded and directed the Secretary of Public Education in 1921 aiming to create model Mexicans through an institutionalized national education system.

“La razón es simple y es una sola: los grupos sociales que han detentado el poder (político, económico, ideológico) desde la invasión europea hasta el día de hoy, afiliados por herencia o por circunstancia a la civilización occidental, han sostenido siempre proyectos históricos en los que no hay cabida para la civilización mesoamericana. La posición dominante de estos grupos, originada en el orden estamentario de la sociedad colonial, se ha expresado en una ideología que solo concibe el futuro (el desarrollo, el progreso, el avance, la Revolución misma) dentro del cauce de la civilización occidental.”[The reason is simple and singular: the social groups that have held power (political, economic and ideological) since the European invasion until today, affiliated by heritage or circumstance to the western civilization, have always sustained historical projects which give no space for the Mesoamerican civilizations. Their dominant position over these groups, originated since the establishment of the colonial society, has permeated an ideology that only looks to the future (development, progress, advancement, and the Revolution itself) inside the realm of the western civilization]^{xiii} (Bonfil Batalla 1987:102).

In consequence, it is not strange that the nation builders of the early 20th century wanted to make Mexico a secular democratic state entrenched in the modern values of respect and progress.

Ironically, while indigenous populations needed to be “changed into Mexicans”, the image of the pre-Hispanic past was glorified and emphasized in the mass media of the time. The government sponsored the mural painting movement that conveyed the history of the Mexican nation. The three main muralists of the Mexican post-revolutionary area, José Orozco, David Siqueiros and Diego Rivera, created, a distinct depiction of the historical formation of the *mestizo* in the main national building. They painted the sequence of historical events as a glorified social evolutionary process. This sequence includes the creation of magnificent pre-Hispanic civilizations, the wars of Conquest by the Spanish, and process of independence from Spain and the Mexican Revolution (1910-1917) that leads to the mixture of the races. Through this popular imaginary, the muralists articulated the story of Mexico to the masses, explaining to them the important events that shaped their identity

as the result of this culture process destined to create the cosmic race, the Mexican *mestizo*. However, indigenous people were not welcomed to belong to this “new” Mexico, unless they ceased to be indigenous (Wolf 1959:248).

As Mexico was becoming a modern nation by industrializing its economy, it had to also deal with its powerful northern neighbor. Mexico’s rich oil industry was a strategic political asset through the 20th century. The industry allowed Mexican politicians to avoid yielding to U.S. interests and helped forge good relations with Cuba after its revolution. Mexico supported Central American *guerrillas*, and its open borders to leftist political exiles from throughout South America. The end of the 20th century marked a deep polarization between Mexico and the United States as their international relations and foreign policies greatly differed. Nonetheless, the focus of their relations was trade (Vázquez & Meyer 1985:187).

In 1982, Mexico underwent an economic crisis known as the Volcker Shock stemming from an accumulation of foreign debt due to the economic policies of U.S. banks (Harvey 2005:29). As a consequence, President De la Madrid (1982-1988) began moving Mexico toward an export economy and joined what would later become the World Trade Organization (WTO). In the early 1990s, President Salinas de Gortari followed the steps toward trade liberalization and proposed joining the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) (Audley, Polaski, Papademetriou & Vaughan 2004:6). On January 1, 1994, the day the agreement took effect, the Zapatista Army for National Liberation (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional; EZLN) composed of mainly indigenous Maya from Chiapas declared war on the Mexican State. It has been more than 19 years since this Maya indigenous uprising began. However, many changes have transformed the political landscape of Mexican politics and the Zapatista movement has had to adapt to a changing national and regional political environment. The analysis of the Zapatista movement and its contemporary challenges to the Mexican state and civil society are beyond the scope of this research. For a well-developed understanding of the Zapatista movement, it is useful to read the books *Rebellion in Chiapas* by John Womack (1999) and *Maya Visions* by June C. Nash (2001). The point I want to emphasize here is that in Mexico there is an indigenous Maya movement of resistance to national submission and assimilation, and through the evolution of the movement, they have become more and more marginalized from the mass media and from Mexican politics.

The condition of the indigenous Mexican individual in the 21st century is different from the one that prompted the Zapatista Rebellion in 1994. The Zapatista’s main declaration of war was against the 70-year rule of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) government. The anti-PRI “revolution” discourse was no longer effective after Mexico had its first democratic election in the year 2000. As a result, the Zapatista leadership changed its rhetoric and efforts to focus on the importance of recognizing the indigenous people’s rights. After the Zapatista’s long campaign for indigenous rights coupled with the support of all political parties in 2001, the second article of the Mexican constitution was amended to recognize Mexico as a multicultural nation. This was probably the greatest victory for the Zapatista movement. Whereas before the indigenous component of the nation was denied, ignored and abused, now, the rights of the indigenous population have been “officially” recognized and specifically written into the Mexican Constitution.

Nonetheless, the social conditions that allowed local governments to arm militias remained. In Acteal, in December of 1997 a paramilitary group of Tzeltal Maya massacred another group of Tzeltal children and women who were Zapatista supporters (Freyermuth 2003:36). The responsible individuals for the massacre were put in jail, but the social conditions that allow paramilitary groups to function and terrorize communities have not been addressed (Freyermuth 38). The contrast between what was placed on paper and the social reality could not be more apparent.

Government institutions and mass media took up the message of the rebel indigenous cause and have now used “indigenous Mexico” more than ever as an important “Mexican” cultural attribute, in particular for the tourism industry. For example, “Zapatourism,” is a tourist industry developed by taking advantage of indigenous representation. In Zapatourism, tourists come to Chiapas to visit the Zapatista communities as a “revolutionary” experience. However, it is important to note that Mexico has undergone drastic political changes through the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century. Mexican institutions have begun to recognize indigenous languages and cultures as an important cultural emblem of the emerging multicultural Mexico. Yet, the process

of recognizing the rights of and wrongdoings towards the present indigenous communities remains far from over. In addition, many tensions remain between indigenous populations and the Mexican Government. The Zapatistas still exist as a rebel group in the state of Chiapas, and there are various indigenous organizations represented by the Indigenous Democratic Convention that still support the Zapatista cause. Another important factor to weigh in is that many indigenous populations that had only participated in seasonal migration inside Mexico have begun immigrating permanently to the United States.

2.5) Representation of the Maya in context: Guatemala

Montejo explains that even though Guatemala won its independence from Spain in the first decade of the 19th century, this did not have a great effect on the Maya populations. By the middle of the century, coffee cultivation was introduced to the region, creating yet another heavy burden on the Maya populations, due to the land and labor requirements of this new crop. Guatemalan President Rafael Carrera (1840-1871) granted property rights to the indigenous people of Guatemala, and then referred to them as “Indians.” Nonetheless, he was a Guatemalan president who ignored the interest of the growing export-oriented coffee barons. Guatemalan army commander General Justo Rufino Barrios (1871-1885), responded to the international pressures demanding an agro-export economy driven by United States investments. Consequently, in 1871, he organized a coup that overthrew Carrera and abolished property rights given to the indigenous people. Barrios assured U.S. investors that labor conditions and infrastructure would be favorable to their business interests by implementing the *mandamiento* (a decree of forced labor draft), a government policy that required the Maya population mandatory labor service for the government (Montejo 1999:35). The policy mainly materialized through road construction and plantation work. After the Wall Street Crash of 1929 and the resulting effect on world coffee prices, President Jorge Ubico, in 1934, established “vagrancy laws” as a national policy. This policy replaced the *mandamiento* in more invasive and exploitative ways. All people without a legitimate profession of sufficient farmland were required to work 100 days of the year for landowners. Such discriminatory and racist measures coerced ninety percent of the highland population into performing forced labor for the landed elite (Thompson 2001:52).

The democratic values of the growing middle class opened a period known as the “Ten Years of Spring,” first electing president Juan Jose Arévalo (1945-51) and then Jacobo Arbenz (1951-54). Both presidents established reforms affecting the Maya communities—the most significant concerning laws for the abolition of forced labor. Overall, their liberal economic reforms strengthened the labor and civil rights of the growing urban working class and the peasantry, legally exploited in the past. In 1952, Arbenz attempted to nationalize unused land from *fincas* (large private landholdings) or from national or municipal land in order to distribute it to the landless peasantry, who were mostly Maya. The elite, composed of private landowners along with the largest landowner of the country, the United Fruit Company, pushed for the intervention of the U.S., justifying the intervention as a struggle against the spreading of communism in Central America (Montejo 1999:38). The following dictatorship under Col. Carlos Castillo Armas abolished all political and economical reforms of the past decade and banned any type of labor unions and left-wing political parties.

Throughout the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century, Guatemala encouraged the introduction of foreign investment capital. Along with North American and European immigrants, the political class distanced itself even farther from the native Maya population. These new residents, along with the old *mestizo* power elites, created the contemporary image of the “*Ladino*” in Guatemala. This ethnic group, *Ladino*, idealizes its European and “white-blood” ancestry. The *Ladino* along with two other ethnic groups, the Xinca, and the Garifunas, are recognized with Guatemala’s 22 Maya ethnic groups in the nation constitution. The Guatemalan military was composed

of hierarchies that paralleled the social economic hierarchies of the nation. The officers were from a high social class and white while the soldiers were from poor urban or rural areas, the majority of them of Maya descent.

Through the second half of the 20th century, Guatemala had generals ensuring a military control of the country. This marked a return to the times of evictions and land dispossessions for the Maya. Guerrilla groups remained through the 1960s and into the 1970s operating with more force in the cities and the countryside. The early 1980s marked the period in which the “scorched earth” policy was in effect, a military strategy that resulted in the massacre of at least 200,000 people in Guatemala, among whom the vast majority were Maya.

The U.S. influx of weapons and military training for the CIA-sponsored coup in 1954, for example, has shown the complicity of the U.S. government with U.S. agribusiness corporations in Guatemala, such as the United Fruit Company, which benefited from cheap and even free Maya labor (Jonas 22:1991). Today, Maya are still exploited by the U.S. demand for cheap labor that has increased the pull factors for Guatemalan migrants into the U.S. Thompson further elaborates on this exploitation and puts forth the need for migrants to have a sense of home in the United States:

The most important point that I want to make about indigenous peoples as travelers, refugees, repatriates, and other *cruceros*, is that the pathways of these people intersect with others...and with violence and economics... ‘Their’ stories of crossing must be related to U.S. demand for security behind lines, for manual labor, cheap food products, and well-manicured lawns. Refugees cannot remain a people outside northern borders who are used to conceive of, and even build, safe places in the United States, but they must also be allowed into definitions of sense of “home” as “home” becomes their “refuge as well” (Thompson 2001:179).

2.6) The Representation of the Maya in the United States

It is apparent that the economic condition of the indigenous people in Mexico is not improving. In the Mexican constitution, governmental institutions and mass media, cultural diversity is recognized and celebrated. Nevertheless, the reality of the hardships of the migration process has yet to be fully and adequately addressed. Guatemala, which recognized its indigenous population in the Peace Accords of 1996, also ignores the reality of the present conditions Maya face that forces them to migrate for better opportunities in the countries north of their border. In the United States, the vast diversity of Maya people are living under the shadow of the mainstream due to their often-tenuous legal status. The same national and economically driven interests and institutions that label them “illegal” are responsible for uprooting these people from their homelands. The imposed representation of the Maya in the U.S. forces the Maya into hidden communities that survive under the radar.

Regardless of how these groups of survivors are labeled— exiles, refugees, migrants, or immigrants—it is imperative to recognize the historical processes of war, exploitation, and displacement that the Maya have suffered in both Mexico and Guatemala that has forced migration northward. Today, it is the economic interests of the political parties and economic elites of Mexico, Guatemala, and the United States that have extended the genocide and exploitation of the 16th century into the 20th and 21st century. Maya movements such as the *Zapatistas* in Mexico or the Pan-Maya intellectual renaissance in Guatemala are clear examples of the ongoing struggle for self-representation and freedom from imposed representation under economic and political subjugation by the nation-states of Mexico and Guatemala.

The state violence against more than 600 Maya villages in Guatemala during the 1980s, their economic hardships in Chiapas and Yucatan and the repression and low-intensity warfare by the Mexican army in Chiapas

since 1994 are examples of the on-going human rights violations toward the Maya population. As Doctor Gabriela Freyermuth encino explains: “El 22 de Diciembre de 1997, en la comunidad de Acteal, Chenalhó, sesenta hombres armados atacaron a la población indígena indefensa, dando muerte a 45 personas, en su mayoría mujeres y niños”[On December 22nd of 1997, in the community of Acteal, Chenalhó, sixty armed men attacked the defenseless indigenous population, killing forty-five people, the majority women and children](Freyermuth 2003:9).

Adding to the traumatic experiences of the Maya in their homelands, Maya in the United States have experienced a new wave of immigration raids and deportations. On May 1, 2006, thousands of people across the nation marched in the streets in support of immigration rights. For the first time, thousands of migrants that lived in the shadows came out to march for their rights. The police and immigration offices responded with a harsh wave of raids in the homes of thousands of migrants. These raids, however, did not specifically targeted the May rather they have targeted working-class families from all over Central America and Mexico. On July 25, 2008, an article by Carolyn Lochhead in the *The San Francisco Chronicle* explained that arrests of undocumented workers in the U.S. have risen sharply from around 1,200 arrests in 2005 to approximately 4,500 arrests in 2008.^{xiv} Due to the increase in the number of raids conducted by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency (ICE) in Latino and immigrant neighborhoods. One of the largest attacks on undocumented working families occurred in 2008 in a meat packing plant in Iowa, where nearly 400 undocumented workers, mainly Guatemalans, were arrested in the largest worksite immigration raid in U.S. history.^{xv} Lochhead emphasizes that “...such raids would never be tolerated by non-Latino ethnic groups.” As she explains, it would be a scandal if such raids occurred in the neighborhoods or workplaces of Anglo, Asian, or African-Americans. The charges against arrested international undocumented workers abducted by the raids (arrested on the grounds of fraud for using a false social security number and aggravated identity theft) are violations that are also committed by non-Latino and non-immigrant populations. Lochhead states, “When dealing with Anglo identity theft subjects, is federal law enforcement going to start cordoning off white neighborhoods or workers, handcuffing and detaining everyone, and only then sorting out the accused?”^{xvi} These events expose the double standard migrants in the United States experience. Understanding the risk of a tenuous legal status helps put in context the imposed representation of the “illegal” and “undocumented” migrant who faces a harsh reality propelling them to remain under the radar.

I argue that the Orientalization of the Maya people has been a constant activity carried out by politicians, businessmen, Western academics and mass media from the United States, Mexico and Guatemala. This process of Orientalization, as an intellectual activity, has developed and imposed a hierarchy of representation and ownership of geographical territory, a way of studying and representing a post-colonial society. For the most part, those I call “Orientalists of the Americas” have disregarded the human rights violations currently suffered by these diverse populations. Instead, they have chosen to romanticize and highlight their ancient and “mysterious glories,” leading to a misunderstanding of the actual political and legal situation of the Maya in the diaspora.

Although I do not intend to generalize by arguing that all Western academics and knowledge producers of the Maya are Orientalists, I will point out particular cases that demonstrate how the West’s mass media discourse still have a tendency to fall into Orientalist representations of “the other,” in this case, the Maya.

I do not argue that Orientalism comprises a monolithic approach. The presence of artists, activists, intellectuals, and academics in the struggle for human rights has been essential and must not be ignored. For instance, the works of Allan Burns (1993) and Charles D. Thompson (2001), among many others, have been essential sources of information regarding the unjust social processes through which Maya populations have survived. These seminal works have also been the core of various academic investigations that have followed the same path of solidarity with subjugated populations. Documenting the abuses and ways of survival of the Maya population, they represent the antithesis of the “Orientalists of the Americas.”

In the beginning of *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Said reminds Americans that they have a particular responsibility to social justice due to the fact they live in a large, enormously influential and frequently interventionist power all around the world (Said 1993:54). In his view, intellectuals and society must address

attention to the subjugation of people based on their cultural and linguistic histories and rectify the economic and political consequences of such subjugation.

One can find a good example of mass media Orientalization of the Maya peoples in the National Geographic Society through its popular magazine. As Peter Hervik explains, *The National Geographic Magazine* has constructed the Maya as museum piece, part of the dramatization of the archeological wonders that can be known by the intrepid visual tourists of its Western readership (Hervik 1999:59). For this reason, it is pertinent to analyze how the Maya have been represented from an Orientalist perspective in the mass media's production, using *National Geographic Magazine* in the beginning of the 20th century as a case in point. This process of Orientalization by the mass media contributes to the misrepresentation of the contemporary Maya, while millions of members of these marginalized communities continue to be either considered second-class citizens in nations like Mexico and Guatemala, or are labeled "illegal aliens" in the United States.

The National Geographic Society was founded at the end of the 19th century and the Maya have been a frequent topic throughout its trajectory. As Peter Hervik observes, between 1925 and 1975 National Geographic sponsored 68 projects producing dozens of articles on the Maya (Hervik 65). As Orientalism in the Western world speaks for those "others" of the Orient, *National Geographic* still represents an evolutionist perspective on the social world. It speaks about the Maya and for the Maya, but does not employ Maya reporters or researchers, a characteristic that I point out to be Orientalist. The cultural output of the representation of the "other" is very powerful and, as we will see, the Maya people are directly affected by the recreation of their history in romanticized terms alluding to the great past followed by a collapsed civilization whose remains are the wretched survivors seen today merely as uncivilized peasants. I argue that the violent colonial exploitation in the Maya history responds to the constant romanticizing of the great achievements of the ancient Maya and the merchandizing of this image in the tourism industry.

An example of this type of Orientalization took place in the summer of 1994, when former Mexican President Carlos Salinas de Gortari went to Chiapas to publicly celebrate the archeological finding of the Red Queen in Palenque, in the midst of the Zapatista uprising. The Red Queen is a relative of the most famous of the Maya kings, Pacal. He is famous because his tomb residing in the Temple of the Inscriptions is the only sarcophagus with inscriptions found in the Americas. While he celebrated the uncovering of a great Maya tomb and appeared in the front cover of major newspapers, he attacked the modern Maya population who had organized itself and demanded land, democracy, work, health, and other basic human needs. *Discovery Channel* and *National Geographic* have produced many stories on the subject of the city of Palenque, its most known ruler Pacal, and the Red Queen, while also ignoring the deep social polarization and the complexity of the Zapatista struggle and its "Mayaness."

While millions view the *Discovery Channel* and the *National Geographic* cultural representations of the Maya, outside the Internet pages of the independent media, the work of a growing number of Maya video makers remains largely marginalized and inaccessible. In consequence, the mass production and representation of the great ancient but collapsed Maya prevails over the real struggling surviving Maya of the 21st century.

I do not mean to imply that archeological practice and the reconstruction of the past is a futile and socially irresponsible phenomenon. However, my point here is that our present existence represents the outcome of a historical process in which economic and political positions among cultures and nationalities have been imposed and maintained by the power of war. Our conception of nations and national boundaries results in violent clashes through which the strongest military has dominated the political, economic, and intellectual landscape. If we take Said's argument that Orientalism, as an intellectual practice, developed as an elemental part of imperialism, then the concept of Orientalism is even more relevant in the discussion of the rights of the Maya. The colonial repression has extended into today's modern economic and diplomatic policies that continue to condemn them to the lowest ranks in the social hierarchy.

The Orientalization of the Maya people reveals the symbolic power of mass media representation. The historical experience has been constantly overshadowed since the production of the accounts of the Spanish conquest of the sixteenth century, through the exploration literature of the 19th century, magazines and travel

guides of the 20th and early 21st century, to the fantasy portrayal of the ancient civilizations in movie theaters. In all, native people have been repeatedly misrepresented in various romantic and degrading forms.

I am not the first to point out this contradiction. Both Allan Burns (1993) and Peter Hervik (2003) have criticized the representation of Maya people by U.S. mass media venues like the National Geographic Society. Although they never used the term Orientalization, I believe it is a useful analogy due to the power relations involved in the politics of representation. Burns begins his ethnographic study (1993) with a harsh criticism of the October 1989 issue of *National Geographic Magazine* with “*La Ruta Maya*” represented on its cover: “The Maya have often graced the pages of the National Geographic..... The article advances an ambitious plan to save the rain forest of Mexico and Central America by transforming the Maya homelands into a vast route for the new ‘eco-tourism’” (Burns 1993:1). He points out that the idea of “*La Ruta Maya*” was to represent an eco-tourist destination filled with wonder and mysticism among jungles and pyramids, without addressing the Maya people and their contemporary situation of exploitation, forced displacement, and genocide. He explains: “This is true for the Maya, who have not only been forced from their villages but now crossed the cultural, geographic and national borders of Guatemala, Mexico and now the United States” (Burns 1993:2).

Charles D. Thompson, Jr. (2001) explores the contemporary connection between the history of the Maya diaspora and violence and economics, issues ignored by the National Geographic Society academics and reporters. He explains that North Carolina, Florida, and California have become entangled in the maze of paths that cross numerous borders for Maya people who, as travelers, refugees, repatriates and survivors, have managed to insert themselves in the world market economy, while at the same time reinforcing their identity. Their stories of crossing and survival must be understood as related to the direct involvement of international policies of the U.S. in people’s lives, a major reason they now live outside their homelands. Thompson highlights that North Carolina, where a growing Jakalteco community has established a strong Maya community in exile, is geographically close to the military base of Fort Bragg where military officers of Guatemalan repressive regimes have been trained (Thompson 2001:179). Nonetheless, the U.S. involvement in the exploitation of the Maya goes far beyond military assistance to the power elite in Guatemala.

Although Guatemala’s armed conflict ended in 1996, leading to the perception that war for the Maya was over, the Zapatista National Liberation Army in Chiapas begun its official uprising in 1994. While the Maya population of the region lives in a hostile and volatile environment often at war with their respective states, venues like the National Geographic Society choose to focus solely on a tourist route to attract visitors to the marvelous ancient Maya sites. Rodrigo Liendo, an archeologist who works in the site of Palenque, Chiapas, explained to me that “*La Ruta Maya*” was a concept invented by some publicists of tourism; this idea was later used by National Geographic. I join Burns in criticizing academics who study and glorify the past of the ancient Maya, while simultaneously ignoring the plight of present-day indigenous inhabitants of the area.

Hervik, also criticizing the same article dealing with the so-called “*La Ruta Maya*,” affirms that the National Geographic Society, since its foundation, has avoided any controversial issue that relates to poverty, exploitation, or violence. It deliberately ignores any connection between the economic consequences of the world market economy and international policy and their effects on different cultures throughout the world (Hervik 77). Along the same lines, the National Geographic Society has traditionally disregarded the active military intervention of the United States in other countries such as, in the case pertinent to the Maya, the training of and financial assistance to the Guatemalan army

(García 2006:26). As both Burns and Hervik point out, *National Geographic* uses the Maya as a product to sell to middle class Americans without disturbing their worldview. Hervik explains:

National Geographic is a commercial mass-circulated cultural product that does not wish to bring disorder into the world view of middle class Americans, and therefore avoids controversial personalities, violence and poverty. This has been its explicit policy since the beginning of the century. (Hervik 65)

In this context, this Orientalization of the Maya makes them as foreign and exotic as a person from the “Orient,” they become so foreign and distant, so strange and exotic that their contemporary existence becomes removed, mythical and invisible.

Hervik places special attention on the type of photographic reporting represented on the pages of the magazine. His observations coincide with the implicit message on the cover one of the the 25th Anniversary editions by Vintage Books of Said’s book *Orientalism* (1979). A naked boy with a large snake in his hands is standing in front of an “Oriental” chief with his tribe of dark-skinned men, being entertained by a snake charmer. The Orientalist representation of primitive men as naked beings close to nature displays the romantic view that the West has of the Orient. Similarly, Hervik analyzes the opening photograph of the 1989 article of “*La Ruta Maya*” in which a young man stands in front of a distant archeological site. We can only see the focus on Maya’s sweaty face and naked torso. His anonymity and lack of ornaments and clothing signify a “classic natural figure” in a timeless Maya dimension (Hervik 1999:66). The editors and author make readers unaware of the suffering of the contemporary Maya and the role of the U.S. in their degradation; rather they emphasize the naked masculinity of their anonymous subject (Hervik 1999:70).

