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Spears-Rico, Gabriela

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Consuming the Native Other:
Mestiza/o Melancholia and the Performance of Indigeneity in Michoacán

By Gabriela Spears-Rico

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

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in the

Graduate Division

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Committee in Charge:

Professor Thomas J. Biolsi
Professor Carlos Munoz
Professor Rosemary Joyce
Professor Renato I. Rosaldo

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Abstract

This project examines the contested terrain of cultural appropriation within mestizo/indigenous relations in México. Inspired by Phillip Deloria's theory of 'playing Indian,' I sought to understand the concept's applicability to the Mexican context. I utilize performance theory, specifically the performance of racialized identities and the performance of embodied memory, as a lens to examine touristic consumption and as a means to understand the relationship between indigenous identities and *mestizaje*. Employing ethnographic field methods, I consider how both mestizos and natives act as performers in touristic transactions during the Days of the Dead in Michoacan as well as how the commodification of the P'urhepecha dead racializes P'urhepecha Indians as inferior others and impacts P'urhepecha communities.

I pose that mestiza/o visits to Michoacán are motivated by their desire to alleviate mixed identity anxiety; mestizos seek indigenous people to resolve their feelings about the Spanish Conquest and to understand the violent moment of rape which birthed *mestizaje* as well as to encounter their romanticized notion of indigenous primitivity in its purest form. I propose that mestiza/o tourists view P'urhepechas as surrogate stand-ins for their pre-Columbian ancestors while P'urhepechas struggle to represent themselves as contemporary beings invested in the globalized political economy. The mestiza/o longing to tour P'urhepecha communities functions alongside an articulated P'urhepecha fear of being viewed as accessories to an imaginary 'pre-Columbian' landscape which relegates indigenous people to the past.

I argue that mestizos' majoritarian position in Mexican society and their distance from contemporary indigenous realities facilitates their consumption and appropriation of the indigenous dead as well as the commodification of living Indians. Mestiza/o tourists engage in mestiza/o melancholia by mourning what they view as the decline of 'traditional P'urhepecha culture' while not acknowledging their own participation in the ongoing destruction of indigenous communities. Touring indigenous communities and appropriating indigenous culture does not resolve the violence but further propagates it. P'urhepechas, however, consider themselves partners in the touristic relationship with an investment in preserving their communities' intimacy and in controlling how they are perceived, consumed, and toured. P'urhepechas view mestizos as spiritually disoriented, culturally astray people who should be catered to for the sake of profit. The P'urhepecha preoccupation with preserving community intimacy motivates P'urhepechas to engage in acts of resistance such as constructing cheap/imitation cultural goods to sell to tourists, barring tourists from particular festivities, and holding specific ceremonies away from the public eye.

To my daughter, Reina Xareni Spears
the Red Lightning Woman (Miskinaabiwinikwe)

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Introduction

During the summer of 2002, I conducted fieldwork on P'urhepecha women's gendered/ethnic identities in Michoacán for my undergraduate Honors Thesis. Under the guidance of Yvonne Yarbrow-Bejarano and Renato Rosaldo, I set out to compare the experiences of women in San Andrés Tzitzendaro and Zirahuen in order to explore how P'urhepecha women's definitions of indigeneity and empowerment vary in different socio-political contexts. My findings indicated that P'urhepecha women's identities and social positionalities are mediated through motherhood. Maternity grants P'urhepecha women a high degree of reverence, power, and voice in their communities yet also defines their lives according to their ability to bear, raise, and support children.

In August of 2002, I conducted the final interview for my Honors Thesis fieldwork with my primary informant, Rosa, a P'urhepecha nurse and cultural activist. I asked her to express her perceptions of *mestizas* [racially mixed Mexican women] as well as to ponder how mestizas felt about P'urhepecha women. She candidly described some of the major differences between mestizas and P'urhepecha women in terms of dress, physical appearance, language, the foods they cooked, worldviews, spiritual practices, philosophies towards raising children, and the types of houses they live in. What intrigued me the most about her response, however, was her aversion towards mestizas who don traditional P'urhepecha clothing for the Virgin of Guadalupe fiestas on the 12th of December.¹ Rosa was visibly upset and her tone changed as she described how painful it was to watch the procession of mestizas and their children dressed in traditional P'urhepecha clothing as they took offerings to the virgin. She said that she wished mestizas appreciated P'urhepecha women's clothing on a daily-basis instead of parading around in the imitative makeshift outfits one day out of the year.

Rosa's objections result from mestizas wearing traditional P'urhepecha clothes such as *nahuas* [long pleated black skirts), *huanengos* [colorful hand-embroidered blouses], *mandiles* [colorful embroidered aprons, *rebozos* [traditional blue/black P'urhepecha shawls], and ribbons in their braids only for the duration of the Virgin's holiday. P'urhepecha women, however, dress in traditional clothing daily but are called racial slurs such as 'María' and 'guarecita' [the diminutive of 'guare,' a term popularly used to identify P'urhepecha women in Michoacán] because of it.² I asked Rosa if she made and sold clothing for mestizas for the Virgin fiestas, and if she did, why she continued engaging in the sales if seeing mestizas dressed as Indians upset her so much. She replied that she made the clothing to make money but it didn't keep her from having feelings of rejection towards the mestizas who bought them. "They can wear our clothing for one day," she said, "but they'll never know what it's like to be a P'urhepecha woman (Rosa, (08/18/2001)." Rosa's feelings spoke to centuries of what has been a very complex relationship between mestizos and indigenous peoples in México. Her concern over the celebratory-but-temporary appropriation of indigenous identity through the *mestiza/o* [racially mixed Mexican or

¹ Processions and celebrations held throughout México to commemorate the 1531 appearance of the Virgin of Guadalupe.

² Guarecita: Derived from the P'urhepecha word uarhiti, which means 'woman who has born a child' in P'urhepecha. Guarecita is a diminutive of guare. Guare is popularly applied to P'urhepecha women in Michoacán and is considered inaccurate and offensive.

Latin American] act of ‘going native’ inspired me to delve further into how performed notions of indigeneity are policed and contested in Michoacán.

The tourist industry is a critical site for the confrontation between the indigenous claim to cultural/spiritual autonomy and neo-colonial capitalism’s desire to consume indigenous culture and spirituality. Employing performance as the theoretical lens and ethnography as methodology, my dissertation analyzes Mexican tourism to the P’urhepecha observations of the Days of the Dead in Michoacán to survey the complex relationship between Mexican mestizos and Mexican indigenous peoples beyond what’s been historically perceived as a hegemonic binary between colonizer/colonized and dominant/oppressed. My project explores how both mestiza/o tourists and Natives act as mediators and performers in the power-laden struggle to perpetuate representations of indigeneity.

Through the collection of interviews, an involved participant observation, and the analyses of transactions between tourists and P’urhepecha performers in the Pátzcuaro basin, my dissertation fieldwork set out to understand how P’urhepechas perform their identities for tourists as well as how mestizos appropriate, mimic, and perform P’urhepechidad. For example: Why do mestizos tour the P’urhepecha Days of the Dead? What compels them to seek out an ‘authentic’ indigenous experience in Michoacán? What types of crises does observing and/or participating in indigenous rituals and spiritualities resolve for mestiza/o tourists? What does ‘going native’ or ‘playing Indian’ look like in México? Conversely, I wanted to know how P’urhepechas view mestiza/o tourists. Are P’urhepechas complicit participants in tourism? How do P’urhepechas challenge the appropriation/commodification of their traditions and spirituality? And finally, how do P’urhepechas preserve intimacy with their dead in light of very public displays of their mourning processes?

Racialization of Indigenous Peoples in México

Before I delve into the theoretical framework and contextualize my fieldsite, it is imperative to explore the construction of Indianness in the American continent and to historicize *mestizaje* [racial mixing/hybridity brought on by the post-colonial miscegenation between Spanish settlers, indigenous people, and African slaves] as a nationalist structural/ideological myth meant to promote the homogeneity of a ‘mixed’ Mexican identity. My aim is to historicize the racialization and subject-formation of Mexican Indians and to argue that Mexican Indians have, indeed, been constructed and treated as racial subjects first by the Spanish crown and then by the Mexican government. To do this, I will provide two historical sketches of time-periods, which I believe solidified the racial construction of Indians as ‘Others.’ The first is the Spanish Conquest and the colonial period in México (1521-1810) and the second is the period after the Mexican Revolution when México was invested in reconstructing the nation at the detriment of the cultures and languages of Mexican Indians (roughly 1910-1929). This scholarship is not only crucial to grasping how México, as a nation-state, promotes a singular performance of *mexicanidad*, but it also reveals the socially constructed invention of the ‘Indian’ and the ‘mestiza/o,’ thereby contextualizing mestizo/Indian relations.³

³ Mexican identity as informed by nationalist discourses and by Mexican folklore and Mexican popular culture.

Indigenous Monstrosity and the Binary between Conquistador and Other

Christopher Columbus' 1492 expedition opened the doors for Spain and other European nations to carry out centuries of imperialist endeavors in the Americas. In the name of God and Country, Spanish and other European explorers killed and colonized millions of Indians. Entire tribes were wiped out and the remaining were enslaved, removed or severely depleted. Due to the colonizing entities' bad record-keeping, we will never know the extent of the genocide which unfolded. In order to understand how indigenous people in México were racialized by the Spanish Conquest, it is imperative to recognize the importance of Columbus' first expedition and the power of the Spanish Crown in influencing the conquistadors' later exploits.

United States historian David Stannard (1992) traces the origins of white supremacy to the European obsession with Christian superiority, and with the notion that races existed beyond Europe's boundaries. Philosophers like Pliny the Elder had been writing about the existence of 'monstrous races' covered with hair and walking on all fours since the first century; Stannard claims that once these conceptions were integrated into Christian thinking, the 'monstrous races' "came to be associated with the lineage of Cain—they were actual creatures whose strangeness was part of their deserved suffering because of their progenitor's sin (Stannard 1992:167)." It was this campaign for Christianity and against the degenerate, which caused the crusades and holy wars in Europe at the eve of Christopher Columbus' discovery. As Stannard contends, "For almost half a millennium, Christians had been launching hideously destructive holy wars and massive enslavement campaigns against external enemies they viewed as carnal demons and described as infidels (Stannard 1992:192)." In fact, Stannard observes, religious fervor deeply motivated Columbus; he followed his desire to spread Christianity throughout the world. Like other devoted colonizers driven by Christian philosophy, Columbus believed "spreading the gospel meant acceptance of its message by all the world's people and the total conversion or extermination of all non-Christians (Stannard 1992:192)." These religious and historical preconceptions would shape settler attitudes towards the people they would encounter in the Western Hemisphere.

Alongside other scholars of the Spanish Conquest, Mexican historian Sylvio Zavala (1978), argues that Europeans "believed themselves to be closer than any other man to the superior model of the species. That's why they considered themselves called upon to extend their influence over other peoples (Zavala 1978:46)." Their superiority complex along with past experiences of colonizing Moors, Jews, and Africans and treating them as racial others set the stage for the European othering of Indians. Indians fit into the settler imagination within the boundaries that European nations had already set between themselves and others. Venezuelan anthropologist Emanuele Amodio (1993) provides a profound analysis of how these boundaries functioned in *Forms of Alterations*. Amodio believes that geographic boundaries can also create rigid ethnic margins, "Within the constitution of such a boundary," he states, "two semantic oppositions strongly intervene in the definition of identity specific to each culture: Inside/Outside and Us/Them (Amodio 1993:112)." According to Amodio, the process of ethnic othering unfolds upon the Spanish encounter with (and simultaneous distancing from) Indians and in the New World, "Within the process of ethnic identity (the Us), the discovery of the simultaneity of the Other produces a distancing reaction, a 'monstrification (Amodio 1993:113).'"

In early America, such monstrification manifested itself in both physical and cultural forms. Colonizers gazed at the natives' dark skin, nakedness, feathered decorations and muscular physique as well as at their consumption of raw meat, incomprehensible languages and adoration of 'idols' as stark differences separating them from Whites and marking them as inferior (Amodio 1993:143). Furthermore, as French-Bulgarian philosopher Tzvetan Todorov (1999) asserts, to the settler gaze, natives always remained part of the natural world and were viewed as objects circumstantial to the territory, not as independent, autonomous beings. "Columbus speaks about the men he sees only because they too, after all, constitute a part of the landscape. His allusions to the inhabitants of the islands always occur amid his notations covering nature, somewhere between birds and trees (Todorov 1999:34)," Todorov states.

This isn't to say that Columbus thought all the Indians were bad or evil. In fact, Columbus decided that Indians were innately good; as the colonizer once wrote in his diary, "They were the best people in the world and the most peaceable (Columbus, 16/12/1492)." Both Todorov and Amodio conclude, however, that binaries were eventually drawn between the bloodthirsty Taino cannibals that Columbus encountered in the West Indies and the peaceful 'noble savages' he came across in other places. As Todorov states, "In order to remain consistent, Columbus establishes subtle distinctions between innocent, potentially Christian Indians and idolatrous Indians practicing cannibalism and between pacific Indians and bellicose Indians, who thereby deserve to be punished (Todorov 1999:46)." Amodio clarifies that the explorers intentionally and strategically drew this bifurcation between the 'noble savage' and the bloodthirsty savage, "Such categories were magnified with the end of justifying Spanish intervention in the defense of the good from the bad (Amodio 1993:132)," he states. In other words, the bad Indians needed to be exterminated in order to save the ones that were deemed as good.

Indians; the Infantilized Innocents and Expendable Commodities

Exploring these historical perceptions of Amerindians contextualizes Spanish attitudes toward the New World. The legacy of violence and imperialism Columbus left greatly influenced the voyages of future conquistadors like Hernán Cortes who would rely on the racist attitudes held by Spain's politicians and intellectuals to racialize and subdue the Indians in similar ways. One of the main Spanish proponents of such subjugation was philosopher Gines de Sepúlveda, who promoted Aristotle's philosophy of the 'natural slave.' Sepúlveda believed that hierarchy is the natural state of human society and he projected these beliefs onto the state of the Indian, which he perceived to be one of natural servitude. This attitude was reflected in the 1514 *Requerimiento*, a juridical document developed to legally justify Spanish exploration and the invasion of the Americas. Todorov pinpoints the absurdity of reading this Spanish document to Indian leaders without taking into account linguistic barriers of communication, "the Indians could choose only between two positions of inferiority: either they submit of their own accord and become serfs; or else they will be subjugated by force and be reduced to slavery (Todorov 1999:148)." Both Sepúlveda's philosophies and the *Requerimiento* reflected Spanish attitudes toward Indians: submit or be enslaved. The conquest of the Aztecs in México vividly illustrates how the Spanish racialized Indianness.

Hernán Cortes's landing in the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan in 1519 influenced the world as much as Columbus's initial 'discovery.' By that time, Spanish explorers, who were mostly made

up of Spain's working-class criminals, had wrought havoc in the West Indies and devastated the population, reducing them to enslavement. Stannard, Todorov and Zavala all relate how Cortes marveled at the beauty and splendor of the cities and architecture upon his encounter with the Aztecs. Through the use of Indian interpreters, he became well-acquainted with Aztec society and even began to admire the Aztecs. As Todorov observes "the mystery grows: not only did the Spaniards understand the Aztecs quite well, they admired them—and yet, they annihilated them (Todorov 1999:129)." The Spanish belief in completely obliterating the Indians demonstrates that the Aztecs and other Indians were all subjects reduced to the role of productive objects to Cortes (Todorov 1999:130). Cortes treated Indians as expendable commodities because their only use was that of laboring in the mines and *encomiendas* [trusteeship labor system which granted land plots and Indian laborers to Spanish settlers/nobility].⁴

The humanitarian campaign championed by Friar Bartolome De Las Casas coexisted with these attitudes of bigoted hate. De Las Casas opposed Sepúlveda philosophies and, in fact, argued against him before the Spanish Crown in 1550 defending the Indians' humanity on the basis of Christian principles for conversion. According to De Las Casas the fundamental opposition is between believer and unbeliever in Christianity – between the Christian and non-Christian; thus, the potential for equality exists in each man because everyone can become a Christian. De Las Casas even privileged the Indians' position by arguing that they were close to God due to their 'gentleness and decency,' "they are supremely fitted and prepared to accept the word of God and the preaching of the truth (Las Casas 1974:1)." Although he practiced a more benign othering towards Indians, De Las Casas' position still justified and encouraged Spanish expansionism in the Americas. De Las Casas and other religious authorities in the New World did not differ in their loyalty to God and Country from the conquistadors—they merely advocated religious colonialism rather than just enslavement. I would further argue that De Las Casas' characterization of Indians as innocent and child-like was racist because it still portrayed indigenous people as vulnerable receptors of conquest who lacked autonomy in deciding their own destinies.

The desire to acquire Indians in the New World functioned dually: Indians were important for missionaries as souls to be saved as much as they were brute labor for the mines and *encomiendas*. Besides extensive land, Spanish colonizers identified Indian bodies as a lush form of capital populating the hemisphere. According to Amodio, Columbus's initial project was to "use the new continents as a slave reserve for the Iberian Peninsula (Amodio 1993:140)." When he discovered gold rings on the noses of Tainos, Columbus realized that the New World was also rich in precious metals and natural resources, which could enrich Spain. This motivated the conquistadors' desire to seek out all the available gold for Spain and for personal wealth. Spanish violence against indigenous bodies best manifested itself in the enslavement of Indians for work in the gold mines. Because enslavement was viewed as the Indians' natural condition, they were treated very harshly. As Todorov observes, "The conquistador-colonist has no time to lose, they must become rich at once, consequently, they impose an unendurable rhythm of labor, without concern to preserve health, hence the life of their workers; the average life-expectancy of a miner of the period is 25 years (Todorov 1999:134)." Religion was often used to justify the

⁴ Encomienda: Trusteeship labor system which granted land plots and Indian laborers to Spanish settlers/nobility. The Indians were granted to Spanish landowners to help them work the land & were also meant to be educated, civilized, and converted by their Spanish overseers.

enslavement and atrocities. As Zavala notes, “Through their natural servitude [pagans serving Christians], the Indians could improve their customs and elevate themselves to the human truth and virtue of religion (Zavala 1978:46).” The narrative popularized during the times carried the message that by enslaving and converting Indians, Christians were really ‘saving’ them.

The various forms of violence imposed on indigenous bodies during the conquest demonstrate the treatment (and thus racialization) of Indian lives as expendable. Alongside forced removal and the destruction of ways of life, the forms of violence which most impacted the actual loss of indigenous lives were disease, genocide, and enslavement. As we know from various historical records, disease was one of the conquistadors’ primary means of obliterating Indian life. In their demographic study of the genocidal depopulation of the Americas, Argentinian scholars Laura Pinotti (an anthropologist) and Benito Narvaja (a psychologist) estimate that México’s indigenous population declined from 25.3 million in 1519 to 1 million remaining by 1605 (Pinotti et. al 1996:43) – a tremendous loss of human life over a short period of time.

Depopulation methods such as disease, displacement, genocide, and enslavement demonstrate that Indian bodies were regarded as racial Others. Indian lives were valuable as far as their economic measure could determine. The treatment Indians received during the conquest set the tone for how Indian bodies were to be racialized, perceived, and treated by the nation-state thereafter. This is evident by the fact that the exploitative treatment of native peoples in México endured through the colonial period with the institutionalization of indentured servitude through the *encomienda* system and the state-sanctioned concubinage and rape of Indian women’s bodies for the reproduction of mestizos who would, in turn, uphold the capitalist economy with their own labor. Geographer Ruthie Gilmore (2002) defines violence as “any act which would cause premature death (Gilmore 2002:261).” The premature death of the indigenous population of the Americas is not only evident in their massive numerical decline, but also in the consequences they endured as a result of their initial racialization as savage, child-like creatures who needed someone to rule them or who were inconsequential to society. Such racialization made Indian bodies utterly exploitable, rapeable, and destroyable at any time and by any act of violence.

Racialization in Colonial New Spain: Limpieza de Sangre and the Casta Paintings

The legacy of anti-Indian racism haunted colonial New Spain—an era when Spaniards and *criollos* [México’s creole population; people of Spanish descent born in México] continued to view indigenous blood as inferior and relegated indigenous people to the bottom of the *casta* [caste] system.⁵ In *Casta Painting: Images of Race in 18th Century Mexico*, Iona Katzew (2004) argues that the casta paintings embody both national anxiety over race and racial mixing as well as the actual racist attitudes expressed towards people of color in México. The *casta* system was based on the Spanish concept of ‘*limpieza de sangre*’ [purity of blood];⁶ it categorized people according to the different races and racial mixings that comprised society as well as by socio-economic status. The casta system worked alongside a socio-cultural-economic model of

⁵ Casta system: caste system, which categorized people of Spanish, African and Indian descent (and the mixtures derived from miscegenation) according to a social hierarchy based on class, color and race.

⁶ Purity of Blood: A Spanish concept applied to social organization. At the time of the Spanish Conquest of México, Spaniards were obsessed with categorizing people according to how much pure ‘old Christian’ blood a person had (without Muslim or Jewish ancestors).

classification, which divided society along rigid bifurcations: *gente de razón* [people of reason] versus Indians (people without reason), *gente decente* [decent people from the city] versus plebeians (ignorant people from the village), and tributaries versus non-tributaries. Having *calidad* [having 'quality'] was another measure of social stature, which took into account various indicators of 'quality' such as skin-color, occupation, wealth, blood, honor, integrity, and place of origin. The categorizations numbered more than sixteen and demonstrated the criollo and *peninsular* [Spaniards born in Spain who lived in México/New Spain] populations' anxiety and hysteria with maintaining a white supremacist racial/socio-economic regime in colonial México. Both the Spanish Crown and the Church expected people of the lowest castes to pay more taxes and tribute than the people of more *calidad*. It is important to note that other scholars have a more nuanced reading of the *casta* system. In his piece, 'The 'C-word' Again: From Colonial to Postcolonial Semantics,' U.S. anthropologist Stephan Palmie (2007) aligns *casta* with hybridity. He describes the *casta* system as "an impossibly complicated taxonomy of degrees of racial mixtures within a culturally rapidly homogenizing social sector administratively set off both from slaves and from those Native American communities accorded corporate status for fiscal purposes (Palmie 2007:71)." For Palmie, those classified under the *casta* system had more fluidity and access to social mobility as they could intermarry with individuals belonging to other categories within the *casta* system.

As a visual representation of the colonial racial order, the *casta* paintings also reflected the social status attributed to various groups in colonial México. It was important to distinguish between social categories during a time when approximately one quarter of the Mexican population was racially mixed. Mestizos became associated with 'illegitimate birth'—they were often banned from positions of power and prestige. Because Indians were supposed to become the 'New Christians,' they received a certain amount of protection from the Spanish Crown yet were still associated with agriculture and unskilled labor and typically became tribute-paying commoners. In the paintings, Indians are either depicted as savages, plebeians, or commoners in open urban spaces. By analyzing the spatialization of race and the racialization of space (in other words, by looking at who could and could not inhabit spaces) in both urban and rural environments as they're represented in the paintings, Katzew reveals the policing of racial and sexual boundaries drawn by the *casta* system. For example, Indian women were primarily depicted alongside Indian men and occasionally with Spanish men whereas Indian men were rarely depicted with Spanish women because of the threat that indigenous masculinity posed to Spanish femininity. Additionally, Indian women were typically portrayed as being in open urban areas vulnerable to gazes and dangers—with little protection of their femininity, which suggested their sexual availability. The *casta* paintings demonstrate the racialization of Black people and indigenous people as an inferior plague which threatened the purity of the colonial population. This was at least partly due to the legacy of conquistadors' attitudes towards Indians and Black slaves as innately dirty, ignorant, expendable and unnecessary.

The Problematic of Mestizaje and the Indian Question

The racist attitudes in the *casta* paintings carried on to the second crucial period for understanding the racialization of Mexican Indians: the period of reconstruction and nation-building following the Mexican Revolution. This era was heavily influenced by the attitudes of Europhilic dictator Porfirio Díaz, who was known to vehemently deny his own indigenous roots,

called himself 'Latin,' and attempted to lighten his skin, as well as by Mexican intellectuals like José Vasconcelos and Manuel Gamio. Mexican scholars such as Guillermo Bonfil Batalla (1996) and Natividad Gutierrez (1999) identify this period as an assimilationist time during which indigenous people were forced to 'Mexicanize' for the sake of the government's post-revolution nation-building project.

In *Nationalist Myths and Ethnic Identities*, sociologist Natividad Gutierrez draws attention to the paradox inherent to the formation of Mexican identity: the tendency to glorify the contributions of past indigenous ancestors while simultaneously marginalizing living indigenous communities. As she states, "The 'dead Indian people' are the source of authenticity and originality embedded in an exceptional historical past. The 'living indigenous people,' in contrast, bear witness to an enduring pervasive social marginalization, thus contradicting a nationalist agenda of modernity (Gutierrez 1999:98)." Gutierrez attributes the social construction of indigeneity as undesirable in México to the ideological promotion of mestizaje as the national identity and the institutionalized government policy of *indigenismo*. Both forces emerged shortly after the Mexican Revolution.

The reclamation of mestizaje as '*la raza cósmica* [the cosmic race] originated with Mexican philosopher-politician José Vasconcelos, who theorized that the mestiza/o was the ideal racial subject because she/he took the best genetic qualities from each group.'⁷ Vasconcelos, however, attributed the mestizo's sensual/bodily contributions to African and indigenous descent, while claiming that the intellectual contributions came from the Spanish/European root. In order to unify the nation after the revolution and to leave the revolts of working class peasant and indigenous communities in the past, the Mexican government adopted Vasconcelos' theory of *la raza cósmica* as the national identity paradigm, eventually hiring him to design a program that would gradually assimilate Indians. Mestizaje, as a state project born in the 1920s, entailed the adoption of the Spanish language, assimilation of Western values derived from Hispanic influences, and material/intellectual manifestations of Westernized culture.

Alongside his contemporaries, including Mexican thinkers such as Manuel Gamio, Vasconcelos theorized the ideology of *indigenismo*, which institutionally translated into a set of policies meant to obliterate any trace of indigenous culture amongst indigenous people while assimilating them into Mexican national identity and bringing them into 'modernity.' The very philosophical foundation of *indigenismo* was antithetical to indigenous ways of living. As Gutierrez claims, "Indian peoples possessed two historical traits that de facto excluded them from the nation-building process: their indigenous languages and what were perceived to be their anachronistic cultures. Thus for them to become part of the national mainstream, they had to be 'Mexicanized (Gutierrez: 1999:92).'" One of the first examples of an *indigenista* policy was the recruitment of young indigenous men from Indian villages who were sent to learn Spanish in urban places in order to return to teach Spanish to indigenous children in their villages. This effort illustrates *indigenismo*'s intent of erasing indigenous languages.

⁷ *La raza cósmica*, a term which translates into the cosmic race. Vasconcelos imagined the new mestiza/o as the ideal modern racial subject who embodied the best attributes from indigenous, African, Asian, and European genetic contributors. See *The Cosmic Race: La Raza Cósmica* by José Vasconcelos published by The John Hopkins University Press in 1997.

Anthropologist Guillermo Bonfil Batalla (1996) claims that mestizaje's real purposes were ethnocide and de-indianization. "This process, this de-indianization," he argues, "is called mestizaje, but it was—it is—ethnocide (Batalla: 1996:52)." Batalla defines de-indianization as a historical process through which populations that originally possessed a distinctive identity were forced to renounce their identities and cultures with all the consequent changes to their traditions, languages, and ways of life. As he contends, "De-indianization is not the result of biological mixture, but the pressure of an ethnocide that ultimately blocks the historical continuity of a people as a culturally differentiated group (Batalla: 1996:17)." Batalla blames mestizaje for attempting to homogenize México's diversity and for consequently destroying languages and cultures, which should have remained part of Mexican identity. He poses that many of today's rural communities prove the success of mestizaje's efforts towards de-indianization.

It is easy to find communities recognized today as mestizo, but that were Indian at the beginning of this century or even more recently. In these situations it is not surprising that a predominantly Indian culture has been preserved in many areas of life. Thus, the change from Indian community to traditional peasant community is not to be understood as a transformation that implies the abandonment of a Mesoamerican way of life. Rather, it is a process that occurs in the realm of ideology. Change occurs when the pressures of the dominant society succeed in breaking the ethnic identity of the Indian community (Batalla: 1996:46).

According to Gutierrez and Batalla, the post-revolution nation-building project of mestizaje succeeded in racializing Indians as unnecessary impediments to progress. The notion of Indian inferiority was proliferated through popular culture; Diego Rivera's commissioned murals, for example, tended to relegate Indians to the past by depicting pre-Hispanic Indians who made glorious contributions to building ancient civilizations. The exclusion of representations of indigenous people as present-day subjects rendered them as either invisible or marginal to the mighty nation-building project. These interpretations of indigenous cultures and indigenous people as stagnant upheld stereotypes of Indians as conquered subjects and as backward people who were dirty, ignorant, poor, stupid and powerless. This persistent racialization of indigenous people carried on into the present when the majority of Mexicans who identify as mestizos continue denying voice and power to indigenous-identified communities.

Performance, Performativity, and Racialized Resistance

As an examination of the performance of race and ethnicity in México, my fieldwork was largely framed by theories and debates emergent in performance studies. Broadly defined, performance theory studies the dynamics of human actions both onstage and offstage. Richard Schechner (2006), a founding thinker in the field, argues that performance resists definition because it is not preoccupied with purity, "There is no historically or culturally fixable limit to what is or is not 'performance, any action that is framed, presented, highlighted or displayed is a performance,'" he says (Schechner 2006:2). While performance is applied to analyzing the embodied staging of subjectivity, the term performativity is used to understand more nuanced and/or abstract types of performances linked to the interdependence of knowledge and power such as the performance of social institutions like the State. My project is not only invested in understanding public and private performances, but also in their relationship to the social/political/economic power

implicated by the tourist industry, and inexorably, by the Mexican nation-state. I sought to understand why the Native is compelled to perform socially-constructed notions of 'authenticity,' how performances become commodified by tourism/tourists, whether acts of indigenous performative resistance in the struggle for cultural autonomy and self-representation exist in what James Scott (1990) terms 'the hidden transcript,' and what these performances reveal about wider power-structures such as the Mexican nation-state, mestiza/o majoritarian supremacy, and the political economy.

Scholars outside of the field of anthropology have also made contributions and widened our understanding of the relationship between performance and subject formation. In theorizing the performance of identities and the performance of power, feminist scholars such as Judith Butler (1990), Teresa DeLauretis (1987), and Peggy Phelan (1996) challenged the notion of pre-determined/essentialist identities and moved us toward understanding all socially-constructed identities as performed (Butler 1990:187) (DeLauretis 1987:3-5) (Phelan 1996:27). For example, if we reject gender as a biologically pre-determined identity, we can invest ourselves in understanding it as a social construction and/or performance either interpellated by the State or performed against the State. Theorists like Michel Foucault (1979), Louis Althusser (1971), and James C. Scott (1990) influenced performance theory's understanding of how state power invokes performances from individuals by examining the question of power and its interrelatedness with performance and subject formation. While Foucault theorized the micro-physics of power (and therefore, acknowledged the performativity of power, itself) (Foucault: 1979:26), Althusser theorized the function of ideological state apparatus while Scott argued that resistance is inherent to power because of the interconnectedness between the two. Althusser posits that ideology represents the imagined relationship between individuals and their conditions of existence as dictated by the ideological state apparatus (the family, the church, schools, culture, community and religion). Each sector of the population is provided with an ideology or a role that it has to fulfill whether it is the role of the exploited or the role of an agent of repression. For Althusser, there is no ideology except by the subjects and for the subjects and there is no practice except inside ideology. Because individuals are always already subjects, ideology functions by recruiting subjects among individuals or transforming individuals into subjects by the operation of interpellation or hailing. In other words, individuals are always already interpellated or hailed as subjects. They act upon ideologies they've constructed, internalized and are continuously being upheld by the State (Althusser 1971:115).

James Scott counters the claim made by scholars like Althusser that domination functions as a one-way operation to control/suppress the masses. Instead, Scott argues that domination is always interrelated with resistance because relations of domination are simultaneously relations of resistance. He proposes that acts of defiance are not only present in the public transcript, but also in the hidden transcript or away from the gaze of the power-holders (Scott 1990:27). My research is invested in this debate over power, subject formation, and representation because I analyze how the settler colonialist Mexican government and the globalized Mexican political economy produce indigenous bodies as performers (and how indigenous people strategically choose to perform for these institutions) by studying the dynamics of both staged performances and 'private' performances, such as spiritual ceremonies, which are hidden from the public.

Scholars of color such as Paula Ebron (2002) and Esteban Muñoz (1999) broke boundaries in performance studies by examining the question of race in relation to performance and the possibility of performing what previous queer feminists of color termed ‘intersectionality (Ebron 2002:5).’ These scholars addressed not only how race complicates the question of performance, but also how multiple subaltern identities (race/class/gender/ sexuality) can be performed simultaneously and how resistance can function from minoritarian perspectives. Esteban Muñoz’s theory of disidentifications, for example, posits that minoritarian subjects must interact with different subcultural fields as they negotiate their places in a the majoritarian public in order to activate their own senses of self (Muñoz 1999:12). The art of disidentifying illustrates the performance of resistance that queer-identified people, people of color, and queer people of color engage in within both the public and hidden transcripts. There is a justified disidentifying that queer people of color undertake, for example, against their own ethnic/racial communities and/or cultures because of the heteronormativity and heterocentrism endemic to them. At the same time, there is a necessary disidentification that queer people of color engage in within queer social circles and queer culture because of their ‘normative’ whiteness and maleness.

Although Native American scholarship has not been typically associated with the field of performance studies, Phillip Deloria (1998) and Shari Huhndorf (2001) have undertaken important work on the performance of indigeneity. Their work theorizes the act of ‘playing Indian’ or ‘going native’ to explain the white desire to consume and appropriate Native American identities in the United States (Deloria, 21) (Huhndorf, 4). For Phillip Deloria, Indians hold a critical position in United States culture as they are a precondition to the construction of American whiteness. Indigeneity has historically been appropriated to resolve the United States’ dilemma of failing to produce an ‘authentic’ American identity. In *Playing Indian*, Deloria proposes that those seeking authenticity have already defined their own state of ‘inauthentic’ and thus they can easily project authenticity onto the figure of an Other. This Other can be understood in terms of time (nostalgia or archaism), place (the small town), or culture (Indianness) (Deloria 1998:101). White Americans have historically turned to Indianness as proof of their authenticity and as the mark to distinguish themselves from Great Britain, their colonizing mother culture. By appropriating the freedom and rebellion stereotypically attached to Indianness, white settlers in the U.S. have been able to play out ‘the spirit of the continent’ and, more materially, lay claim to American land. In order to complete rite of passage towards claiming aboriginality, however, U.S. whites had to displace the interior Indian Other. It was impossible to conceive American identity without Indians but it was also difficult to absorb indigeneity into United States identity while living Indians remained present. The commodification of American Indian culture allowed whites to invent and perform Indianness on their own terms in order to promote the pretenses that the conquest of American Indians was complete and that Indians no longer existed to counter their land claims. By closely examining United States white identity’s dependent reliance on Indianness, Deloria’s work critically unravels the inner workings of cultural appropriation and the construction of whiteness.

In *Going Native*, Shari Huhndorf builds on Deloria’s work by critiquing how institutional racism in the United States has contributed to appropriations of native culture. The premise of going native (both the book and the concept) is that playing Indian or temporarily donning Native American costume has supported the white settlers’ quest for identity and authenticity since the Revolutionary Era. By invoking primitivism, U.S. whites envision Native Americans as idealized

versions of themselves or as embodiments of values lost in the white world. Huhndorf posits that Americans have historically attempted to create an illusion of white innocence by distancing themselves from the conquest of North America. This erasure of genocide and dispossession from the nation's history promotes the myth of United States exceptionalism and denies the United States compliance with and continued participation in imperialist projects. For Huhndorf, going native upholds U.S. cultural hegemony by reinforcing the established national project and contributes to the invisibility of Native Americans by relying on the assumption of Native disappearance while reproducing stereotypical images of indigenous people.

My work was inspired by Phillip Deloria and Shari Huhndorf's foundational texts. This dissertation represents my attempt to build upon their work as I not only consider the performance and appropriation of indigeneity in the Latin American context but also how the commodification of indigenous cultures and spiritualities is framed within the wider power structure of global capitalism via the tourist industry. I am seeking to answer why indigenous identities, spiritualities, and cultures have become the new terrains of appropriation and commodification in the global capitalist economy as well as how indigenous performers negotiate the commodification/ appropriation of their identities and spiritualities.

Tariacuri's Journey: P'urhepecha Indigenous People's Origins and Destiny

According to the 2005 census conducted by México's National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI), there are approximately 105,000 P'urhepecha language speakers in México and most reside in Michoacán, Jalisco, Baja California, and Estado de México.⁸ It is important to note that the census does not reflect an accurate count of all P'urhepechas as the Mexican government does not choose to identify indigenous people who no longer speak their language as indigenous and is not necessarily invested in making sure that all households in indigenous communities or that all indigenous migrants to urban centers are counted in the census. Additionally, not all families choose to participate in the census and not all people who self-identify as indigenous are counted as such in the census due to their inability to speak their language. Although today many educated P'urhepechas have migrated to México's most popular urban centers in order to practice their professions, the origins of P'urhepechas are in the state where most P'urhepecha language speakers (over 95,000) currently reside.

According to *La Relación de Michoacán*, a group of P'urhepecha warriors arrived in northern Michoacán through the Zacapu region circa the year 1200 and attempted to settle the region for several generations.⁹ Their attempts to build alliances with the inhabitants they encountered were met with resistance and harassment and so they defeated the people they encountered through a military campaign and conquered many towns throughout Michoacán circa 1450 (Craine et. al 1970:120). According to Dr. Claudia Espéjel Carbajal (2013), an expert on *La*

⁸ INEGI

2009 Perfil Sociodemográfico de la Población que Habla Lengua Indígena. Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía. pg. 111.

http://www.inegi.org.mx/prod_serv/contenidos/espanol/bvinegi/productos/censos/poblacion/poblacion_indigena/len_g_indi/PHLI.pdf, accessed July 30, 2015.

⁹ A document commissioned by the Spanish Crown and produced by P'urhepecha priests under the direction of Spanish friars. The document chronicles the history of P'urhepechas from the original settlement of Michoacán through the Spanish Conquest. It is primarily credited to Fr. Jeronimo de Alcala and dated around 1540.

Relación de Michoacán and an authority on Michoacán's anthropological and archeological history, the claims of P'urhepecha origins made in *La Relación de Michoacán* are also supported by archeological evidence. Research conducted by French archeologists in Zacapu demonstrates that around 1200, there was a migration from the northern part of the Lerma River to present-day Zacapu. Archeological sites near the Lerma River were abandoned while settlements were simultaneously built in a lava field around Zacapu.¹⁰

In *Historia de los Antiguos Habitantes de Michoacán*, respected Michoacán historian José Corona Nuñez (1988) concludes that the *pre-tarascos* [the descendants of P'urhepechas] migrated into Michoacán from South America (Nuñez 1988:51). Nuñez pinpoints the linguistic similarities between Quechua and P'urhepecha and the archeological similarities between tombs with adjacent arches found in P'urhepecha territory and in Ecuador, Colombia and Peru to sustain this claim (Nuñez 1988:6). The possible relationship between Quechuas and P'urhepechas was acknowledged by several of the P'urhepecha cultural workers I interviewed but scholars such as Dr. Carbajal continue to contest the claim.

The P'urhepecha nation was the second largest Mesoamerican society; its territory ran from the Lerma-Santiago River in the north to the Balsas River in the south. A militaristic society, the nation rapidly expanded through the integration of smaller tribes of people who were either conquered or voluntarily asked to become subjects of the empire. P'urhepechas were known to respect the customs of these tribes; ethnic groups maintained their own languages and the right to elect their local authorities although they were still expected to pay tribute. The P'urhepecha Nation demonstrated the most resistance to the covetous Aztecs, a neighboring militaristic society, which tried to invade P'urhepecha territory in order to colonize P'urhepechas with the end goal of usurping P'urhepecha land. The two empires engaged in warfare from 1460-1520, a time during which the P'urhepecha Nation became the only tribe in México to successfully ward off Aztec invasion.

The City of Tzintzuntzan, the P'urhepecha Empire's capital and ceremonial center, was populated by 35,000 people at the time of the conquest. The city collected internal tribute from other settlements in the P'urhepecha Nation in the form of local goods such as food, clothing, precious metals, and feathers and military and labor services to the state. Like other P'urhepecha villages and settlements, Tzintzuntzan was divided into wards or *barrios* made up of family units (Pollard 1993:50). Lineage was both patrilineal and matrilineal with bilateral kinship. Social classes consisted of the leader (*Cazonci*) and lords, the nobles (*principales*), and the commoners. The *Cazonci*, who was granted power through his special relationship with the P'urhepecha sun deity *Curicaveri*, and the lords held the dominant position within the political administration.

They were only second to priests who performed religious ceremonies.

Tzintzuntzan was surrounded by ninety-eight settlements in the Paztcuaro Basin. The majority of the settlements were agrarian or fishing communities which paid tribute to the *Cazonci* and to various P'urhepecha deities. The P'urhepecha Nation administered three big market places

¹⁰ Weiner, James.

2013 Meet the Tarascans: Fierce Foes of the Aztecs: an interview with Dr. Claudia Espéjel. Ancient History Et Cetera. September 18, 2013. <http://etc.ancient.eu/2013/09/18/meet-the-tarascans-fierce-foes-of-the-aztecs/>, accessed 06/11/2015.

where women were the primary sellers. Although there was a top-down structure from Tzintzuntzan, P'urhepecha communities surrounding the Pátzcuaro Basin were organized communally. As theologian Bernardino Verastique (2000) states in *Michoacán and Eden*, "By 1519, the Purepecha State was a vertically structured system in which authority and status were concentrated at the top. In this vertical social structure, cooperation and solidarity were identified with the elite castes' ability to organize, determine, and distribute the annual production (Verastique 2000:33)." Social mobility and honor were associated with performing civic and religious duties within one's clan or village.

What was a rather prosperous society faced its greatest challenge at their encounter with the Spanish. According to *La Relación de Michoacán*, the Aztecs visited Tangaxoan Tzintzicha, the P'urhepecha Cazonci, seeking his help with driving out the Spanish invaders in 1522 but the Cazonci distrusted the Aztecs and so denied them the aid they needed to defeat the Spanish (Craine et. al 1970:66). Less than a year before the fall of Tenochtitlan, Cortes sent an expedition led by Cristobal de Olid into Michoacán. The Spanish allied with Matlazincas, Otomis, Huetamas, Cuitlatecas, Escamoechas, and Chichimecas to make their way into P'urhepecha territory (Verastique 2000:70).

Their entry into Tzintzuntzan was initially peaceful, but the Spanish army encountered indigenous resistance as they destroyed religious deities in the temples. P'urhepecha armies were unable to stop the Spanish and they soon penetrated P'urhepecha territory demanding gold from the *Cazonci*. When the *Cazonci* realized the Spanish humiliated his people and hungered for gold, he hesitated on ceding his power to Cortes. However, Cortes intimidated him by showing him how he had tortured and imprisoned Cuauhtémoc, and so the young leader ceded power to Cortes and overturned most of the gold in his possession.¹¹ The transition of power was then a peaceful one and Cortes had the territory surveyed in order to establish encomiendas. Most of the land in Michoacán was granted to leaders of the expedition and royal treasury authorities, although Cortes kept the best regions for himself. After Cortes's death, the encomiendas were redistributed amongst remaining Spanish authorities. Thus, the military conquest and territorial colonization of the P'urhepecha Nation was consummated. As U.S.-based historian J. Benedict Warren (1985) summarizes, "With the distribution of the encomiendas in Michoacán, the Spaniards had achieved what the Aztecs had failed to do: they made Tenochtitlan-México the capital and had reduced the kingdom of Michoacán to a tributary province" (Warren 1985:80).

The encomienda system took its toll on both the riches and people of Michoacán. All the communities, including those not located in mineral-producing areas, had to pay tribute to Tenochtitlan. Agrarian communities without access to minerals paid tribute in the form of crops, fish, salt, and products of local industry such as blankets and pottery (Warren 1985:175). Work in the encomiendas was dehumanizing. As Warren states in his chapter about encomiendas, "Little information has survived regarding the treatment of the slaves in the Michoacán mines. The human misery involved...is incalculable. Men and women appear to have been used indiscriminately in the slave gangs (Warren 1985:183)." To address this inhumanity, Bartolome de las Casas petitioned the King of Spain to reform the existing law to better protect the Indians

¹¹ Cuauhtémoc: The son of the Aztec/Mexica emperor at the time of the Spanish Conquest, tortured and killed by the Spaniards so he would reveal where the gold was hidden in the Mexica Empire.

from such harsh treatment. In the resulting new law of 1542, Indians could only carry tribute to the mines if the service was voluntary, if they were paid, or if the distance was less than twenty leagues. The new laws continued the demand already found in laws dating from 1512 for Spanish encomenderos to provide Indian laborers with priests in order to indoctrinate them with Catholicism. The new law repealed enslavement of Indians, although it left in place the exploitation of Indians through forced labor in the encomienda system and ultimately, worsened the natives' predicament by creating expectations of greater tribute to be produced through encomienda labor (Grenni 2004:103-122).

In Michoacán, missionary conversion was undertaken by Don Vasco de Quiroga, a Bishop and *letrado* [scholar] appointed by the King of Spain in 1533. Quiroga began consolidating his diocese by establishing a cathedral built atop the *patazecua*, four stones from which the P'urhepecha thought they originated, as well as a Catholic university. He also organized P'urhepechas into *congregaciones de indios* [Indian congregations] in order to “isolate the Amerindians to prevent their physical extermination and their religious corruption by Spanish Christians (Verastique 2000:96).” Not only did Quiroga reaffirm Christianity by building his cathedral atop P'urhepecha sacred geography, but he also utilized the Pre-Hispanic social organization to his advantage.

Quiroga did not want to alter the P'urhepecha way of life to complete assimilation. Instead, he wanted to negotiate the pre-existing communal model and preserve P'urhepecha social-religious cultural traditions and language so that the P'urhepechas' conversion to Christianity was as authentic as possible. With this goal in mind, Quiroga established *cofradías* [Spanish religious organizations dedicated to administering the liturgical and social calendar] in Michoacán. Quiroga recognized that *cofradías* shared similarities with existing indigenous institutions and therefore could effectively bridge pre-Hispanic P'urhepecha social/religious life with Spanish religious/social organization. The *cofradía* system, for example, centered *familias* [extended families] as the town's social units; this made the congregations translatable to P'urhepechas because “prior to the conquest, the P'urhepecha clans were organized into wards according to tribal affiliation subdivided into family plots (Verastique 2000:135).” Quiroga viewed *cofradías* as the best means towards instilling a sense of civil and religious responsibility in P'urhepechas.

Under Quiroga, evangelizers learned how to utilize the aboriginal culture's existing social institutions in order to work towards conversion. Part of their effort equated features of Catholicism with Mesoamerican practices and concepts, which allowed P'urhepechas to understand Catholicism according to their own religious rites. The next section will illustrate how the Days of the Dead, the primary event that my fieldwork focused on, are an example of the syncretism between Catholicism and P'urhepecha spiritual practices in Michoacán. I offer an alternative view of how ‘syncretism’ evolved and functions in Michoacán by challenging the idea that P'urhepechas adopted Catholic practices simply because they were made comprehensible to them by Quiroga's incorporation of P'urhepecha religious rites. Instead, I subscribe to the idea that P'urhepechas maintained their own cult and their own religious practices by synchronizing them with Catholic rites.

P'urhepecha and Mesoamerican antecedents of Los Días de los Muertos

Due to my ethnography's focus on the Days the Dead, I would like to provide a detailed historic and ethnographic background of *Los Días de los Muertos* [the Days of the Dead] with an emphasis on the Mesoamerican antecedents and practices of the event. I chose to focus on this event because of the strong association that Mexican society and tourists draw between the Days of the Dead and P'urhepecha identity and due to the fact that the Days of the Dead, an identifiably P'urhepecha holiday, is the most toured celebration in Michoacán (Michoacán State Government webpage, 2014).¹² As a representation of Mexican religious hybridity, los Días de los Muertos (or *Animecha Kejtzitakua* as it is known to P'urhepechas) has roots in All Souls Day, the Catholic honoring of the saints sanctioned by Pope Gregory III in the 9th century, and in pre-Colombian Mesoamerican traditions which paid tribute to the pantheon of the dead. Although various Mexican and U.S. American scholarly work has been dedicated to historicizing the origins of los Días de los Muertos in México, I will highlight the Mesoamerican origins of the Days of the Dead as such origins are more relevant to the nature of the tourist desires I queried in Michoacán and to the indigenous communities I worked with.

According to Mexican anthropologist Juanita García-Godoy (1998) and Mexican historian Alfredo López Austin (1999), indigenous people in México buried their dead with personal items, clay figurines, personal ornaments, small toys, food, drink, and dogs since at least 1300 BC, the pre-Classic period. Scholars have inferred that people believed the departed would need such objects on their four-year journey to the place where the dead dwelled according to their respective beliefs/pantheon. Extended celebrations, which paid homage to the dead, also took place amongst various Mesoamerican groups. For ten days during the month of Quecholli (October 24th-November 20th), the Mexicas celebrated a feast honoring warriors. During these ten days, bundles of arrows and torches were placed on graves and participants kept vigil over the graves all day and all night. Additionally, during the post-Classic era, some Mesoamerican groups commemorated their dead during the 9th and 10th days of their calendar. Food was offered and people mourned by weeping; there were also special observances for those who died from drowning, by being struck by lightning, and for women who died during childbirth throughout the year. My informants also described the trajectory of the Days of the Dead as dating back to the times “when the men who built the *yacatas* [pyramid structures built by P'urhepechas in pre-colonial times] were here (Nana Ofelia, 11/05/2009).”