The August 2007 cover issue of *National Geographic* reads “Maya Rise & Fall; How a Great Culture Rose and Fell.” It displays the picture of a pyramid at the archaeological site of Tikal, one of the major cities of the Maya classic period. The title of the article does not refer to today’s Maya, the ones who have organized a political movement and a guerrilla campaign in Chiapas, Mexico, or to those who live as second-class humans in the United States.^{xvii} The National Geographic Society emphasizes instead the archeological findings that highlight the glory of the ancient Maya civilization. They similarly ignore socially responsible archaeologists who direct their scientific research to exhumations of mass graves in order to show evidence of the Guatemalan army’s responsibility for the massacres in 626 Maya communities (Loucky & Moors 2000:3, Manz 1988:17). These archaeologists have created the Guatemalan Forensic Anthropology Foundation (FAFG),^{xviii} never mentioned in *National Geographic* or *Discovery Channel*. The problem, of course, is not research on the Ancient Maya; the issue, as Víctor Montejo points out, is about the representation of the Maya who are often portrayed as people who have fallen from a high levels of civilization into colorful peasantry. This approach does not take into account the past 500 years of repression, exclusion, exploitation, and genocide inflicted upon them by the force of arms, economics, and politics. More importantly, it ignores their rebellions and their long-lasting survival strategies. He defends:

Understanding the dynamics of change and continuity in Maya culture is of great interest in current Maya studies research. This research, however, has centered mainly on the

ancient Maya and has paid relatively little attention to the struggle of contemporary Maya to redefine themselves in the modern, capitalist world system” (Montejo 1999:16).

It is precisely for this reason that the concept of Orientalization is important in order to understand how this misrepresentation of the social reality of the Maya is currently affecting the attention that the real history and struggle demand.

By now, I have coherently explained why I believe that the term Orientalism is relevant when talking about the representation of the Maya. From this perspective, I intend to show that these same attitudes of imperialist relationship are taking place today. Since one of Said’s principal arguments is that Orientalism was used wittingly as an instrument of empire, I argue that the National Geographic Society is also an instrument of empire. Maya migrant communities are growing in the United States. Coming from Mexico and Guatemala, these migrants’ experiences have much to teach us about resistance and survival. To understand the historical background of the migration of thousands of Maya into the United States in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, it is essential to recognize the relation between U.S. interests, Mexico’s economic policies, and the genocide that took place in Guatemala in the 1980s (Watanabe & Fisher 2004:30).

This chapter functions to provide historical and social context for the representation of the Maya in Mexico, Guatemala and the United States. It draws parallels between the imposed representation of the Maya through political and media discourses in each country and the oppressive consequences that force Maya into patterns of migration and survival. Understanding the politics of representation that masks the everyday reality of the Maya experience provides context for the experiences and struggle my participants share in the chapters to follow.

Chapter 3: Contextualizing the Migration Conditions for Guatemalan and Mexican Maya

A growing number of Maya migrant communities in the United States come from Mexico and Guatemala. While Maya migration from these two nations, have some similar conditions there are also differences stemming from the differing political situations in the two nations of origin. In this section I address the following research questions through a historical and global analysis: How have Maya from Guatemala, Chiapas and Yucatan experienced their migration trajectory northward and what are the social and economic factors that propel these movements? What are the similarities and differences in migration experiences?

Through a comparative approach, this chapter first attempts to explore the political, economic and social conditions that have led both Guatemalan Maya and Mexican Maya into a state of diaspora. The second part of this chapter provides context for the social and political conditions of migration historically in the United States and at present. An examination of these conditions complicates a monolithic representation of the “Maya” identity and rather situates migration in a sociopolitical framework. A world system analysis (Wallerstein 2004) offers insight to understanding migration, and in this case a Maya diaspora.

Taking historical perspective of the Maya from colonial times to the present, we can better understand the legacies present in contemporary events, gaining insight into the situation of Maya living outside their homelands. Across the increasing number of various indigenous groups migrating from Latin America to the U.S. there are similarities in the role indigenous people play in the U.S. labor system and how they have managed to survive. As stated in previously, I argue for the use of the term diaspora for all Maya and indeed all indigenous people displaced from their original homelands by violence, persecution, invasion and continuous oppression. While the term diaspora has already been used by academics to refer to the situation of the Guatemalan Maya (Loucky & Moors 2000) there is little application of this term to other Maya groups. Through a comparison of the conditions that have lead Maya groups in both countries to migrate, I hope to provide support for the use of the term for the Mexican Maya groups.

In Guatemala, in the 1980s, indigenous people experienced genocide during the civil war forcing them northward, while the economic policies of the Mexican nation-state played a large role in the migration of the Maya of Mexico (Watanabe 2004:30). A condition particular to the Maya of Mexico is the outcome of the political processes involving the agrarian situation in the mid 1900s. From 1910 to 1945 in Mexico, around 76 million acres of cultivable land were expropriated and given to the landless. During the presidency of Lázaro Cardenas (1934-1940), land reforms took place and the land was allocated to independent smallholders or to communities called *ejidos* (communal lands). Unique to this system was that the community (rather than the individual) had the rights to the land (Wolf 1959:248). In fulfilling the promises of the revolution Cardenas was responsible not only for the land reforms but also for the expropriation and nationalization of the oil industry in 1938 (Hamnet 1999:242). Similarly, Guatemala revolutionary governments of Juan José Arévalo and Jacobo Árbenz (1944-1954) redistributed around a million acres of land (Wolf 249). However, the consequences of the reforms for Guatemala were devastating. In 1954, the United Fruit Company, negatively affected by this land reform, helped instigate a war that lasted until 1996. The effects of the war on the Maya population can be seen until today. In summary, while in Mexico the land reforms of the middle of the 20th century became the “law of the land,” in Guatemala land reforms initiated a war that resulted in difficult conditions in the rural areas of the country where the Maya resided.

The atrocities committed in Guatemala and the Maya migrations that followed can be perceived as creating a new type of refugee or economic exile: indigenous migrants from Latin America. Historically, Maya have used migration as a survival strategy for centuries in what Immanuel Wallerstein (2004) describes as the modern World System. Therefore, I see the current situation as an extension of historical trends.

3.1) Maya Migration in a World Systems Analysis

June Nash (2001) points out that ethnographers, by taking into account the historical effects of the world economy, tend to look for global frameworks as an important part a holistic ethnographic approach. Yet anthropologists have also critiqued Wallerstein’s unified theory of world systems (1974) for its limited perception of “core” and “periphery,” which overlooks many complex regional subsistence systems, and for its

lack of attention to the different regional economies (Nash 2001:16). Wallerstein also overlooked the great complexity of different cultures by reducing them to merely labor migration and workers. Nonetheless, world systems theory provides a valuable starting point for anthropological research on groups such as the Maya, as a particular case study of indigenous populations surviving within the world system, both in their native “peripheral” area and in the “core” areas to which they migrate. This analysis allows us to recognize the power issues that have affected entire populations in the world within a historical and economic framework (Nash 2001:15). I consider the experience of the macro-Maya cultures an example of survival within the institutional forces that control an unequal economical and political system.

Through the lens of world system analysis, we see economic, political and social forces that bring about forced migration. Wallerstein traces the world system’s evolution back to the 16th century as world markets expanded with Europe’s new colonial powers. (Wallerstein 1974, Todorov 1982). The Maya are only one of the various groups that, while living in the periphery, have been subjugated through colonial times and are still actively struggling and rebelling against this system. I argue that the situation of contemporary Maya continues the process that started in the 16th century; they continue to be subjected to repressive economic and political systems that force them to migrate in search of jobs or political sanctuary. Wallerstein posits a “world system” of geographical regions performing a chain of unequal functions that make up a defined and unequal global division of labor. He divided the world into world “core” and “peripheral” areas. The “core” areas profit from taking resources from “peripheral” regions, while at the same time the core subordinates the “peripheral” populations politically (Wallerstein 2004:12). Capitalism follows the laws of accumulation of capital, thus producing and reproducing a global polarization between cores and peripheries (Amin 1988:5). During the later 20th century, this system continued to evolve. Moreover, with the rise of the concept of globalization, the world system functions as a blueprint for the expansion of a globalized neoliberal market economy.

Globalization has been explained as the idea that the societies around the world are gradually becoming integrated into a singular political and economic world system. Nonetheless, from the world system analysis, this is what has been taking place since the invention of the stock exchange in Amsterdam in 1602. Therefore, the processes of globalization we see today are the result of more than five centuries of structural and institutional evolutions that maneuver politically in order to control resources and facilitate, at any cost, the accumulation of capital. This way, under the guise of globalization and sanctioned by neoliberal economic policies, international companies are sacking natural resources around the world to generate unreasonable and unsustainable profits, and the outlining communities become disposable assets (Evans et al. 2002). It is clear that the expansion of the economic power of the multinational corporations has as a strategy to take advantage of systems where environmental and labor rights are not recognized (McSorley & Fowler 2002:168).

As mentioned in Chapter 2, when referring to Mexico’s 1980s crisis the world market is directly responsible for the creation of landless and jobless peasants in the periphery that, in turn, creates cheap and exploitable labor for the core. Currently, in the 21st century, we are seeing the results of the world economic policies dictated by world powers. On one side of the world, Deng Xiaoping took economic steps to liberalize China, previously sheltered by the Chinese, allowing for capitalist investment in its territory and providing a world market for one fifth of the world’s population. On the other side of the world, an American economist took different steps to solidify the U.S. role in the world market. Since the 1970s, economic policies known today as “neoliberal” have structured the global economy (Harvey 2005:2). I am using the term neoliberal to refer to the economic policies that deregulate the private sector and increase its role in the economy, while at the same time reducing price controls, deregulating capital markets, lowering trade barriers and reducing state influence on the economy by fiscal austerity and state privatization (Boas & Gans-Morse 2009).

After WWII, Keynesian economic policies throughout the western countries applied strong welfare and protectionist programs aimed at rebuilding nations and economies ravaged by war. These same decades proved constraining for the oligopolies who were not able to accumulate the desired capital due to the various economic policies that proved to create wider wealth distribution (Harvey 2005:15). Consequently, it was through the Xiaoping, Reagan and Thatcher years that the world market became internationalized, and all of them made an effort to restrain at any cost the growth of different ideals that promoted a more humane solution to social and

economic organization. Accordingly, elites in Latin American countries such as in Chile and Argentina, sided with the CIA and American companies to overthrow democratically elected governments and to put in motion, by hegemonic order, their neoliberal policies (Harvey 2005:15).

A central figure of this process is Paul Volcker, an economist who was chairman of the Federal Reserve under U.S. presidents Carter and Reagan (1979-1987). Through these years, he raised rates very high to rid the U.S. economy of inflation and strengthen the fast-falling dollar. For this reason, 1979 marked a radical change in global economic policy. Banks in the U.S. that have always made investments and loans for the peripheral nations greatly benefited from the soaring interest rates that meant higher interest payments. Thus, governments such as in Mexico in the 1980s were deeply affected by foreign debts. The only solution was to get more loans to pay the debts. In order to get these loans, the peripheral countries had to make financial reforms that would allow the privatization of state industries and eliminate tariffs that would become a death sentence to the millions of people in the agricultural sector. The economic crisis that this caused on the peripheral countries has come to be known as "Volcker Shock" (Harvey 28). This concept is useful to understand the global economic effect that refers to the moment when the United States suddenly and dramatically raised interest rates, since a majority of debt stock was held in dollars. It increased the cost of the Mexican debt precipitously. From that point on, access to international finance, which came from the U.S. banks, became a key policing mechanism directed at peripheral countries (Harvey 22). Therefore, with the instauration by force of these economic policies, international financial bodies are now able to force compliance with their dictates through the manipulation of the debt of impoverished countries.

The growth of the economies in the periphery as they undergo a process of industrialization and modernization and the economic deactivation of rural assistance created massive rural to urban migration. The speed of the growth of the urban centers of these peripheral nations makes it impossible for cities to absorb all the migrants, creating the establishment of unregulated and underserved shantytowns. Peripheral nations cannot provide enough jobs. In order to attract investors, governments have to adapt to the conditions of the investors and get rid of protectionist measures. This way, core countries' willingness to invest in these peripheral areas of the world increasingly depends upon strictly financial concerns of shareholders of the core nations. This creates challenging economic conditions in the periphery, driving migration of work-seekers from the "periphery" to the "core" of the world system, as paradigmatically has been the case of Mexico.

Therefore, a major process involves the shift of core economies to export processing, which facilitates cheap production and rapid movement of goods throughout the world. In terms of mining and oil companies as well as "core" agricultural exports, large-scale corporate agribusiness now displaces peasant and other subsistence practices in the "periphery." Consequently, transformations in the world economy have the human consequence of generating massive migrations from the "periphery" to the "core" (Basch, Glick-Schiller, Szanton Blanc 1994:11).

It is important to recognize that an elemental factor of this neoliberal world economy is to permit the global capital to dominate by force the global labor, which allows the unrestricted flow of capital while creating institutional conditions to captivate and restrict the legal and safe movement of the labor force. Therefore, migration is restricted and the way it is imposed becomes only beneficial to the economical elites of the core nations. Harvey underscores the following:

While too much can be made of the 'race to the bottom' to find the cheapest and most docile labour supplies, the geographical mobility of capital permits it to dominate a global labour force whose own geographical mobility is constrained. Captive labour forces abound because immigration is restricted. These barriers can be evaded only by illegal immigration (which creates an easily exploitable labor force) or through short-term contracts that permit, for example, Mexican labourers to work in Californian agribusiness only to be shamelessly shipped back to Mexico when they get sick and even die from the pesticides to which they are exposed. (Harvey 2005:167-68)

Mexican immigrants in California are only one example throughout the world that exposes the unequal economic exchange taking place in the present economic system. However, the Maya from Guatemala and Mexico face yet another dimension of oppression due to their ethnicity. For the unequal and unjust conditions that these laws impose on workers around the world, academics like Nevins propose the term “global apartheid” (Nevins 2002:185). In this racist social order, Americans are not interested in distinguishing who is Mexican, who is Guatemalan and who is Maya. For the employer, they are all disposable workers.

Nonetheless, the neoliberal negative effect on labor is also experienced among workers of core nations, who, just like workers in the periphery, should be, in the neoliberal philosophy, “disposable” and abundant. For this reason, the neoliberal state approach to the labor market has become problematic throughout the world, as the present world economy is hostile to all forms of social solidarity such as unions and labor movements. Harvey expands:

“Under neoliberalization, the figure of ‘the disposable worker’ emerges as prototypical upon the world stage. Accounts of the appalling conditions of labour and the despotic conditions under which labourers work in the sweatshops of the world abound.” (Harvey 2005:168)

Family farms and small business are also at a disadvantage against the huge leads that the international companies have, and increasingly cannot compete inside the core areas market. Hence, they are forced into foreclosure or absorbed by a major corporation. The neoliberal policies within the core nations also reduce the gains of labor unions, which increasingly face erosion from competition with laborers in world areas where they have never had rights to fair wages, safe conditions, and any type of law that protects them. Most of the core countries that experienced the baby boom following WWII that offered generous pensions and other benefits during the 1950s through 1970s, become increasingly difficult to sustain; this, in turn, threatened the economies of the core countries by making cheap, exploitable labor more attractive. Therefore, not only can immigrants not demand fair pay and working conditions similar to citizen workers in the core, their illegal status creates a precarious and vulnerable state of existence allowing them to be easily manipulated and disposed by companies. Cheap labor is elemental for the economies of core countries. Nonetheless, the exploitation of workers in the peripheral regions is essential too. Vulnerable workers, without any rights, remain in their home countries producing the inexpensive consumer goods that facilitate the maintenance of middle classes in the core. These themes discussed in the chapter that drive migration, the abuse of workers, unjust immigration laws, and the U.S. need for cheap labor, will be expanded on in the ethnographic narrative.

Nation-states continue to regulate the capital flow of the world system and the hierarchy of “core” and “periphery” as well as dominant and subordinate is imposed by state violence (Basch, Glick-Schiller, Szanton Blanc 1994:11). Seeing the world as connected through global modes of production provides clarity to the causes behind the international division of labor— displacement, forced migration and exploitation. Wallerstein’s world system theory helps us understand how the U.S., as a “core” nation, dominates and profits from the international division of labor. It also unveils the reasons the “peripheral” Maya lands of Mexico and Guatemala cannot break out of their role as providers of resources and low-cost labor. Through the Maya experience, we can comprehend how these migration processes are part of an international market force that uses regional policy and state violence to develop a profit making enterprise at the cost of the well-being and indeed the lives of those caught up in it.

Since the 16th century, English and Spanish military confrontations in the New World began establishing ideas, beliefs, as well as institutional and religious structures that would over time collide again and again with each other. However, one thing that the development of all American nations had in common was the extermination of and labor exploitation of native people. Through centuries of institutionalized repression, the indigenous people of the Americas have sought ways to adapt, survive and at the same time maintain and represent their culture (Montejo 2004:231). The Maya are only one example among many people who have

suffered the devastating implementation of war against their families, waged in conjunction with economic policies that affect their lands and their subsistence way of life (Nash 2001, Collier 1994, Stavenhagen 1970).

The experiences of Maya indigenous migration from both Mexico and Guatemala are similar products of the centuries of discrimination, marginalization and, most recently, in the Guatemalan and Chiapanecan cases, persecution (Montejo 2005:36). Anthropologist Michael Kearney explains that migration and developmental processes should be studied as historical phenomena (Kearney 2005:122). Along these lines, John Watanabe and Edward Fischer (2004) explain that there has been little comparison of the national contexts that have shaped the articulation of global markets, cultural differentiation and state rule from the perspective of the Maya in both Guatemala and Mexico. For them, the comparison is necessary. They explain:

Historically, these Maya had also similarly experienced Spanish conquest, Catholic evangelization, and colonial settlements in the sixteenth century, Spanish imperial rule, until the early nineteenth century, and depredations on their lands and labor from commercial plantation agriculture in late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. (Watanabe & Fisher 2004:5)

Taking these perspectives into account and understanding the continuity in the historical process, we gain a better understanding of the contemporary Maya Diaspora.

3.2) Historical and Present-day Conditions of Migration in the United States

Ronald Takaki (1993) demonstrates the pertinence of understanding the past to know the present. His comparative approach presents us with a critical perspective of national identity constructed in the U.S., bringing forth the relevance of the experiences of people whose history cannot be glorified due to the devastating implications they have faced. Many race and ethnic-based issues in the U.S. are yet to be resolved, as scholars frequently do not consider them as part of contemporary migration issues. However, we cannot understand the situations of contemporary migrants without acknowledging that the world to which they migrate has been formed from the experiences of prior migrants and the political struggles of current ethnic groups. By considering the experiences of particular ethnic groups with war, domination, assimilation, and Americanization, we see that all immigrant groups have faced complicated challenges.

Native Americans experienced genocide in the centuries in which the U.S. became a nation. Takaki (1993) emphasizes the difficulties of constructing a nation under these complex circumstances. He sees the U.S. as a country created by migrants from different shores creating a nation that, while promoting the ideal of “freedom and liberty”, continues to hold a hierarchy of divisions of labor closely linked to the ethnic and race relations imbedded in the history of colonization, slavery, and national growth.

The influx of southern and eastern Europeans at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century came in the aftermath of world wars, famine, and political upheaval. Scholars, politicians and mass media have placed special emphasis on the historical context by highlighting the importance of European ancestry in this group; their aim as Takaki has criticized, was the construction of a “white” American national identity (Takaki 1993:2). It is important to understand that at the time, Irish, Polish, Italian, and Jewish people were not considered white. They eventually became “white.” African-Americans have never managed to achieve “whiteness,” and today’s Latin American, Asian, and Middle Eastern immigrants experience strong barriers to assimilation as well (Roediger 1994). Due to U.S. foreign policy since the 1960s, the U.S. became once more a magnet for working families from developing nations. As Robert C. Smith elaborates on this idea:

“The equation between population growth and migration also fails to appreciate the link between prior American involvement in an area of the world and immigration from it: Why would the Philippines be the second largest source of legal immigrants after Mexico, if not for its long involvement with the U.S. as a colony and then close ally?” (Smith 2001:125).

Present migration brings unprecedented numbers from Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. Deemed by scholars as the “new” immigration, these massive influxes of different cultures and languages have deeply influenced the ethnic landscape of U.S. society, as did earlier migration waves, but with a more complex and divisive ethnic and racial politics as context.

Nancy Foner estimates that around 28.4 million immigrants were living in the U.S. in the year 2000 (Adler 2004: v). She points out that at the beginning of the 21st century, the immigrant population makes up only 10% of the total population of the U.S. compared to the 15% it represented in the early 20th century. However, the main differences are not the numbers. This “new” migration has mainly concentrated in six states: Florida, New York, Texas, New Jersey, Illinois and California. Due to this pattern, cities such as Miami, New York, Los Angeles, Washington D.C. and San Francisco experience a vast influx of people with different languages and cultures. These immigrant ethnic mixes have dramatically changed their places of arrival (Adler 2004, Fink 2003). As the growing presence of immigrants becomes more apparent in the U.S., it becomes essential to understand why they come and how they settle themselves and creatively adapt to the new society. This background provides the foundation for analyzing and understanding the experiences of my participants who are part of a Maya diaspora.

Takaki explains that the historical roots of Mexican migration north from the beginning of the 1900s was due to the authoritarian power that the Mexican President Porfirio Díaz gave to private land-development companies that, in turn, controlled one fifth of Mexico’s territory, creating large dispossessions and mass migrations to the urban areas and in many cases to the U.S. (Takaki 1993:313). The U.S. Bracero Program (1942-1964) also brought in massive numbers of migrants, importing agricultural labor from Mexico to meet demand during World War II. This program established the main infrastructure for migration in the decades to come. As Kearney (2004) points out, the Bracero Program excluded non-Spanish speakers, making indigenous migration from Mexico in its essence very different from the experience of Spanish-speaking *mestizo* Mexicans (Kearney 2004:186).

It is clear that the changes in U.S. society brought about by the massive migration of the last decades of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century have affected the way scholars analyze the movement of people. Kearney explains how his anthropological research shifted when the indigenous population he had conducted ethnographic fieldwork with in Oaxaca, Mexico in the 1960s were, in the 1990s, living and working as undocumented laborers in the agricultural fields of Riverside, California. He explains: “My work in Oaxaca had shifted from the Zapotec region of the Sierra Norte, Oaxaca to the Mixtecs of Oaxacalifornia” (Kearney 2004:92).

Rufino Dominguez, General Coordinator of the Frente Indígena Oaxaqueño Binacional (FIOB) and Executive Director of the Binational Center for the Indigenous Oaxaqueño Development, explains that Oaxaqueños, due to historical conditions that shaped the unfair agrarian structure of their regions, often were forced to migrate to other parts of Mexico as a strategy of survival. However, due to the economic crisis of the 1980s, many migrant families were forced to extend their migratory pattern further north into the fields of California, where many began to settle (Dominguez 2001:78). Because Oaxaqueños have supported one another through migratory experiences, they have established strong binational institutions. Consequently, strengthening their strong cultural and social ties with their communities in Mexico, they have created an emerging transnational community that has been the basis of insightful research by various academics. Because there are so many Oaxaqueños in California and because Oaxaca is in itself a multicultural and multilingual state of Mexico, the term “Oaxacalifornia” creatively addresses the experiences of the Oaxaqueños migrant culture. Although Oaxacalifornia suggests a seamless imaginary geographic unit, the reality of the devastating and life-defeating hardships of U.S.-Mexican border crossings cannot be ignored.