Amongst P'urhepechas, funerals were believed to have three intentions: to incorporate the individual into the society of the dead, to prevent the spirits of the dead from harming the community, and to lessen the grief that the departure of a person caused to a community. In their article, “Funerary Practices Mexicas and Purepecha,” Luis Fernando Núñez Enríquez and Roberto Martínez González (2010) analyze evidence in both *La Relación de Michoacán* and in P'urhepecha graves, which demonstrates that P'urhepechas buried their dead with common objects and food, and furthermore, built altars for their dead as a funerary practice (Enríquez et al. 2010:297). While children were buried with objects such as obsidian, copper, bones, and pottery because they were believed be destined to return to the earthly uterus in order to be

¹² According to the Mexican Secretary of Tourism and the Michoacán State Government's estimates, 130 million people visited Michoacán during the Days of the Dead (November 1st to November 2nd) in 2014 and spent 128.5 million pesos. Source: <http://www.michoacan.gob.mx/cgcs-630/>

reborn into the earthly world, adults were buried with common objects to be used for the daily activities they were to carry out in the afterlife. The P'urhepecha afterlife was one where spirits continued carrying out daily activities such as working, drinking, playing, and co-existing as they did on earth. The P'urhepecha departed belonged to communities and lived in villages and carried out daily work just like living P'urhepechas did on earth. As Roberto Martínez González (2013) states in "Death and Post Mortem Destinies Among Pre-Hispanic Tarascans," "We know that, in P'urhepecha thinking, those who went to the afterlife lived as they did here (on earth). And so, they needed to take many objects they could use to live and work there (González 2013:217)." The dead were believed to carry their objects with them along their path to the afterlife. While there were different destinies corresponding to a moral code for each departed person (such as the privilege of reincarnation into human or animal form for children and warriors), each person was buried with the objects that would be deemed most useful to him/her in the afterlife. Furthermore, Enriquez and González contend what some of my informants support -- that P'urhepechas did not view death as separate from the body or from extra-corporeal subjectivities. The journey to the afterlife began in body and soul and as the body disintegrated, one part of the human being was able to roam the earth (the spirit), another served to feed the earth (the flesh), and yet another remained within the earth (the bones) to facilitate the production of new life.

In the present, my informants claim that P'urhepechas continue to believe in three planes of existence. The first plane is *Aruandaro* [Heaven], which is inhabited by deities representing the sun, the moon, the stars, and small and large birds. The second plane is *Echerendo* [Earth], which is inhabited by people and sacred terrestrial deities who are present in the spirits of animals, mountains, large rocks, bodies of water, and in the very air. The third and final plane, *Cumiehchucuaró* [the underworld], is the dwelling place of the deities who govern the World of the Dead. Like the Christian Hell, the P'urhepecha underworld is a place where darkness rules and shadows live, a place that the sun cannot reach. Unlike the Christian Hell, however, the P'urhepecha underworld is a place of work and pleasure and rest. According to my informants, *Cumiehchucuaró* is a place for rest because the sun is unable to create new energy there and because going into the underworld literally means going back into the earth (being replanted into the bowels of *Echerendo*). The process of burial or *jatsintani* [being replanted/being relocated/heading downwards into the earth] is a very sacred process for P'urhepechas because it symbolizes being replanted into mother earth. P'urhepechas believe that the Creator lives in the earth (in *Cumiehchucuaró*) not in the sky. Thus, being replanted into the earth is representative of the last stage of life. As Tata Antonio explained,

In almost all towns, they use the word *jatsintani* to describe burial, which means to replant, reinstalling or relocating. The way we look at it is that we were born, we would bloom out of our mother's womb, we would be released from the womb. So we were a seed, we bloomed, and then we are replanted. You were born, you come from the earth and then you end up being replanted. You go back to the Earth. Someone might believe this is not true because supposedly the God that's in the sky created us but the one that provides food is our Mother Earth. She feeds us. She gives us fruits and water (Tata Antonio, 02/20/2010).

The fact that going into Cumiehchucuaró means that P'urhepechas will be replanted into the earth and will then meet the Creator explains why P'urhepechas believe that despite its darkness, Cumiehchucuaró is a place of pleasure, a place for rest, and a sacred place understood as P'urhepechas' closest interpretation of heaven. Each of these three planes is divided into five areas: the Center, the East, the North, the West, and the South. These five areas correspond to the four cardinal directions and to the Center. Each area also has its own representative color; the east is red, the north is yellow, the west is white, the south is black, and the center is blue. These three planes of existence demonstrate how P'urhepecha beliefs about death are still deeply pre-colonial in nature and inform a better understanding of P'urhepecha Days of the Dead traditions.

Religious Hybridity in Mexican Days of the Dead Celebrations

Contemporary attitudes about death in México echo these Mesoamerican beliefs in honoring and respecting *La Santa Muerte*, death as a deity, and in revering the dearly departed.¹³ Today's Day of the Dead celebrations are more hybrid in nature. The Catholic tradition of All Souls Day, the day when people pray for the souls of the dead who are in purgatory, has merged with indigenous practices of honoring the dead. Indigenous communities consider the Days of the Dead a coronation of the harvest and an expression of gratitude to the Creator and to the ancestors for the blessings they bestowed upon the harvest. The Days of the Dead provide an opportunity for the living to communally share the fruit of the harvest with the departed. Observances of the Days of the Dead vary, but in most communities the Days of the Dead are observed from the 28th of October to the second of November. The 28th of October is dedicated to those who die violent deaths such as those who are murdered or those who perish in violent accidents; for this observance, people may visit the site where the violent death happened in order to place flowers, food, water, and candles there. Many communities also build an altar for the *Anima Sola* (the lone soul) to honor the departed who no longer have living or willing relatives to build altars for them. On the 29th, people begin cleaning gravesites for the observance of *los Días de los Muertos*. On the 30th of October, it is typical to offer white flowers and candles and to build altars for '*limbitos*,' children who died without having been baptized.¹⁴ On the 31st of October, grieving parents and grandparents build altars on the gravesites of departed children for observance of *El Día de los Angelitos* (the day of the little angels). The children's souls are honored by parents who visit the cemetery on the night of October 31st, sometimes continuing until the early hours of November first. Offerings for departed children may consist of white flowers, toys, candy, and candles. And, on the first of November, church-bells ring in order to welcome the adult spirits. People set up altars on the gravesites of adult relatives in order to honor them throughout the night of November first and into the early hours of November second.

Altar-building traditions vary in each community. Typically, home altars are considered common altars which are meant to honor all of the family's deceased ancestors and relatives; home altars are placed near the permanent altar that families may keep in a hallway or corner of their living

¹³ *La Santa Muerte*: The Saint of Death or The Mistress of Death has her own cult and a big following in México amongst Mexican Catholics, atheists, and Satanists.

¹⁴ It is important to note that while the characteristically orange/yellow *cempasúchil* is typically used on altars, white flowers are used for the specific purpose of honoring *limbitos* and sometimes *angelitos* (perhaps due to the association between the color white and the concept of purity).

room where prayers are offered year-round to Catholic saints. The base for the altar may be built out of stacked boxes or on top of a table and is usually placed on top of a *petate* [reed mats which have traditionally served as sleeping and sitting mats for P'urhepechas and other indigenous groups in México]. Altars can be big and elaborate or small and simple. Home altars are typically covered with a blanket or sheet or with a table-cover or decorative paper. The center of the altar is usually made up of photographs of deceased family member(s) and/or an image of the family's favorite saint such as Jesus Christ, St. Anthony, or the Virgin of Guadalupe. Objects that were special to the deceased such as trophies, books, favorite clothing, work tools, childhood toys, etc. are placed on both home and gravesite altars. Altars also contain water to quench the thirst of the departed and represent the purity of creation as well as the deceased's favorite dishes (food, which the family's matriarch usually goes to great lengths to prepare). The food-dishes are usually traditional Mexican dishes such as mole, tamales, or in Michoacán, *k'urhundas* [triangular-shaped cakes made out of corn meal steamed in long green corn plant leaves; a P'urhepecha dish cooked by people throughout Michoacán]. The smell of the food is meant to attract the dead as well as satiate their hunger. Additional important elements of an altar are: copal, which represents fire and transmits prayers for the dead to the heavens; candles, which symbolize eternal love, faith, and hope; *cempasúchil* flowers [marigolds], which symbolize mother nature and emit a scent which is said to attract the dead; sugar skulls, which resonate with the Mesoamerican appreciation for bones as symbols of the disarticulated body which facilitate the production of new life and with the idea that one can embrace/mock one's own death; and *pan de muertos* [pieces of wheat bread shaped into human bodies or human hearts], which invokes the pre-Hispanic tradition of offering amaranth loaves to the dead and of consuming hearts and consuming flesh as a means to pray.

It is common for families to spread *cempasúchil* petals from the entrance of the home to the common altar in order to attract the deceased relatives with the pungent smell of the flowers or to form a cross with *cempasúchil* petals, which is then surrounded by candles. At the cemetery, it is customary for people to form a path with candles from the entrance of the cemetery to the gravesite in order to light the way for spirits seeking food and water at the *campo santo* ["holy field:" a colloquial Mexican term for the cemetery]. Gravesite altars are covered with embroidered doilies and decorated with ceremonial pottery and baskets. Many indigenous communities also build arches made out of wooden rods and decorated with *cempasúchil* flowers, animal-shaped bread, and different kinds of fruit. The arches are placed above the tombstone in order to function as points of departure from the spirit world and points of entry into the world of the living (and vice versa) for the dead. After visiting with the dead during the wake, which lasts until the early morning of November second, families take down the altar in the cemetery and gift the fruit, bread, and food offerings to relatives or fellow observers for consumption. It is typical for families to trade food-dishes with neighboring mourners at the cemetery in order to collect a variety of dishes to take home after the wake. Food from the home altar is also gifted to family and extended family. It is said that if the food smells and tastes different on November second, it is because the dead have already come by to smell or taste the food; thus, the consumption of the food by the dead is believed to have been consummated and the food can now be gifted to living relatives or friends. Other more urban Days of the Dead

traditions include creating and displaying public *catrina* artwork both in print and in sculpture and writing *calavera* poems for living people.¹⁵

Contemporary P’urhepecha Observations of the Days of the Dead

While the Days of the Dead are observed in Pátzcuaro and Janitzio in much the same manner as I described in my introduction: with private and public altar-building, cooking, overnight stays at the cemetery, and traditional music and dances — what makes Janitzio’s observations of the Days of the Dead different are the P’urhepecha-specific customs and the sheer number of tourists who visit to observe how P’urhepechas honor their dead. P’urhepechas begin preparations for the Days of the Dead weeks in advance as there is a strong belief that departed family members who do not have a home altar to visit or do not see food or flowers or candles laid out for them in the cemetery are destined to roam the streets feeling lost and lamenting that they are not loved. Thus, P’urhepechas in Janitzio begin cleaning the graves and building home-altars weeks in advance of the observance of the Days of the Dead. On the 31st of October, a tradition known as *Kurisi-atakua* [the hunting of the ducks] was practiced in Janitzio and in some of the towns surrounding Lake Pátzcuaro. This practice kicks off the observance of the Days of the Dead as hunters emerge from the cardinal points on the lake in their canoes armed with lances, reeds, and guns to begin their search for ducks. The hunt, which is practiced for both ceremony and for sport, begins in the early hours of October 31st because the kill will serve as part of the food offered to the dead during the Days of the Dead community observations. *Kurisi-atakua* is no longer practiced in many communities due to the current scarcity of ducks in the area but it continues to be practiced in Janitzio.

On the 31st of October, people are also invited to visit the homes of families who lost someone within the past year (this tradition is also publicized in the tourist pamphlets as part of the Days of the Dead schedule of attractions on the island). In the early morning of the first of November, families set up altars on the graves of deceased children for the mourning of the angelitos; it is customary for the godparents of the deceased child to fully participate in the altar-building and in the wake for the angelitos. The beginning of the angelitos observation is announced with firecrackers and a procession in the morning as godparents walk to their deceased godchildren’s homes. Those who participate in the procession sing and pray for the children’s souls. The godparents then accompany the parents of the deceased child to the cemetery for the vigil at the gravesite of the angelitos, which lasts from 7:00am until 9:00pm. On the morning of the first of November, families also set up altars and arches for adult deceased loved ones at the cemetery in preparation for an overnight wake, which will go until November 2nd. If the deceased died in the past year, a novenary is offered with the praying of the rosary in the home of the deceased, which ends on November first. From the first of November on, locals who lost relatives in the past year

¹⁵ Calaveras are satirical poems that mock living people by writing about them as if they are dead. Calaveras are typically used to satirize politicians, the wealthy, and powerful in the public eye. The satire lies in the poem’s ability to pinpoint that although some are more powerful and wealthier than others, we all share the common destiny of death in the end. Catrina artwork involves sculpting, face-painting, and illustrations that reproduce the catrina aesthetic. The catrina aesthetic has its origins in a 1910 illustration by Mexican artist and printmaker José Guadalupe Posada titled “La Calavera de la Catrina.” The image was inspired by Mictecacihuatl, goddess of death, who inhabited Mictlan, the Aztec underworld. Posada’s piece influenced generations of imitations that fell into the catrina aesthetic. Today, it is common to see catrina sculptures and artwork adorn altars as well as to see people dressed as catrinas in catrina make-up at Days of the Dead processions.

offer guided tours of their home altars to visitors and tourists. Fishermen hold exhibitions of butterfly net fishing during the afternoons of November first and second by the embarcadero. Janitzio's local government also organizes a P'urhepecha Cultural Festival of song, dance, and music, which happens at 7:30 P.M. on the first of November in the town theater.

An additional P'urhepecha-specific tradition, which is currently losing ground in Janitzio, is the tradition of the *teruscan* [gathering] and *campaneri* [offering]. The *teruscan* happens on the night of November first when young people participate in ritualized acceptable looting by gathering to steal corn, squash, flowers, and other recently harvested crops on rooftops and corrals. Adults then gather in the church atrium to await the loot in order to cook the food communally. Townspeople organize a procession on the morning of November second to parade the streets shouting proclamations about the *campaneri*. The looted food is used to create an offering for the dead who lack living relatives; products are also given to the priest who prays for the dead who lack living relatives on the afternoon of November second. The *teruscan* and the *campaneri* are similar to other traditions of ritualized begging that happen throughout the continent on All Hallows Eve and on All Souls Day. In México, another form of ritualized begging, which happens in urban areas such as Pátzcuaro, involves groups of children asking for a 'calavera' (usually a monetary donation or a piece of candy) as they traverse the streets of the city on November second.

Traditions in villages like Janitzio are different from traditions in cities like Pátzcuaro. Even though Pátzcuaro is very close to the island of Janitzio, its more urbanized nature means that bigger cultural events are organized in larger public venues. In addition to hosting a Day of the Dead handicraft exposition and market, which starts on the 29th of October, Pátzcuaro holds cultural festivals featuring P'urhepecha musicians and dancers from the surrounding communities throughout the Days of the Dead. One of Pátzcuaro's biggest P'urhepecha cultural festivals happens on the shore of Pátzcuaro Lake during the evening of the 31st of October. The city of Pátzcuaro also hosts Muertos-themed theatrical plays, art exhibits, and invites tourists to the city's cemetery for the wake of the Dead on November second. Different communities surrounding the lake have also been hosting an annual traditional P'urhepecha Ballgame (*Uarhukua Chanakua*) tournament, which usually happens on the 26th of October; in 2013, it happened in Pátzcuaro. Various communities surrounding the lake, including the islands of Yunuen, Tecuena, and La Pacanda, host similar cultural activities and allow tourists to observe and participate in their observations of the Days of the Dead.

Other Days of the Dead traditions that are specific to the Pátzcuaro region are the performance of P'urhepecha dances and the singing of *pirekuas*. Dances such as *La Danza del Pescado* [the fisherman's dance], *La Danza de los Viejitos* [the Dance of the Elders], *La Danza de los Kurpites* [The Dance of the unifiers, the Dance of Grandmother Moon and Grandfather Fire], and *La Danza del Torito* [The Dance of the Little Bull] are dances, which have pre-colonial P'urhepecha roots and are native to Michoacán. These dances are featured in the P'urhepecha cultural festivals organized by Pátzcuaro's Regional Tourism Delegation and by specific municipalities. One important evolution of these dances, which my informants noted, is that specific dances such as the Dance of the Fishermen and the Dance of the Kurpites were previously only performed for private ceremonies and celebrations (such as weddings and baptisms) but are now performed for tourists with the purpose of earning profit from the cultural knowledge. Informants

maintain that though European instruments such as strings have been incorporated into the dances, the structure and choreography of the dances remain largely P'urhepecha. Like other Mexican Indigenous songs, *pirekuas* have lowland rhythms and waltzy tunes. They are played with an old-fashioned guitar known as the *vihuela*, a double-bass player, harp, and violin. The themes for the songs range from singing proclamations of love for beautiful women to lamentations about the loss of love to celebrating the region's geography or paying homage to P'urhepecha identity and culture.

Additionally, there is a P'urhepecha tradition of storytelling, which comes to life in the Pátzcuaro region during special occasions such as the Days of the Dead. One of the legends, which originated in the island of Janitzio, specifically relates to the Days of the Dead. The story of Mintsita and Itzihuapa dates back to the Spanish Conquest when Janitzio was part of the P'urhepecha Empire. The king of Janitzio was T'are and, as previously mentioned, the *cazonci* was Tangaxoan Tzintzicha. Upon hearing about the havoc that the Spaniards wreaked in Nahua territories, Tangaxoan surrendered to Cristobal de Olid and agreed to convert to Christianity. Years later, the conquistador Nuño de Guzman falsely accused Tangaxoan of killing Spaniards and of continuing to practice his P'urhepecha religion. De Guzman subjected Tangaxoan to trial, and punished him by dragging him from a horse, and condemning him to lynching. De Guzman's humiliation and execution of the *cazonci* led to unrest and rebellion amongst P'urhepechas. According to this legend of star-crossed lovers, Mintsita, the daughter of Tangaxoan and Itzihuapa, the son of T'are were in love but their marriage was prevented due to the unrest provoked by the arrival of the Spaniards. Upon the capture of Tangaxoan, the lovers offered Nuño de Guzman a gold treasure found at the bottom of Pátzcuaro Lake as ransom for the *cazonci's* freedom. It was believed that the spirits of twenty rowers safeguarded the treasure and when Itzihuapa plunged into the water to search for the treasure, he was drowned by the rowers and became the twenty-first guardian of the P'urhepecha gold. Mintsita died on the shore of the lake waiting for her lover's return. People believe that on November second, the spirits of the twenty-one rowers awaken and walk into Janitzio. Princess Mintsita and Prince Itzihuapa go to the cemetery to take a romantic walk amidst the surrounding candlelight and to receive the offerings that the people of Janitzio have laid out for them.

The Genealogy of contemporary P'urhepecha understandings of death

According to the cultural workers I spoke to, P'urhepechas today understand the genealogy of P'urhepecha knowledge according to four phases; *Tua Anapu Ambe* [the pre-colonial/the ancestral/the very ancient knowledge created by P'urhepechas who had no contact with the Spaniards], *Dionki o Ionki Anapu Ambe* [the knowledge of survival and change attained during colonial times after contact happened with the Spaniards; this knowledge is still old because it refers to colonial times but it is not pre-colonial], *Iasi Anapu Ambe* [the post-colonial collection of hybrid P'urhepecha practices, traditions, and knowledge], and *Ma Jurhia Anapuecha* [knowledge which will be created by the people of the future, the ones who are not here yet] (Tata Antonio, 02/20/1010). In this way, every P'urhepecha belief and practice has its epistemic chronological referent, which corresponds to each of these phases. For example, P'urhepechas recognize that the Dance of the Elders, which originated in Jaracuaro, had spiritual significance related to honoring *Curicaveri* [the deity of the sun] during the *Tua Anapu Ambe* phase. Back then, the dance was only practiced ceremonially as a way to contact *Curicaveri*. Dancers

performed the dance semi-nude with animal skins and feathers. The instruments used were Mesoamerican flutes and the drum. During *Dionki o Ionki Anapu Ambe*, the dance evolved with the introduction of European instruments, white cotton trousers, and masks. Spaniards introduced clothes and mask-making into indigenous dances during the colonial period. Although P'urhepechas incorporated masks, which imitated the features of the conquistadores (pale white skin, long straight noses, and blue eyes) into the dance, the purpose of the gesture wasn't necessarily to honor European facial features or to depreciate P'urhepechas. Instead, the period of *Dionki o Ionki Anapu Ambe* created the conditions for P'urhepecha subversive resistance and the masks were a way to mock the conquistadores; by associating Spanish features with a dance about the elderly, the masks mocked the notion that although conquistadores were "in charge," Spaniards actually died much younger than P'urhepechas because P'urhepechas had better diets and led healthier more active lifestyles. During *Dionki o Ionki Anapu Ambe*, then, P'urhepechas turned Spaniards into caricatures by incorporating a mask into the dance, which made a mockery out of Spaniard lifestyles and facial features (Hellier-Tinoco 2011:218). Today, in the era of *Iasi Anapu Ambe*, the Dance of the Elders continues to be syncretic in nature but it has become more of a public spectacle mostly performed to entertain tourists for profit. Many of the dancers don't possess historical memory about what the dance meant during the *Tua Anapu Ambe* era, but the cultural keepers continue to hope that the dance's original spiritual meanings will be preserved for the *Ma Jurhia Anapuecha*. P'urhepechas understandings of death and practices of the Days of the Dead also have to be contextualized in these four phases. Thus far, I have covered many of the beliefs that P'urhepechas held about death during the *Tua Anapu Ambe* era and how they evolved into hybrid beliefs after the *Dionki o Ionki Anapu Ambe* phase.

According to my informants, many P'urhepecha festivities followed the agricultural calendar during the *Tua Anapu Ambe* time. Back then, observations that honored the ancestors such as the Days of the Dead might have been more in sync with the agricultural calendar. Today, some P'urhepecha communities have more than one Day of the Dead celebration. While most communities observe the Days of the Dead on November first and November second (a custom in line with *Dionki o Ionki Anapu Ambe* influences such as the conversion to Catholicism and the adoption of the Gregorian calendar), some communities observe an additional Day of the Dead festivity on Holy Saturday. Tata Antonio from Quinceo, for example, said that they observe a Day of the Dead festivity on Holy Saturday by participating in a procession throughout the community while shouting *tsintskua* [resurrection] and then building altars with food offerings upon the graves of their departed at the cemetery. Tata Antonio claims that this second Day of the Dead is observed in Quinceo because of the resurrection's association with the balance between life and death—thus while the resurrection of Jesus Christ is being celebrated, it is also important to turn back towards the past and towards death by honoring the dead. Tata Antonio expressed that Quinceo's second observation of the Day of the Dead on Holy Saturday is more in line with the corn cycle in the agricultural calendar. It happens in the spring when the corn has recently been planted and thus it is also a time to give thanks by engaging in a communal offering (Tata Antonio, 02/20/2010). While current P'urhepecha observations of the Days of the Dead demonstrate the syncretism introduced during the *Dionki o Ionki Anapu Ambe* era, a hybridity which has been carried into the *Iasi Anapu Ambe* (present), the *Tua Anapu Ambe* influences are always present in P'urhepecha practices.

Other differences which make P'urhepecha observations of the Days of the Dead unique from wider Mexican practices are P'urhepecha-specific beliefs about death as an entity and about how to interact with the dead during the observations. From my observations and interviews, I gathered that P'urhepechas believe that altars should only be made when one loses a relative. If one builds an altar without necessarily having lost someone in the immediate family, it is a way to call death upon the family prematurely. P'urhepechas have a great deal of respect and reverence for *Acha Uarhikua* [His Greatness/Sir Death/how La Muerte, the death entity or the spirit of death would be understood by P'urhepechas]. One of my informants shared that he was once asked to build a general altar for a university campus but he refused because of his reverence for *Acha Uarhikua*. He has not lost anyone in his immediate family and he believed that if he built an altar prematurely, *Acha Uarhikua* would come to take someone from his family. He respectfully declined even though the inquiring students were confused; they assumed that because he is P'urhepecha, he would automatically know how to build an altar and he would automatically be willing to build an altar. In places like Janitzio, the dead who passed away in the last year get more elaborate altars and offerings. A novenary is held to pray for their souls and their relatives have priority in the cemetery for holding all-night wakes. In Pátzcuaro, only people who lost a relative in the past year are expected to hold wakes at the cemetery on the Days of the Dead. These practices are in line with the belief that the Days of the Dead should only be observed for the recently departed and not necessarily for all of the departed as is the custom in México and in the United States.

The way that P'urhepechas interact with their dead during the Days of the Dead is also distinct from how mestizos interact with their dead. In P'urhepecha communities, the family is expected to gather at the cemetery either on the evening of November first or in the early morning of November second. Usually, they will gather at the gravesite of their oldest deceased family member. Every child and grandchild in the family is expected to participate. The oldest matriarch in the family will then express proclamations to the deceased as each family member arrives. The proclamations on the one hand function as life-updates about the family member who is arriving and on the other allow the family to communally express how much the loved one's presence is missed and needed in the family. The interesting aspect of the proclamations is that they are of a depreciating tone. They may vary from, "Look, your son has arrived...you know the one who is always late! He doesn't want to change...And look at you: you are lying down here without being able to tell him how to change his ways" to "Look now, Rosalinda is here! She never comes to visit! Tell your children something. You left me all the responsibility and here you are resting. You left me all these responsibilities." While these proclamations may sound like they are meant to shame the arriving family members or the deceased person who is now resting without tending to responsibilities, they are actually expressions of sadness and melancholy for the departed. They are meant to update the deceased on how living loved ones are doing and to express how much their presence is needed on earth to strengthen character and unity in the family. They also function as a way to invoke melancholy for the departed amongst the family members and to allow family members to unify around their common grief. These proclamations are not performed for tourist spectacle. One of my informants in Janitzio invited me to observe one of these sessions for a departed elder in the early morning of November second. Such gatherings are not publicized as tourist attractions; they are for immediate family members. Passersby at the cemetery would not necessarily suspect that an intimate communion is happening between a deceased person and her family at a gravesite because the proclamations

are not shouted and are not meant to create a spectacle or to invite attention. People select times during the day when there are fewer tourists at the cemetery to hold the gatherings and they do not last long. The proclamations in these gatherings are unique amongst P'urhepechas; my research and personal experience has not led me to find these types of gatherings in other parts of México or in the United States.

Pátzcuaro as a Commoditized Cultural Landscape

I chose Pátzcuaro, Michoacán and Janitzio, Michoacán as my field sites for this particular body of work because Pátzcuaro and its surroundings are fertile ground for analyzing tourist/Native interactions on the Days of the Dead. Like other Mexican regions with large indigenous populations (such as Oaxaca, Chiapas, and the Yucatán peninsula), the city of Pátzcuaro and the state of Michoacán have become known as places where outsiders can experience how 'real' indigenous people observe the Days of the Dead and how 'real' indigenous people carry out practices to honor and recall their deceased loved ones and their ancestors. Indeed, the Days of the Dead are sold as a way for visitors to 'travel back into time' and observe first-hand how 'P'urhepechas carry out practices which have been happening since time immemorial in México.' Visitors flood Pátzcuaro and the small island of Janitzio with hopes of experiencing the romanticized version of how real pre-Hispanic people who 'are still alive' mourn and encounter their dead ("Michoacán Noche de Muertos 09" 2009:18).¹⁶

Pátzcuaro, the place of the fishermen, is located in the north-central part of the state of Michoacán. The founding of Pátzcuaro as the first P'urhepecha capital dates back to the rule of the P'urhepecha leader Tariacuri, who in the late 14th century divided the P'urhepecha empire into three chiefdoms: Tzintzuntzan, Ihuatzio, and Pátzcuaro. Tariacuri left his son, Hiquigare, in charge of Pátzcuaro and because Hiquigare had no descendants, Pátzcuaro lacked an heir and proper leadership. Upon the death of Hiquipare, Tzintzuntzan then became the capital of the P'urhepecha Empire. *La Relación de Michoacán* relates the division of the region's inhabitants into three types of people: the *coringuario* class, the *chichimecas*, and the island people. Pátzcuaro is the central town in Michoacán's lacustrine zone. The Pátzcuaro Lake is surrounded by volcanic mountains and measures 50 km wide by 33 km long and runs 5-11 meters deep. Twenty-two towns surround Lake Pátzcuaro and six small islands dwell within the lake including; Yunuen, Janitzio, La Pacanda, Tecuena, Jaracuaro, and Los Uruandenes. As of the 2000 census, the city of Pátzcuaro boasts a population of close to 48,000 people, which includes approximately 4,840 urban P'urhepecha language speakers. It is important to note that the P'urhepecha language predominates as the native and primary tongue spoken at each of the lakeshore towns surrounding Lake Pátzcuaro and in each of the islands within Lake Pátzcuaro. The islands within the lake vary in population; as of 2010, Janitzio (the island where the majority of this fieldwork took place) had a population of 2450 inhabitants.¹⁷

¹⁶ "Michoacán Noche de Muertos 09" is an 43-page Día de los Muertos program, which describes the origins and traditions related to the holiday, printed in Spanish, English, and French by the Michoacán State Government annually.

¹⁷ The population estimates for both the City of Pátzcuaro and the island of Janitzio were provided by the City of Pátzcuaro website. Source: <http://www.patzcuaro.com>

Although my informants indicate that the Days of the Dead have been observed in the Pátzcuaro region and in the island of Janitzio since time immemorial (since before they can remember or dating back to the time of the “men who built the yacatas” as Nana Ofelia put it), P’urhepecha celebrations of the Days of the Dead were not known to the Mexican public or to the world until the early 1920s when a group of intellectuals sponsored by the Mexican government visited the islands of Janitzio and Jaracuaro. During this visit, musicologist Carlos M. Campos, artist Carlos Gonzalez, folklorist Francisco Dominguez, and anthropologist Frances Toor toured the Pátzcuaro region to experience P’urhepecha culture and to personally witness how P’urhepechas observed the Days of the Dead. In 1924, following accounts documented and written by these four intellectuals, government institutions staged and performed a reenactment of how Janitzio residents observed the Days of the Dead in México City. Photographs and articles about the intellectuals’ visit to Janitzio were also published in magazines; thus, the Days of the Dead as a P’urhepecha celebration became incorporated into the Mexican national cultural imaginary (Hellier-Tinoco 2011:27).

According to anthropologist Ruth Hellier-Tinoco (2011), this visit was an influential transition in how Janitzio and how P’urhepechas would be viewed by non-indigenous Mexicans during future encounters. As she states in *Embodying Mexico*, “Their visits to the island of Janitzio for Night of the Dead initiated the ‘in situ’ spectacle for visitors, and resulted in appropriation for theatricalized performance and dissemination through publication (Hellier Tinoco 2011:72).” Hellier-Tinoco argues that the early 1920s visit by Mexican intellectuals to the region created the framework for future visits and effectively transformed the event from a ceremony into a public spectacle. “There was no expectation that the visitors would participate in the rituals,” she writes, “but rather that [visitors] would remain on the outside, performing a role as voyeurs, onlookers, and witnesses. In the very act of visiting the ceremony and observing the ritual commemoration, two groups of people were present —actors and viewers— transforming the event into an activity for exhibition, display, and observation (Hellier-Tinoco 2011:73).” Furthermore, Hellier-Tinoco poses that this initial visit framed the future understanding of P’urhepechas as racialized people of the past. “In this scenario,” she states, “people living in the moment were framed and read as from the past, with an unequivocal presentation of the inhabitants of Janitzio as an idyllic and romantic Other, an idea that was subsequently disseminated widely through ethnographic, popular, and tourist publications (Hellier-Tinoco 2011:73).” In other words, this formative moment perpetuated the image of P’urhepechas as primitive and pre-modern racialized others and sparked the selling of Janitzio and of the Days of the Dead as an opportunity to experience the pre-Conquest Mesoamerican past.

In the 1930s, the Mexican government established cultural missions in the area to bring “out of their backwardness the inhabitants of the region (Hellier-Tinoco 2011:91),” and academic institutions such as the National Polytechnic Institute in México established “El Proyecto Tarasco” [“The Tarascan Project”] to promote anthropological work focused on P’urhepecha people. A series of fictional films, including *Janitzio* (1935) and *Maclovia* (1948), which romanticized the island of Janitzio as a place for traditional indigenous life and which presented P’urhepechas as people who were weary of the outside world also followed. U.S.-born anthropologist George Foster carried out his fieldwork in Tzintzuntzan between 1944 and 1946, sending ethnographic analysis of P’urhepecha culture into the academic world. In 1961, the ethnographic documentary about Lake Pátzcuaro, “*Rituales Tarascos*,” was released and in 1964

a ‘Festival of Music and Dance’ was instituted in Janitzio to provide entertainment for tourists. Today, Pátzcuaro and Janitzio have become commoditized cultural landscapes which both Mexican tourists and international tourists frequent —particularly during the Days of the Dead — in order to experience the natural beauty of Pátzcuaro Lake and, most importantly, in hopes of catching a glimpse of indigenous México.

The majority of this fieldwork was conducted from August of 2009 to February of 2010 in Pátzcuaro and Janitzio. Although my central fieldsites were Pátzcuaro and Janitzio, I travelled to Tzintzuntzan, Ihuatzio, Yunuen, Uruapan, Corupo, Cherán, and Zacán to conduct interviews and participant observation at P’urhepecha cultural events and private ceremonies. During the months leading up to the Days of the Dead and during the days following the Days of the Dead, I interviewed 14 P’urhepechas. It is important to note that the P’urhepechas I interviewed were not all from the Pátzcuaro region; some lived in surrounding regions (such as ‘*La Meseta P’urhepecha*’ or the Sierra Tarasca) but were either respected cultural activists or medicine people or performers/ vendors who had previously worked in the Pátzcuaro region during the Days of the Dead. During the actual Days of the Dead, I interviewed ten tourists. I lived in Pátzcuaro with my husband and travelled to Janitzio and surrounding islands on the 30th and 31st of October and on the 1st and 2nd of November to engage in participant observation and to conduct the tourist interviews. I recorded the interviews and took field notes during events while engaging in participant observation. I have given both my P’urhepecha and tourist informants pseudonyms except in the cases where people explicitly instructed me to use their real names. I also took photographs and video-taped performances of songs and dances. Most of the events I attended were open to the public but some of them were private events that I was invited to due to previous relationships I had built with P’urhepecha cultural workers in Michoacán.

My questionnaires were designed to seek out insights on these topics with specific questions relating to how tourists experience P’urhepechas such as; whether tourist experiences with P’urhepechas met their expectations before the visit; what tourists would share with acquaintances back home once the visit was over; and tourist knowledge about contemporary P’urhepecha political concerns. Conversely, my questionnaires for P’urhepechas explored P’urhepecha reflections about why tourists visit them during these events; how P’urhepechas felt about tourist visits to various spaces such as their homes and the cemetery; how prices for cultural objects, entry into homes, and photographs were bargained; the current P’urhepecha political concerns in the region; and how the tourist presence during spiritual events was negotiated. I framed my questions in an open-ended manner so that informants could have the freedom to express themselves without too much guidance or structure and so that they could make their own connections between topics. The length of my interviews varied from 25 minutes to two hours. My informants varied in age from mid-twenties young professionals to 80-something elders.

Mestizaje and P’urhepechecidad as Mutually Constructed Performances

This projects examines the tension between power and representation in mestizo/indigenous relations. Relying on the theories of ‘playing Indian’ and ‘going native,’ I sought to understand how the phenomenon of ‘playing Indian’ manifests itself in México. I utilize performance theory, specifically the performance of racialized identities and the performance of embodied

memory, as a lens to examine touristic consumption and as a means towards understanding the relationship between indigenous identities and mestizaje. I consider how both mestizos and natives act as performers touristic transactions as well as how touristic commodification racializes P'urhepecha Indians as inferior others and impacts P'urhepecha communities.

I will pose that mestiza/o visits to Michoacán are motivated by a desire to resolve mixed identity anxiety; mestizos seek indigenous people to resolve their feelings about the conquest and to understand the violent moment of rape which birthed mestizaje as well as to encounter the pristine indigenous primitive. I propose that mestiza/o tourists view P'urhepechas as surrogate stand-ins for their pre-Columbian ancestors while P'urhepechas struggle to represent themselves as contemporary beings invested in the globalized political economy. The mestiza/o longing to tour P'urhepecha communities functions alongside an articulated P'urhepecha fear of being viewed as accessories to an imaginary 'pre-Columbian' landscape which relegates them to the past. I will argue that touring P'urhepecha communities and appropriating indigenous objects such as clothing facilitates mestizos' symbolic claim to indigeneity and reaffirms their relationship to México's spiritual and material origins. Mestizos' majoritarian position in Mexican society and their distance from contemporary indigenous realities facilitates their consumption and appropriation of the indigenous dead as well as the commodification of living Indians. Mestiza/o tourists engage in mestiza/o melancholia by mourning what they view as the decline of 'traditional P'urhepecha culture' while not acknowledging their own participation in the ongoing destruction of indigenous communities. Touring indigenous communities and appropriating indigenous culture does not resolve the violence but further propagates it. P'urhepechas, however, consider themselves partners in the touristic relationship with an investment in preserving their communities' intimacy and in controlling how they are perceived, consumed, and toured. P'urhepechas view mestizos as spiritually lost, culturally astray people who should be catered to for the sake of profit. The P'urhepecha preoccupation with preserving community intimacy motivates them to engage in acts of resistance such as holding specific ceremonies away from the public eye and constructing cheap/imitation cultural goods to sell to tourists.

Map to the Dissertation

This introduction has provided you with a foundation for understanding the racialization of indigenous people in México as well as the theoretical groundings of performance theory as it applies to intersectional oppressed identities. I have also provided a detailed historical contextualization of the ethnic group I worked with, the primary event I focused on, and of my fieldsite. My first chapter, "Mestiza/o Melancholia and P'urhepecha Observations of the Days of the Dead," presents an overview of mestiza/o motivations for touring the P'urhepecha Days of the Dead with a focus on both their desires to understand their own mixed racial identities via the appropriation of indigeneity and their insistence on racializing Indians. I explore the phenomenon of mestiza/o melancholia as well as the role of the mestiza/o as intermediary between 'bad foreign tourists' and 'defenseless P'urhepechas.' Chapter Two, "The P'urhepecha Critique of Tourism and Mestizaje," presents a P'urhepecha counter-narrative of tourism. I argue that while P'urhepechas view tourists as a temporary nuisance which must be catered to for the sake of profit, they are well aware that encountering P'urhepecha difference informs the narrative that tourists construct about themselves and influences the impressions about

P'urhepechas that tourists proliferate throughout México and the rest of the world. P'urhepechas understand that people make judgments about P'urhepechas as a whole when they visit their homes, tour their communities, and observe their cultural events. Their critique of mestiza/o tourists proposes that encountering P'urhepecha difference assuages mestiza/o egocentrism by reassuring mestizos of their superiority while perpetuating anti-Indian racism. P'urhepechas, however, believe themselves to be more culturally situated and morally centered than mestizos; they pose that mestizos are a lost people who are the true victims of Mexican ethnic segregation because they lack culture, community, and spirituality. In Chapter 3, "P'urhepecha y Mestiza: Reflections on Conducting a Decolonizing Ethnography," I delve into a self-aware navigation of my subjectivity in the field as a bicultural Mexican/P'urhepecha ethnographer. I argue that my multiplex subjectivity allowed me to approach the field as native and non-native, insider and outsider, community member and professional, which both created opportunities for relationship-building and caused some communication disjuncture. I analyze specific manifestations of the P'urhepecha hidden transcript in P'urhepecha-specific ceremonies such as the *Kurhíkueri K'uínchekua* better known as the P'urhepecha New Year. I close the chapter by illustrating the facets of accountability that I drew in order to conduct a more decolonizing ethnography and by providing examples of how my work has shaped partnerships and relationships with P'urhepecha organizations and P'urhepecha people. In an effort to honor my ethnography's commitment to treat P'urhepechas as contemporary people engaged with our globalized political economy, my conclusion articulates contemporary P'urhepecha political concerns as voiced by my P'urhepecha informants.

Chapter One: Mestiza/o Melancholia and the P'urhepecha Days of the Dead

In this chapter, I will provide an ethnographic account of mestiza/o and P'urhepecha touristic interactions, negotiations, and transactions during the Days of the Dead. I will utilize ethnographic examples to argue that mestiza/o visits to Michoacán are primarily motivated by a longing for the absent, which tourists interpret as the pure/pristine primitivity in México's Mesoamerican past. I will ground my ethnography in tourism studies and performance studies by invoking work on heritage tourism, theoretical work on the aesthetics and curation of indigeneity, and on the concepts of haunting and surrogation to examine the performance of the absent. I will pose that mestizos experience a deep melancholia as they encounter indigenous people and that this melancholia dangerously approximates racism although such racism is not queried by mestizos or by Mexican understandings of race and ethnicity. I will close by examining the role of the mestiza/o intermediary in touristic transactions, paying close attention to how mestiza/o tourists wish to protect indigenous people from what they perceive to be invasive foreign tourism and disrespectful foreign tourists.

Mixed Race Anxiety and Travel to Michoacán

Dean MacCannell (1976) is a prominent anthropologist who has surveyed the dynamics of tourism, travel, and sightseeing as consequences of capitalist modernity. In *The Tourist*, MacCannell argues that the ideological and demonstrable expansion of modern society is intricately linked to international tourism and/or modern mass leisure. For MacCannell, sightseeing stems from the differentiation drawn by categories of social stratification such as socioeconomic class and racial/ethnic background. As he states, "Differentiation is the origin of alternatives and the feeling of freedom in modern society (MacCannell 1976:11)." In other words, having access to alternatives and leisure implies that a specific class of people has the freedom of choice, travel, and movement, which oppressed peoples and the working class do not have. MacCannell claims that sightseeing is a ritual performed to accentuate these differences between people in modern society.

During the late stages of capitalism, middle class moderns face an isolating detachment from the family, the work place, and the community because they are bound to the clock and to the structure and demands of the workplace. There is no authenticity in the workplace because the workplace is detached from nature and from human relationships. Leisurely travel then becomes the ultimate commodity as a means of escape. MacCannell claims that the middle class and the wealthy desire to "sightsee" the third world in order to experience humans living 'in their simplest form;' humans who are perceived to be freer and who are co-existing in communal arrangements with their fellow human beings. Modern man is starved from experiencing this intimacy with nature or with others and must therefore search for his own authenticity by observing simplicity, poverty, clarity, or the purity of others (MacCannell 1976:3). MacCannell however pinpoints that this profound longing for 'dead' or 'pristine' or 'primitive' cultures is deeply imperialist in nature. As he states in his introduction,

For moderns, reality and authenticity are thought to be elsewhere in other historical periods and other cultures, in purer, simpler lifestyles...the concern of

moderns for naturalness, their nostalgia and their search for authenticity are not merely casual and somewhat decadent, though harmless attachments to the souvenirs of destroyed cultures and dead epochs...They are also components of the conquering spirit of modernity—the grounds of its unifying consciousness (MacCannell 1976:3).

The middle class and the wealthy feel the need to travel in order to experience the authentic ‘primitive,’ and in collecting experiences of the primitive throughout different regions of the world, they gain credibility and social capital amongst their circles of equally isolated individuals. Experiencing primitives is then a way to participate in capitalist consumption, which is a critical element of the conquering spirit of modernity. I found that a search for the primitive and a longing for observing pristine/untouched pre-Hispanic indigenous life and customs motivated both foreign and mestiza/o tourism to Michoacán. Travel to Michoacán during the Days of the Dead is, for the most part, escapist in nature and enveloped in privilege. Additionally, mestizos wished to use encounters with P’urhepechas to fulfill their own spiritual journeys and to better understand their Mexicanness in their quest for self-exploration. Mestizos wished to relieve their anxieties about the conquest and about being mixed race by speaking to and observing indigenous people.

I propose that a type of mestizo/o nostalgia or mestiza/o melancholia for the past motivates mestizos to tour P’urhepecha gravesites and P’urhepecha communities during the Days of the Dead. My conceptualization of mestiza/o melancholia is in conversation with Renato Rosaldo’s concept of imperialist nostalgia (1989). Rosaldo presented this idea as a groundbreaking critique of the field of Anthropology in his essay “Imperialist Nostalgia.” Intending to enlighten anthropologists as to how complicit they are with imperialist projects, Rosaldo proposed an ending to the trope of mourning traditional societies typical to the field of Anthropology. Although anthropologists proposed that anthropological methodology (such as ethnography) could intercede in ‘preserving’ fading cultures by textualizing ‘dying’ oral traditions, Rosaldo critiques the field for its obsession with the ‘vanishing savage.’ Rosaldo effectively argues that the colonial official’s longing for the pre-colonial and anthropology’s romanticization of the past both mask their involvement in the process of domination by purporting innocent intentions in their interactions with indigenous people. He contends that anthropologists and agents of colonization mourn the violent colonial destruction of the pristine and/or the indigenous through their desires for experiencing what was ‘lost’ yet they do not recognize their role in intentionally destroying the very forms of life they long for and they continue to be complicit in the ongoing process of colonization.

Rosaldo terms this sentiment ‘imperialist nostalgia’ because “nostalgia is a particularly appropriate emotion to invoke in attempting to establish one’s innocence and at the same time talk about what one has destroyed” (Rosaldo 1993:108). Imperialist nostalgia utilizes the facade of yearning to both capture people’s fascination with the pre-colonial and to conceal the melancholic fascination’s active complicity with violent forms of control. As he states, “When the so-called civilizing project destabilizes forms of life, the agents of change experience transformations of other cultures as if they were personal losses” (Rosaldo 1993:108). But in reality, feeling nostalgia for the past absolves colonizers of guilt and responsibility for present conditions. Rosaldo recognizes his own scholarship’s complicity with imperialism because the post-colonial conditions in the Philippines are what allowed him and his wife to conduct their

fieldwork with the Ilongots while feeling a loss “for the romantic sense of the untouched society that had been a factor in our first seeking out the Ilongots” (Rosaldo 1993:119). He proposes that a mere self-awareness of participating in or reproducing this problematic trope of nostalgia can help agents of change and anthropologists move through unequal interactions with indigenous peoples.

While mestizos with symptoms of imperialist nostalgia desire to experience the untainted pre-colonial past in its most primitive/pristine form, mestiza/o melancholia differs from imperialist nostalgia because mestizos themselves are racialized as a result of colonial miscegenation and, due to these circumstances, they do have a racial relationship to indigeneity and a desire to understand themselves as indigenous people. Mestizos were borne from a moment of violence (rape) during the Spanish Conquest and from a moment of destruction (colonization). The post-revolutionary nation-building project of the early 20th century, however, elevated mestizaje as the ideal racial identity and further marginalized indigenous and Afro-descent identities in México. Mestizos have maintained their status as the majoritarian population in México while indigenous communities continue to be economically, socially, and racially marginalized. While there *are* poor mestizos in México (some darker-skinned than others), mestizos continue to hold the majority of the positions of power in Mexican corporations, Mexican institutions, and in the Mexican government.

I would like to propose that mestiza/o nostalgia for the indigenous yearns to make sense out of the moment of rape, conquest, and violence that created mestizaje. By appropriating indigeneity through their tours of indigenous communities, their experiences of indigenous spiritual events, and their purchases of indigenous knowledge and indigenous cultural items, mestizos are mourning what was and assuaging their anxiety over the violence that ensued while simultaneously denying any of their ancestors’ involvement in the colonizing process. (They, in fact, go as far as proclaiming their innocence through declarations of solidarity.) Mestizos romanticize and love the pre-colonial Indian yet simultaneously demonstrate rejection and disdain for contemporary indigenous people. They desire an approximation to indigeneity yet distance themselves from poor, dark, and isolated indigenous communities. As Huhndorf and Deloria’s work would demonstrate, the United States settlers’ desire to appropriate is more admiring and polite than mestiza/o melancholia yet still deeply imperialist in nature. The mestiza/o facade of innocence, their declarations of solidarity, and their assuaging of racial guilt occur alongside their ongoing participation in the touristic destruction of P’urhepecha communities and P’urhepecha cultural sites, graves, and practices.

Mestiza/o melancholia and the reification of the Mexican pre-colonial past

Like other settler colonialists, mestizos are not innocent; the conditions, which enable them to tour P’urhepecha communities, already make them complicit in the colonizing and neo-colonizing processes of commodification and exploitation of P’urhepecha people. As inheritors of the casta system and beneficiaries of the dispossession of Indigenous peoples, their historic majoritarian positionality grants them access to leisure, allowing them to travel to Michoacán and to proliferate their impressions of P’urhepechas throughout the nation and the world.

As my findings demonstrate, within the context of the Days of the Dead in Michoacán, mestizo/o tourism functions as an act of post-colonial nostalgia through which mestizos project their desires to resolve their mixed race identity crisis and to understand their own indigeneity onto P'urhepechas. Mestizos tour the P'urhepecha dead to alleviate their anxieties about their own indigeneity and to re-encounter/re-experience a pristine México, which was untouched by colonization. By experiencing P'urhepecha remembrances of the dead through the tourist gaze, mestizos are able to imagine themselves as experiencing México's pre-colonial/Indigenous past.

Due to this chapter's focus on touristic performances of nostalgia and the embodied performance of both P'urhepecha and mestiza/o cultural memory, I would like to survey relevant theories of performance, memory, and nostalgia before delving into the chapter's ethnographic component. In *Cities of the Dead*, Joseph Roach (1996) explores the relationship between memory, performance and substitution in the circum-Atlantic world to examine how culture reproduces and recreates itself through a process he terms 'surrogation.' For Roach, the body functions as a counter-memory that bears the consequences of the history of racialized violence in the Americas. Much like Michel Foucault's theory of power as performative (1979), Roach posits that performance can testify to the counter-memories of history as it is textually recorded and history as it is performed by the bodies that bear its consequences on a daily basis. Roach aims to reveal how circum-Atlantic societies have invented themselves by performing their pasts in the presence of others, claiming that performances always carry with them the memory of forgotten substitutions, which will either be welcomed or shunned.