The U.S.-Mexican border (1,952 miles) is the longest geographical zone in the world that divides a global economic and military power, the U.S., from a developing nation, Mexico. In the 19th century, this geographic area was still a vaguely defined territory, with populations that had been in policy separated by an international boundary created in 1848 via the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo although, in reality, it was given

little political attention (Vazquez & Meyer 1985:76). Today, however, the border is a place that has created a culture of its own and it has become the focus of interaction between the two nations (Nevins 2002). Joseph Nevins has researched the history of the increased activities of the U.S. border patrol and the deployment of Operation Gatekeeper. He explains that it is a U.S. policy implemented in October 1994 to respond to the practical tensions emanating from transboundary metropolitan areas such as Tijuana and San Diego, and to reduce the thousands of unauthorized migrant crossings from Mexico to the U.S. (Nevins 2002:2). He clarifies that the militarization of the border by the U.S. not only embodies “war on undocumented workers,” but is also a death sentence to aspiring working families who are forced to ever more treacherous strategies to enter the U.S. to evade the border patrol. His research on the reinforcement of the U.S.-Mexico border demonstrates how the process of nation building continuously defines “we” and “them” and the directly related “friend” and “enemy.” Thus, nations create identities in opposition to the context that defines “the other” (Nevins 74). Nonetheless, due to the history and the increasing interactions of economic and cultural exchanges between both nations, the U.S.-Mexico boundary as a line of division and control remains a highly volatile geographical area, often violent, always contested. Nevins fearlessly equates discrimination against people based on their nationalities to a global policy of apartheid (Nevins 185). Consequently, Operation Gatekeeper forms part of “an ongoing project of territorial and social boundary construction between the United States and Mexico and by extension, the rest of the world” (Nevins 166). Nevins shows that cultural, ethnic and racial divisions become either an advantage or a disadvantage. Despite the toughening of the conditions and the higher uncertainties for prospective migrants, people continue to cross into the U.S., find jobs, and manage to maintain high levels of remittances (savings that migrants send back to original homelands). In 1989, the level of annual remittances to Mexico was recorded at \$1.7 billion. In 2006, this number grew to \$23 billion (Castañeda 2007:19). Remittances constitute the second most valuable sector of Mexican gross national product after petroleum. This number has already surpassed tourism and international investment.^{xix} However, due to the U.S. economic crisis in 2008, a decrease in job opportunities and a weakening dollar against the peso, remittances have dropped^{xx}. Data from Mexico’s Central Bank reports that between August 2011 and August 2012, remittances from the U.S. to Mexico dropped by 11.6%.^{xxi} These remittances were sent by millions of Mexicans who one the one hand are economically expelled from Mexico to the U.S. due to the lack of job opportunities in Mexico, but in the other, they represent the ongoing labor interdependence between the two nations.

Migration strategies have evolved as a response to the tightening of U.S. immigration policies and the implementation of crackdowns such as Operation Gatekeeper. Although the U.S. government had dedicated more and more resources to border security, it has not been able to diminish the flow of undocumented workers to the U.S. (Cornelius 2001). As Wayne Cornelius shows, Operation Gatekeeper has only forced prospective migrants to look for remote areas to cross the border. Some researchers argue that this has helped the indigenous migrant community strengthen transnational ties, as a reaction to the increasing difficulties they face (Kearney 2004). The collaboration created through these transnational communities along with advances in technology have made constant communication across distant areas possible. In the more than a decade since the launch of Operation Gatekeeper, the border has witnessed a massive wave of migration northwards (Nevins 2002). According to a report by the Office of Immigration Statistics,^{xxii} as of 2011, there were 11.5 million unauthorized immigrants living in the U.S. Of those, fifty-nine percent were from Mexico (Hoefer, Rytina & Bajer 2012:1). Included in this flow were diverse groups of indigenous people, among them the Maya.

This chapter has attempted to contextualize the social, economic and political conditions that propel the Maya migration from Mexico and Guatemala and situates the diaspora at present in the United States taking into account the long historical trajectory of immigration to the U.S. This contextualization will assist in understanding the migration experiences of the participants in my study.

4) The Unlikely Maya Migrant: Countercultural Voices From Chiapas

"Migration is Chiapas's oldest story...And many people, probably more than in other parts of villages in Mexico or Guatemala, continued to move from region to region, freely as pioneers in search of a better life, as resettled captives, or as refugees from tribute, lost wars, or lost rebellions." (Womack 1999:5)

Today, Maya from the region of Chiapas continue to migrate due to the harsh economic and social reality in their homeland. Many people from Chiapas have migrated to the United States in search of economic opportunity (Aquino 2009, 2010 & 2012, Mancina 2012, Arevalo, Sovilla & Escobar 2012). I introduce participants in this chapter who, through their narratives, help illuminate the conditions that have forced them to leave their homes in Chiapas and explain how they have survived and thrived in ways that resist mainstream representations of the Maya, and, migrants more generally. I characterize these participants as the "unlikely Maya." They are "unlikely" in the sense that their everyday survival depends on counterculture practices that undermine immigrant, media, political and social discourses that, in a process of Othering, essentialize Maya identity into mythical categories such as "the rural farmer migrant" or "non-educated migrant". I argue that the Maya participants in my study survive in hidden communities that get by using practices that resist the mainstream culture.

I use the concept of counterculture to refer to diverse human activities that diverge from accepted norms of behavior of certain places at certain times (Agustin 1996: 16). In this way, the dominant culture takes up its positioning in relation to the counterculture. I conceptualize culture as a non-static concept in which both the dominant culture and counterculture feed off each other. There is both fluidity and tension between their boundaries allowing for a symbiotic relationship driven by a constant exchange of meaning.

Womack, in the abovementioned quote, points out how movement has historically been a means of resistance and survival from harsh political, social and economic conditions in the region of Chiapas in Mexico. Since the Spanish invasion, violence and diseases ravaged entire towns. By uprooting the populations and concentrating them, they depopulated the Lacandón Jungle. Obligatory institutionalized migration was imposed on the indigenous population. The independence from Spain and the revolution of the early 20th century generated few significant social changes for the Maya of the region. It was not until under the Presidency of Lázaro Cardenas (1934-1940) that substantial institutional reforms took effect that alleviated, to some extent, the racism experienced by the Maya. Because migration was a way of life for the rural Maya and the abuses against Maya were so inhumane, the union of the Indian migrant workers was created. This step, along with the land reforms, did not solve the exploitative and racist labor conditions. Nonetheless, it gave a framework for social organizing and, for the first time, the issue of labor rights was considered. However, as Womack explains: "But migrant labor continued. It still drew Los Alto's most desperate down east to the lumber camps, where the union meant nothing and bosses worked laborers to death" (Womack 1999:9).

In 1952, Ricardo Pozas (1912-1994), noted Mexican anthropologist and part of the iconic generation of *indigenistas*^{xxiii}, wrote a widely-circulated ethnographic narrative in which he uses his character, Juan Pérez Jolote to show how important migration was to status as a respected adult for men in this community (Pozas 1952). The Chiapas indigenous populations have been landless for generations. Elite families who live in the urban areas continued to hold political and economic power. Applying Wallerstein's world systems, it can be said that there is a polarizing dynamic between the core, the capital of Chiapas, Tuxtla Gutiérrez, and the rural areas, the regions of Los Altos, Las Cañadas and the Lacandón. These rural areas have the largest concentration of indigenous people. In the peripheral areas, they lived in extreme poverty conditions. Despite Chiapas being a state with rich resources, there is an unequal distribution of wealth, land and power. Consequently, the unequal social

conditions and the extreme poverty that permeated the indigenous regions of the state was a factor in the development of Zapatista communities, mostly made up of Maya that remain today.

It is essential to highlight the extreme poverty that exists in the state of Chiapas. Chiapas, the eight largest state in Mexico, is one of the three southern borders states of Mexico. To the east lies Guatemala and to the South the Pacific Ocean. In Chiapas today there are 5.06 million inhabitants of which 74.7% are considered “poor.” Of those, 32.2 % are considered to be “extremely poor.” Maya make up the population that lives in extreme poverty (CONEVAL 2012).^{xxv} Here, in Chiapas, curable diseases become epidemics. Statistics show that around one fourth of the population has no access to any type of health care and 83.3% lack any type of social security.^{xxv}

In *Una Tierra para Sembrar sueños; Historia Reciente de la Selva Lacandona, 1950-2000* (A Land to Farm Dreams; A Recent History of the Lacandon Jungle 2002), Jan de Vos points out that Chiapas is the region in Mexico where, in the last decades, the most profound changes have taken place in the lives of its inhabitants: social movements, peasant migration, environmental degradation, extreme religious radicalization, armed insurgencies and political upheaval (De Vos 2002:10). The Chiapanecan Mayas I interview are Tzeltal, Tzotzil and Chol, and come from the central regions of Chiapas Palenque and Los Altos. Journalist Garance Burke posits that there is little existing research on the Tzeltal and Tzotzil population, the two Maya groups with the highest populations in Chiapas (Fox-Salgado 2004:375).

There are structural factors that made it difficult to find Chiapanecan Maya in the Bay Area. Yucatecans are more visible and more accessible than the Chiapanecan Maya. Firstly, Yucatecans have a longer history of migration to the Bay Area, thus, they have a greater presence that permeates various economical strata. There is a considerable Yucatecan American population, extending now to the third post-immigration generation. There are wealthy Yucatecan Maya who have been here since the 1970s as well as newly arrived ones who still have to pay the debt they incurred for their trip north. Secondly, unlike the Yucatecans and Guatemalans, Chiapanecans have not established a strong presence in shelters, churches or non-profits which, in theory, could serve as a community centers or a gathering spaces for exclusively Chiapanecan Maya. To contact a Chiapanecan participant, I turned to the areas where day laborers from Chiapas gathered. I would only visit these areas well after the main workflow of the morning had passed. In all, I was only able to identify speakers of three Chiapanecan Maya languages Tzeltal, Tzotzil and Chol.

My research, along with that of Mancina (2012), and Aquino (Aquino 2010) shows the enormous political, cultural, and economic diversity among the thousands of Chiapanecan migrants in the Bay Area. This diversity originates in Chiapas, where not everyone is Maya, and not every Maya is a Zapatista. Maya identity has been shaped by centuries of colonialism, Christian missionizing, and both national and local political divisions (García de León 1981, De Vos 2002). The deep culture of clientalism has further divided the Maya people of the region, who are far from homogeneous at the start of their journey to the U.S.

4.1) The Chiapas Migration Experience: Rockrigo and Trinidad

In this section, it is my intent to share the stories of migrants that rarely make it into mainstream media. Both participants explain the discrimination and abuses migrants face on their journey northward and the harsh conditions that force their journeys. In addition, I use the narratives of my participants Trinidad and Rockdrigo to capture the counterculture voices of the migrant population, again voices rarely sought out by discourses that silence them. I take these types of cultural activities my participants engage in to represent non-conformist, critically engaged individuals who seek a different way of nurturing their lives. It is countercultural because it represents a different way of life than the

one expected by the dominant culture, and, more specifically, it undermines the stereotypes of the migrant that circulate in popular discourses. I also find that participants, in many cases, position themselves vis-a-vis historical icons in an effort to assert resistance of the mainstream.

Radical immigrants in the Bay Area recognize Flores Magón as the main elder who first migrated to work with U.S. working class in the nascent labor movement (Katz 1998: 265). He was one of the revolutionary heroes that was widely read and became an important symbol of anarchopunk idealism is (Bartra 1977, Agustín 1996, Feixa 2005). Coming to the U.S. for many is part of a ritual of social work, to work against the neoliberal capitalist system by working in the neighborhoods at the historical base of grass root organizing. The punk scene has encompassed such activism since the early 1990s. Like other young Maya I met in the Bay Area, both Trinidad and Rockdrigo described themselves as Magónistas and Zapatistas. Ricardo Flores Magón is the perfect example of a countercultural icon who, unlike the national revolutionary heroes, has never been iconized by the dominant culture of Mexican historical institutions.

I met Trinidad who worked some days in a corner in the Mission District selling marijuana and crystal, DVDs and CDs other days providing fake ID card services. I introduced myself to Trinidad, who greeted me in a very reserved and distant way. I found him to be a mellow person, with a soft handshake who kept his eyes down kept looking to the sides as we talked. I told him about my research and that I was interviewing people from different Maya areas. I placed strong emphasis in my voice when I said “Maya areas”. I asked Trinidad straightaway, “Where are you from man?” He replied, “From Mexico City” “No way!” I replied, “Dude, you are from Chiapas, come on!” He moved back a little with reservation and looked straight in my eyes: “How do you know?”

As I talked about my diverse adventures in the Maya region, Trinidad looked surprised. As we talked, an occasional buyer would pull close to the curb. Trinidad would walk to the car, make his deal, the car would leave and Trinidad came back to talk. In the half hour or so that I was there, Trinidad moved close to the street talked with a guy that pulled a little bag from his baggy pants and came back to talk at least four times. It was puzzling to meet a *cholo* style Maya youngster who sold drugs in the Mission. The experiences with Trinidad helped illustrate the effects of counter culture in the Maya region. Palenque and San Cristobal have been countercultural hubs for travelers since the 1960s. In the 1990s, there was yet a further explosion of tourist and traveler types coming into the area. Their off-the-beaten-path lifestyles have influenced the youth of these areas. Trinidad did not conform to mainstream representations of a migrant, and, perhaps, this could be attributed to the context in which he grew up. He was an unlikely character. He was a Maya whose economical niche is selling drugs, both back in his homeland and here in the United States. Trinidad felt that, through his choice of work, he was fighting a system by transgressing the system. According to him, it is “a way of living in rebellion.”

Enthusiastic to learn more about my research, he was eager to talk and participate with me. “*Huy, mano tengo unas historias de las que deberían de hacer películas, en serio. Así como películas de acción! Y no manches mis camaradas con los que vivo son la pura banda!*” [Man, I got some stories to tell you, they could make action movies out of them, and man.... my friends, they are all my homies!]. Because I told him I had made several video documentaries about indigenous struggles, he invited me to his house to watch them with the promise that he would introduce me to more Chiapanecans like him. Among the men I met through him was Rockdrigo. I decided to use this pseudonym for this character, because Rockdrigo is a well know rock artist who died in the earthquake 1985 and symbolically represents the rock culture of Mexico (cf. Agustín 1996:112-13).

Rockdrigo, a young Maya migrant, traveler, adventurer, internationalist, is not working today. I used to go to the Mission the previous year to make rapport and interview Rockdrigo and Trinidad as part of my research. Sometimes, I would spend time with one of them while they worked and other times I would meet them after work in the streets. Like Oakland, the Mission District has experienced gentrification, however, this has not diminished its cultural diversity, nor has it totally swept the immigrant communities from the neighborhood. It has created more renters that are affluent; more commerce, many more buildings and a wider diversity of individuals who come to a very diverse night live. But, now, I had come to visit Rockdrigo during the height of the Occupy movement. Most of the time I spent with him we had a couple of beers either in one of the cantinas around the Mission or in his apartment.

“Its my fucking day off! Yeah.” Again, we are hanging outside his apartment complex. “Yes! *Cabron!*” He rattled off the following making references to icon figures:

Of course internationalist! We are internationalists! I don’t like this nationalism! Look, why do people like Hemingway so much? Because he went to fight in Spain against Franco! Well, he was an internationalist... he didn’t ask the fascist government for permission to go to Spain! He just went! So, like him, many of us also just come here! For us, to live is a struggle. We are the survivors, like Bob Marley said!

Rockdrigo, in the above passage, uses historical figures as a marker of his rebel spirit. By alluding to the American novelist, Ernest Hemingway, he is drawing parallels between a well-known literary figure who fought the fascist regime in Spain and his own experience fighting against what he considers a fascist U.S. government. Combining a reference to a literary figure and in the statement exemplifies his strategic use of cultural capital that he has acquired from western culture to mark his own identity. Rockdrigo continued, expressing discontent on the topic of American activism. Talking outside his Mission district apartment (which he shares with Trinidad and six other people), he complains about the Occupy movement:

“Man these guys are a bunch of bums just wanting things for free!” I replied, “For me, as an anthropologist, even the bankers and politicians are also interesting human beings well-worth analyzing!” He lives and works in the streets of la Mission and one day, out of curiosity, he went to the Occupy encampment in San Francisco. Through his experience, he relays that he did not receive a good impression of the U.S. activists he saw there. Inevitably, his idea of struggle comes from what he saw throughout his teenage years. He explains that he would like to say he was a Zapatista supporter, but he recognizes the big difference between being a sympathizer and being a real Zapatista living in the Zapatista communities. His experience of the Zapatista struggle and what he saw as real repression in Mexico made him very critical of the activists here. He was also influenced by reporting on the Latino mass media oligopolies of Telemundo and Univision, which provided a one-sided, negative view of Occupy events.

Man, the cops here are so much nicer to the protesters than in Mexico. In Chiapas, it gets very intense. Well, look at the news now all over Mexico, man, it’s a war, and this war of the drugs, that is what they call it, but it’s a bigger thing, people are rebelling all over. That is what it’s about... this dumbass Calderon [Mexican President 2006-2012]. Man, poor fellow, he thought he was going to fight the drug cartels. He didn’t get shit done

right. And, the U.S. gave him so much money! Just recently, he came over here to Stanford to give a speech and some people went to protest.

“Where you involved?” I asked.

No, I just saw it on the TV. But, man, you see it all over the news the killings and horrible things that are going on down there because of his war on drugs, which, in reality, is a war on the people. The drug cartels, you know, man they are the people, people love the drug lords of the region, they were nice and spent a lot of money on the people of the region. After all, they are from there.

For more than two decades there have been *narcocorridos*, songs that glorify drug dealers have played on Mexican and U.S. radio stations. These songs tell adventurous stories of drug cartel members, always enhancing their paradigmatic attitude of being “good.” In this sense being cartel supporter means being against corrupt Mexican institutions and the evil American empire; thus, it connotes a rebellious attitude. Unlike the Zapatista rebels, drug “rebels” in Chiapas and in the U.S. could earn both wealth and tremendous community status. “And in Chiapas,” I ask, “how is it now?”

Well, to tell you the truth, Palenque, where I am from, was always very tranquil.

Everybody knows the importance of the ruins, how many tourists it receives and how that is very good for the town. It has always remained an easygoing town. There are a lot more police and military now. You know, they invested a lot of money in Palenque so in these last years it has not been a center of violence, for the tourist. Considering that it is next to Tabasco, and Veracruz-- the areas where the Zetas took over, I mean, they say the Zetas even control down to Guatemala and El Salvador and they are the bosses of Palenque! Look at the north of the country... if anything any of us who are coming north or is going down, what we are scared of is the in between. It is a no man’s land! And it has gotten far more dangerous in Mexico. It did not used to be like that. For example, when I came up north I was not afraid of being kidnapped. Now, people are being kidnapped! Before, one would be scared of the migration stops on the bus ride. They would stop the bus in the middle of the night in the road, where immigration makes their stations, and they go out looking for people that look Central American... and, of course, because we are indigenous so many Chiapanecans were stopped all the time because they look like the Guatemalans. I was lucky.

Experiences of discrimination that Maya face by Mexican institutions on migrants’ journeys northward are commonplace. In addition, such experiences point out the patterns of racism and classism those Mexican institutions inflict on its indigenous population. In Mexico, the lack of transparency and political accountability by the government creates a state of lawlessness that has been exacerbated by the present drug war. The stateless condition, in which migrants are abused by diverse criminal organizations, as Rockdrigo accounted through his experience, is corroborated by the documentaries *Sin Nombre* 2009 and *La Bestia* 2009, which have exposed these inhumane conditions.

Rockdrigo continued:

That is why many people now just traveled by plane up to some border city. Before we took the train and buses, but as it got more dangerous and violent, if you could, you

would take a plane to a border city. But, the youth just try to jump in the train. It so dangerous! You need to have money to pay the mafia for your ticket. Everybody knows that *la mara salvatrucha* [California-Salvador mafia] dominates the Palenque train station, and any migrant from Chiapas or Central America has to pay them to be on the train. In fact, they say that now you have to pay several criminal organizations along the way. It is so barefaced that one wonders how a governmental officer could be taking bribes with no shame and collaborating openly with the gangs. The military and the federal police do not do anything about it. If you want to take the infamous train known as *la bestia* [the beast], which is supposed to be the cheapest way to come north and has the poorest of the poorest of the migrants, well, you now have to pay the *mara* high fees to be able to just to get in the train. They kill you if you don't pay.^{xxvi} They charge 100 dollars! Of what I know, most people go directly to Villa Hermosa and then to the border.

These comments about the lawlessness in Chiapas, the abuse of power of the authorities, the lack of accountability in this region are alarming. They point out the lack governability and the vulnerability in the state of Chiapas and the border region and it shows the complicity of political institutions that do not intervene in this brazen abuse of vulnerable populations. An anthropologist Aida Hernández-Castillo who works in Chiapas points out, nothing is getting better and the corruption in the state is out of control (Hernández-Castillo 2001, Freyermuth 2003, Aquino 2010).

4.2) Finding Economic Niches on the Fringes of the Mainstream

In my small town, after having problems once with the cops they know you, Palenque is small. And if you want to work in what I do you end up like working with them or for them... they are the bosses, at our level, you know, since they allow some to sell and they bust others. It is a game. But, here, in the U.S. nobody bothers me I just have to be good with the people that give the product. I guess they let me sell there... they choose who they want to be working in such or such corner, and they let me do it cause they know I'm good and honest. It's been couple of years, I do move around, but it's always nice... I like hanging out in the street and I make good money. I don't like to be inside, I could not work in a kitchen or in a bar like many Maya do. I need to see the sun... I am a mother-fucking Jaguar.

Selling drugs and other illegal merchandize is often considered a risky way to make a living. They do have other alternatives, but my participants describe that they like what they do and constantly justify it as a way to be a rebel and to fight the system. Not playing by the rules and evading immigration laws as well as participating in a black market places them in a position where they are likely to be perceived by mainstream society as a couple of more law breakers and drug dealers of the Mission. The main product that they sell is Marihuana. The increased perception of marijuana as a medical plant has influenced authorities not to prioritize marijuana users as criminals. The medical marijuana movement is a growing market all through out the U.S. Marijuana growers are mostly white and mostly sell to medical marijuana dispensaries. Rockdrigo and Trinidad are on the fringe of that market, selling on the street. As individuals surviving in the present economic market, they are in a stigmatized position. Their migration, northward responds to poverty conditions that Maya people live

in Chiapas. And, in being individuals who work in the black market of the economy, they choose to work in the streets as opposed to getting a regular job in the bars, restaurants and hotels of the city as other Maya youth do. In a way, as they say, they choose to continue living similar to how they did back home. They choose to sell drugs. This is what they learned to do and that is what they can do.

Rockdrigo's alternative lifestyle of living and working on the fringes back in Chiapas allowed him to connect with the youth culture in San Francisco and skip the day laborer phase experienced by so many male immigrants (Castells & Portres 1989, López-Garza 2001, Manz et al. 2002, Martin et al. 2007, Nick 2007, Gretchen 2009, Herrera 2010). He considered his work a "more lucrative business" and a more "fun" and "risky" working atmosphere.

Both Rockdrigo and Trinidad, as immigrants who participate in the *cholo* style and sell drugs in the Bay Area are exemplary of the syncretic global countercultural movement fueled by modern media. The "*cholo*"^{xxvii} style associated with gang affiliation in the popular mind: baggy khaki pants, sleeveless t-shirt or partly buttoned flannel shirt, hairnet or bandana, athletic shoes, tattoos. By syncretic global culture movement I imply that there is a fusion, appropriation and creation of cultural traits that often contribute to the makings of a countercultural realm. As Maya immigrants to the Bay Area, Rockdrigo and Trinidad bear the burden of racial discrimination in their own country for being Maya and face the same burden in the U.S. for being labeled "Latino or Hispanic" or "illegal." In the U.S. they also face discrimination for being working class and undocumented. Profiled for their well-maintained *cholo* style, a style considered outside societal norms, adds yet another level of stigmatization. In the U.S. poor Latinos are seen as "illegal", although, only some are undocumented. From Rockdrigo's point of view, he is not a criminal but a successful entrepreneur. In the next excerpt he compares "selling drugs" to white collar executives "crimes".

We poor people doing our business are regarded as evil. However, the real evil people, the ones that steal money and are corrupt. Those people are never in the street. They are all wearing suits and work in high corporate or government offices. Those are the criminals. The dangerous ones... they create wars, make profits and then they want to jail the poor man who tries to find work. If they think that, what I do is a crime, then good! I do not need their consent!

Rockdrigo sees himself as a "rebel" fighting against a system. He resists becoming "a mind controlled zombie that only works to make money thus perpetuating the injustices in the system." He is proud of how far he has made it, from a hamlet in the surroundings of Palenque to be part of a tribe of "Latino youth" in San Francisco. The risk involved in living they way they do is what creates that strong bond of community on the border of the mainstream. Yet, a deep conflict remains for some participants who live on the margins of the in between— in between two places, their homelands and the U.S. They struggle to justify their own ways of surviving against the moral standards of family and society. Rockdrigo continues:

I figure my struggle, in any case, is in Palenque where my family is. I mean, now, my struggle is here. Every day I am out there risking my life— it is dangerous work you know. And, I do send them money, thanks to God all my family is well and the money I send helps them but they don't survive from it. They never really expected anything. My mother, she loves me, but my dad never really approved of my lifestyle. He was always saying I was a shame to the family. Anyways, I guess all *cholo* get that. I began

thinking more of what I was doing and it made sense... for example, how in the *narco corridos* the narcos, we are the good guys... the warriors who are not corrupt and are real loyal men with honor and whose word is all that counts.

Rockdrigo's life has been full of unexpected turns from state repression in the hands of Mexican police through the militarized U.S.-Mexico border, to the tense racial politics of the Bay Area. Rockdrigo's family came from the rural areas of Palenque. They were among the Tzleltal-speaking landless rural migrants, who ended up settling in Palenque urban areas in the late 1980s around the time Rockdrigo was born. Inspired by the politics of mushroom seeking tourists in Palenque, he made it through the U.S. border by himself, crossing desert and dodging border patrol, and now he works on the streets, making up to 500 dollars a day. He is certainly an unlikely character, far different from what one would imagine a Chiapecan Maya migrant to San Francisco to be. Rockdrigo uses his identity to propel his political discourse. As a Zapatista supporter from Chiapas, he constructs a discourse of struggle, defining his Mayaness as fueled by resistance and survival. He is a product of the culture of his hometown, the ancient Maya city of Palenque, and the culture of his new home, the diverse metropolitan city of San Francisco. Rockdrigo places himself not only as a Maya, but as an activist who works at grass roots with the drug dealers. He compares himself to the heroes of *narcocorridos*, modern day Robin Hoods, as an outlaw who works with the people for the people.

We are a family that protects itself. It's a job, but if you are professional it becomes like family. And all of them are young guys from here from the hoods. Many of these guys are like me, they did have a family but because we are the type of outlaw rebels and adventurers we really wanted to make our own lives, by our own rules. We have the poor people's adventures-- the adventures of the street workers! In our way we are going against the system. Is a combatant form of survival within this system, which marginalizes our people and exploits us, so we fight back. How do we fight back? Well, by not being domesticated into the system. We are not afraid of the rules, we make our rules and live by our morals. For us selling drugs, making fake ID cards, selling pirated movies and music, it is all part of creating our own economy, our own culture of survival through our struggle. It is a way of life.

Rockdrigo places himself within a narrative of resistance survivalism. He analyzes his situation with a politicized understanding of the complex hierarchies that have been created by centuries of domination and war, persecution of indigenous people in Mexico, and Mexico's politically and economically dominated position within dependent capitalism. He felt that his positionality as a Mexican national and a Maya gave him a feeling of moral superiority to other, U.S. born activists.

These guys are too soft, they need to suffer so much more, and they are very naïve about the forces they are fighting. When the struggle in Chiapas began they were ready to die, those comrades were ready to give their lives for a change, for knowing that they were doing the right thing fighting for all Mexicans. I bet migration wasn't part of the strategy, now I'm sure some comrades are here and they never thought they had to migrate. How is it that we come with nothing? And not even knowing the language, how is it that we can survive and even send money back home?

4.3) Loneliness in the Hidden Spaces of Migrants

In Mexico, ...we have family and we are all poor but we help each other. Here, it is way harder. Even though we got our group of guys, it's us, yes, that is it. It's like here we are a team, but our team dwindles too, and it's not easy living in crowded one room places with six guys in one room and another six guys in another room sharing the apartment.

Despite my argument that my Maya migrant participants from Chiapas have found ways to survive and thrive on the fringes of society, they face common struggles of loneliness stemming from the separation from their homeland and families that they face. It is important to recognize that even as the participants survive through practices that resist the mainstream they do so under the radar of the mainstream in what I have called hidden communities. While in being “invisible” or, under the radar, contributes to the feelings of fear and loneliness they experience daily, these struggles are also what unites them as a community of migrants in diaspora.

The next day I rode my bike in the rain to Rockdrigo's apartment. He came out, beer and cigarette in hand. “I like the rain, but here it is fucking cold! Palenque never really gets cold. After living here it never seems cold to me there.” Rockdrigo moved his arms around as he paced back and forth. He finished his beer and smoke and invited me inside. “*Vente vamos con la raza!* [c'mon, lets go with the guys up there]” Rockdrigo lives in the heart of the mission in an apartment complex with eight other Chiapanecan Maya migrants, all of them Tzeltal, but not all of them fluent in the language. They all grew up close to Palenque or in the city itself where Spanish is the dominant language. Even though their parents spoke to them in Tzeltal, they grew up speaking Spanish outside the home and in school. While Rockdrigo speaks to me in Spanish, others speak to one another in Tzeltal. Rockdrigo's apartment has two rooms, two bunk beds in each, four to each room and one bathroom for all of them. They pay \$1600 per month, which comes out to \$200 dollars per person. Rockdrigo explains: “It is crowded yes, and we do get tired of it— imagine, we used to live in our houses in the mountains with so much space, the scenery, our fields, our families. And, now we are here... all crowded. But it's the only way to save money.” The building entrance is dirty, with unclean pavement, peeling paint, and trash. “So how long have you guys lived here?” I asked. He responds, “Like three years, but when I arrived my friends were here already, so, maybe it's been around six or seven years since we got it.”

We walked up the stairs to the fifth floor where the aisle was half lit and the carpet old, burned, filthy with holes worn through. As we entered the apartment, I greeted four of Rockdrigo's roommates. Even though San Francisco declared itself an immigrant sanctuary city, Rockdrigo and his friends do not do many outside activities for fear of being deported. Instead, they hang out in their apartment, watch Univision or Telemundo on TV, and drink beer. It seemed to me that Univision and Telemundo provided a connection to their homes back in Chiapas. Under the umbrella of “Latino news”, these channels fosters connections among Latinos in the U.S. as well as between U.S. Latinos and their families in the Spanish speaking world.

Men like Rockdrigo and his roommates spend their time in the U.S. working, eating, drinking beer, and watching TV. Their diet includes much more meat and bread than their typical diets of beans and tortillas back in Chiapas. The longer they stay in the U.S., the more weight they gain. Pablito proudly showed off his belly. It is difficult to tell if he masks the loneliness he feels from the separation from his family with the pride.

He exclaims:

Look! This is the good life! I think I eat more meat here in a week than I used to eat in Mexico in a year! I really want to bring my whole family here, but it seems too risky, I almost died. I don't want my children to go through that... I think they will do well with the money I send them. I try to send 500 dollars home every week. That is a big part of what I make working per week, but they are the most important things in my life, so it's ok. My kids, they are almost twelve and fourteen years-old now. The older one wants to come but I keep telling him to stay in school so he doesn't have to migrate here. I tell him to learn about computers. That seems like that is the future now. But, who knows if he'll listen.

Going back to Rockdrigo's apartment, they recalled that they all used to play soccer back home. "It was our sport," Placencio explained, "Every Sunday we used to have our tournament games. Everybody participated. I do miss that, playing, and then drinking beer until we went to bed. It was so fun, we played hard then celebrated all day!" The reality of life in the United States means being hidden in crowded apartment building. Scared to go outside, they pass the time by drinking and watching television. Placencio continues to shed light on their everyday,

Yes we never exercise. Our lives back in Chiapas were constantly exercise-filled...just to live. But, here only our work keeps us in shape! Don't think we don't like being outside. We really miss hanging out in nature or just in the street. But here it's too risky, we need to lay low...you know. It is too much risk to go out to have fun. Some times we do go drink beers— there are a couple of bars where we like to hang out. But, generally, you know, life outside is a thing of the past. Here our life is indoors. So when we do go out, sometimes we go a bit crazy! Don't you Pablo! Fucking Pablo only saves to go see this whore in one of those places!

"Fuck you *pinche Cabron!*" Pablo defends himself and replies back: "Just because the whores won't even have sex with you cause you are so ugly and fat! But me! The ladies like me!" Pablo reacts. Placencio interrupts with laughter and turns his attention to making fun of Rockdrigo as well. "Rockdrigo, don't worry, just be patient some day you'll find a woman who will like you!" "What are you talking about Placencio? Don't you remember Anita! She was wonderful!" Rockdrigo spits back. "Bullshit! You never had her!" Pablo interrupts and continues: "She was only mine!" Rockdrigo replies, "Yes I did and she told me that you weren't man enough for her-- you little Pablito!"

The conversation became more heated on the surface, but it illustrates what Mexicans call *albour* in which men use double meanings and audacious sexual put downs as a form of humor. Only men who are friends can joke in this way (cf. Basso 1979, Limón 1989). Moreover, in the confines of their apartment humor becomes a coping mechanism. Also, the group's need to assert their manhood to each other may be a way of compensating for the loneliness they feel far from their homeland. The expectations surrounding the concept of manhood create a constant reconfirmation of struggle among my participants— exacerbated by the migrant experience. Many Mexican migrants have little access to sexual and emotional relationships with women, except through prostitutes, massage parlors or *fichera* bars (bars where men pay women to talk and dance). To ease the insults going back and forward, I asked: "Do you guys have wives? Or girlfriends back home?" Trinidad looked up from sipping his beer quietly and said while pointing to Placencio and Pablito:

“Those two are married with children. Me... I’m like Rockdrigo... But more handsome! Young and *matando gueras*! [killing blondes]. And good that we didn’t get married! Right Rockdrigo? There are so many *gueritas* [blondies] and *chinitas* [Asian women] out there waiting for mexican *chile*! Only God can stop us!”

“So, you have a girlfriend here?” I ask.

“Not right now. But I have many *morritas* [girls], *las chicanitas* [Latina women] are cool too.” “Yeah those girls you guys get will lead you to no good!” Placencio adds. “You guys got to be careful fucking around with *esas cholitas*. You know what happened to Lario. He didn’t see it coming and now he’s dead!”

In this section, I have tried to illustrate the ways in which my participants experience and cope with the separation from their homeland. Bonding over beer, conversation, jokes and television from back home are ways in which they make it through their everyday behind closed doors. The constant fear of being exposed as a undocumented migrant further drives them into the activities that form a foundation of community in a place of hiding.

4.4) A History of Movement: Effects That Push Migrants Northward

Many anthropologists have documented the complex trajectories of human movement within Maya communities in Mexico, and the role of land, migration, and religious institutions in shaping that movement (eg. Freyermuth 2000, Hernandez-Castillo et al. 2001, Thomas Benjamin, J. 1989 Womak 1999, De Vos 2002, Rus et al., 2003). In this section, I examine, with the support of the narratives of my participants from Chiapas, what I see are the main forces or events underlying the social, political and economic conditions that push the Chiapas Maya, as well as other Maya in Mexico, into a diaspora. I conclude that there are three interconnected structural factors to consider in this examination: the drug war, the economic effects of NAFTA and the *ejido* system.

The Drug War

Although reports vary, it is estimated that the Mexico drug war left somewhere between 40,000 to 60,000 dead (Castaneda 2012). The attorney general of Mexico documented 25,000 disappearances. Human Rights Watch documented 170 cases of torture, 39 disappearances, and 24 extrajudicial killings throughout Calderon’s presidency.^{xxviii} Anthropologists have also documented and denounced the continuous violations to human rights in Chiapas (Hernandez-Castillo 2001, De Vos 2002, Freyermuth 2003, Kovic 2005).

The drug war in Latin America is fueled by U.S. interests. (Youngers & Rosin 2005). The U.S.-Mexican agreement of the Merida Initiative^{xxix} has drastically changed the lives of thousands of people by contributing to the violence around drug production, control of territory and transportation of drugs, weapons and humans (Castañeda 2012). The violence impacts ordinary citizens of Mexico, who have been subjected to human rights violations on the part of the Mexican army, as well as suffering injuries and death as “collateral damage” from combat between cartels and government forces.^{xxx} Many critics point out that G.W. Bush and Calderon planned the Merida Initiative, in which the United States gave Mexico \$1.9 billion to combat the drug cartels. However, the high number of deaths as a result of the drug war illustrates that criminalizing drugs and military attacks do not solve the problem of addiction;

rather, it just adds to the existing violence (Castaneda 2012). Rockdrigo, in his left wing radical jargon, expresses his thoughts on the drug war:

This fucking war in Mexico, man... this war is part of their plan, because if they allow people to return they will lose their cheap work force here! So they create an environment of war to keep us scared. After all, that is how they operate, they brainwash everybody into being afraid. Especially after the economic crisis and the large numbers of immigrants returning, they create a war on Mexico.

Palenque is a stop in the circuit for alternative travelers looking for exotic highs. The situation of migrants like Rockdrigo can only be understood in the context of their political, economic, and social situation within the larger world of the drug trade and suppression. The interconnection of culture and drugs has no borders. The same economical niche he found to survive in Palenque Chiapas is the same as the one he has found in the heart of the Mission District. As he said, selling drugs here and there is almost the same thing, if anything it's easier in San Francisco. "So why would there be a drug war in Mexico while the major market is in the U.S.?" Rockdrigo demands an explanation as if could give him a reasonable argument to justify what seems ridiculous.

At this writing in the states of Guerrero and Michoacan, in the wake of several murders perpetrated by organized crime in conjunction with police, locals have formed their own police force to fight drug related violence in their town, arguing that President Calderón's drug war has failed to protect citizens. This is just one of many such protests taking the form of self-policing in indigenous communities in Mexico in response to the ongoing violence.^{xxxii} After his narrowly won victory in 2006, President Calderon entered into an agreement with the United States for military cooperation against drug cartels and other forms of international organized crime. Critics have pointed out that the financing of the drug war to establish an improved and more prepared police and military force to fight the drug cartels was simultaneously used to repress social movements such as the ones in Oaxaca and Atenco in 2006. In addition, militarized police supported by the plan have engaged in wide scale human rights abuses, including torture, rape, and murder. Critics also argue that ending the influence of drug cartels should begin in the United States, with efforts to reduce sale and consumption of drugs, as the U.S. is the largest world market for illegal drugs.^{xxxiii}

NAFTA

Since NAFTA took effect in 1994, it has received the attention of several academic studies regarding its benefits and downsides (Papademetriou, et al. 2004). Because NAFTA attempts to integrate three national markets (Canada, U.S. and Mexico) what may benefit one market may not benefit another one. Notwithstanding, positive reports from the three governments regarding NAFTA explain that the agreement has fueled economic growth by allowing more dynamic trade, stimulated investment, developed small and middle sized investors, and established legal parameters that enhance equality, providing fairness and certainty. According to this version, NAFTA promotes environmental protection and provides better job opportunities in North America (Andreas 2000:74-77). However, evidence from my fieldwork leads to the claim that, in Mexico, that NAFTA has not facilitated achieved equality in social and legal rights. In addition, unlike the case of other Mexicans who already had established migratory networks in previous decades, this trade agreement has had a deep impact in the livelihood of Chiapanecans—it strongly propelled them to follow Guatemalans and other Mexicans to the U.S.^{xxxiii}

In addition to weakening labor interests, NAFTA meant a certain death to millions Mexican farmers, who could not compete with the corn produced by subsidized U.S. corporate farms (Castañeda 1995, Carlsen 2007). Although the Mexican economy has grown for the first time in a decade, and the U.S. economy has begun a slow, uneven recovery, NAFTA has not been good for immigrant Mexican workers in the U.S. or for small Mexican farmers (Carlsen 2007: 2, Nash 2001: 84-88). Fear of the drug war and continuing political violence in Mexico keep many undocumented workers in the U.S. and migrants' families back in Mexico continue to remain dependent on remittances.^{xxxiv}

On one occasion Rockdrigo pushed me on my analysis of NAFTA: “*Pinche* Carlos why aren’t you gathering information on how NAFTA killed millions of farm workers in Mexico?” I explained that my work focuses on Maya in the U.S. “Well...” he responded, “It was because of that, that many of us migrated here to California, Mexican corn farmers can not compete with the subsidized farms of the U.S. Now its their agricultural market!” Trinidad’s perspective on NAFTA echoed Rockdrigo’s: “Yeah, NAFTA really screwed us over. Well, because of NAFTA many people had to migrate because their corn was worth nothing. So they could not eat! What do they teach you in school? That NAFTA was good! If NAFTA was good then I would have the right to work anywhere and I would not be a fucking illegal!”

Left-leaning author David Bacon explains the disadvantages of the neoliberal market promoted by this treaty in various articles and reports that can be found on his website *The Real Face of NAFTA*.^{xxxv} The “free trade” promised by treaties like NAFTA is only for corporations, not individual workers, and it weakens workers’ rights to organize and demand both living wages and safe working conditions. NAFTA has been a triumph for corporations over the rights won by workers in the U.S. during the last two centuries (García 2002). Drawing on Foucault’s notion of power as structuring reality and disciplining knowledge (Foucault 1975) and Bourdieu’s notion of power requiring that those subjected to it to believe in the legitimacy of power (Bourdieu 1982:23), both workers and consumers share the political illusion of a “free market” for labor, and politicians are able to win votes rallying U.S. citizens against what they portray as an “invasion” by “law-breaking criminals” without mentioning how central this cheap labor really is to low food prices in the U.S. The system works to enrich food producing corporations by convincing citizens of the legitimacy of campaigns against illegal workers (Bourdieu 1982) as it also enriches other corporations by weakening the gains of labor in general in the United States. The worker’s doublethink leads him remain complicit in the relations of power by believing someday they will also win. As a result, the class hierarchy is thus reproduced and discrimination against “illegals” justified.

For all the foreseeable disadvantages that poor Mexicans face through the implementation of the free trade, the Zapatistas, foreseeing these problems, chose to use the day NAFTA took effect for their first uprising on January 1st, 1994. This uprising symbolized not only the need for greater attention to the rights of indigenous and landless rural people in general, but the struggle to create laws that benefited all Mexicans, not only the few elites.

The Ejido

Victor Montejo’s term “macro-Maya” (2005) helps to clarify the diverse experiences of Maya from different language groups and geographic areas. A crucial difference between the experience of the Mexican Maya and the Guatemalan Maya is the institution of the *ejido* lands. I have observed that the *ejido* system and its complexities have not affected all Maya in the same way. Guatemalans lived in a similar colonial land tenure system but the *ejido* is a uniquely Mexican post-revolutionary phenomenon. In the case of Chiapas, just as the Zapatistas had predicted the disparities created following the trade agreement ensured the erosion of Maya ways of life. Before NAFTA, farmers could

sell part of their harvest; eat part of it, and save seed for the next year. But the downward effect of NAFTA on corn prices made that economically impossible (Carlsen 2007). To further expand the role of land history, I conclude this section with a closer examination of the history of the *ejido*.

Many Tzeltal are from rural areas of Chiapas or from the urban poor or lower middle classes of Palenque. All of them are sons of landless indigenous people who through the 1950s, had to migrate to various areas of the Chiapanecan state to look for land to settle on. Some were given *ejidos*, but many were forced to work in haciendas and were landless (De Vos 2002). In the case of these Maya international migrants, their parents migrated inside of Mexico, creating the urban indigenous Maya poor of a growing Palenque. In contrast, David, a Maya participant from the Agua Azul area explains his experiences from the *ejido* lands.

Yes right there we have our land, I am from the *ejido* lands. We can't just make our business there. We have our lands and we cultivate them and live off that. But besides that there isn't much work for us to do. All the people that make money off the tourists don't really live in the *ejido*. It also grew so much and the state intervened with strict rules of who can profit from the tourists. And our lands-- yes, we got them, but there are also many of us. I mean my dad had six sons and three daughters. So imagine, in the end, that is what we are sharing. And now we all have our families so there isn't enough land for all of us. Also on the work of the farming... you know you can barely survive with that. I mean you can eat. But it's getting harder and harder to sell anything. With the cost of the seeds, the fertilizers by the time you work and consider transportation to the *coyotes*^{xxxvi} who always want to make the biggest profit... So many of us come up here to work and send money to our families.

David's story illustrates a larger phenomenon of Maya people who are, after NAFTA, no longer able to sustain a living through the agricultural products of their *ejido*. Thus, for indigenous people, NAFTA has become a death sentence to the traditional ways of survival. *Ejidos* are an elemental part of understanding why so many of these migrant Maya farmers migrate to the U.S. For that reason it is pertinent to understand the symbolic and economic effects of the *ejido* issue.

The *ejido* is a land tenure system rooted in pre-Hispanic culture (Stavenhagen 1970: 249-268). The *ejido* is based on the Mesoamerican system of the *calpulli*, which in Nahuatl, the language of the Aztecs, means neighborhood. The city was constructed and organized around *calpullis*, or neighborhoods, built on the lake. The *ejido* and the ingrained idea that it has Mesoamerican roots has developed into one of today's central issues when thinking about Mexico's rural development. As such, the symbolic nationalistic discourse creates a larger impact, by placing special significance on this tenure system as it is opposed to the market necessities for drawing foreign investment. Individuals living in an *ejido* conceive themselves as an agricultural collective group living and working on a specific territory and collaborating politically and economically as a community. The *ejido* is divided in parcels of which each family uses it to do subsistence or commercial farming.

However, *ejidatarios* did not actually own the land, but were allowed to use their allotted parcels indefinitely as long as they did not fail to use the land for more than two years. They could even pass their rights on to their children. This is what happened in the case of David, who little Parcel was due to the fact that his Dad the main *ejidatario* had to divide his parcel among his sons. Thus, the shrinking of the farmable territory leads to lower production and hence it endangers the families' economic

dependence on their land. Consequently, more and more, to be a successful *ejidatario*, becomes unattainable.

Migration is only one possible response to the difficulties the *ejido* faces under a neoliberal economy. Traditional systems have also become a platform for social movements and rebellion in a variety of municipalities in Mexico. In Tepoztlan, the townspeople sabotaged the creation of a golf course on *ejido* land by storming city hall and taking hostages in protest. A protracted and sometimes violent “golf war” attracted the interest of international environmental activists, and eventually, the project was withdrawn (Monroy Caracas, 1995). In the process, local people were empowered, and the governing PRI was weakened (Martin 2005). In another example, in Atenco, locals stopped the building of a new airport in Mexico city, but at the cost of terrible police brutality and violent confrontations where many people were severely injured. In Oaxaca, after the contested 2006 presidential elections, the teachers’ movement of the *Asemblea Popular de los Pueblos de Oaxaca* APPO [The Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca] led to an uprising resulting in the death of an American journalist and the leadership of the APPO jailed.

In this chapter, I have attempted to bridge the experiences of the Chiapas participants in my study to illustrate the narrative of resistance that they each encompass. Contextualizing their experiences in the specific economic, political and social conditions in Chiapas that propel this diaspora experience helps shed light on the diversity of reasons Maya find themselves across the United States, and in the case of my study, in San Francisco.

5) Experiences on Both Sides of the Border: Voices from Yucatan

Yucatan's regional history has played an important role in migratory processes (Fischer 2003, Wittlinger and Manzanero 2003, Alicia Re Cruz 2003, Fortuny & Solis 2010, Contreras 2010). The diverse settlements that we see today in Yucatan developed as a result of a historical process in which migration was a response to the economy of the colony, the local repercussions of Mexican independence, the Caste Wars of the nineteenth century and, finally, the Mexican Revolution. Much later, in the 1970s, the state organized its economy around tourism and international remittances.

The aim of this chapter is to present an understanding of a Maya diaspora experience through an analysis of social and economic conditions, historically, and, at present, that have driven transnational migration from Yucatan to the United States. With the exception of a few of the participant vignettes that illustrate "success" stories, this chapter, in particular, highlights the hardships many migrants face. Furthermore, these experiences assist in supporting an overarching argument that the "Maya" "migration" experience, a diaspora, is far more complex than the monolithic interpretations and representations of the "Maya" and the migration experience perpetuated by the prevailing anti-immigrations discourses. Through the story of Wilma and her husband, I posit that, in Yucatan, internal migration plays a significant role in how Yucatecan Maya experience their international migration experience, namely as a step toward their professionalization in the U.S., whereas, in Chiapas, internal migration has much less of an influence on Chiapanecan migrants in the U.S. Through the narratives of Canek, Chepis and Lenin, I explore the difficulties migrants face in their journey across the border while the Ramirez family story helps to illuminate the consequences of migration on both sides of the border. Lenin's vignette gives us an example of resistance in the face of much hardship and misrepresentation.