For Roach, surrogation is intimately tied to performance because an implied absence is always existent within performance. Performance offers a substitute for something that preexists it; a performance stands in for an elusive entity that it must aspire to substitute, mimic, or replace. Surrogation is inherent to performance traditions in the Americas because the numerous cultures that came into contact with each other during colonization created encounters of exchange, hybridity, and violence. Surrogation is the performance of the absent—the mourning for the loss (whether of genocide, cultural tradition, language, an individual, etc.) or the substitution for what's missing. However, surrogation does not always function because the collective memory of the community may not entirely accept the surrogate. The intended substitute can either not fit expectations, creating a shortfall, or actually exceed expectations, creating an excess. Roach understands death as a timeless process, which is culturally-constructed by surrogacy, and he contends that corpses can function as important surrogates or effigies for the performance of funerals and other events where dead individuals are eulogized. As he states,

I argue that performed effigies—those fabricated from human bodies and the associations they evoke—provide communities with a method of perpetuating themselves through specially nominated mediums or surrogates: among them, actors, dancers, priests, street maskers, statesmen, celebrities, freaks, children, and especially, by virtue of an intense but unsurprising paradox, corpses (Roach 1996:36).

Roach argues that the effigy functions as a monstrous liminal double which can produce paradoxical feelings of both fascination and loathing in audiences who may be disturbed by its provocative and unsettling liminality. For example, Roach contends that Aztec sacrificial victims

were surrogates/monstrous doubles onto whom Aztec society projected its anxieties; sacrificial victims were stand-ins for the renewal needed to appease creation and God.

In *Embodying México*, U.S.-based anthropologist Ruth Hellier-Tinoco (2011) explores how embodied memory influences the performance and racialization of indigeneity in my field site, the Pátzcuaro basin of Michoacán. Hellier-Tinoco's work exposes P'urhepecha racialization by analyzing both the history of tourism in Michoacán as well as ethnographic data on the Days of the Dead and La Danza de los Viejitos. Hellier-Tinoco argues that the popular decimation of La Danza de los Viejitos and the Days of the Dead as folkloric iconic performances of indigeneity in the 1920s led to their widespread touristic consumption at the local, national, and international levels. She focuses on indigenous embodiment to better understand the consumption of the dead and of P'urhepechecidad¹⁸ in touristic contexts. According to Hellier-Tinoco, the body is the primary material sign of social difference and P'urhepecha bodies serve as the ultimate signifiers of indigenous authenticity for tourists in Michoacán. As she states, "In the cemetery the efficacy and potency of Night of the Dead is predicated upon the presence of indigenous, authentic, and different bodies, which re-member and em-body the past (Hellier-Tinoco 2010:28)." She analyzes two sets of bodies which perpetuate the racialized embodiment of indigeneity during the Days of the Dead: P'urhepecha women who kneel by gravesites to hold vigil over the dead and P'urhepecha men who stage butterfly net fishing in canoes or perform La Danza de los Viejitos. These two types of bodies reinforce notions of indigeness.

For Hellier-Tinoco, during the Days of the Dead, P'urhepecha bodies stand in for their dead ancestors and embody the pre-invasion past. As she states,

Whereas archeological explorations revealed inanimate artifacts from the pre-invasion past; and historical and anthropological documents recreated bodies from the past in words; and monuments restaged significant pre-Conquest bodies in larger-than-life yet motionless bronze and stone sculptures; the bodies of living people provided flesh and blood models as living artifacts with a real direct linkage to previous civilizations. These were historical and archeological bodies, yet they were also animate, sentient, living bodies, offering multiple possibilities for the future even as they provided resonances with the past. Thus, the 'authentic body' took center stage, charged with re-creating, re-embodying, and restaging the past (Hellier-Tinoco 2011:202).

According to Hellier-Tinoco, five attributes authenticate P'urhepecha bodies as indigenous; pre-Conquest roots, physiognomy, geographic location, cultural practices, and people's daily activities. Out of these particularities, she claims that skin color is particularly important because it continues to be a distinguishing feature and marker of identity in México. Hellier-Tinoco attributes this to the way that brown skin has been codified since the Spanish invasion and during the colonial period in Mexican racial classifications. As I discussed in my introduction, the *casta* system classified people of mixed race according to blood and skin color. For Hellier-Tinoco, brown skin has been regarded as both a problem for the project of modernization and/or the ideological creation of the *mestiza/o* nation and as an asset used to attract tourists. Brown skin

¹⁸ P'urhepechecidad: "lo P'urhepecha," all of the elements that comprise P'urhepecha identity, using P'urhepecha identity as a noun.

continues to be a marker of Mexican subalterneity, which carries stereotypes such as poverty, otherness, ugliness, undesirability, lack of education, and indigeneity. Hellier-Tinoco pinpoints a contradiction within this web of embodied performance: tourists pay to travel to see bodies different from them yet the money that they pay does not necessarily go to the marginalized bodies. Understanding how P'urhepecha bodies are read both by the state and by tourists is not only important to appreciating the racialization of indigenous people in México but also imperative to analyzing how indigenous bodies everywhere have become exploitable commodities in the post-modern capitalist age—with the primary agent for this exploitation being the tourist industry.

My fieldwork demonstrated that P'urhepechas do function as surrogate stand-ins for their dead ancestors before the tourist gaze; their dark-skinned, P'urhepecha-speaking 'poor' bodies dressed in traditional clothing and their facial indigenous features are read as live representations of the remnants of the pre-colonial past. Tourists seek out contemporary P'urhepecha people in hopes of witnessing how things were done before the Spanish invasion and as sources of knowledge about the pre-colonial past. As Hellier-Tinoco observes, "Indigenous bodies become objects of the past, embodying the 'souls of the ancestors,' hinting at notions of immortality, and enabling a trace and residue of pre-incursion México. Bodies of living individuals are transformed into the 'soul' of México in a representation and remembering of the collectivity of the Mexican nation (Hellier-Tinoco 2009:121)." Like the African American mardi gras performers and the Native American ghost dancers that Roach discusses in *Cities of the Dead*, Indigenous bodies at the Days of the Dead function as contemporary testaments to the existence of racialized ancestors (Roach 1996:207-209). The tourist gaze facilitates the mestiza/o view of P'urhepechas as surrogates while P'urhepechas allow mestiza/o tourists and all other tourists to observe the mourning of their dead out of economic necessity.

Although they are not always able to experience genuine/intimate P'urhepecha observations of the Days of the Dead, Mexican mestiza/o and foreign tourists arrive in droves in the Pátzcuaro Basin as early as October 30th in hopes of getting a glimpse at what MacCannell would term the P'urhepecha 'back region' or the desired authentic spaces that tourists wish to inhabit in order to experience more intimacy, closeness, or realness (MacCannell 1976:94). My first ethnographic section explores why mestiza/o tourists, in particular, visit the Pátzcuaro basin during the Days of the Dead. Understanding the ironic negotiation between tourist desires for experiencing untouched primitivity and their participation in an industry, which is completely complicit in the capitalist re-colonization of indigenous people, is critical to contextualizing tourist/indigenous interactions.

Mestiza/o Motivations for Touring the P'urhepecha Days of the Dead

My findings reveal that mestizos visit Michoacán in a journey to reconnect with their roots, which they define as being in the pre-colonial historical past. My interviews with mestiza/o tourists revealed that mestizos tour the Pátzcuaro region during the Days of the Dead because they believe that P'urhepecha observations of the Days of the Dead are an 'authentic' example of how Indigenous Mexicans encountered and honored the dead before the arrival of Spanish colonizers on Mexican shores. Mestizos feel that experiencing the Days of the Dead in Michoacán allows them to witness how 'real' Mexicans confront and commemorate the dead.

For example, Mónica, an environmental lawyer from Puerto Vallarta expressed that she wished to travel to Michoacán to experience the P'urhepecha Days of the Dead after she recovered from a cancerous tumor. As she explained, "For me, the tumor represented dying, killing all the negative things in my life and being reborn to a new life. My recovery coincided with the metaphor of death. Since I had a really close encounter with death, I wanted to come to Michoacán for spiritual renewal and to see how the ancient Mexicans face and deal with death" (Mónica, 11/02/2009). Mónica contextualized her need for experiencing 'something more authentic' and 'something indigenous true to who I am' by elaborating upon the fact that she lives in Puerto Vallarta, a Mexican city which has been taken over by U.S. tourists where people speak English and where monetary transactions are carried out in dollars. Mónica is a middle-class light-skinned green-eyed lawyer who could very well blend into the mainstream pool of tourists in Puerto Vallarta but as a mestiza, she feels Mexican and mourns the tourist takeover in Puerto Vallarta (yet did not reflect on her own positionality as a tourist in Michoacán). Mónica has access to travel funds and vacation time from her employer and thus was able to travel to Michoacán for the Days of the Dead. She described feeling anxiety about understanding her near-death experience after she recovered from the tumor, feeling lost and confused, and feeling like she was given a second chance to seek understanding after having brushed with death so closely. She did not think that returning to her work routine would give her the understanding or enlightenment she was seeking—and thus, she turned to indigenous people because she viewed them as possibly being more spiritual and thus having the answers. Mónica is one of the moderns that MacCannell (1973) and Deloria (1998) refer to in their work—a privileged individual facing a spiritual crisis and seeking to resolve the crisis by gathering 'primitive' wisdom or knowledge from Indigenous people. For Mónica, P'urhepechas became performative surrogates of the pre-Colombian past. She went to Michoacán to "see how ancient Mexicans face death" in order to understand her tumor's metaphorical death and the shifts and changes in her life.

To Mónica, P'urhepecha women became important representations of her search for healing and spiritual enlightenment. Their mere presence in their "traditional shawls, long skirts, embroidered blouses, and long braids" represented sacred space and made her feel safe. As she explained, "For me, the lake represents the mother and motherhood and alongside the lake, the P'urhepecha woman became really important. When I saw them holding vigil over their dead in their traditional clothes, it was like 'Wow, these are my mothers... these are my roots'" (Mónica, 11/02/2009). Here, Mónica projects her own anxiety with her near-death experience onto P'urhepecha women seeing them as surrogates for the connection she yearned for her to a sense of place and belonging, to the earth and to the stereotypical healing indigenous mother. P'urhepecha women become surrogates for the dead Indians who represent her roots and can reaffirm a path towards understanding her place in México as a mestiza facing a spiritual awakening.

Similarly, Armando, a corporate attorney from México City, travelled to Michoacán in search of a spiritual journey. As he explained,

In my case, deciding to come was something completely spiritual. As a matter of fact, I come from studying how death is understood by Buddhists in Nepal. I was touring Nepal and then decided to come back to my own roots in México in time

for the Days of the Dead to confirm the coincidences I noticed. I wanted to live death here as a Mexican. I can travel to many different parts of the world to experience other people's spirituality but I knew I wouldn't understand myself without gathering more knowledge about how Mexicans understand spiritual transitions and how we view death...there is no better way to get this knowledge than by living it with Indigenous people, they still have the traditional knowledge that many of us have lost as we moved to the cities. They still understand the way our ancestors do things because they still do things in the same way. I thought they could teach me some of these things so that I could better understand myself and my position in comparison to the other parts of the world I have visited (Armando, 11/02/2009).

Here, Armando expresses reverence for indigenous people's ability to pass down spiritual knowledge from generation to generation. His motivations for visiting Michoacán during the Days of the Dead are to gain insights into how Indigenous people view death with the end purpose of understanding himself. For Armando, P'urhepecha culture is stagnant in that he believes it has remained the same throughout the generations; in his opinion, indigenous people will fulfill his desire for insight into pre-Columbian beliefs and the pre-Columbian way of doing things. On the one hand, Armando is a cosmopolitan traveler who has visited different continents to collect spiritual experiences and on the other he still feels lost without knowledge about the 'true' spiritual traditions of México.

During his interview, Armando described the observations he made about P'urhepecha culture and spirituality but did not really recall talking to P'urhepecha people. He gained insights from observing how P'urhepecha bodies moved through their ceremonies and he spoke of admiring their simplicity and longing to experience their simple way of life for a longer period of time. Along with viewing P'urhepecha culture as stagnant, Armando also views P'urhepecha people as stunted and/or un-evolved. He gathered knowledge about what he considered to be 'true' pre-Columbian indigenous traditions by observing and photographing living P'urhepecha bodies as surrogates of their dead ancestors while simultaneously proclaiming that P'urhepechas enjoy the 'privileged position' of avoiding the complexity of living in the city. As he reflected, "Well, my impression is that they are very happy. At least they do not have to deal with much complexity in their every-day lives or with the contradictions that someone living in the city might deal with. Hopefully this will continue to be the case for them" (Armando 11/02/2009). Though well-intentioned, Armando's assumptions about the lack of complexity in P'urhepecha people's lives may be read as prejudicial against P'urhepechas and even as deeply racist.

As my next chapter will reveal, P'urhepecha people feel they deal with a great deal of complexity as mislabeled and misunderstood contemporary indigenous people navigating colonized landscapes. P'urhepechas reflect upon their subject-positions as indigenous people working in a capitalist economy and living in the modern world as much as mestizos or any other modern people do. P'urhepechas are critical thinkers with the ability to analyze their lives and their existence; they face the daily challenges of surviving in a country and in an economy which predominantly exclude them. Armando signs off this complex existence as being part of P'urhepecha reality. By labeling their lives as simple and praising their simplicity, he promotes the assumption that P'urhepecha people are aloof or unaware about their world around them and

that they are happy living in what he perceives as an ignorant bliss. These assumptions based on Armando's perceptions of P'urhepecha poverty are fraught with racist views of indigenous people as poor, unintelligent, isolated, backward, ignorant, and unaware. Rather than appreciating P'urhepecha adaptability and contemporaneity as part of P'urhepecha subjectivity, Armando continues to long for the untouched pure primitive.

Mestizos also celebrated the continuity of P'urhepecha traditions from the onset of the Spanish arrival. They claimed that continuity as part of their personal heritage—whether they identified with indigenous roots or not. For example, Mónica, who admitted to primarily having and identifying with her European descent talked about the survival of P'urhepecha traditions as part of her own trajectory in México—as evidence of post-Conquest survival that sparked her own personal pride in being from the country. As she observed,

Being here makes me realize that even though we were conquered, we keep laughing at them. Oh yes, the church came, they brought names like María and Jesús...but as a matter of fact we keep believing in our roots internally and ideologically. You can see it with the indigenous people, the mestizos walking around. This place continues to be pre-Hispanic. That makes me proud, especially because I come from a place where it does not feel like it's México, where people speak English and everything is in dollars. So when I came here I said 'Bravo! We keep being unconquered, they have not conquered us yet!' That makes me proud, to see their flowers and their clothes and their dances...where the children, the elderly, and modern people like us speak their native language and Spanish. So I say to myself, 'What conquest?' We still have a lot to rescue and expand on (Mónica, 11/02/2009).

Here Mónica claims the 'survival' of P'urhepecha culture as part of her own personal heritage as a Mexican even though she claims that her own roots come predominantly from Spain. She expresses pride in indigenous continuity and resilience and proclaims it as evidence that Mexicans continue to be unconquered. Comments like Mónica's were common amongst my mestiza/o informants. Indeed, her comments are typical when the topic of indigenous people comes up in discussions amongst Mexican mestizos. Mestizos proclaim the 'survival' of Indigenous people as evidence that México was not conquered by Spain. The shared memory of rape, the trauma that we are a product of '*la chingada*' still collectively plagues us.¹⁹ Many mestizos see the contemporary existence of indigenous people and indigenous languages as an anti-rape and anti-conquest discourse; indigenous bodies remind us that some amongst us escaped the rape and the inter-generational shame of being mixed race due to rape. While proclaiming that victory as our own, discussions about the dispossession and violent takeover of the land, the bloody genocide, the destruction of cultural ways, the imposition of Catholicism upon indigenous spiritual traditions and indigenous languages, and the numerous assimilationist campaigns that have targeted indigenous people are much less discussed. Thus, celebratory comments about 'survival' like Mónica's lack historical context and lack mestiza/o accountability over the loss of life and destruction. Comments like hers are ignorant of the daily inter-generational struggle that Indigenous people had to endure to keep their traditions and to

¹⁹ La chingada: A referent to Hernán Cortes's lover and translator, La Malinche. The damned one or raped one who gave birth to the first mestizo.

ensure the continuity of their culture. This celebratory anti-rape/anti-Conquest discourse romanticizes indigenous survival without contextualizing it in the bloody history of violence and genocide that has afflicted indigenous communities throughout the centuries.

Similarly, even Mexicans with traceable indigenous heritage such as my informant Victor from Cuernavaca celebrate the continuity of indigenous traditions while seeing themselves as temporary visitors of indigenous cultures. Victor, a journalist, visited Michoacán to write a story about the Days of the Dead for an independent México City newspaper. Victor wanted to experience the spirituality of the event and wanted to reconnect with his paternal P'urhepecha ancestors who are buried in Angangueo, Michoacán. As he relates,

I came with the intention of experiencing the day as close to the religiosity of the people as I could. Every time I have the opportunity I travel and basically get to know the whole country. My greatest interest is to get to know and understand the cultures, to return to my roots, in a way. I think my paternal grandfather had P'urhepecha roots because he is from a town relatively close to here called Angangueo. They are also of P'urhepecha descent. When I was a child he used to tell me about the celebration of the Days of the Dead in these towns. He went to Cuernavaca when he was very young. I grew up with that interest in getting to know his roots. It's the first time I come during the Days of the Dead (Victor, 11/02/2009).

When I asked Victor what most impressed him about the celebrations, he referred to the continuity of the traditions.

What really impacted me positively is that these towns maintain those traditions since before the Spanish arrival. To know that a tradition can survive for five hundred years or more in such a methodical and profound way really strikes me. P'urhepechas are a warrior tribe. I'm sorry, the term tribe is more western. What I meant is ethnicity. They're tough and demanding of themselves, but also very generous. I would say that P'urhepechas have these two traits: the strength of maintaining their traditions, their language and creating a certain barrier against external influences. At the same time, there's a tremendous generosity and religiosity. It's a group of people who are very clean and dedicated to their work, and of course to their traditions as well. My general impression of the P'urhepechas is very positive. From my experience, when a P'urhepecha is a friend, he is a friend one hundred percent. But if you get on their bad side, they are tremendous, because they unite and they are tough. It's a people who are used to a tough life, a life of fighting, but also very generous. Very religious and artistic, also. The fact that they continue to have these celebrations almost intact to their traditional ways makes me proud to share their heritage. In the city, I'm displaced, but here they share their fruit and bread with me. They show me their altars and share their knowledge. I can leave knowing that our traditions have survived thanks to their toughness and that makes me happy (Victor, 11/02/2009).

Victor proclaims the victory of survival as part of his own personal heritage yet he has not returned to his paternal grandfather's community to learn about their contemporary struggles nor does he dedicate any aspect of his journalistic career to P'urhepechas. It was his first time visiting P'urhepecha communities and his first time experiencing the Days of the Dead and he commended their cleanliness, hospitality, and warrior spirit yet the positive impressions he gathered did not motivate him to personally invest himself or his journalism in the community. The visit was temporary and he felt satisfied knowing that the purpose of his visit (to learn about his paternal heritage) was fulfilled due to a few open generous P'urhepechas who let him into their homes. Victor found some resolution to his anxiety over his mixed heritage by partly finding himself in the visit. He celebrated the resiliency of P'urhepecha people, yet also talked about his exciting life in México City with enthusiasm during the interview while simultaneously making comments about encouraging P'urhepecha people to maintain the simplicity of their rural ways. For temporary visitors like Mónica and Victor, celebrating indigenous resiliency functions as a self-fulfilling appropriation of indigenous struggles while there is little investment in understanding the context and the implications or in proliferating the message behind the resistance that made such resiliency possible.

Mestiza/o Melancholia and P'urhepecha Surrogates of the Pre-Colonial Past

In this section, I would like to elaborate upon the concept of mestizo/o nostalgia by exploring how the mestiza/o tourists I interviewed celebrated expressions of pre-colonial P'urhepecha culture and mourned P'urhepecha exposure to modern life. Mestizos like Mónica and Armando expressed anxiety over what they perceived as 'dying' P'urhepecha culture. Alongside my other mestiza/o informants, they travelled to Michoacán to search for the primitive in order to discover their own Mexican indigenous roots and, in their search, they instead encountered strategically-curated P'urhepecha performances. They encountered what Dean MacCannell (1992) terms the performative primitive, a staged replica of the authentic, which did not satisfy their hunger for understanding their own indigeneity or their expectations for experiencing something 'authentic' or something truly 'of the past,' truly 'pre-Hispanic' representations of the 'original' Mexicans.

One of the ways that mestiza/o tourists felt betrayed by their visit to Janitzio during the Days of the Dead was by not being able to see traditional P'urhepecha houses made out of wood. Most of the houses in Janitzio are now made out of brick with a few houses remaining that are constructed out of adobe. Mestiza/o tourists lamented the impact that 'progress' has had on traditional P'urhepecha living and expressed that they really wanted to see homes made out of wood or clay with a *fogón* [central fire pit stove] in the kitchen. Echoing Hellier-Tinoco's (2011) observations of tourist/P'urhepecha interactions, my informants also wanted to witness the stereotypical image of the indigenous woman grinding cornmeal for tortillas on a *metate* [flat grinding stone]. Although tortilla-making has been mechanized in Janitzio as it has been throughout México, Hellier-Tinoco claims that P'urhepecha women must stage traditional tortilla making on the metate to appease tourist desires. As she states, "In order to perpetuate an image of difference and authenticity, configured as indigenous, pre-modern, and traditional, the islanders are required to undertake a performance of everyday life, encompassing fishing and tortilla-making in the expected manner, and must embody the space 'as if' no onlookers were present" (Hellier-Tinoco 2011:256). In "Home as a Place of Exhibition," Walter Little (2000) describes a similar phenomenon amongst Kaqchikel Mayas in San Antonio Aguas Calientes,

Guatemala. According to Little, tourists attend Kaqchikel Mayas' home exhibitions in hopes of experiencing what MacCannell (1976) terms the 'back regions.' As Little states, "Both tourists and students visit Gloria's home to get a glimpse of Indian life, in hopes of seeing what indigenous people do when tourists are not looking" (Little 2000:168).

Like Little's tourist informants, the mestiza/o tourists I spoke to wanted to see homes free of Western commodities such as refrigerators and gas stoves and they desperately wanted for P'urhepechas to care more about preserving traditionally-constructed homes free of Western influences and Western comforts. As Sonia, a journalist from México City expressed,

There was a house we saw on our way here. I really liked that one. It was a house made of adobe, out of soil. It was a beautiful house that was made by them. You can tell that they made it, and that's also what they do and they were taught how to do. When you bring in cement for building, it could be an advancement of the western world, but sometimes the palms and other materials are warmer during this cool climate. I prefer to see it how it has been for many years. For example, on the island you see many houses and every once in a while you see one made out of concrete and it breaks with the tradition (Sonia 11/02/2009).

For Sonia, even houses constructed in the colonial adobe design are preferable to modern houses made out of brick. She still considers adobe homes to be more traditional even if that style was introduced after Spanish contact because they represent an older style of living. Sonia associated P'urhepechas with being more in sync with nature and she thus appreciates families who build their homes with more natural material such as adobe. She doesn't think that homes built out of cement and stucco belong in Janitzio.

Similarly, Ester, a civil engineer from Uruapan currently residing in Los Angeles, lamented that she did not personally get to see wooden homes during her visit,

Their traditional homes were wood. In the middle they'd have their fire going. It was raised from the ground because it's so wet and humid, and that's how the wood wouldn't rot. So, you know, good engineering. But now I see them in adobe houses, which is more modern. Modern if you want to go back four hundred or whatever years... Traditional living I think gives more respect to the earth; you're not taking things that you don't need or an excess of what you need, which I think they truly should do that (Ester, 11/02/2009).

Ironically, my P'urhepecha informants from Janitzio expressed that they participate in the tourist industry precisely to save money in order to re-build their homes with more modern materials, to acquire convenient appliances for the home, and to pay for their children's education. While mestizos did not necessarily propose development projects, which would enforce the maintenance of traditional homes, they did express that as tourists, they wanted to see what was more traditional. As Miguel, a geotechnical engineer from México City, expressed,

I think it would be too idealized to ask them to continue living in clay houses. They have the right to live wherever and however they want. Of course, seeing concrete houses is out of sync because as a tourist, I want to see what is ethnic. They have all the same rights as everyone else. Of course, I would prefer to see

the clay houses because they are more romantic. At the same time, I know they're uncomfortable because when there is heavy rain, the clay disintegrates. Obviously, many of them want to improve their style of life. Firstly, I saw that many of the clay houses are disappearing and more people are building houses out of cement. Secondly, the few clay houses that exist were very kept and clean. That gave me great joy, to know that poverty doesn't mean un-cleanliness (Miguel, 11/02/2009).