According to the Mayaab Association, at the beginning of the 2000, there were approximately 7000 Yucatecans in the Bay Area. Mexico has almost 113 thirteen million residents (112,336,538) of which almost 2 million (1,955,577) live in the state of Yucatan. According to the Institute for the Development of the Maya Culture of Yucatan (Indemaya),^{xxxvii} 24 % of the overall migrant populations from Yucatan go to the U.S.: 76% go to California, 15 % go to Colorado and Oregon, 5% to Nevada, Texas and Washington and 4 % got to other states (Fortuny & Solis 2010). According to the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI^{xxxviii}) Santa Elena (population of 3,833) Oxkutzcab (population of 24,159) and Peto (population of 9,325) are the predominant migrant-sending areas from Yucatan to the Bay Area. Oxkutzcabeños have a history of migrating to San Francisco while Peteños go to San Rafael.

5.1) A comparison of Migration: Yucatan and Chiapas

Exploring the sociohistorical context Yucatan and Chiapas is the first step in understanding migration patterns that are particular to a region. The Center for Geographical Studies (INEGI) classifies these movement patterns as inter-municipal, interstate, or international migration. Inter-municipal migration is most common as the movements of people within their state responds to the particular economic conditions of each state. Crops such as coffee, tobacco, cotton, or sugar require seasonal migration, whereas migration to capitals for industrial works tends to be permanent (Lomnitz 1985). In the indigenous south of Mexico, most migrants previously opted for seasonal inter-municipal migration. However, the growing popularity of international tourism to the Yucatec region has had a distinct effect on local migration patterns.

Geography and the strong presence of the Yucatec Maya language over a wide region have played an important role in facilitating internal migration. The Yucatan Peninsula's limestone composition makes the landscape flat. From Yucatan to Quintana Roo there is little change— with no rivers, mountains or valleys to cross, the area contains long stretches of beautiful beaches and clear blue Caribbean water. For Yucatecans, going to work in Cancun, Playa del Carmen, Cozumel or any other growing tourism area of the Riviera Maya, means they are moving easily within the area they consider Maya, whereas for INEGI, they are crossing state boundaries. These boundaries mean less to Maya migrants, and more important to them is a shared Maya language and culture among Maya across imposed “boundaries.” Yucatec Maya, with 734,611 speakers, is the predominant indigenous language in Yucatan and Quintana Roo. Smaller populations in Campeche, Belize and Guatemala also speak it. This shared native language feeds a strong cultural bond among its various populations. In Chiapas, however, there are nine different Maya languages, which leads to a wider cultural and languages diversity that does not foster the same cultural unity that the Yucatec Maya foster. In addition, the mountainous region, valleys and rivers make Chiapanecan geography and ecosystems more harsh and difficult for prospective migrants. Traveling within Chiapas is much more complicated than in Yucatan.

Chiapanecans have had a long documented tradition of migration in Mexico before migrating internationally. In an early study, Ricardo Pozas (Pozas 1952) concluded that indigenous people migrating within Chiapas often considered migration as inevitably composed of dangerous long journeys through the rugged mountains and across rivers. For Chiapanecans, the division between intermunicipal and interstate migration is not a strong factor their migration experience. Migration Chiapas is driven by the search for work in growing cities, such as Tuxtla Gutierrez, Comitán, Ocosingo, Tapachula, Palenque, San Cristóbal de las Casas, where cheap labor is in high demand. Previous to migrating to the growing cities, the Maya of Chiapas had already established seasonal migrations patterns to the coastal coffee *fincas* [plantations]. The *fincas* are private large land holdings that produce agricultural produce. They benefit from employing indigenous workers, paying them poorly to perform labor-intensive work. Men, women and children, work seven days a week under strong sunlight, with no requirement for employers to provide shade, breaks, water, or other safe working conditions. Most rent a small shed and have no choice but to purchase overpriced goods at the *finsa* store often putting them in debt with their employer.

Migration differences between the Yucatecans and the Chiapanecans are mainly due to the economic demand. Both have indigenous populations that participate in intermunicipal and interstate migration and are employed as seasonal agricultural workers (*jornaleros agrícolas*). Nevertheless, for Yucatec migrants, their movements are affected mainly by the tourism industry and they tend to be permanent, whereas for Chiapanecans their movement responds to the availability of *finsa* work within the state or in other states of Mexico. If they can, they prefer to return home eventually.

After WWII, the United States established the Bracero Program, which brought Mexican seasonal workers to the U.S. After the end of the program, Mexicans continued to seek international seasonal work without legal documents. Mexican immigrants benefited from a small salary in U.S. dollars, and U.S. producers were able to evade complying with legal protections for migrants. Kearney has focused on indigenous international migration since the early 1990s. Michael Kearney (1994) researched how many of the people with whom he worked during research in Oaxaca in the 1960s are now working in his neighborhood as gardeners. Researchers on migration have mainly focused on the role of remittances, unequal labor rights, human rights and moral issues (Stavenhagen et al. 1992). The multifaceted attention to migration led to the concept “transnational migration” and the need to

understand the cyclical migration patterns of diverse indigenous people. In the case of Chiapas, internal migration mainly provides agricultural work. However, in the case of Yucatan, it provides Maya with a professional training in the service industry. Therefore, internal migration in Yucatan helps prepare the migrant for a different work experience in the U.S.

Mexico's southern states have high rates of temporary migrants who search for employment in the agricultural sector in states in Mexico outside their home states. There are between 2.7 and 3.7 million agricultural migrants in Mexico, many of them indigenous (SEDESOL 2000). These *jornaleros* [agricultural day laborers] can be characterized into three subgroups according to the length of their migration and the distance they cover. *Jornaleros pendulares* [pendular day laborers] leave their place of origin for periods of four to six months and then return; *jornaleros golondrinos* [swallow day laborers] move constantly all year from one place to the next, and *jornaleros locales* [local day laborers] are employed relatively close to their place of origin and do not need to migrate for longer periods. The Maya fit many of these categories at different stages in their lives.

Two participants, Wilma and Antonio, share narratives that illustrate the their treacherous journey to the reach the U.S and the relationship of internal migration to their current experience. Wilma and Antonio, got married in Oxkutzcab when they were twenty-two and moved to the growing city in the Caribbean coast of Playa del Carmen. There, Antonio worked in a kitchen and Wilma as a waitress. Eventually, both moved up to management positions. Wilma describes the border crossing:

We did well but some friends told us to go for it! To go up north with them, that we would do great! So, we risked it all. The crossing was horrible; back then, we took a bus to Tijuana, now people fly from Merida directly to a city in the border. They told us to get ready for at least four hours, four very long and uncomfortable hours. So we got in the trunk of a car and crossed from Tijuana to San Diego. It was really horrible; good thing we were young and had no children. I would never want my children to go through that. It's horrible! Now, ten years later, we are working here in the MOMA [Museum of Modern Art] café.

As the chef and the manager of the MOMA cafe, Wilma and Antonio, received their restaurant business training in Mexico, in Playa del Carmen. Although they had lived well in the beautiful Caribbean town of Playa del Carmen, they still went north in a spirit of adventure that is typically Mayan. Both grew up in Oxkutzcab, speaking Maya in the home, but speaking Spanish in school. In San Francisco, they explain that they have found Yucatec Maya to be the practical language to speak, and, since their arrival in the U.S., both have become more fluent in their mother tongue. The significant point here is that Yucatecans have, what I refer to as, well-developed "university tourist services"—training for high-end service jobs in the Riviera Maya and the cities of Cancun and Playa del Carmen; these services have, in turn, have provided a great training ground for the Maya who later come north to the U.S.

5.2) The Journey across the Border: Lenin and Chepis

Maya dramatist and play writer from Oxkutzcab, Yucatan, Lenin^{xxxix}, who had lived for eight years as a dishwasher and sandwich maker in the Bay Area grew up speaking Yucatec Maya. As Lenin's father was the son of Maya farmers, Lenin saw firsthand the racism and the rural problems of the country. For him, being fluent in Spanish and being able to navigate the western Mexican world, was elemental. However, his father also valued retaining Maya culture. He insisted that his siblings

and his children should learn both languages and cultures well. For him being Mexican was not incompatible with being Maya. Lenin recalls many instances of racism in his early years. However, anti-indigenous sentiment has gradually lessened since 2000. The Zapatista fight for indigenous rights played an important role in shifting attitudes towards the Mexican indigenous population, and in 2001, the constitution was reformed to recognize Mexico sixty-two indigenous languages.

Lenin's friends grew up listening to their parents and grandparents speak Yucatec Maya, but for them, they explain, "being Maya" hindered their chance of "being Mexican", so they refused to speak Yucatec Maya, and lost the ability. Throughout this period *indigenismo*, or the policy of assimilating indigenous people into the Mexican national project (Nash 2001:14), was praised as a progressive move. Many of the young Maya I met came to value their Maya identity and mother tongue while in the U.S., and began to study to regain the ability to speak their parents' language. In the U.S., their language became not only the backbone of their community, but it also provided them with what Bourdieu (1982) calls symbolic capital, a linguistic advantage over both other Mexicans and the American employees who mainly learn Spanish. Hence, Yucatec Maya became a weapon of the weak for them (cf. Scott 1985). Evidenced by the prominence of speakers of Yucatec Maya I have encountered in my research, I would speculate that Yucatec Maya is the largest growing indigenous language in the Bay Area today. However, assessing the number of speakers of a language that is spoken by undocumented migrants is difficult.

After finishing high school in Oxkutzcab, Lenin went to the Maya language school in Merida, the capital of the Yucatecan state. Due to the lack of opportunity to become a teacher and because many of his friends were going north, he took the trip into the adventurous unknown with his best friend el Chepis. One evening in their apartment on 18th street, they told me about their adventurous trip north:

We took a mini bus to Merida, the casual thing, then we took a plane to Mexicali... we tried to cross there and got caught in our second day in the desert walk. They caught everybody. So they sent us back to Mexicali. So we decided to go towards Yuma, there in the middle of the desert we decided to go for it.

"You and who else?" I asked.

The first time we got caught we had paid a coyote... so after getting caught we were broke... no money even to go back. So, we got some plastic bottles, you know those big coca colas... we each had 4 liters of water and we went for it. And thank God we survived! Three days through the dessert. I can't believe that women and children take those roads. It's inhumane!

Chepis chimed in: "People think down there that you just come up here and make money and go back... it takes many falls to understand that it is not easy... it is hard, hard work, we don't find money under the rocks." I asked them what was the most dangerous part of their trip. Chepis replied, "Man, it's Mexico, the cops, the *federales* [federal police], the military...they are all out to get you. Nothing can control them, they can do what ever they want. We crossed in the times when kidnaping wasn't as usual as today. Imagine, how scary it is for the migrants now!"

Lenin added:

“Yes, anyone really is out to get you! There are so many people that make their money out of robbing us migrants as we try to make it here! Any motherfucker will get you on the Mexican side. However, once you make it to the U.S. at least you know that you are not going to get robbed or hurt. If the *migra* [border control] gets you they even give you water and treat you with respect. It’s sad that the most dangerous part is Mexico.”

Lenin explained that he felt that indigenous Maya often get treated worse than other Mexicans. Both explain that they are often mistaken for Guatemalans. “It really hurts,” said Chepis, “To be treated so badly. I mean we are Mexicans, we should be able to travel freely through our country, but no, we are treated like foreigners, in our own land.” These experiences are traumatic for the migrants who find themselves discriminated against for being indigenous in Mexico and undocumented in the U.S. Yet, despite the difficulties, participants also express feelings of gratefulness toward their Americans they encounter. Lenin describes:

I mean, even though I do feel discriminated against and lack many equal opportunities here in the U.S., at least here I think they are nicer to us than the Mexicans. I mean we did break the law and came here without papers, and, even like that, we always get jobs. To us it feels like we are grateful, at least, to have a job and to be able to send money to our families.

For Lenin and Chepis, they know that if they live and work in Mexico, the quality of life of their families would diminish. They find themselves torn between where they wish to be and where they need to be. In the metaphoric and literal places of being “in between” countries, cultures, and languages, Lenin and Chepis bond in their struggles to, as they say, “just get by”. As we will see with Lenin in the following section, also find new spaces to give meaning to their sense of being Maya.

5.3) Deconstructing and Resignifying Media Representation: *Apocalypto*

From 2005 to 2013, the period I worked on the research and writing of this dissertation, Mel Gibson’s movie *Apocalypto* (2006) came out in theaters across San Francisco. The movie depicts the end of the Maya civilization as the first Spanish galleons arrives to its shores (in the region of the Yucatan peninsula). The discourse concerning the “end-of-the-world” that circulated around this time, allegedly predicted by so-called Maya prophesies for the year 2012, only helped further fuel such overdramatized and romanticized historical misrepresentations. I will emphasize how Lenin, a migrant Maya intellectual, responds to Mel Gibson’s misrepresentations of Maya culture through theatrical resignification. I emphasize the distance between romanticized images of the ancient Maya and the political and economic inequality that being Maya implies in both Mexico and the United States. Drawing on Said’s (1993) notions of culture and imperialism, I aim to deconstruct Orientalized misrepresentations of the Maya in order for the reader to better understand the importance of representation in political justifications of repression of the Maya people.

According to Gibson’s portrayal of the contact of the two cultures, the Spanish arrived at a time when decadent Maya empires enslaved forager tribesmen for sacrifice to appease the bloodthirsty gods. Although there is some evidence of human sacrifice taking place in Mayapan in ancient times, it seems to have ceased a century before the Spanish arrived (Sharer 2006:592-604). Gibson’s representations more adequately fit the human sacrifices that the Aztecs performed in their capital Tenochtitlan during

the Flower Wars between the Aztec Empire and neighboring city states of Tlaxcala, Huejotzingo, Atlixco and Cholula. During this war, Aztecs aimed to capture warriors for sacrifice in the name of Huitzilopochtli (Leon-Portilla 1992:36). However, the Hollywood film ignores the ancient and complex history of the Maya and the political climate of the Aztec empire. Gibson represents the Americas as a land of vicious barbarians, rather than one of complex civilizations involved in lengthy conflicts. The film over-dramatizes scenes of sacrifice, ignoring the considerable dispute over exactly who and how many were sacrificed in specific historical periods. The imagery of the movie is full of anachronism and misplacement in its representation of the city architecture and artwork. The historical claims of Gibson's film distort Maya history and culture for eyes all over the world.

When compared to archeological data that has reconstructed a Maya past, there are further incongruences in the film relating to the representation of the Maya and their history relating to the social political structure, the architecture and religious practices such as human sacrifice.^{xi} When the Spanish arrived, there were no major Maya cities left. As Sharer explains, the fall of Mayapan marks the beginning of the Petty States Period (Sharer 2006:603). Unlike the Maya portrayed in *Apocalypto*, most Maya of the time lived in rural hamlets as opposed to what is depicted in the movie, a decadent society ravaged by diseases and a city elite who deceives the inhabitants by coordinating human sacrifice at the same time of a total eclipse. The Maya in the movie were falsely depicted as from the classic Maya period. It is important to recognize that when the Spanish contact happened, there were still major settlements, but nothing compared to the splendor of the ancient Maya cities as, again, incorrectly portrayed in the movie. When the Spanish arrived, the region already had a millennia of history, including the mysterious end of their classic empire around the 9th century of the European calendar. Their traditions had been built up over centuries despite the rise and fall of different cities and empires.^{xii} By the time the Spanish arrived, all the well-known Maya archeological sites such as Tikal in Guatemala, Palenque in Chiapas, Calakmul in Campeche, Cobá in Quintana Roo and Chichen Itza in Yucatan had been abandoned for centuries. The movie *Apocalypto* chose to ignore main aspects of the archeological evidence, and, instead, represents the Maya over-simplistically as a decaying and barbaric people that killed innocent hunter-gatherers at the time when the Spanish galleons reached the shores of the Maya area.

The exoticized portrayal of the “barbaric” Maya in the popular movie contributes further to the false notion of the Maya as “primitive” fueling stereotypes of the ancient Maya. This, in turn, contributes to a whitewashing of the Maya history and facilitates a lack of awareness in the U.S. about the complex, diverse, and violent history Maya have faced. Furthermore, media representations mask present-day realities—the great spectrum of migrants that are categorized into the essentializing labels “migrant,” “Latino” or “Hispanic”. My participant Lenin, however, undermines these representations by creating his own version of *Apocalypto*.

In 2006, local Maya were outraged at the distortions perpetuated when *Apocalypto* came out in the movie theaters all over San Francisco. My friend Lenin,^{xiii} was so upset about the movie that he decided to make his own play also named *Apocalypto*. Determined to fight against the misrepresentation of his culture, he organized a dozen Yucatecan Maya migrants to produce a masterpiece of revolutionary countercultural theater.

Lenin went to restaurants, churches and all over his web of community relations to find the cast for his play. More than a dozen of enthusiasts jumped at the opportunity, but only one of them had experience in theater. Lenin explains how he had a tremendous task ahead of him. They decided to gather and rehearse two times per week in a room in the Presbyterian Church at 22nd and Capp in the Mission district, which has been a pillar of the Oxnard migration (Fortuny & Solis 2010).

Lenin's initial intention was to do a "Maya version" of Gibson's *Apocalypso* exposing the misrepresentations and historical incongruences in Gibson's movie. However, instead he focused the plot on human sacrifice. My first impression was that he had made no direct critique about the incongruences in the Hollywood movie. For Lenin, however, clarifying the erroneous representation of human sacrifice in the Hollywood movie was crucial. His play offered a different historical perspective on the nature and reasoning behind human sacrifice in the period before the arrival of the Spanish. As noted by archeologist the last ceremonials sacrifices of the Yucatecan peninsula are the ones found in the excavations of Mayapan, the last confederation who ruled the region and whose ending archeologist have dated to 1441 (Sharer 2006:603). With this information at hand, Lenin was not interested to correct the time period incongruences in the movie. For him, what was alarming is that the movie producers did not explain humans sacrifice adequately and portrayed it as a "barbaric act instead as a ritual of highly civilized societies." Sacrifices, according to Lenin, were culturally important in that they exemplified continuity as a way of life and a sense of gratefulness.

The main difference between Lenin's portrayal and Gibson's were the ways in which the sacrifices were conducted and the purposes they served. In the movie, the sacrifice is a performance aimed at deceiving the people into believing in the power of the king's elite family. The ruling elite, through advance astronomical calculations, is able to predict solar eclipses. Thus, by performing the sacrifices preceding the hours before the eclipse, it is clear that the ruling elite manipulates the population by making them believe that they can appease the gods with the human sacrifices of hunter-gatherers. Consequently, the elite and the king legitimized themselves as the intermediaries between the Gods and the humans. Gibson representation alludes to the power of astronomical knowledge that acts as a tool of power to create and maintain a religion in order to manipulate the masses. In the movie, the priest is an accomplice in the deception and manipulation of the population. The image of a charlatan Priest really upset Lenin. That is why he chooses "set the record straight" in his theatrical resignification.

The play began with a procession headed by the priest, followed by women and then the warriors who were carrying a young athletic male. Throughout the play the priest spoke to the gods, and gave directions for the ceremony. The humble Maya priest was unlike the presumptuous one depicted in Gibson portrayal. Lenin's representation made sure to portrait a kind, soft man that took care to explain to the Gods, to whom he spoke to during most of the play, why they, as a group, were making a human sacrifice. He had the warrior voluntarily lay down belly up on a stone altar and get ready to face the Gods. This voluntary action is different from Gibson's interpretation, in which the scarified victims are captives. Being a volunteer of a sacrifice is the key point that Lenin highlighted. The priest asked questions that the women responded to, and, then, with copal smoke burning in the air and the sound of sea shell trumpets roaring, came the moment when the priest lifted his hand with an obsidian knife facing the heart of the warrior. The priest perforated the warrior's sternum and pulled out his heart.

Therefore, Lenin was not challenging the idea of whether or not sacrifices took place. For him the sacrifices are a fact. Nevertheless, unlike the Gibson portrayal, they have a deeper reasoning that underscores a different understanding of one's place within the society, the world and the cosmos. The main point of disjunction according to Lenin, was that sacrifices should be view as a voluntary practice that showed gratitude towards life and commitment of an individual towards society. In this version, to be sacrificed was an honor, not a punishment. In this case, the society chooses its best to sacrifice not the unwanted. He explained, "If you are grateful to the creators, you give them the best you have in

gratitude... you give that which is most precious to you.” Therefore, giving that which is most precious is very different from capturing people and sacrificing them.

By choosing to focus on the sacrifice, Lenin is reinvoking an ancient tradition in the Americas that has been falsely used to portray the losing empires as savages that deserved to be colonized and later modernized. Maya archeologist Robert J. Sharer states: “Although Native Americans certainly practiced human sacrifice, the scale of destruction wrought by Europeans was beyond anything seen before” (Sharer 2006:6). Therefore, to use the practice of human sacrifice to portray a negative view of the ancient Maya falls into yet another Orientalization mechanism.

The lack of adequate networking was not beneficial for the play to be put for larger audiences elsewhere and it was ignored by the same institutions that claim to promote the so-called “Latino” heritage. Lenin’s experience as a playwright never took off. Nevertheless, his attempt to reclaim and resignify the meaning of human sacrifice demonstrates that there are pockets of resistance in which Maya can counter mainstream discourse that attempts to define them on the basis of misrepresentations. Despite the fact that at least half of the cast were not fluent speakers, the play was conducted in Yucatec Maya. For Yucatecans, spaces such as these become creative ways to reconnect with their native tongue and culture.

5.4) Oxkutzcabenos Aventureros: Mr. Parra, Santos Nick, Bermejo

For young Maya who continue to migration, traveling to the United States is a risky but potentially rewarding adventure. According to William Hanks, a prominent Maya academic, the Maya are among the most well-traveled indigenous people of the world because Yucatan has always been a port, a crossroads of seafaring communications from ancient times through today. Hanks stated to me once, “They have always moved, they are *aventureros*!” (p.c. 2006).

The Oxkutzcabenos are considered the first Yucatec *aventureros* to come to the Bay Area. They came to the U.S. under the Bracero Program (1942-1964) which brought around five million temporary laborers to the U.S. They worked picking lettuce, pepper, broccoli, strawberries and asparagus in the fields of Santa Rosa, Pajaro Valley and Soledad California. Their decision to go to San Francisco after the program ended was the beginning of the current wave of migration. These Oxkutzcabenos participants migrated to the north and remained in the United States. I share short vignettes of their experience to illustrate the diversity of ways of life the experience upon arrival here during the first wave of migrants from Yucatan. “Mr. Parra” came to Santa Rosa first as a “bracero” and later moved to San Francisco to work in the service industry. He saved enough money to build a nice house back home and returned to live happily with his kin in Oxkutzcab. Unlike Mr. Parra, Santos Nick died poor in Oxkutzcab after having lived a life away from his family. He has been interviewed extensively by a number of anthropologists (Burke 2004) as a “representative” of the Yucatecan culture in the U.S. When I interviewed him, he complained sadly about how hard it was for a “man to be away from his family” and the “heavy weight in his heart” as he could not afford to go visit his mother, wife, or children. He was devastated when his mother died and he could not go back to attend the funeral. Sometime around 2008, Don Santos Nick went back to Oxkutzcab, where he struggled to get a job and died in his house. Mr. Bermejo owns several restaurants and bars in San Francisco. He is known for offering jobs to other Maya and then exploiting them. He brings Maya from the hamlets of Xhouayan, Yucatan, luring them with promises of the “American Dream” and generous loans of cash. When eager takers arrive, they learn that they need to work off the loan accompanied by high interest rates, rent their home directly from him and pay his rates on gas, water, and electricity, making it nearly

impossible to escape the cycle of debt to him. These three participants are examples of the various paths Maya take in life after making the choice to adventure north and the diverse effects, both positive and negative, that unfold as a result.