Here, Miguel seems to defend P'urhepecha autonomy to build their houses as they please and even understands why it would be necessary for P'urhepechas to build homes out of more durable materials that can resist various seasons, but he still expresses what he wanted to experience as a tourist. Although he is aware that modern living provides P'urhepechas with more convenience, he still feels deprived out of being able to see what he pictured as traditional living in a P'urhepecha community. Mestizos seemed to understand the need for P'urhepechas to build homes out of more durable materials but insisted that seeing modern homes dispersed throughout Janitzio betrayed their expectations for being able to witness things in their more pristine condition or as they were before external influences.

Tourists also romanticized traditional P'urhepecha lifestyles by continuously referring to and praising P'urhepecha use of traditional clothing and P'urhepechas speaking their indigenous language. The majority of the mestiza/o tourists that I interviewed proclaimed both seeing P'urhepechas wear traditional clothing and hearing people speak the P'urhepecha language in the city and in the villages as the most beautiful, most captivating, most fulfilling part of their experience. As Ester expressed,

I think them maintaining their dress is so important, because it's part of them, it's part of who they are. Their wool skirts and their pleated skirts mean something, and certain colors mean something. I think that's important for them to maintain it and keep going in the modern world as we're living in it. I think it's really good. I love to see them in their traditional dress. It's impressive, it's really impressive. Especially what the women wear! Have you seen those skirts that they wear? Wow! (Ester, 11/02/2010)

Similarly, Sonia observed,

The fact that they still wear their clothing says a lot about their culture. It's extraordinary to see them so colorful; all the colors in the skirts and shawls that the women wear transmit a great deal of joy. I didn't notice the men as much, or I didn't get to see men wearing traditional clothing as much. I did see the women in the cemeteries...they would sit down and the skirts would cover everything. From what I've seen, those skirts are made up of a lot of cloth. It's nice to see that they still use it, that they don't give into labels or western influences and that they continue to wear their clothing (Sonia, 11/02/2009).

Informants continued to agree that seeing P'urhepecha women wear traditional clothing on a daily basis made their touristic experiences more spectacular and memorable. However, some

mestiza/o tourists lamented that younger generations may not have had as much of an interest in donning traditional clothes. As Victor observed,

I like it a lot. However, I regret the youth don't continue what the elders do. I regret that a lot of their traditions are being lost. I see clothing as an element that identifies them with their roots. Many older women wear it with such honor. I would be in favor of everyone dressing in their traditional clothing. Yesterday I was asking a young woman why she doesn't dress like that. She said it was because she was not a traditional woman. I responded that maybe she wasn't, but her family was P'urhepecha. 'It's just that I'm from Morelia,' she replied. She detached from that tradition, which is a shame because they're very valuable elements. I love to see them, but I regret that it's being lost (Armando 11/02/2009).

Armando also noticed that the younger generations did not wear traditional clothing as often as their parents and grandparents. He pinpointed internalized racism amongst P'urehepechas and Mexicans in general as being the reason why wearing traditional clothing in México has become more rare. As he stated,

I would love that young women and girls would still wear their traditional clothes because there is nothing to be ashamed of. The problem is that our parents and grandparents taught us, especially me, that to be Indian is shameful. 'You dress like Indian, like a countryside man.' So now to dress like that can be shameful. That is a big problem. I would love to see young women being educated and told 'this is really beautiful, these are beautiful dresses and they make us proud.' That would be the best (Armando 11/02/2009).

When asked whether he purchased traditional clothes, Armando replied that he didn't because it's not something he saw himself wearing in the city. Mónica admitted to buying traditional blouses but said she only wears them on special occasions such as the 16th of September (Mexican Independence Day) or on the Day of the Virgin of Guadalupe. When I asked my mestiza/o interviewees how they were able to tell apart a P'urhepecha from a mestiza/o local, they pinpointed both traditional clothing and the speaking of the P'urhepecha language as ethnic identifiers. Furthermore, mestizos noticed and complained that 'pretend Indians' tried to fool them by wearing fake traditional clothing in order to sell things (especially in Pátzcuaro). And, sometimes the things that these 'pretend Indians' sold were not traditional handicrafts made by P'urhepechas. The shoppers amongst my interviewees seemed obsessed with purity and authenticity and felt insulted and bamboozled by the 'pretend Indians' who tried to sell them non-Indigenous items. As Mónica complained, "At the craft-market there were P'urhepecha things mixed with cheap goods from India and China. Come on! And there were 'indigenas' that were not really indigenous but were really making themselves pass as indigenas. More mestizos than me! So you would go to stands and see a shawl, look at the label, and realize that it was 'made in India' or 'made in China' (Mónica, 11/02/2009)." As a participant observer, I did notice non-P'urhepecha speaking people who donned what looked like indigenous clothing (but not necessarily P'urhepecha clothing) begging on the streets or selling goods. There would be no way to tell if such folks were indigenous unless they were directly asked or if one could hear

them speaking the P'urhepecha language. The fact that it seemed to profoundly bother Mónica and other mestizos that I interviewed speaks to the Mexican mestiza/o tourist fixation on P'urhepecha authenticity when travelling to Michoacán.

Similarly, mestiza/o tourist informants applauded hearing the P'urhepecha language being spoken during their time in Michoacán. Many of them felt that the language truly testified to the continuity in P'urhepecha cultural existence and 'survival.' Hearing the language for them functioned as proof that living P'urhepechas could indeed be surrogates for their dead ancestors—because the language stemmed from the pre-colonial past and spoke to the fact that 'real Indians' actually did exist before the Spanish Conquest and that mestizos could *be* amongst them in the post-colonial present and learn from them. The language then could transport people to the pre-colonial past, attest to the purity of the events and rituals that tourists were observing and participating in, and therefore further authenticate tourist experiences during the Days of the Dead. During our interview, Sonia revealed what she considered to be a pleasant encounter with P'urhepecha *pireris* [musicians] whom she asked to speak a few words in P'urhepecha so that she could record what they said.

Yesterday when there was a performance, at the end I approached three P'urhepechas that were playing the guitar and singing in Tarasco. I went up to one of them, who said he didn't speak Spanish very well, but told me to ask someone else. I asked if he could say some words. He agreed and very enthusiastically began to speak in P'urhepecha. I didn't understand anything, but then he translated it and told me what it meant to them. His translation said that he wanted people to know P'urhepechas lived the Days of the Dead, how it really was worth it for them to do all this for those who are no longer with us because the spirits really exist and they do visit (Sonia, 11/02/2009).

Sonia's interruption of the *pireris* with her voice recorder seemed appropriate to her because she could not contain her excitement upon hearing the P'urhepecha language. She wanted to capture it on tape in order to take it home with her and have a way to authenticate her experience of talking to P'urhepechas in Michoacán to her friends and colleagues in México City. For mestiza/o tourists, the practice of asking P'urhepecha people to speak in P'urhepecha for their amusement, education, or enjoyment seemed to be common. I myself experienced it as a participant observer. I was asked more than once whether I spoke P'urhepecha and if I could speak P'urhepecha for people who were visiting Janitzio. Although I did not interview any P'urhepecha children, a common practice amongst P'urhepecha child tour-guides is to recruit tour-participants by greeting tourists as they dock in Janitzio in the P'urhepecha language and promising to tell them stories about the island. Children used the language as cultural capital to recruit tourists in order to compete with each other for *propinas* [monetary tips]. Children may yell things like, "Come on my tour! I speak our language the best!" Or "I can tell you the stories of the island and sing in P'urhepecha the best!" Still, tourists seemed to prefer listening to everyday use of the language in daily situations to confirm that the language isn't 'dead' and to legitimize their experience amongst P'urhepechas. As Ester explained, "I appreciate that, very much. I do, I really like to hear the *pirekuas*, their music. It's a really interesting language. It's just fun to see if they're joking around. It's just nice to hear them talking in their language and maintaining that. Maybe they're joking about us, I don't know. They're smiling, having a good

time and talking. They don't feel intimidated to hide their language, to talk softly. They're just talking normally, and I think that's totally acceptable Ester, 11/02/2009)." The sentiment that Ester expressed about whether P'urhepechas purposefully talk about tourists in the P'urhepecha language because they know that tourists will not understand them is common amongst both mestiza/o tourists and local mestizos and mestizas who live amongst P'urhepechas in the region. Not all are as sympathetic as Ester however. From my participant observation in Pátzcuaro's marketplace, I gathered that it is common for locals to get angry when P'urhepechas speak to each other in their language while in the presence of mestizos due to their suspicion that P'urhepecha women vendors might be trying to trick them into paying higher prices for items or that P'urhepechas may be joking about them. Nevertheless, hearing the P'urhepecha language as an identity marker seemed to be a top priority in the experiences that mestiza/o tourists sought in Michoacán during the Days of the Dead.

While mestiza/o tourists celebrated the preservation of language and the donning of traditional clothing amongst P'urhepechas, they mourned the impact that 'progress' and the importation of modern commodities has had on P'urhepecha communities. Informants such as Armando and Mónica voiced an outcry against 'progress' for being at fault in influencing change and for importing the desire for modern things into P'urhepecha communities. Though 'progress' (industrialization, the introduction of commodities, participation in the capitalist market) is acclaimed as a good thing in urban regions, according to mestiza/o tourists—it is not such a good thing in indigenous communities. As Armando reflected,

I hope that the humility that they live with will continue to be preserved. The community where I stayed eleven years ago was similar, but tourism came and they started to buy homes, cars, and land. That changed everything there. It is not like that here and I hope that won't change. I hope the simplicity will continue to be preserved for the best of these communities. So much progress is not good. Before we used to think that progress was good and desirable, but in reality that is not true. In reality the humble conditions they live in are better. I hope they keep it that way (Armando, 11/02/2009).

Similarly, Mónica expressed frustration with 'progress,' which she seemed to align with acquiring modern conveniences and exposure to capitalist consumption. As she stated, "What can we call 'progress?' Is it to build a mall here or something like that? No...no...no because that makes these people desire stuff that they cannot have so they would have to sell other things to be able to have them. The humility that they live with is perfect and I hope that policies are created to conserve this humility for the best of the communities." Lost in feelings of mestiza/o melancholia, both Armando and Mónica mourned how 'progress' or Western influences change indigenous communities. They did not sympathize with the P'urhepecha desire for home-improvement or for owning modern things. They did not reflect upon the possibility of P'urhepechas having personal autonomy to participate in the capitalist economy or to buy non-indigenous things for their homes. Both Armando and Mónica live in urban settings in furnished apartments with appliances but their reality or access to things which improve their quality of life does not compound with what they believe should be P'urhepecha reality. Like other tourists, Mónica and Armando view poverty as an 'authentic' P'urhepecha condition that should not change, a condition that should remain in place in order to preserve P'urhepecha legitimacy.

Such attitudes completely deny P'urhepechas the right to live contemporary existences where P'urhepechas work, participate in the modern world, and strive to improve their quality of life like other Mexican citizens. To believe that P'urhepechas should not have access to improvements or to accumulating monetary wealth denies P'urhepechas their experience as modern peoples. This tourist obsession with maintaining indigenous purity speaks to mestizos' insistence that the integrity of P'urhepecha communities lies in the preservation of their cultural 'purity.'

When asked what she wished for the future for P'urhepechas, Mónica expressed that she wished for P'urhepechas to remain pure. As she explained, "If they become integrated to society they will not be pure anymore... I know it's a challenge for modern society to access these communities and thus they live in really poor conditions, really hard conditions, so you think 'what is best?' but if they remain isolated and poor, at least they are 100% pure (Mónica, 11/02/2009)." Once again, whether these communities are poor or not doesn't seem to matter to mestiza/o tourists who are invested in preserving mestiza/o fantasies about pre-coloniality or 'how things used to be' as long as P'urhepechas can remain authentic surrogates of their dead ancestors in Mexican society. Neither Mónica nor Armando (or any of the other mestiza/o tourists I spoke to) reflected upon the causes of the destruction of P'urhepecha lifeways. They did not implicate themselves or the Mexican government in P'urhepecha poverty or in the destruction of P'urhepecha livelihoods. They did not acknowledge how they personally gain from the historical genocide of indigenous people and dispossession of indigenous lands on a daily basis. Thus, while they mourned change and longed for P'urhepecha lives to remain traditional, mestiza/o melancholia allowed them to remain innocent observers of how 'industrialization' and 'modern society' forces change upon P'urhepecha livelihoods.

The reality of mestiza/o racism in México

The paradox inherent to the tourist/indigenous relationship and the more general mestizo/indigenous relationship in México is that while Mexicans express a great amount of reverence for indigenous people (particularly for ancient Mexican indigenous cultures and the remnants of sophisticated contributions from these cultures in contemporary society), they also spout virulent racism against living indigenous people. Mestiza/o locals in Pátzcuaro and my tourist informants were no exception to this. The mestiza/o tourists I interviewed often referred to P'urhepechas in diminutive terms such as '*indito*' [little Indian], 'María,' and '*indio pata-rajada*' [split-foot Indian], which are common racial epithets aimed at indigenous people in México.²⁰

It's common for P'urhepecha women in Michoacán to be called 'Marías,' 'guares,' and 'guarecitas.' These terms were used often and interchangeably in tourist responses to my questions. Indigenous women throughout México are often referred to as 'Marías.' Even though the use of the term 'María' refers to the image of the Virgin Mary (an image comparable to indigenous women who drape shawls over their heads and faces) and to the fact that 'María' was a common name given to indigenous women during colonial times, it is deeply offensive because it generalizes indigenous women into one blurred unspecified category. P'urhepecha women

²⁰ Indito: the diminutive of 'Indio,' which means Indians, translates into 'little Indian,' a way to racialize and infantilize indigenous people in México.

have their own individualized names and identities. To call them all 'María' denies them the right to be perceived as individuals and puts them into a common category of being ignorant/poor/disenfranchised women of indigenous descent. 'María' also calls upon the stereotypes propagated by the popular comedic character of '*La India María*,' a buffoonish satirical representation of Mexican indigenous women as stupid, clumsy, ignorant, unintelligible women who done long braids and dress in traditional clothes. The vicious stereotypes attached to calling indigenous women 'María' perpetuate the perceived inferiority and worthlessness of Mexican indigenous women and therefore justify ridiculing, humiliating, and discriminating against them in public spaces. As a participant observer and patron in Pátzcuaro's vibrant tourist attractions (hotels, restaurants, shops), I observed indigenous women being forcibly removed from establishments by security guards or told to leave for attempting to sell their crafts inside or in front of said establishments. I myself was denied the use of a restroom on one occasion because I was dressed in traditional clothes.

Similarly, the term '*guare*,' which is a term used by P'urhepechas for women who have already borne a child, functions as a means to homogenize P'urhepecha women. The term 'guare' is a Spanish pronunciation of the P'urhepecha word '*uahriti*.' While it is used for a specific category of P'urhepecha women, P'urhepecha women don't just call themselves *uahritis*; they have different labels such as '*Nanaka*' [young unmarried woman] and '*Nana K'eri*' [elderly wise woman] which correspond to different phases in a woman's life and titles such as '*uarhibaxi*' [woman who has given much of herself as a caregiver of her own children and other children] which correspond to different ranks/ social strata granted to women as they reach older phases and/or for contributions they make to sustaining their communities. Worse-yet, calling P'urhepecha women 'guarecita' (the diminutive of 'guare') infantilizes P'urhepecha women by stereotyping them as child-like people who need to depend on the intelligence/logic of real adults. The infantilization of indigenous people with the use of diminutive terms such as 'indito' and 'guarecita' dates back to the Conquest when both conquistadores and friars considered indigenous people children. These terms also recall the racist binary between '*gente de razón*' [people of reason/logic or white people] and '*gente sin razón*' [people lacking reason or indigenous people] drawn by the *casta* system during colonial times. Calling P'urhepecha women one generic name (whether 'María,' 'guare,' or 'guarecita') is erroneous and offensive because doing so erases the social ranking and respect that women have earned in their communities. As journalist Grecia Ponce (2014) points out in her article "Guare or Guarecita," "To call P'urhepecha women *guares* or *guarecitas* is not an expression of love or a recognition of ethnic identity. It is an erroneous term, which only demonstrates the ignorance of those who use it. There is a specific term for each stage of a woman's life in P'urhepecha culture and so the word 'guare' is a disrespectful term (Ponce, 2014)." The *mestiza/o* worldview does not grasp or seem to care about how P'urhepechas differentiate between the stages of a woman's life and/or rank or about how P'urhepecha women identify themselves. As proven by my *mestiza/o* tourist interviewees, these homogenizing terms for P'urhepecha women continue to be used well into the 21st century.

One comment made by Sra. Godinez, a prominent business-owner in Pátzcuaro, speaks to the racism (and clear disdain) that *mestiza/o* locals feel towards P'urhepechas. When asked what she thought about Days of the Dead celebrations in Pátzcuaro, Sra. Godinez observed,

I like that the inditos bring in the tourists because it's good for my business. But I wish they would stay on their island and that the tourists would go visit them there. I don't think their presence is good in Pátzcuaro because they bring in a cheap element. Before, the celebrations used to be so beautiful here...the inditos would lay out their crafts in the plaza and the Marías placed their offerings at the cemetery and people looked at them respectfully. Now everyone drinks...the Indians who bring in the tourists and the tourists themselves have turned Pátzcuaro into a cantina (Sra. Godinez, 10/28/2009).

Sra. Godinez is a prime example of how the words 'inditos' and 'Marías' are used to generalize indigenous people into one disempowered/disenfranchised stereotype.

In his piece, "Marketing Mayas," Pierre Van Den Berghe (1995) explores the under-researched concept of the middleman in the heritage tourism industry. During his fieldwork in Chiapas, México, Van Den Berghe examined how the local mestizo/o bourgeois appropriated living Mayas as a marketable resource to supply and promote the sale of materials in their tourist shops. Van Den Berghe posits that Indians in México are subaltern due to three factors: their class positions as poor peasants, their cultural marginality due to their unfamiliarity with the Spanish language and lack of formal education, and their geographical isolation in rural areas. According to Van Den Berghe, before the 1980s gave a rise to heritage tourism in the Chiapas region, virulent racism against local indigenous peoples predominated amongst mestizos. As he states,

Most mestizos have traditionally looked down on Indians as ignorant, superstitious, backward, alcoholic wretches who impede the progress of the country. Mestizo attitudes have been more of paternalistic condescension tainted with fatalistic pessimism than one of competitive, aggressive dislike or hatred, because Indians are too poor, too powerless, and too invisible to constitute a threat (Van Den Berghe 1995:571).

According to Van Den Berghe, public recognition of living Mayas as marketable resources grew amongst the local mestizo population in San Cristobal in the early 1980s. Mestizos then began to strategize on how to profit from the image of Indians as 'picturesque noble savages' with long unbraided hair and white cotton trousers' as a means to promote the touristic quest for experiencing living Indians as authentic descendants of their authentic predecessors. Van Den Berghe contextualizes ethnic tourism within a preexisting powermap of regional ethnic relations wherein a locally or nationally dominant group can become the middlemen in the tourist trade by granting access to the more marginalized groups. Van Den Berghe argues that mestizos became the middlemen between tourists and exploitable indigenous people in Chiapas. As he states, "The tourist quest for the authentic other enables the local elite to use its political economic, locational, and linguistic advantages to capitalize on the otherness of indigenous groups. The otherness, hitherto, seen as a liability and obstacle on the path to progress and modernity, suddenly becomes a marketable commodity (Van Den Berghe 1995:583)."

Like the mestiza/o locals in Van Den Berghe's article, Sra. Godinez appreciates the P'urhepecha presence in Pátzcuaro insomuch as it brings tourists to patronize her businesses. Sra. Godinez admitted to being part of the mestiza/o local elite who capitalized on the P'urhepecha presence in Pátzcuaro to sell things to tourists. As she reflected,

I have two boutiques here in the downtown area where I sell things that I buy from the Indians. I sell them for three or four times the amount that I pay the Indian women to make them! The fact that there are Indian vendors in the streets helps my business because I can point to them and tell my customers that they made the items... There is a class of tourists that would rather buy items in a boutique than in the streets. My well-maintained and clean boutique caters to those tourists but they still want items that are authentic and made by Indians (Sra. Godinez, 10/28/2009).

From what I observed, mestiza/o locals have become what Van Den Berghe terms ‘the middlemen in the tourist trade;’ mestiza/o locals control the local economy and gain the most profit from P’urhepechas functioning as living tourist attractions. P’urhepechas gain very little from being toured while mestiza/o locals who have the means to be shop-owners see their business burgeon during peak tourist seasons such as the Days of the Dead. As Van Den Berghe poignantly observes, “Ethnic tourism often superimposes itself into a preexisting system of ethnic relations between the locally or nationally dominant group and one or more marginalized nonmainstream groups. The latter become tourees, and the former become middlemen in the tourist trade (Van Den Berghe 1995:581).”

My mestiza/o tourist informants also drew an ethnic binary between themselves as modern city-dwellers and P’urhepechas as rural Indians. Despite their desire to learn about indigenous traditions, clear differences were accentuated between urban educated mestizos and P’urhepechas in Michoacán. In “Home As a Place of Exhibition,” Walter Little (2000) argues that Kaqchikel Mayas know that they must perform difference in order to capture and keep tourists’ attention. Confirming tourist beliefs of indigenous people as Others is important to Kaqchikel Mayas because they realize that tourists want to see and experience something divergent to how they see themselves. As Little states, “If the Lopezes are too much like the tourists, the performance fails. Hence, attending to boundaries is fundamental to the success of the performance and subsequent sales. In other words, the Lopezes must consciously make themselves different from tourists (Little 2000:172).” Playing to these ethnic boundaries by drawing contrasting differences between Mayas and tourists is imperative for Kaqchikel Mayas to profit from their performances. Little emphasizes the importance of the temporary staging of Otherness to appease the tourist experience. He argues that structural power relations between the disenfranchised observed and the ruling appropriator must remain in place in order for the tourist to experience the staging in a non-threatening way. In other words, the tourist’s access to Otherness must be temporary as she can complacently return to her privileged lifestyle after the experience while natives remain in their third world existence.

For mestiza/o tourists, the consumption of P’urhepecha culture seemed to be temporary and self-serving. P’urhepechas are useful surrogates of pre-colonial knowledge inasmuch as they aid the mestiza/o self-exploration of indigenous roots but mestiza/o tourists do differentiate between themselves as knowledgeable empowered people and P’urhepechas as primitive, poor, and different. When asked how he identified ethnically, Juan from Guadalajara expressed, “Well I might be a Mexican but I’m not like the inditos pata-rajadas here. I grew up in the city as a ‘fresa’ but I like to see the way they do things here. I like to learn from their culture and take

pictures to show my friends (Juan, 11/02/2009).” Juan expresses that he grew up as a ‘fresa,’ or a well-off urban kid.²¹ To him, interacting with P’urhepechas is a sightseeing experience he can then showcase to his friends in Guadalajara. His use of the racist term ‘split-foot Indian’ demonstrates that he sees P’urhepechas as extremely different and inferior to him and his upbringing. Such views of P’urhepechas speak to the ironic relationship between mestiza/o locals and the indigenous people who attract the tourists and between mestiza/o tourists and the indigenous people they tour in México; a relationship defined by the simultaneous desire to learn from and take from P’urhepecha culture and the racist attitudes that continue to marginalize indigenous communities.

The Mestiza/o as intermediary

Although they are aware of their racial and spatial distance from P’urhepechas, mestizos see themselves as respectful cultural brokers and/or intermediaries between P’urhepechas and foreign tourists and as participants in a traditional ‘Mexican’ event that belongs to all Mexicans. One of the questions I asked of mestiza/o tourists was whether they considered the Days of the Dead and other P’urhepecha ceremonies P’urhepecha celebrations that belong to P’urhepechas or holidays that are part of the national patrimony which belong to all Mexicans. All of the mestiza/o tourists I interviewed considered the Days of the Dead (and even more P’urhepecha-specific celebrations such as the P’urhepecha New Year) events, which belong to all Mexicans, and in which all Mexicans can partake in. The discourse of mexicanidad as a common heritage and sharing and/or appreciating indigenous cultural contributions ran through their answers to this question. The logic of my informants seemed to indicate that if mexicanidad is the common thread woven through the Days of the Dead and indigenous-specific celebrations, the events belong to all Mexicans and if P’urhepechas and other indigenous people are willing to share the events, everyone can participate. Mestiza/o tourists then failed to see their participation in P’urhepecha events as acts of appropriation. They considered themselves invited guests to even the most private aspects of the ceremonies because they shared the common heritage of being Mexican with P’urhepechas. The majority of them expressed feeling this way about wearing traditional P’urhepecha clothes and buying P’urhepecha cultural items. These attitudes are common throughout México and are not at all surprising. As Helier-Tinoco (2011) discusses in *Embodying México*, Mexicans share the common use of phrases such as ‘our indigenous communities’ and ‘our folklore’ (Helier-Tinoco 2011:243). In elementary school, children are taught that indigenous history, indigenous cultural forms, and indigenous communities are part of México’s ‘national cultural patrimony.’ Not only do these attitudes deny indigenous communities their right to exist as autonomous from the nation-state but they also convert indigenous bodies into something that can be claimed and possessed by all Mexicans. These beliefs are also aligned to mestiza/o tourists’ attitudes that indigenous people are abused and taken advantage of by foreign tourists—touristic transactions through which mestiza/o tourists function as the protective intermediaries between foreign tourist predators and their indigenous victims.

²¹ Fresa: colloquial term for a young urban Mexican who prefers urban-style music, urban nightlife, and dresses in preppy clothes. Urban Mexicans term use the term to either identify young people with the tastes associated with ‘fresas’ or to differentiate between young city-dwellers and rural Mexican cultural traditions.

My conceptualization of the mestiza/o intermediary resonates with the body of work in performance studies conducted on African American pilgrimages to Africa. In the final chapter of *Performing Africa* titled “Tourists as Pilgrims,” Paula Ebron (2002) explores African American emancipation tourism to the motherland. According to Ebron, the removal of Africans during slavery and the view of the Middle Passage as a point of origin in African American history leaves many African Americans with a sense of displacement and a sense of longing for experiencing Africa. As she states, “Travel routes in such contemporary ‘return’ journeys to the continent are maps of collective memory; the visit becomes a ‘revisit’ with aims to attend to the trauma created by the capturing of African bodies taken to the New World as slaves (Ebron 2002:190).” Ebron points to a contradiction inherent to the tour she participated in: it allowed the participants to rearticulate their identities within imagined networks of extended family and homeland while simultaneously allowing them to deny their roles as privileged first-world consumers. Tourists were asked to see the trip as a pilgrimage or a journey back home and tourists expected to experience the Africa from brochures, television, films, coffee table books, and magazines. The tourists, however, widely ignored narratives about contemporary African political disputes and realities because such articulations disrupted their romanticized voyage of self-discovery. Because of this, Ebron claims that the tourists experienced Africa in ‘mythic time’ where the current political realities of Africans (such as the struggles of displaced homeless African refugees) seemed to be outside of the current frame. When the tour stopped at an orphanage, for example, the beliefs that African Americans were the true orphans due to their exportation to another continent and that Africans could never be orphans due to their extended family networks were disrupted by the real-time experience of visiting the orphanage. As Ebron posits, “Such a journey takes place in mythical time; in this case, it involved a temporal displacement of the current moment in which the international representation of contemporary African political culture was...at best an irrelevant waste of time (Ebron 2002:197).”

Jennifer Hasty (2002) makes similar observations in “Rites of Passage, Routes of Redemption.” She puts forth that African Americans who travel to Africa as heritage tourists consider themselves spiritual tourists rather than material consumers. Like Ebron, Hasty found that her informants were not interested or invested in local history, politics, or in African autonomy. Hasty’s informants also insisted that African American tourists in Ghana were not foreigners or tourists on holiday but pilgrims traveling to reunite with their lost home, family, and native culture. Yet, simultaneously, these same informants demanded authenticity from Ghananians and relegated Ghananians to the past. Hasty’s informants complained that Ghananians had embraced the culture of the colonizer by using European dress, hairstyles, Christianity, having Christian names, and speaking the English language. As she states, “Through these pronouncements, diasporans made clear their ‘sacred mission’ to emancipate local Africans from the cultural alienation of neocolonial practices and institutions (Hasty 2002:52).” Within their moments of nostalgia for the pre-colonial past and in expressing their desire to see Ghananians as authentic representations of the ‘primitive,’ African American pilgrims to Ghana could place themselves in the roles of intermediaries who could effectively ‘save’ Ghananians from European influences by encouraging them to celebrate their ‘true’ selves.

I propose that like Ebron and Hasty’s African American informants, the mestiza/o tourists I interviewed in Michoacán viewed themselves as intermediaries between foreign tourists or foreign influences and indigenous locals. As intermediaries, they were able to both identify the

faults of foreign tourists and intercede on behalf of indigenous people. While the performative role of the mestizo/a intermediary can be a productive space of liminality to promote social change, my informants claimed that their informed knowledge and positionality as Mexican mestizos not only gave them unique perspectives on foreign tourists but also the responsibility to protect indigenous people. In this way, my informants distanced themselves from the havoc being 'caused' by foreign forces and foreign tourists and allied themselves with a sense of solidarity for their fellow Mexicans and racial brothers and sisters, indigenous people. They draped a safety net over their facade of innocence and blamed the destructive element of tourism and the invasion of P'urhepecha privacy on foreigners while paternalistically expressing concern for how indigenous people experienced the foreign gaze.

When asked what they enjoyed the least about the Days of the Dead, mestiza/o tourists pointed towards the utter disregard that foreign tourists demonstrated towards P'urhepechas and towards the P'urhepecha dead. My interviewees identified the lack of decency and lack of respect and outright aggression that foreign tourists demonstrated towards P'urhepechas as something that made them (mestizos) feel uncomfortable and attacked and as incidents which took away from their own pleasurable experience in Janitzio and Pátzcuaro. As Ester expressed, "This is the Day of the Dead and the indigenous people are honoring their family members, and they don't even ask if they can take a picture of them while they're sitting with them! I understand that urge but, you know, you'd hope people would have a little bit of decency to ask, but...You see that and it's a little bit unnerving, because they just think that they're there for the taking or something, I don't know. So I think that's kind of disrespectful (Ester, 11/02/2009)." For tourists like Ester and her husband José, witnessing the disrespect and desecration of the event at the hands of tourists diluted what they hoped would be a spiritual experience in Michoacán. As José stated,

I take back with me good impressions of this ceremony. I like its original intention, which I believe to be a spiritual one. However, it is much too commercialized with so many tourists from all over the world and mostly young people, who think this is a party festival, with lots of drinking, smoking etc. I didn't like that part of all this. I saw young people drinking, smoking, throwing up, urinating all within the walls of cemeteries! Totally disrespectful in my opinion! (José, 11/02/2009)

While José correctly pinpointed the desecrating acts that I witnessed as a participant observer, he neglects to mention that Mexican mestiza/o tourists partook in these acts as well. From my observations, both foreign tourists and Spanish-speaking mestiza/o tourists stepped on graves, peed in the cemetery, stepped on altars, disposed of trash inside of the cemetery, partied loudly and got drunk in close proximity to the cemetery. Mestiza/o tourists however seemed to notice these acts more when foreign tourists engaged in them. This anti-foreign tourist sentiment may be explained by the nationalist concern that the majority of Mexicans express over protecting the 'national patrimony' (a concept which appropriates indigenous bodies as part of Mexican folklore) and by the fact that foreign tourists are seen as outsiders partaking in desecration of the homeland (whereas Mexican visitors are tourists who are in 'their' country touring 'their' indigenous people and 'their' land).

If we examine the role that cameras play during the Days of the Dead in Michoacán, we can see how the role of the mestiza/o tourist as intermediary manifests itself. Many of the mestiza/o tourists I interviewed complained about foreigners' use of cameras to capture images of P'urhepechas and of private moments in P'urhepecha observances of the Days of the Dead. Victor from Cuernavaca complained that he felt hurt by the aggression of foreign tourists who not only took photographs without asking for permission but disrupted the space by obstructing P'urhepechas' right to pass through their own cemetery if they happened to be in the way of tourist photo-shoots. As he stated,

That hurt me a lot because I saw that the local people felt uncomfortable. In fact, I saw that when P'urhepechas were attempting to place candles on altars, white tourists would say 'No! Don't go through, I'm taking a picture!' They would tell them not to get into the photo because the photo wouldn't come out well. I felt attacked as a tourist, and I imagine that the people felt even more attacked. Speaking under my breath, I told the tourists they were very rude and that they should allow the locals to set up their altars in peace. That was my experience (Victor, 11/02/2009).

Sonia similarly expressed feeling attacked by the foreign tourist horde,

As a tourist myself, I felt attacked by the non-Mexican tourists. When we got there, indigenous people had not yet fully arrived to the cemetery. It seemed like the few P'urhepechas who were at the cemetery were being gazed at like animals in a zoo. It was one or two Indigenous people being surrounded by twenty tourists with cameras. It made me feel uncomfortable and I did tell them that they were crowding the space and should be more respectful (Sonia, 11/02/2009).

Here, both Victor and Sonia differentiate themselves from foreign tourists. Foreign tourists are the rude outsiders gazing at and photographing P'urhepechas during intimate communion with their dead while Victor and Sonia see themselves as respectful and even heroic visitors who know how to act properly when observing Days of the Dead traditions. Both Victor and Sonia felt compelled to speak up and to express their indignation with the events that unfolded. In other parts of their interviews, they both admitted to recording and taking pictures of P'urhepechas but they seemed to have asked the people they recorded/photographed for permission. Like my other mestiza/o interviewees, Victor and Sonia see foreign tourists as what Janet Hoskins (2002) terms 'predatory voyeurs' who use the camera lens to capture and hijack images of indigenous people to take back to their home countries—whereas mestizos know the proper etiquette for taking photographs though the photos might serve the same purpose of seizing moments to share with their friends in the cities (Hoskins 2002:809).

Armando from Zacatecas also took great issue with the presence of foreign cameras at the events. As he observed,

I can tell you my perception of foreign tourists in detail. Yesterday there was a woman with her shawl, completely indigenous, she extended her petate to hold vigil throughout the night over her departed relative. She was the only family member present. She was fixing her candles and all that. She was the ideal model

for any photographer, including me. From the distance, with respect, I zoomed in and took a picture of her. But I noticed a lot of people, surely more than one, who got way too close to her to take a picture. They stepped all over her relative's tomb. That told me a lot. That told me that it was nuisance to P'urhepechas, a major disrespect to this woman's privacy in that moment with her dead one. I did it, from far away with lots of respect and using the zoom. The other ones did not. And even without knowing her, that instance told me that foreign tourism is a problem (Armando, 11/02/2009).

Like Victor and Sonia, Armando distinguishes himself and his actions from those of the 'bad' tourists, from the foreign tourists who have no sense of respect for P'urhepecha privacy. The scene that Armando describes is 'the ideal photograph' because it encapsulates the romantic fantasy that tourists look for in their Day of the Dead travels in Michoacán: that of the indigenous woman in her traditional shawl surrounded by candles as she holds a night vigil over her loved one. It is the image that tourist agencies use to promote the event in brochures and magazines. In *Embodying México*, Hellier-Tinoco (2011) argues that this image of kneeling indigenous women by gravesites is one of two iconic corporeal figures associated with the Days of the Dead in Michoacán and throughout México. In her ethnographic chapter, "Experiencing Night of the Dead," Hellier-Tinoco describes the scene as follows,

Visitors disembarked into another world—a world of the past and of difference, where women wore their traditional clothes and knelt by gravesides, surrounded by flowers and food. All the senses were engaged with the feel of the cold, damp mist; the pungent smell of incense and flowers; the sweet taste of ponche; the distant sound of music drifting through the air; the soft vision of shadowy figures in the graveyard; and the dazzling sight of brightly lit dancers and musicians performing on the basketball court (Hellier-Tinoco, 2011:162).

Armando himself romanticizes this image by viewing the woman he saw as an ideal model because she represents P'urhepechecidad—the essence of being P'urhepecha. The woman becomes a surrogate for her pre-colonial ancestors and for one moment feeds the tourist fantasy of being able to experience the purity and authenticity of pre-colonial P'urhepecha vigils over their dead. Armando distinguishes his own desire and his own act of photographing the woman by explaining that he respectfully used a zoom to capture the image. Yet his desire stems from the same romanticization of the woman that the foreign tourists he's critiquing are guilty of (capturing the pristine/pure, appropriating the indigenous)—like the zoom of his camera lens, Armando imagines himself as an innocent intermediary between the woman and the foreign tourists. Yet, the zoom does not diminish Armando's own tourist gaze or the voyeuristic motivations behind his actions.

If we examine mestiza/o racial positionality in Latin America, it is logical and sensible for mestizos to see themselves as mediators between indigenous people and the forces that oppress indigenous communities. Although they are not classified as indigenous, mestizos are racialized as mixed people. Though some mestizos have the privilege of passing as middle class and/or white (of Spanish descent), others are treated as less-than due to having darker skin/complexion and being working class. The complexity and curse of mestizaje stems from having to live under

the impression that one is part of the majority while one may actually be treated as part of the minority. Homi Bhabha's theory (1984) of mimicry and of the 'mimic man' is relevant to the mestiza/o subject position in Latin America. The 'inappropriate colonial subject,' or whom Bhabha terms 'the mimic man,' is an educated colonized subject whose role would be to act as an intermediary and/or translator for colonizing entities. The 'inappropriate colonial subject' can either be 1.) the colonized indigenous elite who are authorized versions of Otherness and simultaneous objects of colonial desire or 2.) educated racially mixed colonial subjects who double as part of the majority and the minority. Bhabha claims that these inappropriate colonial subjects become 'mimic men' who attempt to mimic the colonizer (either in a subversive or self-depreciating way) but the end result of such acts of mimicry are ambivalent and never definite: never entirely white or indigenous, but rather "not quite, not white." (Bhabha 1984:132) What is tremendously effective and useful about Bhabha's analysis is that while he acknowledges the power that the colonizer exercises over the colonized, he complicates the bifurcated relationship between the colonizer and the colonized by granting agency to the colonized through the power of performance. His example of the mimic man is applicable to the Latin American context where a large mestiza/o population resulted from colonial racial miscegenation.

Alongside '*caciques*' [indigenous elite who enjoyed special titles and privileges in colonial Latin America], mestizos are also effective examples of mimic men. Mestizos in Latin America are indoctrinated to look towards the West as the ideal model of living/identity. Latin American mestizaje either romanticizes the indigenous and relegates it to the past, or seeks to move beyond it because having *calidad* or *razón* (quality/logic/the ability to reason) is still attributed to having European ancestry or European values. Yet, as the mestiza/o attempts to imitate the ideal image of the West, the result is the 'not quite, not white' that Bhabha suggests. Elements of the indigenous still peer back from the distorted mirror that mestizos gaze into, reminding them that they still face day-to-day discrimination and that they will never be able to be fully white or become fully Europeanized.²²

Feminist scholars Gloria Anzaldúa (2009) and Diana Taylor (2003) have explored the role of the mestiza/o as mediator in their theories of mestizaje as hybridity and as resistance. In conceptualizing mestiza consciousness, Anzaldúa (1987) theorized mestiza/o identity as the liminal subject position betwixt/between the colonizer and the colonized: crossing borders, languages, sexualities, and loyalties to perform their subjectivity. As Anzaldúa states, "Cradled in one culture, sandwiched between two cultures, straddling all three cultures and their value systems, la mestiza undergoes a struggle of flesh, a struggle of borders, an inner war (Anzaldúa 1987:100)." Anzaldúa contends that the mestiza's positionality betwixt/between the U.S./México border and her ability to straddle the Spanish and English languages (and the slippage of *pochismos*/Spanglish),²³ United States and Mexican cultures, different sexualities, and the roles of both the colonizer and the colonized grants mestiza women privileged perspectives on subalterneity or what she terms 'mestiza consciousness.' For Anzaldúa, mestiza subjectivity is productive due to its ability to live in *nepantla*, a Nahuatl term referencing the space of in-betweenness or the middle. According to Anzaldúa, the mestiza's challenge is to make the

²² Anibal Quijano elaborates on the 'Eurocentric mirror' of the mestizo in "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America" published in *Nepantla Views from the South* (1.3) in 2000.

²³ Pochismos: Chicana/o linguistic colloquialisms, invented words that may reflect a combination between Spanish and English or variations of colloquial terms used in Mexican popular culture.

nepantla space productive despite the demands inherent to dwelling in liminality; the *neplanteras*' productivity can be illustrated by their ability to be border-crossers and bridge-builders. As she states,

Bridges span liminal spaces between worlds, spaces I call nepantla, a Nahuatl word meaning tierra entre medio. Transformations occur in this in-between space, an unstable, unpredictable, precarious, always-in-transition space lacking clear boundaries. Nepantla es tierra desconocida, and living in this liminal zone means being in a constant state of displacement—an uncomfortable, even alarming feeling. Most of us dwell in nepantla so much of the time it's become a sort of 'home' (Anzaldúa 2002:1-5).

Similarly, in *The Archive and the Repertoire*, Diana Taylor reconceptualizes *mestizaje* as the performance of a mixed race identity. For Taylor, like Anzaldúa, *mestizaje* entails a hybrid embodied consciousness, a subject position from which the *mestiza/o* can speak to liminality. As she contends, “Mestiza says it all, simultaneously signaling gender, race, ethnic background, and the cultural positioning of liminality. European and Indigenous betwixt and between central to México’s national identity yet politically marginalized (Taylor 2003:86).” According to Taylor, it is this very liminality/hybridity, which allows *mestizos* to take upon the position of the intermediary. Taylor conceptualizes the *mestiza* as the mediator by analyzing the role of the *mestiza* intermediary in Emilio Carbadillo’s 1965 play, “*Yo tambien hablo de la rosa*” [I too speak of the rose]. For Taylor, the *mestiza* as intermediary, like *mestizos* themselves, are borne from *La Malinche*.²⁴ As she states, “Like Malinche, the Intermediary brings the new/s into the world. What she transmits, commingled through her act of transfer, is a new original—not the European, not the Nahua, but a third, mixed entity, the *mestizo/o*. The Intermediary, like the Malinche figure, has been humbled and pushed to the margins (Taylor 2003:93).” Taylor proposes that the birthing of *mestizos* through La Malinche’s body also gave birth to *mestiza/o* doubleness, hybridity, and liminality. For Taylor, the *mestiza/o* body carries the cultural memory of *mexicanidad* as well as the embodied consciousness of the intermediary. As she states, “[Mestizaje] entails a doubling, a double-codedness, both pre-and post-, both indigenous and Spanish, bilingual, bicultural... Instead of either/or, *mestizaje* entails a both/and. For all its theoretical flexibility, *mestizaje* tenaciously clings to the body (Taylor 2003:100).” This positionality is useful because it allows the *mestiza* intermediary to live at the intersections in order to utilize her ability to receive signs and transmit and interpret codes. Taylor advocates a recuperative process to understand the potential of *mestizaje* so that it may reveal what she terms “the spectacle of the ‘lost and found’ in terms of race, gender and cultural memory (Taylor 2003:97).” In the Mexican context, the “lost and found” is almost always indigeneity, a central element to Mexican identity, which is continuously and simultaneously rejected and admired, held in contempt, and fetishized through the repetition of performance.

It is along these veins that *mestiza/o* tourists can consider themselves intermediaries between indigenous people and foreign tourists. They can feel a sense of solidarity with P’urhepechas because they consider P’urhepechas a part of ‘their’ country, ‘their’ indigenous communities, and ‘their’ cultural patrimony—while foreign tourists are outsiders whose visits pillage and

²⁴ La Malinche: known also as Malinalli, Malintzin, or Doña María, was the Nahua woman whom Hernán Cortes used to translate between Chontal and Nahuatl in order to facilitate the conquest of Tenochtitlan. La Malinche became Cortes’s mistress and bore him a son (popularly known as one of the first *mestizos*).

destroy P'urhepecha communities. This romanticization of P'urhepecha communities as needing help and intervention denies P'urhepechas the decision-making power of promoting and negotiating tourism to their communities. It is a paternalistic attitude, which pits P'urhepechas as victims rather than as players with a stake in the tourist industry. Furthermore, the fact that the mestiza/o tourists I interviewed do not recognize their own participation the pollution of the lake, in the desecration of the yacatas or the cemetery, or in the trashing of the islands paints them as innocent bystanders in the tourist/indigenous relationship. In my experience, P'urhepechas do not assign 'foreign' or 'domestic' labels to tourists or to the cause of destruction of the islands. Mestiza/o melancholia allows mestizos to romanticize indigenous communities and to appropriate indigenous culture all the while remaining innocent spectators in the process—or in the case of mestiza/o intermediaries—heroic interventionists with solutions to indigenous problems.

On Mestiza/o Bastards and Uncooperative Indigenous Teachers

Although Chicana feminist scholars like Gloria Anzaldúa have granted mestizos a privileged positionality to understand intersectionality and oppression due to their liminality, it is also true that the mestiza/o and mestizaje are inseparable from conquest and colonization. The mestiza/o was borne from a moment of violence and rape; from the dispossession and genocide of indigenous people, the emasculation and enslavement of indigenous men, and the sexual conquest of indigenous women. As Taylor so eloquently states,

Whatever the nature of their particular relationship, the term carries with it a history of unequal power relations, racial and sexual domination, and rape: the white male forcing himself on the indigenous woman. The illegitimate, mixed-race child lived the tensions, contradictions, push-pulls, racism, hatred, and self-hatred associated with domination in her or his own flesh. There was little joy at the birth of this 'new' race, which was accompanied by political, social, and cultural displacement (Taylor 2003:96).

In *The Archive and the Repertoire*, Taylor claims that mestizos still carry the stigma of being 'disinherited bastards' (disinherited by society, culturally disinherited, deprived of stability in the social order) in Mexican society and throughout Latin America (Taylor 2003:95). Furthermore, through *malinchismo*, mestizos continue to blame the raped mother for their illegitimate status. It is this constant state of being in limbo which prompts mestizos to not only seek their identities by turning to indigenous people but also to search for understanding and healing from the moment of rape by turning to indigenous spirituality.

Hellier-Tinoco argues that México is a context where everything comes 'after' the Conquest. Thus, it is logical for Mexicans to romanticize pre-Hispanic civilizations. Mestiza/o melancholia — the mestiza/o urge to want to experience indigenous people and indigenous traditions in their 'purest' forms — stems from the impulsive Mexican nostalgia for the 'before,' the era of divinities, gods, goddesses, intellectual sophistication, and highly developed civilization. México and Mexicans are lost in this anxiety over understanding the epistemic rupture, loss of identity, and resulting trauma that took place in 1521. As Hellier-Tinoco states, "Angst over a national memory and notions of a collective identity and of individual identities relates to the concept of a nation of trauma and rupture, the pain of lost identity, and the search for identity (Hellier-Tinoco 2009:120)." Hellier-Tinoco asserts that the need to re-member and re-embody the past naturally

leads mestiza/o society to turn to contemporary indigenous people. As she states, “With the need to find roots and the need to trace the untraceable and know the unknowable, there was and is hope that it could and can be found in the narratives of the pre-Hispanic rulers, in the myths of the gods of past eras and in the rituals and bodies of the twenty-first century indigenous peoples (Hellier-Tinoco 2009:120).” My work demonstrates that mestizos undertake this journey with high hopes of gaining enlightenment from experiencing indigenous cultural/spiritual events but then feel betrayed when they do not encounter the ‘Indian’ popularized by the Mexican cultural imagination.

Mestiza/o tourists seek the social construct of purity, the untouched, the pristine, and feel a sense of betrayal when they encounter peoples who have adjusted to modernity in order to survive. They seek conversations with the pre-colonial without allowing for the existence of post-colonial complex Indians. Mestiza/o tourists experience mestiza/o melancholia when they find that indigenous people desire modern commodities and no longer live in traditional houses, longer speak their language, or wear their traditional clothing. They mourn what has been ‘lost’ without acknowledging their role in destroying ‘tradition’ and they experience heartbreak when indigenous people cannot or will not give them the answers they are looking for. To assist in unpacking a moment of historical rape, to alleviate mixed identity crises, to perform the primitive while participating in the modern political economy, to provide healing for centuries of violence: these are tremendous expectations and, indeed immense burdens, to place on toured indigenous communities. It is, after all, not the responsibility of the oppressed to explain their oppression to the oppressor or to make the oppressor feel better about the violence that ensued just as it is not P’urhepechas’ responsibility to make P’urhepecha knowledge available to outsiders or to provide spaces/opportunities for healing from forced miscegenation (mestizaje). The next section will delve into P’urhepecha readings of mestiza/o expectations and will reveal P’urhepecha understandings of mestiza/o racism and how it functions during touristic transactions.

Chapter Two: The P'urhepecha Critique of Tourism and Mestizaje

By extending P'urhepecha critiques of the tourist industry, mestizo/o tourists, and race relations in México, this chapter will explore P'urhepecha articulations of self and resistance. My interviews with fourteen P'urhepechas from the Pátzcuaro region and surrounding areas revealed their insightful analysis of how the national and local political economies position P'urhepechas within the tourist industry, a revelation of P'urhepecha acts of resistance against tourism and tourists, an exposition of P'urhepecha 'back regions' built to preserve P'urhepecha intimacy, and an articulation of current P'urhepecha political concerns both related to tourism and to other pressing matters in P'urhepecha communities. This chapter will focus on P'urhepecha critiques of mestiza/o tourists and of mestizaje as it functions within the Mexican racial hierarchy.