5.5) Coping in the Everyday, Work and Play: Canek and El Terrible

“¡Échale cabrón, échale tú puedes! ¡Vamos vamos!” [Come on, you can do it!] It's hot and I feel the sweat in my hands, I am fifteen feet from the ground grabbing little pieces of plastic on an overhanging wall in the climbing gym of El Cerrito California. I desperately try to position my feet to release some tension from my slipping hand but it is too late-- before I know it I am on the soft pads that cover the ground of Bridges, a Bay Area Climbing Gym. Canek, says: “Nice man, you just got to bring your foot up there and you got it! Good job! ¡Viva México, cabrones! Now is my turn!” He chalks his hands, takes a look at the wall, inspects the holds, tries out a sequence of moves, and falls. “*Chinga ya casi* [Fuck ! Almost!]” he exclaims. Canek is 5’ 2”, dark-skinned, with, with long dark hair almost down to his waist. In my twenty years of climbing, a Maya climber is rare in a white middle-class male-dominated sport. In the following section, I sit down with Canek and his friend *El Terrible*. Both have found climbing as a social and physical outlet that takes them away from the struggles of their everyday life. They explain that no matter how hard their day might have been they “feel happy” to go climbing. Having control over this aspect of their life, getting into what they call a “physical training mode” helps in their ability to cope with the uncertainties of their undocumented status. It is a game, but also an escape from harsh realities of their precarious situation.

Canek, is a Yucatecan from Santa Elena, a small but iconic town, which was important in what came to be known as the Caste War. The tourist town is located south of Merida in the Puuc region in the center of the Maya archeological belt famous for its distinct classic Maya cities. Today Santa Elena no longer has pyramids because the Spanish tore down Maya buildings to create a cathedral.^{xliii} The annihilation of the old ways by brute force and the re-accommodation of the urban architecture around churches were elemental components of the Spanish strategy for conquest. As the crown implemented its *reducción* [reduction]^{xliv} and accommodated the new populations in hamlets around churches, it was confronted with a resistance strategy that proved fundamental for the survival of Maya ways. Bracamonte Sosa explains that the most common rebellious response to the Crown was to become a fugitive and establish rural settlements a great distance away from the Spanish centers (Bracamonte 348: 2001). Some Maya were able to resist the Spanish by creating these rebel communities just as Maya today migrate to escape and to resist. The Maya who remained also resisted by mixing their beliefs in with the Spanish religion to create a syncretic culture. As Bracomonte writes, the Spanish conquest was never finished, because the Maya never fully acquiesced (Bracamonte 2001).

Over many interviews, Canek shared a great deal about the region’s historical inequalities and how they have played into being Maya, an adventurer, a rebel, a migrant, and a male. In the following vignette, I interview him with his close friend, *El Terrible*, a wild, boisterous, charismatic *chilango* (a person who migrates and settles in Mexico city) anarcho punk traveler. *El Terrible* was raised in Mexico City but his family is from Merida, Yucatan. He is the dangerous *chilango* that all men should fear. The joke about him is that everybody should put their wives, girlfriends, sisters, nieces and even mothers away when *El Terrible* goes out dancing or he will get them with his smooth talking and his spicy salsa moves. Canek is always quiet until he thinks of something funny to say and proceeds to crack himself up. It was somewhat puzzling to see the two participants get along. Each exemplify two “extremes” from Mexico, the wild anarchic punk traveler of Maya family but who is now from the

“concrete jungle” of Mexico City, and the rural Maya who was forced into the Mexican army as a way out of his small town in jungles of Yucatan. Canek and *El Terrible* made an odd couple. *El Terrible* begins rambling:

Man, yes, I have been lucky I am glad I am also climbing now. I have put so much shit up my nose, and man I get really crazy... that is also why I stopped drinking. After waking up two times in Santa Rita jail, I think I have learned my lesson! I personally cannot complain about the gringos, the cops have been so good to me and I have been really doing fucked up shit... and I am still here. They didn't deport me!

Canek's adventurous spirit may explain why he hangs out with *El Terrible*. Canek grew up as a Yucatec rural Maya in Santa Elena and finished high school while helping his father in their family cornfields.

I lived there all organically. You know how people here in the Bay are all into the organic stuff... many just want to be farmers and have their chickens and live off the land... It's funny, that is how I grew up. I remember always knowing that people came up north to work, but I didn't really know anybody there in Santa Elena who had migrated. When I was finishing high school I worked with an archeologist in Uxmal. Man that was amazing, we were digging in this amazing city... we did some construction and rebuilding-- many of the structures are totally destroyed, so for the tourists we fixed them so they would see what the ceremonial centers were really like. But, then, that type of job was only temporary... I must have done like almost five years on and off working there, it was a temporary job, only when it's not raining we can dig. Then I decided to go explore and I joined the military. Man... that was tough. And, that was really the first time I went out of Santa Elena.

A young Maya with archeological digging experience is now working a low-paying job as an undocumented worker in the U.S. In Mexico, Canek had no educational opportunities to expand on his archeological experience and, in the United States, due to his undocumented status, he also could not access any avenues that would have allowed him to follow his desire to be an archeologist. While non-Maya study the Maya, the Maya are struggling to survive in what Joseph Nevins calls the global apartheid system (Nevins 2002:186).

I thought that perhaps Canek hung out with *El Terrible* to feel more comfortable exploring the American nightlife. But he just seemed to want to watch *El Terrible* work his magic with women, to witness but not partake in the dancing or drinking. He never smoked drank, or did drugs in my presence, despite being surrounded by people who do indulge. He was focused on working, remitting money, observing nightlife, and, now, rock climbing.

Although Canek told me he would have liked to become a Maya archeologist, instead, he joined the Mexican army and then came to the Bay Area as a migrant. In San Francisco, he found jobs working as a busboy in two restaurants in Berkeley while living in El Cerrito in a two-bedroom apartment with three other guys from Santa Elena. One of his employers was a trendy restaurant on Shattuck Avenue in Berkeley, which was infamous for its ill-treatment of its workers. Canek shares his thoughts on his workplace experience as an undocumented worker. Canek comments on the imposed identity of

migrants as illegals, a framing of migrants that keeps them in a constant state of fear and invisibility from any legal system.

It is really hurtful when people are racist. It just gives you a feeling of disempowerment...like they are taking away your humanity. It just feels bad to be put down. And here we always have to take it... I mean we are not from here. We can't start fights not even to defend ourselves... and they call us 'illegals' and say we are going to call the cops. And what can you do but to just look away and get out of there.

These experiences of living under the radar are commonplace among migrants. Such experiences negatively affect one's sense of self. Canek goes on to explain that the "warrior" in him has gotten lost in this state of running, hiding and keeping silent. He juxtaposes his inability to fight with the experience of his father and grandfather who were able to fight for their rights.

And for me that just doesn't feel right. I grew up with a warrior mentality... my grandfather was in the revolutions and his grandfather and father were in the caste wars, so that gets to me... that I am here taking insults whereas them, they fought for liberty and they never got down on their knees like us migrants, they always fought.

Canek's objection about the helplessness of non-documented workers is an important point. The sense of disempowerment faced by undocumented workers is exacerbated by abusive employers and aggressive people in the streets that harass the migrant for their assumed undocumented status. Consequently, the disempowerment of labor is not only for the undocumented. It also ties in with the weakening power of labor unions. However, it is not the economic system that offers unfavorable conditions; rather it is the border policies and immigration laws that hinder labor rights. Neoliberals propose to allow the market rule itself (Harvey 2005). Nonetheless, we must accept that if it is a free market, then workers should be free to look for work wherever employment exists. The market is in part free because it allows for conditions that improve profitmaking. Included in the related strategies for profitmaking is the constant flow of undocumented workers to hinder the rights of the domestic unionized workers. If employers were to abide by the labor rights promoted by the International Labor Organization (ILO), the disadvantages related to immigration laws undocumented workers face would no longer hinder labor rights. Furthermore, undocumented and domestic workers would be protected alike under the ILO labor rights.^{xlv}

Canek shares the discrimination he has faced in the workplace, a common story of the undocumented migrant. I suggest a revision of labor rights for undocumented workers in the United States necessary for improving working conditions for migrants.

5.6) Effects of migration on both sides of the border: The Ramirez family

The Ramirez family comes from Oxkutzcab in Yucatan. Margarita, the mother, lived in a two-story unpainted cement house surrounded by a wall made of piled up stones. Her garden has various colorful fruit trees and flowers along with plastic and food debris in the washing area. Chickens, dogs and cats shared the walled space with Margarita, her daughter Diana and Diana's baby boy. Margarita carried the baby boy in her arms while we sat down to record the interview.

The Ramirez family is an example of the hardships faced by the family members on both sides of the border when a family member migrates in search of a better opportunity. In the interviews, participants share experiences of abandonment, family ruptures, family deaths related to drug addiction and border crossings, working while still underage and pregnant adolescent migration. Despite the difficulties faced through the migrant process and its effects on those left behind, members of the Ramirez family consider themselves successful because they feel they overcame the worst with their health intact. To the Ramirez family, their ability to build a modern house in their homeland is a marker of their success.

It was a cool Thursday evening as we talked about migration in the Ramirez family house. When I arrived, Margarita seemed eager and prepared to tell her story to me. She was pleased and a bit excited that I had a video camera and was recording our conversation. We were waiting for Abraham, her son, who after much drug abuse, turned to the Presbyterian Church and is now well known for being a living testimony of a positive change via religion.

More than half of Oxxutzcab's population is living in California and a few thousand more in Oregon.^{xlvi} Ramon, Abraham, Juan and Diana, Margarita's children, are among those who grew up speaking Maya with their mother at home and speaking Spanish at school. The family continues to use Yucatec Maya in the home. All of them, while still very young, eventually dropped out to work and help support the family. Eventually, all of the children, for both economic and personal reasons, migrated north. Margarita's story echoes the stories of other women of Oxxutzcab who have been left behind when their partners migrate, have lost members of their families in the migration process and have witnessed the decline of the agricultural economy in the homeland. When her community became a breeding ground for migration to the U.S., in the early 1990s, her husband left to work in San Francisco, abandoning the family and never returning. He had left her alone with three sons and one daughter. At the time, her home was a classic Maya rural hut made of wood, clay, stones and palm leaves. Her children did not finish elementary school because they had to work to sustain the family. Margarita recalls that she only heard about her husband through another migrant who called home. The news she recalled hearing was that her husband became involved with another woman and started another family in California. She never heard from him again apart from a short visit five years after his departure in which he remained distant for the few months he was at home, before unexpectedly leaving Oxxutzcab again to reside permanently in the U.S.

After being abandoned for more than ten years by her husband, Margarita now looks with pride at the sacrifice that one of her sons has made in order to build the house in which she now resides. Nonetheless, she recounts how difficult it has been and the price that she has had to pay: one son's life lost to drug addiction, Ramon, another recovering from drug addiction, Abraham, and a third in San Francisco for the last six years unable to visit home, Juan. Ramon, the eldest son, is one of the casualties of the migration experience. Since they were children, all three sons worked with an uncle in Oxxutzcab in the construction business in order to sustain the family.

Tears came to her eyes as she retold the story of her eldest son, Ramon. He was seventeen years old and was deeply affected when his father left for the second time. He was angry and shocked, and even expressed a desire to go to California to find and kill him. However, when he voiced his desire to venture north, Ramon claimed it was to build a house for his family. Margarita pointed at her house and explained that her home was not always like this. Her former house was a long, one story, and traditional house with a thatched roof, through years of neglect by her husband it had been in poor condition. Margarita's recounts the divisions between her son and former husband. Ramon talked his father into helping him go to San Francisco to work and help build a better family house. Ramon's

father, at that time, was not aware of his son's feelings of abandonment at this point, and gladly paid his son's way to San Francisco. Once in San Francisco, Ramon accompanied his father to Eugene, Oregon, to work in the service sector. It was there that Ramon, wielding a knife in his hand, expressed his feelings of rage and despair to his father. Ramon's father fainted and the angry son found he could not kill his father, and ran from the house in despair.

I had the opportunity to interview the son residing in San Francisco shortly after visiting the family in Oxnard. Juan Ramirez lived in a tenement-style apartment complex near downtown San Francisco. Like millions of migrants in the United States, he is a significant contributor to the Mexican economy because he sends money back on a monthly basis. He works as a bar back in a busy San Francisco bar. Five months after his elder brother made the long journey northwards, Juan, then fifteen, decided to follow in his footsteps in order to contribute financially to the household. In San Francisco, Juan has been working and sending money back to his family. With that money, his mother was able to finish constructing a house for his entire family to live in. Juan speaks Spanish fluently and he is proficient in Yucatec Maya and English. He is back in San Francisco for his third time since 1996. At this point, he has already learned to navigate San Francisco's streets and understands its culture. He also has established good networks for work. He admits that in being Yucatecan in San Francisco, he must be "open to the diversity of cultures," and, as he phrased, the "craziness" of the city. He said that back in Mexico, many people hold the misconception that immigrants in San Francisco are having a good time, but that it is not true he explains. He emphasized how easy it is for youth to get involved in gangs and drugs in addition to being exposed to the financial risk of being homeless not being able to find work. Having good networks help migrants adjust and mitigate the loneliness.

Juan has managed in San Francisco by himself, taking care of his two drug-addicted brothers and supporting his family back in Yucatan by sending remittances. He is not a member of a church or community group, nor does he seek help from anyone other than his immediate friends. His energy is focused instead on ensuring his mother has money back home and his house is constructed. He stressed the importance of prospective immigrants to learn English while also maintaining a strong identity because as he put it, "One must not feel inferior to anyone just because they are white or wealthy." Juan proudly showed pictures of his mother's house in Oxnard while he spoke sitting in the single room he rents in a two-bedroom apartment. "The house is done. It just needs some details," he said, pointing to some pictures hanging on the wall in his room. He had plans of returning to Oxnard in the coming months.

In Oxnard, as the daylight began to fade, a motorcycle engine roared out in the street; Abraham was arriving home from visiting his girlfriend. As he entered, he politely greeted us and sat down to talk. The mother and sister got up, but stayed around to listen intently as Abraham told his story of endurance and perseverance. Wearing a baseball cap, a football T-shirt and shorts, Abraham began talking in an open and friendly manner about his drug use. He recounts the path he took to heavy drug use. Abraham first got into drugs during his teens, and, as he grew up, he entered a downward spiral of self-destruction. Abraham joined a gang, started drinking heavily and using cocaine and marijuana. Shortly thereafter, it was *la piedra* or crystal methamphetamine, which initiated his violent behavior. He attributes this drastic shift toward drug use to the native Oxnard way of life. He explained that almost any drug you get in San Francisco, you can also get in Oxnard. However, the crowd he spent time with in Oxnard ended up being the same who also migrated to the Mission District. Abraham began using drugs at the age of thirteen while hanging out with older friends. Therefore, the youth groups he adhered to in Oxnard are also in a migratory dynamic coming back and forward from Oxnard to San Francisco.

The first time Abraham went north it went well. He found his brothers and was able to work for a couple of years to sustain his drug addiction and *cholo* life style. He returned to Oxnard with dollars to spend and really no concern for investing in the construction of the family house. However, the second time that Abraham went north he had a horrific experience. While in San Luis Rio Colorado with his cousin, a gang of locals tried to beat them up and rob them. “They put a knife to my cousin’s neck,” gestured Abraham as he explained how lucky they were because the thieves only wanted money to purchase beer and allowed them to continue on their journey. He said that, luckily, they spent less than twenty minutes crossing the desert. After crossing the border, and while walking through a cemetery in the U.S., some local people began shouting at them that they were on private property. It was not dark yet, but the sun was setting, so they ran, diving through some bushes and down a hill that opened abruptly into a busy street. Abraham’s cousin was unable to dodge an oncoming car and instantly became another statistic in the list of border-related deaths. Abraham could see that his cousin was in the middle of the street and not moving. Hoping that he was still alive, Abraham was barely able to get him out of the road before a truck ran him over. Abraham had to leave his cousin dead and make his way to San Francisco.

Abraham Ramirez credits his mother for her patience and the Presbyterian Church with proving him spiritual guidance during his problem days. He now believes his worst days are behind him. He has a sense of overcoming a life-threatening obstacle. He wants to return to San Francisco to work near his brother, Juan. Currently, he works for his uncle’s construction company in Oxnard. He says he is “more determined than ever.” He admits that many young people migrate hoping to experience adventure and the freedom to experiment with drugs and alcohol, or, as he also pointed out, to “party in San Francisco.” Abraham believes he has now escaped his destructive cycle of life and he wants to go to San Francisco to see his brother Juan, to work and to financially contribute for the family well being.

Through the interview, Abraham and Juan both assert that the most dangerous border space was the Mexican side of the geopolitical boundary. They both note that the Mexican officials, especially soldiers and federal police, representing a significant source of threat. Taxi drivers, gangs, hotel owners and transport agents also participate in this pattern of abuse in their own way. The media in both countries focus mainly on the dangerous terrain that the Mexicans are forced to cross, placing more responsibility for the deaths on U.S. migration policies rather than on the Mexican government’s role in neglecting the conditions that push people from their families and communities. The Ramirez family’s story is just one of millions. Just as many are able to overcome these difficult challenges, many become lost in the consequences of moving back and forth across the border. These participants are exemplary of transnational migrants—migrants that continue to maintaining ties with their place of origin and mark themselves as members of communities on both sides of the border. The border is more than the international boundary and the regions adjacent to it. If we think of the cultural and social consequences of migration on both sides of the border we come to understand the border as dividing and connecting more than just land. Family, community, employment and cultural practices are both divided by and connected through the border.

In this Chapter, I have given an overview of conditions that propel migration intertwined with my Yucatecan participants’ migration experiences. I provide a short review on Yucatecan migration to the U.S. in order to contextualize the ethnographic study of migrants from Oxnard to San Francisco. The journey taken from Yucatan to San Francisco is best understood as a cyclical migration since many migrants try to go back and forth across the border some risking their lives as undocumented. This movement, seen among both documented and undocumented migrants, may contribute to why an open border policy would work. According to my participant findings, migrants, in this case Yucatecan

migrants, would be happy to return to their home countries if they could, contradicting Huntington's (1996) thesis that the United States faces internal jeopardy due to high levels of immigration (consisting of immigrants he claims want to remain in U.S.) from Latin America.

6) “Visibility” in Hidden Communities: Voices from Guatemala

In the Fruitvale neighborhood of Oakland, Guatemalans, Mexicans, Salvadorians, and other Latino and Maya living in the Bay Area find few spaces in which they can gather. Many Maya participants expressed a constant desperate fear of deportation and, thus, an unwillingness to gather and be “seen”. Even inside their homes, study participants articulated the distress they felt always wondering if and when agents of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) would break into their homes, arrest, or deport them. From their point of view, on the one hand, the United States offers a refuge from the violence of their home country and provides them with economic opportunity, but, on the other, does not welcome or legally protect them.

Forced into the spaces of the hidden out of the eye of the public, the Maya I interviewed conveyed the ways in which they did manage to gather and find places of cultural and personal exchange. Non-profit organizations are vital in creating spaces in which Maya can gather and feel relatively comfortable. The aim of this chapter is to draw on two specific social events, both organized by Grupo Maya, in which Maya from Guatemala recreate homeland practices despite living under the radar in their new lives in the United States. Escaping the hidden for the “visible”, Maya are able to engage in practices that assert their Maya identity resisting the American discourses that essentialize and marginalize them. Living in a constant state of fear, there is still a sense among Maya that they can never be fully “visible” in their everyday practices. A Maya sunrise ceremony and a soccer tournament provide concrete examples of the way these hidden communities become “visible”—creating rituals of belonging that enhance a sense of community. In the case of the Maya sunrise, participants express a sense of “reconnecting to nature” through the different rituals of the ceremony which fosters a sense of belonging to a Maya community. Male participants in the soccer game explain that the game is one of the few places they can gather freely as a community and allows them to “be a man”. I draw symbolic parallels between the present ball game and the ancient one to create an analogy that show how games are an elemental part of the rituals that societies depend on to reinforce its sense of belonging.

As with the other chapters, first I will discuss the conditions of migration that are specific to my Guatemalan participants to help contextualize their diverse migration experiences. This should not be mistaken as, in any way, essentializing the “Guatemalan” experience. Rather, I point out social, political and historical conditions propelling migration that are specific to the region, and, in most cases, influence the trajectories of movement for my participants.

The first wave of Maya from Guatemala arrived in the Bay Area to escape the civil war (1960-1996). Most scholarly sources refer to the war in Guatemala as lasting thirty-six years; however, centuries of conflict before the 20th century created diverse migration patterns (Lovell 1985b). The 1960 to 1996 period of armed conflict merely pushed this migration further north. Although many Maya came to southern California cities like Los Angeles (Loucky 2000), some went to Florida (Burns 1993) and others to North Carolina (Fink 2003). American anthropologists have paid close attention to the displacements, disposessions, struggles for human rights, and, in the case of Guatemala and unlike the case in Mexico, the plight and the survival of the Maya as a diaspora (Loucky & Moors 2000).

One factor that attracts immigrants to the Bay Area is the area’s leftist political reputation and established networks of outreach. Many formal organizations such as humanitarian groups, activists and churches sympathized with the causes in Central and South America and reached out to help exiles. Places like The East Bay Sanctuary and *La Casa del Obrero Católico* (The House of the Catholic Workers) continue to provide basic services such housing, food, training and job placement to those still arriving today. In this first wave of migration, a chain of social and religious networks aided

people in finding places to live and work. Rents were cheaper in Oakland than in other cities, and, as a result, refugees flocked there. Although the housing market crash in 2008 allowed hundreds to move to Stockton, California, to take advantage of newly lowered housing prices, many Maya remained in rental properties in Oakland.

Some Guatemalan migrants came with political status as refugees while others came undocumented. In 1986, President Ronald Reagan signed the Immigration Reform and Control Act,^{xlvii} which granted legal status to nearly three million people who had entered the U.S. illegally before 1982 provided that they admit their status and pay back taxes and a fine. Of more than 2.1 million immigrants legalized, 59,863 are Guatemalan but, not necessarily Maya. The act also increased scrutiny of hiring practices involving non-documented immigrants and eased some restrictions on seasonal workers. Many on the left point out the irony in that Regan signed this law granting U.S. rights to victims who escaped the right-wing violence in Central America, yet, it was the Regan administration that helped instigate the conflict in Central American (García 2006:4).

4.1) Opening Up Spaces: Grupo Maya and El Puma

One participant, El Puma, along with other Guatemalans who insist on remaining anonymous, founded Grupo Maya. The full group name is Grupo Maya Qusamej Junam [Everyone raiseup], in the language K'iche'. Grupo Maya's mission statement is as follows:

Grupo Maya focuses on revitalizing the Maya culture, fostering cultural and spiritual pride among the Mayan youth, adults and elders, developing leadership among Mayan communities, supporting self-determination, self-development and indigenous rights.^{xlviii}

The organization, carrying out a number of community services, focuses mainly on serving the Maya, however, other migrants are also welcome. They organize health campaigns and provide English classes, computer classes, nutrition classes, and programs addressing childhood migration for parents. According to El Puma the organization also plays a role in advocating for children—particularly in cases where children are left behind in Oakland when their parents are deported.

El Puma states that in the Grupo Maya of Oakland there are at least 20 thousand individuals that have, one way or another, been a part of the association and on a contact list; of those individuals, around 13 thousand have no documents to work in the U.S. From the Guatemalan Maya I met in Oakland, I determined that the most prominent language group among the Guatemalans I met is Mam, followed by K'ichee', Q'anjob'al, Kaqchikel, Chuj, Akateko, Potpti', Q'eqchii' and Tz'utujil. Relations among Guatemalan Maya in the Bay Area reflect the complex relationships among groups of speakers of different Maya languages. In order "to be a Maya", the participants explained to me, you must come from one of these language groups. Otherwise, you are a ladino. Rarely do these Maya participate in events that are not organized by their Maya organization out of fear of being seen. El Puma believes its essential to create events where the community feels safe to participate.

Having survived the long war period in Guatemala, El Puma arrived in Oakland with few resources. El Puma is from the Mam region of northern Huehuetenango. He fled the region as a teenager when the scorched earth policy was implemented in Northern Huehuetenango. He refused to tell me how he escaped and how he eventually reached Oakland. El Puma explains, "Now I am a U.S. Citizen. All you need to know is that I ran for my life and I survived." He firmly stressed while interviewing him to be "as vague as possible" about individual participants in order to protect their

identities. Living in the East Bay for more than twenty years shaped him into a passionate activist paving the way to his present role as a leader at Grupo Maya, fighting for the rights of immigrants and indigenous people. El Puma asserts the need for the legal and social recognition of the Maya people by critiquing the lack of accuracy in depictions of historical and present day Maya events:

It's not the right history, it's not the history of our people... Today, in 2009, we are still struggling for the recognition of events that we lived and they say it's not true... imagine...we are still struggling to be able to have a legal system to do something about the 200 thousand people killed in Guatemala plus innumerable human rights abuse cases. The history of Guatemala that is in the books is rarely the history of the Maya!

El Puma's assertion is correct. It wasn't until 2005 that 30,000 Guatemalan police archives^{xlix} were unearthed confirming human rights abuses took place in the 1980s. These documents containing information about disappearances throughout the thirty-six year civil war were discovered in the archives of the now defunct National Police. Most of this information was discovered through other sources such as the aforementioned works of Monsignor Gerardi and the Human Rights Commission report of the United Nations. Extensive testimonial research estimates that 200,000 people died and 50,000 vanished (Montejo 1999: 4, Loucky & Moors 2000: 3, CEH 1999). For the legal cases pending against the responsible individuals, these archives are regarded as the most important discoveries in recent times. These archives offer evidence that security forces carried out kidnappings, disappearances, illegal detentions, torture, mass executions, and entire village massacres during the war, which ended in 1996 with the establishment of the Peace Accords between the dictatorship government and the freedom fighters. This was a war that pitted poor rural dwellers against a government, backed by the United States and Guatemala's urban elite, which has never been removed from power. These political events create an international political environment of "impunity" that, in the Guatemalan case, is exacerbated due to a general lack of legal accountability for the perpetrators of atrocities (Manz 2004, Martínez Salazar 2012).

6.2) Recreating Homeland Practices: A Maya Sunrise Ceremony

El Puma called at four in the morning to confirm that I was coming to the César Chávez Park in the Berkeley Marina for a sunrise ceremony. Around thirty people attended the ceremony— most of them were Maya and the rest were Bay Area residents. We had to walk about a quarter of a mile to bring food, the marimba, a drum, flowers, candles, coal and metal plate to the place where the hearth was to be lit. Everyone carried something and El Puma, Rodolfo, and two Maya women began organizing the altar. The creation of a hearth, the placement of candles, chocolate, and flowers, around the coals, and the lighting of a fire was accompanied by the prayers of Rodolfo and El Puma, both Maya priests and healers. Different from other Guatemalan ceremonies I had seen was the incorporation of a drum. This perhaps could be attributed to influence from the Lakota traditions that have come to dominate in Native American Church ceremonies in the U.S. El Puma, a Mam, has worked for years with Native American organizations representing a diversity of groups, and his approach to this ceremony reflected this background as the syncretism of diverse rituals was evident. El Puma never claimed to be performing an authentic Maya ceremony. He explained that his ritual was a syncretism of spiritual beliefs that help a community find "common grounds" through prayers. However, the ceremony did take on many characteristics of a traditional Maya ceremony. The method of people gathering in a circle around a fire, the way the altar was built around the hearth and how the

altar burns throughout the ceremony are all characteristic of what is considered traditional Maya ceremonies in the K'ichee' region of Guatemala.

It was still dark in César Chávez Park as El Puma began formalizing the ceremony. It was cold and windy. El Puma intoned, "We are going to enter the circle. We are going to give thanks... to see that everything is important that everything has a form, it has a process in life. Life is a circle. In a couple of minutes the sun is coming out and we are going to give thanks to our brother sun, he is coming, giving us the light so we can live here." The ceremony was conducted in both Spanish and English and the prayers had a mixture of Mam and K'ichee'. El Puma incites people with his words. He continued:

We must respect the land of our brothers. We must respect the air. We have come together today to be together. We are here to integrate a community to help us heal. If you see an animal like a snake, do not be scared, they come sometimes to participate. Our body is the land. We should hear each other as brothers. So, we are entering the circle. For those of us that are coming in you should know that once we enter the circle you must be respectful. Once you are in, you must ask for permission before going out. Thanks to mother earth who gave me the medicine, thanks to the plants that have cured me, thank you mother earth. Welcome! This is a sunrise ceremony, wake up happy and give thanks to life.

He then proceeded to discuss my presence as an ethnographer:

The process is important and we cannot take pictures during ceremonies. It is imperative to respect and to cultivate our tradition and our way of life. Come in the circle. If you have noticed we are filming you should know that it is important to document our traditions our ceremonies. If any of you doesn't want to be filmed, please let us know...but for us this is important because we are making a movie about the Maya experience here in California, a documentary about the Maya. There are moments in which we can't record because the camera vibrations interfere with the spiritual world, but other moments it's ok. Those moments we will film.

Throughout the ceremony, el Puma signaled to me when I could record and when I should not. His objective was to have footage to make a documentary about the Maya in Oakland. For this reason, he was willing to be flexible about the camera rules inside the ceremony. It was my intention to help him as much as I could. In having the camera, I could approach different participants who wanted to tell their story.

Interview participants conveyed that the reenactment of these rituals helped solidify a sense of belonging. The majority of the participants' belief in Christianity created no conflict with this Maya spiritual practice. These practices were more closely related to their sense of being Maya; embodying them brought them closer to nature, thus, echoing practices they had experienced in their homelands. Some participants note that before migrating such "Maya" practices were sometimes in a fragile state of existence because of the war-ravished environment they faced in Guatemala. Juanita, a fifty-three year old woman from the K'ichee' region in Guatemala, is a single mother of two living in Oakland. She first migrated to the capital city of Guatemala due to the intensity of the civil war in her town. In Guatemala City, she raised her children while working as house cleaner. Disillusioned by the false

promises of the Peace Accords and the increasing inner city violence, she migrated with her two children to the U.S. She describes what the ceremony means to her, "It has helped us feel a sense of community here with our brothers. In Guatemala, we also followed this tradition and it helps us cope with being so far away from our land. Moreover, by making these ceremonies, it makes me feel like we carry the tradition wherever we go. We carry it whether here in the U.S. or in Guatemala."

For more than a decade, Juanita has involved her daughter and son in the ceremonies. She expresses pride that both of them speak their mother tongue, K'ichee'. "Not all mothers are as lucky... there are many kids here than don't even speak Spanish anymore." She continues comparing Maya youth who do not participate in homeland practices to her own children, "They find other ways to survive... they are smart, they find their way, and, for them, maybe makes more sense to become American. But, yes I think having this community in Grupo Maya definitely helped my kids and I remain strong. It is just nice to know you have a community to count on." She continues on to explain that through Grupo Maya her children took English and computing classes in the headquarters helping them complete high school with "a good work ethic."

The teenage participants, making up one-third of the overall attendees to the ceremony, expressed that the first time they had participated in a Maya ceremony was in the U.S. José Antonio, like other Maya youth, discovered the organization through the widespread networking of the youth that most often originates under the radar, on the corner of streets where Maya wait to be picked up for work. It is not unusual that the people who are from the same regions congregate together in the day labor pick up areas (Herrera 2010). They explain that it was easy to adapt and meet more people from their region in the street while waiting for work. Spaces in the hidden, under the radar, become an important place for the exchange of information that offer Maya opportunities to access new spaces such as the ceremonies or the soccer games.

In a literal sense, day labor pick up areas are far from "hidden". Workers linger and congregate visibility on street corners in the hopes of being picked up. Such pick up places are well-known among American contractors who look for cheap and uninsured laborers on a temporary basis. Illustrating a doublethink mentality permeating the migrant discourse, immigrants are leveled illegal and unwanted, while, at the same time, authorities look away at such activity because they know that migrants play an important role in the economy. Yet, migrant's status as workers with rights is not recognized. Consequently, they become "invisible" in the eyes of institutions. These workers pay taxes, and, yet, they rarely benefit from the social services they pay into nor do they receive the taxes back. As temporary day-to-day workers, they have no job security and no health insurance under labor-intensive, and sometimes unsafe, work conditions. Migrants exist as an invisible work force that is at the same time necessary and unrecognized.

The youth participants echoed Juanita's feeling of gratitude. Migrating from the capital, Huehuetenango, these young Mam migrants grew up in a predominantly ladino city experiencing first hand the ubiquitous anti-indigenous sentiment. These children often did not acquire fluency in Mam. In the city landscape most did not follow any type of religion. They were children of parents who migrated to cities to perform service jobs escaping the violence of the war. This group of teenagers migrated to California in 2001. They are a group of teenagers who, using networks and friendships, were able to make it across Mexico and the border traveling northward as a group. Upon arriving and looking for work in the day labor pick up areas of the Fruitvale district they learned about Grupo Maya. Gaspar, one such young migrant, expressed:

It is thanks to El Puma and his organization that we have come to appreciate the meaning of being Maya and the meaning of having roots in the land. Back in Huehuetenango, being a Mam is something we were not proud of... In Huehuetenango we have no land, we were not connected....and here we have no land either, but the ceremonies helps us connect. We spent our lives trying to not be *indios* as the ladino call us. Back there being *indio* is being a savage. Here, I feel more Mam than in Guatemala.

It is elemental to acknowledge the importance of these types of ritual activities because through them the Maya revindicate their roots and write their own history. Ceremonies like this one are the illustration that memory is embodied in social practice. Ritual practices in this ceremony involving the sun, earth and fire are symbolic of the interconnectedness of nature and man that Maya have traditionally valued. Re-remembering in the case of older participants, and, remembering for the first time for younger participants, brings them closer to their homelands and to each other. By placing special attention to rituals and other types of physical movements, it is evident that these re-enactments are understood as a performance necessary to keep the memory of identity and history alive. Hence, these rituals are embodied phenomena that create social cohesion (Durkheim 1907, Turner 1986, Connerton 1989).

6.3) Rituals Recreated: The Maya ballgame

The objective of this section is to analyze participation in a Maya soccer tournament that sheds light on the way hidden communities become “visible” ones, both creating and recreating Maya identity. Such an event illustrates the strong cultural endurance of the Macro-Maya culture as well as its malleability and capability to transform itself while maintaining itself as a cornerstone of social cohesion within the Guatemalan Maya community.

Distinct as the game of soccer may be from the ancient Maya ballgame, I put forth that, symbolically, the meaning, solidifying human ties and asserting manhood, recreated in this activity is as important for the Maya migrant in Oakland today as it must have been for the players of the ancient world. Roles acquired and developed through the performance of the game transfer to the social life outside the playing field. I posit that the reconstruction of a cultural past practice can be understood as a strategy of community building in a hostile environment for these survivors in diaspora. The soccer (football) tournament in Oakland, California that migrant Maya communities organize through Grupo Maya is a ritual comparable to the ancient ballgame. I offer an explanation of why the soccer game acts as must of acted back in the times the ballgame was played a cornerstone of social cohesion that has endured.

The ball game has the essential elements of a ritual: rupture with daily life, creation of a specific time-space frame, repetitive and codified conduct, metamorphosis of hierarchies and roles, emotional agitation, symbolic richness of the values placed at play, drama performed, sacrifices made (cf Turner 1966). These elements make the modern game similar in its sacred importance to the ancient ballgame.

A soccer game is more than just a group of men playing on a field; it is also a symbolic arena for player competition and ritual events in which players communicate ideas and meanings through the details of play. In the case of the Maya game, the players are all male and they utilize the game as a kind of “ritual combat” creating social hierarchies of dominance among themselves. Through the fervor inherent in the contemporary soccer tournament among Bay Area Maya, immigrants create symbolic connections to their ancestors and the ancient ritual of the Maya ballgame. I would like to

emphasize the symbolic importance of the game: its meaning, its influence in the daily lives of the participants and how the game influences the way the participants view the world and themselves.

The Mesoamerican ballgame is called *ulamaliztli* or *tlachtli* in Nahuatl, the language of the Aztecs that is still today spoken by more than 1.45 million people in Mexicoⁱ. In Maya, the ballgame is referred to as *pok-ta-pok*. The game was played in a wide region of Mesoamerica, as far south as Nicaragua and as far north as Arizona, the southwest of the United States in pre-Columbian times (Taladoire 2001). Archeologist Eric Taladoire describes more than 15 hundred ball courts which have been excavated in pre-Hispanic Mesoamerican cities. These archeological sites provide evidence of the importance of this game in the political, economic, spiritual, and symbolic and ways of life of the ancient Maya. The game originated at least 1400 years before Christ, and forms of it still survive under the name *Ulama* (Taladoire 2001), providing a continuing tradition over three millennia. Along with the calendar and the development of corn, the ballgame was a defining cultural trait of the Mesoamerican ancient world. The details of how the game was played varied considerably by location. Taladoire explains that inscriptions reading “playing ball” or different representations of players are found even on sites that have no court, providing evidence of the importance of symbolic representations of this activity. Like contemporary sports, this ancient game had similar political, economic and spiritual aspects. From the form of the court and the reports of the colonial Spanish, it involved opposing teams keeping a ball, probably made of rubber, in play.ⁱⁱ Archaeologist Taledoire (2003) argues that evidence shows strong similarities between the ancient ball game and contemporary *ulama* in terms of gear and ball hitting methods.ⁱⁱⁱ

Cultural transmission and the essential component of individual creativity, is what gives human culture its dynamism and capacity to change the environment in which they live. Language serves as an elemental way of transferring culture; therefore, the process of communication among humans, as well as their ways of adapting to their environments, is part of a constant selection among cultural traits around them. I posit that the game is a way of communication, a way to understand one’s place within the social sphere. The ball game did not die as a cultural practice but it only changed.

There are currently thirteen different variations of the contemporary Mesoamerican ballgame. These are all played today in diverse areas of Mexico. These games survived colonialization and the Spanish Inquisition and adapted to new ways of engaging in recreation that did not involve a physical structure (Turok 2000). Just as the religion of Christianity became highly syncretized with native beliefs, the ballgame also displayed syncretism— shifting in form and played without the courts. The balls were the elemental principle of the game not the courts. The Maya use of the rubber tree was primarily to make balls to utilize in a different variety of games. This gave the trees a special symbolic dimension that is also apparent in many pictographic expressions throughout the region (Sharer & Traxler 2006).ⁱⁱⁱⁱ Balls in games such as soccer, rugby, football, tennis, baseball, and basketball have been revolutionized by the rubber ball invention of the Mayas; thus, the ball is a powerful cultural tool for the cohesion of masses. However, the game of Ullama or the *pok-ta-pok* are not nearly as commonly played as soccer. For that reason it seems pertinent to make the analogy that just as the ancient ball game appealed to the passions of the inhabitants of the Maya region in the past, soccer now brings together the Maya hidden communities of Oakland.

Outside observers have noticed the symbolism of the game since the first encounters among Europeans and Americans. DeLanda describes a high degree of symbolism imbedded in the ballgame due to its relation to Maya creation of myths; ballgame courts were seen as thresholds of the underworld. For that same reason, it is also relevant that the elements and relation of the ballgame to sacrifice have come mainly from the written source of the *Popol-Vuh*, which also refers to the symbolic

meaning of threshold of the underworld. For some, the *Popol-Vuh*^{liv} is known as the sacred Maya book or the Maya Bible for the K'iche's of Guatemala (Tedlock 1996).

In the second part of the *Popol-Vuh*, the hero twins take on the lords of the underworld in a defiant ballgame. According to this story, the lords of the underworld call the hero twins to a deadly challenge in Xibalba (the underworld). The story connects the courts and the game itself with the creation of the world, and its shape as formed by the mythic heroes. In this context, life itself is a symbolic ballgame against the lords of the underworld, Xibalba, and this loss symbolically represents death. To play ball is to be alive. And, to be alive is playing ball, winning is associated with fertility, and loss with death.

Enrico, a Jakalteco from Huehuetenango exclaimed:

For me coming to play every Sunday is the most fun thing in my life! I really don't like to go out. You know it's dangerous for us. Besides the absolute necessary things like going to work, taking my kids to school and buying food for the house.... However, I can't resist to expose myself and come play. It's the only fun activity I do, besides that is only work..... coming to play here makes me feel like somebody, it really helps my self-esteem. We, the Maya, have always played ball.

I put forth that despite a variety of differences, the contemporary soccer tournament is following an evolving tradition of the ancient Maya ballgame. The soccer tournament in Oakland continues to be essential in facilitating social structures and practices of modern Maya. Today, soccer plays a central ritual role for the Maya who I studied in the Bay Area, in the same way the ancient ballgame played a central ritual role. As explained, there are a growing number of Guatemalan Maya in the Oakland area. These populations began arriving during the thirty-year civil war and have settled and built families here. Their activities are important to defining themselves as a group within a highly multicultural and multilingual context. By creating activities that symbolize the rituals of communality, they highlight their ancestral qualities.

The soccer game in these Guatemalan Maya community serves as a central pillar not only of community life, but also of the creation of the local heroes and villains, the brave and the weak. It gives continuity to the ritual cycle of the year, in an integration of ancient and modern sport. According to sociologist Michelle Maffesoli, tribes are constituted through a sentiment of belonging that encompasses a set of specific ethical behaviors that relate to each member of the tribe to each other member (Maffesoli 1990:241). For ancient Maya and contemporary Bay area Maya alike, the game creates a common tribal identity, complemented by work and family life.

In the case of my participants the space of the game becomes a ritual space for the symbolic assertion of their right to migrate, reinstating their rebellious response to adversity. In many ways, the game represents the struggle between undocumented immigrants and U.S. authorities, good and evil, dark and light, life and death, God, family, masculinity, gender, and social mobility, all are all part of the cultural displays that are recreated in the soccer tournament that I argue is a continuation of the Maya ballgame. Both the past and present games constitute ritual combat (cf. Taladoire 2001), set out rules of engagement, and shape and maintain notions of manhood.

Anthropologist Christian Bromberg (2000) explains that soccer is a complex interaction of distinct human consciousness, and has six characteristics in common with rituals. First, rituals and sports both provide a rupture from everyday life, encompass specific temporal and special boundaries and have a

Carefully programmed cycle of ceremonies, elaborated through words, body language and manipulated objects.

Rituals, including sports, allow individuals to maintain a sense of cohesive community with one another. Emile Durkheim proposed that the main objective of religious ceremonies is creating a unified community. He saw ideas about God or gods as symbolic representations of the collective consciousness of this community, which organizes individual destinies around the collective needs and norms. Rituals create and recreate community awareness of identity and social belonging (Turner 1977). Victor Turner elaborated on Durkheimian ideas in his definition of *liminality* as a condition of breakage from everyday life which makes rituals into thresholds, and of *communitas* as the sense of belonging created anew with each ritual enactment (Turner 1977:125-30).. Andres Fabregas (2001), a Mexican anthropologist, argues that soccer, the most popular sport in the world, is also the biggest spectacle of the world, a passion that is felt throughout the planet. Participating in local soccer games symbolically ties individuals into local leagues, but it also links disparate world areas in communal support for teams.

In the case of the Oakland Hills Maya soccer game, the undocumented status of most players and spectators also forms a nexus of connection and community. The tournament was originally organized by El Puma. In the context of my research at the soccer game, El Puma was insistent that I not use identifying information about the players or the location of the game. For this reason I am will not name locations, origins of players, or diversity of languages on any given game day. Even in such cases where Maya gather publically and “visibility” there remains a sense of hiding.

For the first game, I arrived at seven in the morning on a beautiful Sunday morning. It was my first time there, so, besides el Puma, I only knew a handful of people. Almost every player in the field had someone from their close kin who came with them. Each team had eleven players on the field and two or three on the bench. It was the beginning of the season, so the first game involved the “Eagles”, champions of the last season, playing against the “Volcanoes” of San Marcos. The game was heated with the Eagles fiercely defending their champion’s status. By the first half, they had proven dominance in the field with a score of three to zero. I was bored with watching and I wanted to participate. I asked El Puma how feasible would it be for me to get in to a team. He smiled and said, “Sorry Carlos, there is a waiting list, we even have another four teams that wanted to play but ... we don’t have the money to rent the field for a bigger tournament with more teams.”

El Puma continued on the importance of these places of gathering:

We, el Grupo Maya, place essential importance on these types of activities... this is what the people need... a place to feel safe, to be outside in the sun, do healthy things like playing soccer. Our communities are plagued with drug addiction and alcoholism, so this soccer tournament helps us get good funding to draw the youth into a healthy lifestyle. And it helps us to create a community, it is really the only place where no matter your religion, no matter where you are from within Guatemala, no matter how economically good or bad you are... this is a place where we can be and feel safe from immigration raids. They haven’t found us here so far! But, it is hard work... we are not always successful.

The games were rough and the players aggressive. For the players it was something much more important than just some game. It is a place where they can reclaim their manhood threatened by their stigmatized, powerless situation in the U.S. It is a game of Maya survivors, a game of Maya adventurers and a game of warriors. One participant, Rogelio asserts the connection between being a man and playing soccer, "Since I can remember we played soccer in our town. It is something that if you are a man, you just do."

Through the season, I went to several games to conduct interviews with a diversity of Guatemalan Maya. All of the players I interviewed played soccer in teams in the towns they were came from, and, thus, many of them knew each other from back there. In most of the Bay Area, teams were made up of players from the same region in Guatemala, so the tournament also reflected the pre-immigration identities and sense of regional pride making social ties from their homeland transferred into their migration experience.

I could often count three or four Maya languages among the spectators present per game. However, unlike the Yucatecs who do speak Yucatec Maya in the Bay Area see their language as a marker of identity, the Guatemalan Maya rarely speak their various native tongue outside their families. Consequently, the predominant language through the games was in Spanish. The main aim of the interviews was to have a qualitative sample of what the game meant to them. In the following, I present small excerpts from longer interviews with different players through out many different games.

The soccer game also becomes a place they could "openly" express religious beliefs and were intertwined with the game. Religious values transcend into participants' self-perceptions. Participant Juanito explains, "I always ask God for his blessing before entering the field... I know God is not going to score a goal for us. I understand that it's us who are playing, not God, but I do ask for his blessing. It's important to be on his good side not only in the game but in our daily lives. I know that if I am good in my life I will be a better player; however, if I am a bad person, I know I won't be a good player..."

It is clear that there is a special configuration that delineates the time and space of the game. By establishing a field, this place becomes a sanctuary in the industrial world where families can observe the game and bring out feelings of belonging. Just like in a religious ceremony, here, in the soccer tournament there is a distribution of space for the ones who observe versus the ones who enact the ritual, creating a natural stratification among the group.

Just as local churches bring worldwide religious norms to specific regions, local soccer tournaments bring a connection to the wider realm of soccer fanship around the world. It is that sequential frame of the game that resembles the religious rite. The players become representatives of a region and through their play they create a collective memory that forms an elemental part of the heritage of collective knowledge created and shared by the followers of the tribe. Every Sunday, by playing and sharing this rite, they write their collective memory and thus communal history. New identities through the soccer game create a sense of *communitas* among participants, a sense of cohesion and solidarity, and a "oneness" of identity for Guatemalan Maya often missing in their daily life. Anastasio expresses what the space of the ballgame provides for him:

Being a gardener is nice, I am glad to have a job that lets me pay for my families needs, but here, in the soccer game, is who I really am. Here is where we see our faces and

know who is who... just for the time we are players. We are not undocumented, we are not poor, we are not migrants... we are warriors playing in the field and that feeling... I love it.

In conclusion, the Maya soccer tournament in Oakland CA has a similar symbolic importance to today's immigrant community as the ballgame of old had to the ancient Maya. The main function of the ball game is still the same- to help a fragmented society have a central cohesive ritual that dramatizes their struggle, synchronizes their sense of identity and solidifies an understanding of their place. Both the ancient ball courts and the contemporary soccer field represent a sacred space where the battle for life and death takes place. The sacred time-space continuum is delineated and the performance has a stage.

The undocumented nature of the lives of Maya immigrants and their forced invisibility in public, make it even more important to have the opportunity to gather in an arena in which everyone feels relatively safe and fosters the core values of the culture. The game, today as in the past, allows the Maya community to observe itself, and to witness its imagined community in flesh and bone, in action and competition, in the communal enjoyment of the sacred event of the game.

8) Conclusion

"We, Mayans in the U.S., are leveled undocumented. They call us illegal. They persecuted us in Guatemala, they chased us in Mexico, and, here, in the U.S., many people have gotten deported. For us the war is on and we are still surviving." El Puma

As I finished writing the dissertation two events came to light that could be contextualized in the arguments of my research. In the first instance, my colleague, Jennifer, and I were waiting for our food at a burrito truck in El Cerrito California when we ran into people from the local rock climbing gym. We overheard them talking about Mexico and initiated conversation. One of the two, a biology student at UC Berkeley who studied in the jungle of Chiapas, stated, "These Maya people were so isolated that they didn't even know that Guatemala existed nor had they had even heard about or knew of the U.S.!" Her intentions appeared not to put down the Maya, however, she was inferring the Maya were isolated and ignorant—unaware of their geographic position as a country. The graduate student was surprised when I told her that there are thousands of "real" Maya around the Bay and that one of them also climbed in the same gym. I point out this conversation to illustrate the continuous "Othering" (Said 1994) of the Maya facilitating a discourse that misrepresents them as "faraway" people, "exotic" or uneducated, when, in fact, they play an active role in the American workforce and continue to maintain their diverse culture here in the Bay Area. The second event took place in Mexico's International Airport. A photo exhibition "*B'ak'tun trece Legado Maya*" (*Thirteen B'ak'tun a Maya Legacy*), of the ancient Maya culture sponsored by the Mexican Institute of History and Anthropology (INAH) was held in the airport. The gallery of photos presented were characterized by an Orientalization of the history of the indigenous populations—magnificent ancient temples and statements about the so called Maya 2012 "prophecies." By only highlighting the ancient Maya cities and ignoring the Maya's contemporary plight, the exhibit reinforced the Orientalizing of the Maya.

This extensive research among diverse group of migrants from the Macro-Maya culture who are originally from Yucatan, Chiapas and Guatemala, helps illuminate that the migration experience Maya face is a diaspora. I trace the history of the regions they originate from to illustrate the complex sociopolitical contexts that influence their trajectories. I aim to contribute to anthropological perspectives on Maya migration from both Guatemala and Mexico to the U.S. in order to specifically address the similarities and differences between their experiences to accentuate the interconnected relationship between U.S. policies, nation building in Guatemala and Mexico and a global neoliberal market

My participants' stories provide evidence that there is a need to alleviate the unequal social status that these Maya migrant populations are still facing today in Guatemala, Mexico, and the United States. I hope this work contributes to measures that demand more humanitarian border policies as well as national immigration policies. There is a great need to understand the unjust conditions the Maya face daily, view the Maya as a diaspora and recognize that their plight and settlement in the U.S. are intertwined with the colonial and nation building history and the violence promulgated against indigenous populations by U.S., Mexican and Guatemalan. I propose that Maya should have open access across national boundaries as an act of repatriation for the centuries of dispossession and abuses that they have faced. California migration is not only vital to agricultural work but also to service-related work, construction and other manual labor jobs. These occupations are filled with young migrants from Maya areas.

The Maya in the U.S. today are made invisible by the very institutions that benefit from their cheap labor and essentializing representations. They are orientalized by profit-making institutions such as Hollywood and the *National Geographic* or used as tourist propaganda by Guatemalan and Mexican institutions. Yet, the Maya have found spaces “visible” from the hidden communities in which they reside, in which they have found creative ways to survive and foster.

Important to recognize is that the Maya experience is overshadowed by essentializing views that permeate the mass media and various discourses involving migrants in the U.S. Contrary to the discourse on immigration that pins migrants as the “poor rural Maya”, the “uneducated non-English speaker or non-Spanish-speaker”, or the “victims of history”, my interviews with Maya from Chiapas shows the strong presence of resistance practices. Discourse on the migrant as filling an illusionary static category of “victim”, “uneducated” or “feeder” off the U.S. economy falsely permeates and understanding of who the Maya really are and how their experiences also weave into the economic fabric in the United States. Discourses involving migrants need to change to reflect the active diversity I capture through my participants’ narratives. The experiences lived by Chiapanecan Maya are more illustrative of a counterculture existing in the “in between” on both sides of the border.

The Yucatan participants share some “success” stories, but, more often hardship experiences. Analyzing the conditions that have forced them from their homelands support the overarching argument that the “Maya” “migration” experience is, indeed, a diaspora. The diversity of experiences understood through the narratives of my participants help breakdown the monolithic interpretations and representations of the “Maya” and the migration experience perpetuated by the prevailing anti-immigrations discourses.

Drawing on the context of two specific events, a Maya sunrise ceremony and a soccer tournament, the Guatemalan Maya I interviewed conveyed the ways in which the invisible becomes “visible” in ritualized practices fostering cultural and personal exchange as well as a sense of belonging to a Maya community. Maya from Guatemala recreate homeland practices despite living in a constant state of fear in their new life in the U.S. Still present among all undocumented participants, was the feeling that they can never be fully “visible” in their everyday practices. I juxtapose a present ball game to the ancient one to illustrate how games are ritualistic practices that have, historically, and at present, nurtured a sense of belonging.

The Maya history of survival within the current world system has suffered the effects of war and the hegemonic order imposed to control their representations as being as “mythical” Maya or undocumented and unwanted “illegal” workers. They are Maya migrants that are under economic forces to make the quest north a necessary option. They are part of a culture that, until recently, has experienced an open war on diverse fronts. By being divided by colonial borders, what should be the Maya nation is dominated by other nations that actively reenact political and civic traditions of exclusion towards indigenous people.

Through the ethnography, my participants revealed that migration is a form of resistance. The unlikely Maya is not a group of rural individuals who are defenseless against a hegemonic order, but, rather, they are rebels of a system and survivors of social and political forces that have greatly affected the Maya area. Activists, community organizers, survivors of the war, a play writer, electricians, gardeners, teachers, Maya priests, day laborers, anarcho punks, soccer players, climbers are individuals that have, through great risk, been able to settle in the Bay Area. However, the double discrimination Maya face, in their home countries for being indigenous and in the United States for being undocumented, is a hurtful reality that could be alleviated through more humane border policies in North America.

There is a structural transformation and dynamic process of the economic reconfiguration that take place every time a Maya makes it across the border and begins a life working and sending money to their families. By breaking the law, millions of immigrants have contributed enormously in remittances to their home countries. Even though migrants are persecuted in the U.S. their labor is welcomed in a political and social environment that is constantly stigmatizing them as “illegals” who are breaking the law (Parson 2011). They are not, however, viewed through the immigration discourse as workers providing elemental services that contribute the U.S. economy. What this research shows the insidious underlying contradictions that the notions of a “democracy” or the so-called “American Dream” rest upon. My findings demonstrate the way these migrant workers survive in a system which does not recognize them as protected under the same free market principles that it advocates. The simple argument is that a U.S. company can look internationally for opportunities for profit while at the same time workers who are looking to earn a “profit”, to feed and house their family, are labeled “illegal” aliens if they pursue the same international opportunities.

The Maya are only one of the recent waves of immigrants that have arrived to the U.S. I hope to provide a compassionate view of these recent immigrants to argue for the need to recognize the growing interdependence of the regions in the North America. Instead of mistreating the Maya workers they should be welcomed and given equal rights. Acknowledging the growing economic interdependence among the regions would better the quality of life of people in all the regions.

In contrast with the anti-immigration discourse that is fed to the American public through government, mass media, education and other institutions, not all immigrants want to live the rest of their lives in the U.S. Evidenced by my research, there are a variety of intentions and needs among the Guatemalan and the Mexican Maya as they live their lives in the United States. From all my interviews with recent arrivals the objective was clear: come to the U.S., save some money and go back to one’s home countries. Besides the exiles from the Guatemalan civil war, coming to the U.S. temporarily appears to be the intention of the thousands that have settled here. Many dream of sometime going back home, but the stark reality proves otherwise. Hence, the networks and settlements that have taken root in the last decade are a direct result of the life-threatening circumstances that people face through their travels in order to go back and forth over the border. Guatemalans who escaped the war do not want to go back. However, most Mexican immigrants, the Maya included, wish to go back home with enough money saved to start a business. Going back home would be easily facilitated with a better immigration arrangement—one in which people could go and come as they please in accordance with what the labor market necessitates. With this stipulation, the market should be fair for all workers alike. I suggest the following two positive reforms: a special immigration reform for indigenous people and the U.S. recognition of the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). The Declaration defends the collective and individual rights of indigenous peoples in relation to self-government, land, education, employment, health, and most importantly to their right to participate in decision-making processes in regard to issues of development that will affect their lands, lives, and livelihoods. An elemental point of this accord is that along with the International Labor Organization (ILO) this declaration guarantees the rights of international workers.

One cannot think of border policies without taking into account the ongoing Mexican drug war. The investment of millions of dollars has not been successful in managing the border and making it more secure, nor has the implementation of tighter border security (Nevins 2002, Cornelious 2005, Castañeda 2007). While Mexico is going through a drug war, the main market in the U.S. has not been affected. While American States like Colorado and Washington vote to legalize Marijuana, in Mexico the drug war has killed thousands of people and the police and military force have been used against

organized peaceful social movements. Both Mexican and U.S. policies focus on criminalizing social movements and prospective workers alike, while ignoring the real struggle of working class people. Despite all the efforts to control the border, it has not reduced undocumented migration nor the power of the organized crime. From all the interviews and relationships I developed with migrants in the three countries in which I worked, it is clear that the indigenous migrant community has strengthened transnational ties as a reaction to the increasing difficulties they face. The collaboration and the social networks created through these transnational communities along with advances in technology have made possible a constant communication across distant areas.

Migrants are not only defying the laws and power structures of their own country, but faced unarmed and defenseless the border that has accounted for more daily deaths in the world (Cornelius 2005). More money is spent on the U.S. Mexico border than any other for security systems and border vigilant personnel (Nevins 2002). Despite all these disadvantages, the migrants take advantage of living at the margins of society to be able to infiltrate and later settle into U.S. territory. The migrant evades all geographical and legal power structures, and acts in the shadow of “illegality.” In this way, the migrant develops family and community structures that are part of their daily life and underpins the survival strategies in the Maya family life cycle.

The nature of adventure that the migrant experience connotes is a central liminal phase that binds these communities together. These rebellious acts are reenacted and performed in various ways— from religious gatherings, theater performances, activism and sporting events. The embodiment of their experiences always is a constant reminder of their ongoing struggle. Witnessing these various gatherings, it became clear that memory is embodied in social practice (Connerton 1989, Bourdieu 1991). And these diverse rituals are the embodied phenomena that create social cohesion. These rituals give evidence of the ways that these particular communities convey and sustain their memory and history. Their undocumented status and their past plight complicates their vulnerable social situation and helps explain why their experiences are engulfed in a dimension of political power where their social memory and presence without documentation in the U.S. is a clear marker of rebellion. Therefore, their stories challenge the version of history portrayed in the mass media that wants to shape history through a selective glass of convenience, highlighting the great Maya past and ignoring the rebellious and long-lasting Maya adventures.

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ⁱ Linguists and Mayanists suggest the use of Mayan with a “n” only when referring to language. The use of Maya is employed when referring to the different cultures of its people

ⁱⁱ Historical and cultural influence has resulted in some Mayan languages having more than one spelling.

ⁱⁱⁱ Outside the context of my research has resulted in some Mayan languages children and toddler parks of spelling.

ⁱⁱⁱ Outside the context of my research I encountered Maya females in the children and toddler parks of Berkeley, where I would take my kids in their first years. I talked uncountable hours with Maya women who worked as nannies in the area. None of these conversations were recorded nor counted in my sample. However, they have provided me with an “off-the-record” rich understanding of the female experience that I believe can be the central subject of a different research.

^v http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/mexicos-crime-wave-has-left-up-to-25000-missing-government-documents-show/2012/11/29/7ca4ee44-3a6a-11e2-9258-ac7c78d5c680_story.html

^{vi} <http://www.state.gov/j/inl/merida/>. The Merida Initiative is an unprecedented partnership between the United States and Mexico to fight organized crime and associated violence while furthering respect for human rights and the rule of law.

^{vii} <http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/history/lang--en/index.htm>

^{viii} http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf

^{ix} Yucatec Maya is spoken by 1,475,575 people. It is the third largest language of Mexico, Spanish being the first and Nahuatl, the second. For specifics on the number of speakers of each of the Maya languages and other Mexican languages, see <http://www.cdi.gob.mx/index.php?id_seccion=660>. Or visit Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas

<http://www.cdi.gob.mx/index.php?id_seccion=660>

^x <<http://www.providence.edu/polisci/students/indianismo/indigenous.html>>.

<http://www.prensarural.org/wnu20050918.htm>, <http://alainet.org/active/24873&lang=es>

<<http://www.prensaindigena.org.mx>>

^{xi} Chapter 2 is a worked version of an article by the name “*The National Geographic Orientalization of the Maya*” published in the book edited by Ignacio López-Calvo. 2009. *One World Periphery Reads the Other: Knowing the “Oriental” in the Americas and the Iberian Peninsula*. Newcastle, England: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

^{xii} My own translation.

^{xiii} My own translation.

^{xiv} Lochhead, Carolyn, “Workplace immigration raids called harsh, punitive.” *The San Francisco Chronicle*. July 25, 2008.

^{xv} It is not specified in the article if the detainees were Maya.

^{xvi} Lochhead, Carolyn, "Workplace immigration raids called harsh, punitive." *The San Francisco Chronicle*. July 25, 2008

^{xvii} The clearest example of this can be seen in the name of the special military forces: The Kaibiles. This special unit acted as THE principal repressive and counter-insurgency bastion against the leftwing guerrillas and the civilian, peasant, Maya population. The name "Kaibil" comes from Kayb'il B'alam (Kaibil Balam), a Mam indigenous leader.

^{xviii} FAFG is a non-governmental organization that investigates, documents, and raises awareness of human rights violations through forensic examination. FAFG's forensic anthropologists exhume clandestine mass graves and analyze human remains in order to enable criminal prosecutions to be brought against the perpetrators, many of whom are walking Guatemala's streets freely. To date, FAFG have exhumed over 400 graves and examined 3000 skeletal remains. <www.fafg.org>

^{xix} *La Jornada*, 2004: Feb. 4

^{xx} http://www.focus-economics.com/en/economy/news/Mexico-Remittances-Remittances_contract_for_13th_consecutive_month-2013-09-02

^{xxi} <http://latino.foxnews.com/latino/news/2013/04/02/remittances-to-mexico-drop-11-pct-in-february/>; http://abcnews.go.com/ABC_Univision/News/remittances-mexico-feels-pain-us-recession/story?id=17483329#.Ubj8Y-ud4fo

^{xxii} http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/publications/ois_ill_pe_2011.pdf

^{xxiii} Generations of Mexicans who through the academy or political institutions solidified the state's grasp on indigenous cultures.

^{xxiv} <http://www.coneval.gob.mx/coordinacion/entidades/Documents/Chiapas/pobreza/PPT%20Chiapas.pdf>

^{xxv} <http://www.coneval.gob.mx/coordinacion/entidades/Paginas/Chiapas/pobreza.aspx>

^{xxvi} Tourliere, Mathieu. Los Migrantes Carne de Narco. Proceso No. 1925/ 22 de septiembre 2013

^{xxvii} The word *cholo* was a derogatory Colonial Mexican term for an Indian or mixed Indian-Mestizo person from Mexico. Today it is associated with working class Latino fans of hip hop music, and participants in the lowrider car culture. Mexicans tend to see this style as originating in the United States, but it is older than the current migration, and spread largely through popular music (Valenzuela 1988, Agustín 1996). Many youth who have never been to the U.S. use it in Mexico. Many Mayas, like Rockrigo, arrive already using the cholo style.

^{xxviii} <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2013/02/20/mexicos-disappeared>

^{xxix} Plan Merida refers to the money provided by the U.S. government to start a drug war in Mexico.

^{xxx} Beletsky L, Martinex G, Gaines T, et al. "Mexico's northern border conflict: collateral damage to health and human rights of vulnerable groups". *Rev Panam Salud Publica*. 2012;31(5):403-410; see also Reuters, "Peasants in Rural Mexico Claim Army Brutality," 17 November 2003.

^{xxxi} Zabludovsky, Karla. January 26, 2013. "Mexican Violence Prompts Self Policing by Civilians". *New York Times*. P. A7.

^{xxxii} "Mexican Rights Panel Slams Army for Drug war abuse." *Reuters.com* 2008/07/11.

^{xxxiii} It is important to note that NAFTA may have had some effects on particular areas of the country to force migration, but migration was well under way before NAFTA was ever implemented. As Castañeda (2012) points out, migration is the story of at least 100 years of Mexico-U.S. relations, so it cannot have been caused by NAFTA. NAFTA has had a different affect in areas where migration to the

U.S. is not part of economic survival strategies. Because of the agricultural driven economy of Chiapas NAFTA has played an important role in propelling migration.

^{xxxiv} In 2008, the Pew Hispanic Report reported that there were 12.7 million Mexican immigrants residing in the U.S. and among those 7,000,000 were undocumented.^{xxxiv} The Mexican migrants residing in the U.S. maintain the internal consumption and the scarce economic activity of Mexico. In 2003 the Mexican Bank calculated that remittances sent by Mexican migrants in the United States to Mexico totaled U.S. \$13,266,000, which was 35.2 % more than in 2002, and double what was calculated in 2000. Remittances constitute the second most valuable sector of Mexican gross national product after petroleum. This number has already surpassed tourism and international investment.^{xxxiv} However, due to the U.S. economic crisis in 2008, a decrease in job opportunities and a weakening dollar against the peso, remittances have dropped^{xxxiv}. Data from Mexico's Central Bank reports that between August 2011 and August 2012, remittances from the U.S. to Mexico dropped by 11.6%.

^{xxxiv} Remittances were sent by millions of Mexicans who on the one hand are economically expelled from Mexico to the U.S. due to the lack of job opportunities in Mexico, but in the other, they represent the ongoing labor interdependence that has characterized both nations for the last hundred years. The Governments of Vicente Fox, Felipe Calderon as well as regional and local authorities have been unable to fix the flaws in their unsuccessful economic policies. Public policies have done nothing to elevate the quality of life of the inhabitants of rural areas or low-income people in urban areas of Mexico. And even though the U.S. has spent millions of dollars on militarization of the border, it has not diminished illegal immigration from south to north (Cornelius 2005). As late political analyst Adolfo Aguilar Zinser emphasized, Mexican elites benefit from expelling poor people to the U.S., as it eases social tensions in a tremendously unequal, racist and classist society, and it allows the migrants to prop up the Mexican economy through their remittances. This policy eases political pressure for reform in Mexico.

^{xxxv} <http://dbacon.igc.org>

^{xxxvi} The middle men who go to the *ejidos* with trucks to buy the farmers produce and makes a living out of buying cheap produce from the farmers and raising the cost to sell it to the markets in the towns or cities.

^{xxxvii} <http://www.indemaya.gob>

^{xxxviii} <http://cuentame.inegi.org.mx/monografias/informacion/Yuc/Poblacion/default.aspx?tema=ME&e=>

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^{xxxix} Lenin may not appear to be a common name for a Maya. However, Yucatan has a history of leftist idealists, including Lenin's father who was an elementary school teacher in Oxkutzcab. Lenin's father grew up being the son of Maya farmers in the 1960s just as the Yucatecan economy experienced a couple of decades of economic collapse due to the crash of the henequen market. Henequen is the textile product that was replaced in the late 1930's by nylon, causing economic suffering in the area. In those decades, in the midst of the cold war, Mexico took a Pro-Cuban stand, reflected in leftist inclined public education. Lenin's father chose a name for his first born that reflects his political attitude.

^{xl} Archeologists today categorize Maya history based mainly on the archeological data that allow them to reconstruct a very precise timeline from such cultural artifacts as trash pits, obsidian, hearths, pottery and artwork, architectural remains and many burials from commoners to royalty such as tombs which provide evidence of cultural rises and falls and the development of the largest urban centers. Maya studies have allowed scholars to delineate a timeline across the Mesoamerican region to explain its thousands of years of history.

^{xli} The Classic period (300-900 AD) and early Post-Classic (900-1200 AD), produced ceremonial centers and palaces like Uxmal, Labna and Kabah. These marvelous cities were already centuries old

ruins when the Spanish arrived. However, the rivalries that had arisen during the fall of the last Maya cities of the 15th century would continue to influence the political alliances when the Spanish arrived. The last large Maya city-state, Mayapan, fell in 1425. The first Spanish contact recorded on the Maya coast was in 1511, decades after that. When the Spanish arrived, Mayapan had been abandoned for more than seventy years, and there is no record of Maya human sacrifices after that.

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^{xliii} Like many churches and cathedrals in Mexico, it is the largest building in town and stands on the ruins of ancient Maya buildings as a symbol of the Spanish conquest. By tearing down Maya buildings and using the same stones on the same site to build churches, the Spanish represented their power and the new era they brought. Only the ruins of the largest Maya cities remain today.

^{xliv} Beginning in the 16th century, the Spanish began what they called *Reduccion* instituted to organize the "peaceful conquest" of the Yucatan peninsula. There were three main objectives of the *reducción*. The first entailed remaking space, the second aimed to transform the lifeways of the inhabitants of Yucatan, and the third was the imposition of the Spanish language throughout the territory.

^{xlv} How the system uses icons like Cesar Chavez is relevant to the labor rights issue. For instance, San Francisco city named a street after Chavez honoring his legacy; however, this is a gesture made hollow by blind contradiction on the part of city officials. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the street is utilized by undocumented day laborers as a pick-up place for obtaining work; however, Chavez is well known for working relentlessly in organizing documented and undocumented farm workers in California. Workers rights are endangered by the flow of undocumented workers, however, by conceptualizing undocumented workers as international workers, and by adhering the internal laws of the world labor organization, workers rights would not succumb to the interest of the profit makers.

^{xlvi} <http://www.indemaya.yucatan.gob.mx/guia/pagina608af18af1.html?Pagina=60>

^{xlvii} [http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-](http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d099:SN01200:@@L&summ2=m&%7CTOM:/bss/d099query.html)

[bin/bdquery/z?d099:SN01200:@@L&summ2=m&%7CTOM:/bss/d099query.html](http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d099:SN01200:@@L&summ2=m&%7CTOM:/bss/d099query.html)

^{xlviii} <https://www.facebook.com/Grupomaya>

^{xlix} <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB170/index.htm>

^l http://www.inegi.org.mx/prod_serv/contenidos/espanol/bvinegi/productos/censos/poblacion/2010/principales_resultados_cpv2010-2.pdf

^{li} Each city had its own patterns of layout of the ball game courts, different sizes and different locations as well as a great difference in number of ball courts in each location. For example in the City of Palenque, Mexico, where Archeologist Liendo has been excavating for nearly twenty years, there is only one ball court and is highly centralized in relation to the main temples and palaces, whereas in Utatlan, Guatemala, there are a high concentration of smaller and bigger courts and they appear to be highly located in the living areas of the common lay people. Another interesting evolving architectural layout of these courts is that during the classic (250-850 AD) period the ball courts were oriented in a North South axis, whereas in the post classic (900-1419 AD) the courts were oriented in an East-West axis (Taladorie 2003).

ⁱⁱⁱ Taledore (2003) elaborates the following scheme: Two teams play the game, numbering from one to seven players on each side. They confront each other in an elongated court divided into two sides. Accounts of Spanish historians describe how the players could not touch the ball with their hands, and had to use their elbows, wrist and hips. To score entailed hitting the ball in to an end zone or making a shot that could not be returned, such as in contemporary tennis, ping pong and volleyball. Friar Diego De Landa (DeLanda 1966) reports that in the ball courts that have one single ring in each side of the courts wall, a sudden victory shot could be delivered if the ball went through. However, such shoots were extremely rare and considered very lucky, so lucky that if the player got the ball through the arrow he could call claim rewards from the members of the audience, a strong motivation for crowds to hurry out if someone made such a shot (Scharer & Traxler 2006:214)

ⁱⁱⁱⁱ The importance of the ball comes yet more relevant as the Spanish, and especially the Basque, also had a ballgame and were fascinated by the rubber ball of the Americas. As a consequence, the American rubber ball deeply influenced and revolutionized the ballgames in Europe to the extent that today most balls have rubber in them (Turok 2000).

^{iv} The book is divided into four parts. The first section describes the creation of the world; therefore the narrative contains mythical characters and supernatural beings. In the second part, the book tells the story of the fight between the twin hero brothers Hunajpu and Ixb'alanke against the lords of the underworld. The third part explains the creation of the cornmen and their propagation throughout the world. The fourth and final part tells of the royal lineage of the K'iche's until the arrival of the Spanish in the 16th century (Tedlock 1996).