My findings indicate that P'urhepechas do allow mestizos and foreigners to tour and observe how they mourn their dead out of economic necessity. P'urhepechas are complicit in tourism inasmuch as it provides a livelihood and revenue for the island of Janitzio and for nearby communities. P'urhepechas are keenly aware that they function as a spectacle and/or tourist attraction during the Days of the Dead and that mestizos and other tourists view them as different/less than. P'urhepechas understand that the national and local political economies are built to exclude them from decision-making processes in the tourist industry and in other institutions that directly affect their livelihoods. They know that such exclusions contribute to their political disempowerment and therefore subjugate P'urhepecha communities into living as disenfranchised political subjects without access to Mexican democracy. P'urhepechas are keenly aware that the State, the local government, and local companies appropriate their cultural symbolisms and publicly parade them to attract and appease tourists just during the Days of the Dead, and they understand that their political concerns involving autonomy and community needs are not important to these others. While P'urhepechas are aware that mestizos visit their communities to consummate their curiosity about how P'urhepechas live (and how P'urhepechas die) and to make judgements about P'urhepecha poverty and inferiority based on those visits, P'urhepechas see their communities as cohesive, morally superior, and rich and view the government as a false entity and mestizos as lost people. In this chapter, I will demonstrate how P'urhepecha critiques of tourism articulate an ironic paradox between their importance to the State and to tourists as 'dead Indians' and their very real invisibility to Mexicans as contemporary beings who have a stake in the Mexican political economy. Furthermore, I will argue that while tourists view P'urhepechas as surrogates of their dead ancestors, P'urhepechas see themselves as contemporary beings who can codeswitch between identities as they navigate touristic relationships, make decisions over what is shared and what is committed to the realm of the intimate, and articulate their feelings about mestizos and about how racism functions in Mexican society.

P'urhepecha Counter-Narratives of Tourism

When I posed the question, "Why do you think tourists come?" to P'urhepechas who live and work in the Pátzcuaro area, it was evident that P'urhepechas are well-aware that tourists have the luxury of travelling to places where they can 'relax' and where they can experience 'something different.' It was also evident that although some P'urhepechas consider tourists to be a nuisance, they understand it is crucial to temporarily cater to them during the high-peak tourist season in

order to earn a profit. Tata Dionisio, the owner of a boating company which transports people from Pátzcuaro to Janitzio, openly expressed an understanding of the fact that while all tourists are different and may have varied needs and demands, it is necessary for P'urhepechas to gain a general awareness of how tourists function in order to be successful entrepreneurs in the tourist industry. Dionisio explained that tourists visit the Pátzcuaro area due to two physical attractions: the Pátzcuaro Lake and the monument that President Lázaro Cárdenas erected to honor José María Morelos in Janitzio. As he states,

There are two attractions here. For example, we've noticed that a lot of people like to travel in the lake. It's one of the things they like the most. Yes, because a lot of people come from the city and they rarely go to a beach or to a lake. That's something we've noticed about tourism. They want to see something natural and although our lake is polluted, it still looks natural to them. We also can't forget about President Lázaro Cárdenas, who built the monument for José María Morelos on the island. The monument makes Janitzio stand out from the other islands because you can see it from miles away. Without the monument there wouldn't be visits to the island of Janitzio. That's one of the reasons. The other islands would like to have that kind of monument in order to enjoy more tourism like Janitzio (Tata Dionisio, 11/10/2009).

Many of my informants discussed the importance of physical markers such as the lake, the statue of José María Morelos, the yacatas in Tzintzuntzan and Ihuatzio, and the cemetery in Janitzio as tourist attractions in their interviews. However, as Tata Dionisio poignantly elaborated, there are also illusory attractions. Tourists want to experience 'something different,' which includes experiencing people who are different than them, and so P'urhepecha culture (including P'urhepecha altar-building and mourning rituals) must be staged to attract tourists. As he observed,

This has been a primordial tradition in our community more than five hundred years ago, when we began the tradition of honoring our dead and lighting our altars at the cemetery at midnight. Currently, there are other communities that have developed similar traditions because of tourist interest in altar-building. In my youth, I still remember my elders building altars at midnight in the cemetery. When our altar-building traditions became publicized, that's when people began to visit our island. Now tourism increased because we also organize cultural events. However, the Days of the Dead originated in my culture more than five hundred years ago (Tata Dionisio, 11/10/2009).

According to P'urhepecha cultural entrepreneurs and cultural workers like Dionisio, Pedro, Anselmo, and Mario, it is both Pátzcuaro's physical attractions such as the lake, the monument, the yacatas, and the cemetery and the spiritual experiences promised by the Days of the Dead that attract tourists to the Pátzcuaro region. The physical attraction of the lake allows tourists to experience a physical marker of great importance to P'urhepechas since before the Spanish arrival. It was a meeting place, a place for ritual and ceremony, a place where decisions were made, and where great leaders are said to dwell—these mysticisms and symbolisms are narratives about the lake that continue being sold to tourists. As Tata Anselmo, a P'urhepecha medicine man observes, "Mestizos go look for those places where there is a little bit of nature. They can't look at the mountains or visit bodies of water in the cities. Our lake was once a place

of ceremony and a gathering place for our leaders but now it is a polluted tourist attraction. I'm surprised that mestizos can't see it for what it is—a symbol of the mess left by colonization—and still want to visit it and see it as pure and holy (Tata Anselmo, 11/26/2009).”

In a similar fashion, the yacatas represent pre-colonial Michoacán. As P'urhepecha ceremonial grounds, these pyramid structures symbolize P'urhepecha life and culture before Spanish arrival. Their political and religious importance during the height of the P'urhepecha Empire as well as the fact that living P'urhepechas recognize them as structures built by their ancestors allow the yacatas to function as critical markers of authenticity which tie the P'urhepecha past to the P'urhepecha communities in the Pátzcuaro basin. In essence, the yacatas represent continuity between precolonial P'urhepechas and their contemporary descendants. Literally viewed as the campo santo (sacred ground) where P'urhepechas have been buried for centuries, the cemetery functions in a similar way to the yacatas. As a physical marker, the cemetery represents the syncretism between Catholic and P'urhepecha beliefs; it is a space that allows communion between the living (whether it is the P'urhepecha living or tourists) and the P'urhepecha dead. The cemetery becomes the most congested physical space during the Days of the Dead precisely because tourists reify the P'urhepecha dead.

In contrast to the associations between the lake, the yacatas, and the cemetery with precolonial P'urhepechas and with the P'urhepecha afterlife, Janitzio's monument to José María Morelos stands out as a symbol of nationalist Mexican pride. It is a representation of the nation-building bent on promoting homogeneity in the Mexican nation-state, which was erected at the cost of indigenous people and of indigenous identities. It is a physical marker unique to the island of Janitzio that can be seen from the city of Pátzcuaro. As such, it makes Janitzio stand apart from surrounding islands and gives tourists (especially mestiza/o Mexican tourists who may embrace the nationalist spirit) one more desirable site to see. During various visits to Janitzio, I was able to observe mostly mestiza/o tourists posing for photographs by the monument.

These physical markers combined with the tourist desire to imagine and/or witness how pre-colonial P'urhepechas mourned and held vigil over their dead are the driving factors that attract hordes of tourists to the Pátzcuaro region in November. As P'urhepecha artist and craftsman, Tata Mario, states, “The Pátzcuaro region is imagined as a place lost in time. We keep a book here in my shop and we ask tourists why they come. Many people say they come to Pátzcuaro because it is like coming to a place where time has stopped and everything looks the same way as it was many years ago. They see us, indigenous people, as people who still live as if we were in the past. They like it that way. They don't want it to change (Tata Mario, 10/01/2009).” Mario, like other informants I have cited here, is keenly aware that these symbols and these stereotypes of P'urhepecha primitivity and P'urhepecha mysticism are the attractions that bring tourists to the Pátzcuaro region and to other P'urhepecha communities. P'urhepecha entrepreneurs like Dionisio and Mario are willing to sell these symbols and to present themselves as the P'urhepecha primitives that tourists imagine. Like other P'urhepechas who hustle the tourist industry in the Pátzcuaro region, they fit what Dean MacCannell (1992) terms the ‘performative primitive.’

In *Empty Meeting Grounds*, Dean MacCannell (1992) claims that there are no longer any authentic primitives. He argues that the primitive other no longer exists and instead there are ex-primitives or recently acculturated people who are lost in modern industrialization and are merely actors who stage performances for tourists. These performative primitives feed

postmodern fantasies for authentic alterities. They construct the savage to make money as a long-term economic strategy to survive in the modern world (MacCannell 1992:26). They stage authenticity in perceived ‘back regions,’ which are carefully curated to allow tourists to peek at their livelihoods and/or rituals. The P’urhepecha entrepreneurs I worked with like Mario and Dionisio were acutely aware that they were performing primitivity for tourists. They know that both foreign and mestiza/o tourists long to experience as close of an encounter with the pre-colonial and with pre-colonial (dead) P’urhepechas as possible. Mario adheres to performing the primitive by incorporating pre-colonial P’urhepecha symbols and aesthetics into his artwork and paintings while Dionisio sells the primitive by marketing the Pátzcuaro Lake and his homeland of Janitzio as an encounter with the indigenous past and with an imagined authentic P’urhepechecidad. He hires P’urhepecha tour guides who are trained to present this image to tourists as they are transported from Pátzcuaro to Janitzio during All Souls Night. I would like to propose that while P’urhepechas do perform the primitive, ‘authentic’ P’urhepechecidad amongst P’urhepechas is not dead. Indeed, MacCannell’s declaration of the extinction of authenticity amongst indigenous peoples is pernicious to their autonomy over identity and self-definition. P’urhepechas perform the primitive with negotiated agency – that is in a manner which promotes their interests and preserves their dignity.

My findings indicate that P’urhepechas are willing to sell what anthropologist Alexis Bunten (2008) terms the ‘commodified persona.’ In her article “Sharing our Culture or Selling Out,” Bunten develops the concept of the commodified persona by analyzing how Alaska Native tour guides appropriate stereotypes about Alaska Natives to perform for tourists while being in control of how much of their own cultural knowledge they actually choose to share. Bunten argues that self-commodification is a dual process—on the one hand a response to the global expansion of the service sector and on the other a means to politically express identity. For Bunten, “The practices of constructing a commodified persona involve representation of cultural uniformity as a simplifying trope, self-exoticizing as the Other, polyvocal alternations of identity culled from a repertoire of possibilities, and rejection of stereotyping through covert acts of resistance (Bunten 2008:381).”

Bunten argues that Tlingit tour guides are sophisticated cultural brokers who can distinguish between the commodified persona they perform at work and who they are as individual clan-members. As she states, “Whereas the commodified persona is constructed to meet tourist desires for an encounter with the Other, the person behind it usually does not openly accept himself as an object, the ultimate human commodity, and therefore openly resists being objectified according to stereotypes (Bunten 2008:382).” Bunten contends that Tlingit tour guides are agents who can control the product of their labor —themselves— by choosing how to respond to the tourist gaze and by being able to retire or codeswitch from the commodified persona to their authentic selves outside of the workplace. While her informants performed a commodified persona drawn from stereotypical imagery found in television, movies, books, and magazines to play to their clients’ expectations, they also defied stereotypes by presenting themselves as fiercely immersed in modernity and engaging in acts of resistance such as withholding information from tourists, choosing when to ignore tourists, and offering misinformation.

In the Pátzcuaro context, I found that P’urhepechas sell the commodified persona under the following conditions: when they know that encounters with tourists are staged, when they know

they will make a profit from such encounters, and when they know that encounters with tourists are temporary and that they can return to their daily lives when the tourists are gone. The majority of the P'urhepecha vendors I interviewed indicated that they did not mind the temporary tourist presence and congestion during the three Days of the Dead because the traffic only affects them once a year and because it is the peak period to profit from tourism during the year. As Nana Magdalena, a P'urhepecha vendor from Cherán who sells her embroidery at cultural festivals in Zacán and Pátzcuaro, states, "They don't really bother me that much. They stay in downtown so they are far away from my house. They like to come to our events to experience our traditions... what we call *p'indekua*... because these are probably celebrations they've never seen before. I like it when there are more tourists at events because they make the party bigger and also the more tourists there are, the more stuff they buy from me (Nana Magdalena, 10/18/2009)." Nana Magdalena expressed what other P'urhepecha performers and vendors felt; that tourists are just curious about what P'urhepechas call *p'indekua* or the cultural traditions that P'urhepechas carry out. When I inquired about why certain elements of ceremonies were carried out in specific ways, informants often told me it was simply the *p'indekua* that had been practiced for many years. P'urhepechas seemed willing to share their *p'indekua* because the *p'indekua* attract tourists who visit and spend and then leave so that P'urhepechas can return to their lives and routines.

Nana Agustina, a vendor from Cherán and Nana Magdalena's travel companion, expressed similar sentiments, "I like tourists because they come to buy something. I'm happy to see them. I travel from place to place and town to town to sell the clothes that I make and I make friends who are not P'urhepechas and sometimes they visit Cherán. P'urhepecha clothes and P'urhepecha celebrations belong to P'urhepechas but it's a joy to share them with other people who come from different places because they increase our profits and sales (Nana Agustina, 10/18/2009)." Even though Nana Magdalena and Nana Agustina are willing to tolerate the temporary tourist traffic and cater to the tourist desire of seeing P'urhepecha women selling items in their traditional clothes (thereby reproducing the image typically printed in tourist advertisements of the traditionally-dressed P'urhepecha woman in braids sitting next to her craftwork), they both also mentioned the fact that catering to tourists only happened during peak periods; they alluded to the fact that tourists only see the part of themselves they wish to openly present. As Nana Magdalena mentioned, "I know they are looking for the P'urhepecha women they see in the magazines. They don't really know that this is how I make a living but it's not who I am in my community. In my community, I organize community patrolling so that outsiders do not steal from our forests. These tourists see an image that may seem quiet but there is the Magdalena that they don't know, the Magdalena of the community (Nana Magdalena, 10/18/2009)." Nana Agustina also expressed that she did not share all of her opinions with mestiza/o tourists like the fact that she doesn't believe in any of México's political parties and that she encourages community members in Cherán to boycott and protest municipal politics. As she states, "Who I am as a vendor has little to do with who I am as a person. Like I said, it's good to see tourists during this time but I hope one day our community can sustain itself without having to sell to outsiders. I don't like outsiders influencing our decisions and I try to promote this opinion among young people in Cherán (Nana Agustina, 10/18/2009)."

Nana Ofelia, a vendor from Ihuatzio, also explained that she was happy Ihuatzio's *yacatas* were restored to attract tourists and that a road was built to allow tourists to visit Ihuatzio. But she

expressed some regret over no longer being able to observe the Days of the Dead within the intimacy of community. As she stated,

It hasn't been that long since people started coming to Ihuatzio. Like I was mentioning, there was no road from Ihuatzio to the cities before. Now there are people coming because there is a road. Before, there were no people. But the altars were made ever since I can remember. Back then outsiders didn't come to see how we made our altars because there was no road. I like when the tourists come on the Days of the Dead because they buy from us. Even though everything gets crowded, at least they buy things from us. I sell them a lot of the things that I make and it makes me happy. But I miss seeing our families build the altars without outsiders watching. We did things we don't do anymore. We used to talk to the spirits that live in the yacatas because we could hear them. Now that would sound strange or funny to outsiders. But those were our traditions (Nana Ofelia, 11/05/2009).

Nana Ofelia explained that she doesn't share her belief in the spirits of the yacatas with tourists due to fear of being seen as odd or crazy. To tourists she presents herself as a vendor and only completes transactions but she is 88 years old and feels that she knows a great deal about Ihuatzio's history and is happy to share more insights with people who take interest in her knowledge even if some tourist questions annoy her. As she states,

They always ask dumb questions like why do we do these things, how long have we been doing them, where did these traditions come from. I tell them it is because this is our *p'indekua*. They ask who made the yacatas. I tell them I don't know. They ask me if I come from the same people who make the yacatas, I tell them probably because this is the only place I have always been from. Those questions are ignorant. Of course I know who made the yacatas and of course I come from the people who made the yacatas. I know a lot of stories about the yacatas that I don't share with tourists because they will probably go tell different information. My grandparents used to tell me that in the past the yacatas were a bad place and that you can still hear the spirits at night if you go there when it's dark. Since I can remember when I was little, kids have always been curious about the yacatas. And we used to sleep on top of the yacatas at night sometimes to try to hear the spirits and we could hear very beautiful sounds (Nana Ofelia, 11/05/2009).

Like the vendors that I interviewed from Cherán, Nana Ofelia learned how to develop and sell a commodified persona to tourists and can navigate between who she is at the surface for tourists with who she feels she is at the core. Ofelia and other P'urhepechas challenged Bunten's notion that indigenous tourees have an authentic self, which fundamentally differs from the self they present to tourists (the commodified persona). My informants differentiated between who they are at the surface (how they present themselves to tourists) and who they are at the core (how they behave in their daily lives and in their communities) but, unlike Bunten, I would argue that both selves are authentic. The vendor self is authentic even when identity is being negotiated as a performance for tourists; as one part which composes the whole 'self', it represents the person who strategizes and works to survive. And, the core self (the wise elder, the community member, the political rabble-rouser, etc.) that my informants described is authentic and does not disappear

even as it encounters tourists. Although, as Nana Ofelia expressed, they do not always share their opinions about tourism or about mestizos with tourists, P'urhepechas also have strong opinions about how mestizos may view them. Ofelia's fear of being cast off as crazy due to her belief in the spirits that inhabit the yacatas affects what she chooses to share with mestiza/o tourists. When posed with questions of what motivates tourists to visit P'urhepecha communities, my interviewees expressed very particular and specific reasons that turn P'urhepecha people into coveted tourist attractions.

Mestiza/o Egocentrism and P'urhepecha Difference

I expected hesitation to openly discuss the controversial topic of ethnic difference and touristic motivations for visiting the Pátzcuaro basin amongst the P'urhepechas I spoke with. My interviews, however, revealed that P'urhepechas acutely understand that they are both valorized and devalorized for their Indianness by mestizos. Although they are romanticized due to their perceived relationship to the pre-colonial (or to 'dead Indians'), they are also othered and looked down upon by tourists who visit their communities. Furthermore, P'urhepechas expressed that indigenous people in México function as a mirror which reflects poverty, darkness, and difference to mestizos who chose to see themselves as civilized, better off, and smarter than P'urhepechas. The following beliefs predominated amongst P'urhepecha understandings of the mestiza/o desire to tour their communities: P'urhepechas believe mestizos go to Janitzio to consummate their curiosity about P'urhepecha livelihoods and to see if any of the stereotypes they have heard about P'urhepechas are true. Secondly, P'urhepechas believe mestizos visit P'urhepecha communities to confirm their distance and difference from P'urhepechas and thereby reaffirm their feelings of superiority to P'urhepechas. My P'urhepecha informants posited that by experiencing P'urhepecha difference, mestizos could return home *knowing* that they are indeed better than P'urhepechas.

Tata Pedro was one of the first P'urhepechas I interviewed for this fieldwork; his profound insights on mestizo/P'urhepecha difference shaped how I approached the topic of ethnic difference with other informants. When I asked Tata Pedro why he thought mestizos visit P'urhepecha communities, he immediately responded, "They come to see how different they are from us and to confirm that they are better than us." I asked him to elaborate on those thoughts.

Well, you see... They do not visit our communities with respect to experience the festivity, they come with the desire to see things they don't get to see back home and to spend. Really, you can't blame them for their inability to participate. How can you participate as an outsider without a context or an understanding of how to enter into a ritual or a conversation meaningfully? There is a difference between observing and participating. As a tourist, you can't really participate because being a tourist or being an outsider is contradictory to being a participant. You don't have knowledge of the cultural standards for how to participate so you can't participate. For me, tourists, and especially mestizos come here because they heard of us or they simply heard of 'Indians' in some previous situation and they then want to experience us or observe us for themselves in person. They may have heard of our houses or of how we dress or of how we build altars and they may then want to see if indigenous people do still exist and if we still do things the way our ancestors did or if we live in poverty. But they don't want to see us to

understand us or to celebrate who we are as human beings. They come into our houses to see how different they are from us. I think in their minds they keep count of these differences to say, 'poor people, they are not like me,' or even 'wow, we are better than them.' The desire to visit can begin as curiosity but in the end it is to confirm they are superior (Tata Pedro, 09/23/2009).

Tata Pedro's articulate analysis presents an opportunity for understanding how P'urhepechas experience the mestiza/o gaze. For P'urhepechas, mestiza/o visits are terribly othering and belittling. P'urhepechas are aware that 'Indians' are seen as diminutive children by Mexican society and are stereotyped as stagnant pre-colonial backward people who never evolved past their 'primitive' state. The fact that an outsider wishes to visit your home to confirm that your people still exist and with a desire to experience primitivity and Indianness as they may have read about it in a magazine absolutely informs your feelings about how such people look at you or how they value you. Tata Pedro's comments are influenced by the current marginality that indigenous people experience in México and by the mestiza/o supremacy that currently engulfs Mexican race relations. For Tata Pedro, mestizos experience P'urhepechas to account for their own worthiness and to accentuate their own feelings of dominance over indigenous people. He believes that mestizos visit P'urhepecha communities simply to observe and further distance themselves from P'urhepechas. He affirms that mestizos do not have the set of tools or cultural competence to truly participate in P'urhepecha events and that tourism in P'urhepecha communities exploits communities and proliferates mestiza/o beliefs about P'urhepecha/indigenous inferiority.

Pedro connects the distance that mestizos draw between themselves and P'urhepechas to race and class. For Pedro, the visual experience that mestizos have in P'urhepecha homes informs the judgements they make about P'urhepecha backwardness and P'urhepecha inferiority. In chapter one, I discussed how the lack of electrical appliances in P'urhepecha homes was expected by tourists wanting to experience P'urhepecha 'authenticity' and in some cases curated by P'urhepecha people to present the pre-colonial illusion that tourists searched for. Pedro, however, sees the lack of electrical appliances in P'urhepecha homes as a means for mestizos to cast off P'urhepecha families as poor and therefore less than. As he states,

They may see that some of our homes lack the objects that they are used to such as electronics and refrigerators. They are not used to that. That is their way of judging. There is something that I have always said, that they make us feel and say that we are poor. They make us feel poor even if we may not see ourselves as poor. At least when I was growing up we wouldn't hear that we were poor from family members. We didn't understand what it meant to be poor because we had everything we needed. We had animals, and crops, and community. So there was no poverty until outsiders told us, 'we need to help you because you are poor.' But mestizos who come to our communities make us feel that we are poor, that our possessions are not worthy, that we are a product of being conquered... something which we have failed to overcome. This also happens with tourism in our communities. What they are bombarding us with is 'you are poor, you cannot be businessmen who run the tourist industry, because you are indigenous and indigenous people cannot be businessmen, they can never have more.' And the

day we do open up a business, we are no longer Indigenous because then we become capitalists (Tata Pedro, 09/23/2009).

Here, Tata Pedro explains that P'urhepechas learn they are different by learning that scarcity or lack of possessions makes them different or less than. Pedro emphasizes that he was not taught he was poor by his family; on the contrary, he was taught that his family enjoyed abundance from the harvest and from culture and from community. Outsiders who did not recognize traditional lifestyles as wealthy and who measured poverty according to lack of modern commodities or material possessions told Pedro that his family needed help due to their poverty. According to Pedro, it is this learned inferiority attached to poverty which becomes internalized by P'urhepechas and marks P'urhepechas as different and/or less than mestizos. For Mexican mestiza/o society, P'urhepechas and other indigenous people live in rural areas and wear traditional clothing. Indigenous people are not imagined as wearing business suits or accumulating monetary wealth. Thus, the image of an indigenous businessman in a suit is an anomaly both for the mestiza/o world and for the indigenous people who may internalize the boundaries which forever relegate them to traditional living or rural poverty. Pedro believes that mestizos visit P'urhepecha communities to solidify and further spread such stereotypes and attitudes about P'urhepecha poverty, perceived P'urhepecha scarcity, and assumed P'urhepecha inferiority. As I will later elaborate, however, despite the fact that mestizos may hold these paternalistic and downright racist attitudes about P'urhepechas — Pedro and other P'urhepechas do not see themselves in this light. As Pedro made it clear, the concept of poverty may be learned but not necessarily accepted as true. Scarcity and poverty are both subjective perceptions and P'urhepechas may actually see themselves as wealthy and even better off than mestizos.

As I continued my interviews with other P'urhepecha vendors and cultural workers, it became apparent that Tata Pedro's attitudes fit into a pattern amongst P'urhepecha people. Tata Javier, a P'urhepecha farmer from Santo Tomas, also feels that mestiza/o tourists visit P'urhepecha communities to reassure themselves of their cultural and material superiority. As he states, "Well, in my way of seeing it, it's so they can continue feeling superior. They tell themselves, 'I will go see how they act, and from my observations see that I am superior to them.' That is the sole reason for their visits. In schools they teach mestiza/o children that they are superior and that Indigenous people are inferior. So since they are young they have that mentality (Tata Javier, 11/12/2009)." For Tata Javier, the root of anti-P'urhepecha racism is institutional. Javier expressed a concern which other informants also expressed — the concern that Mexican children learn about indigenous inferiority from textbooks and teachers and that they then project these beliefs onto indigenous people when they become adults. Like Pedro, Javier believes that mestizos visit P'urhepecha communities to feel better about themselves as they confirm P'urhepecha difference. "Maybe they see that we eat only what we grow or fish or that we do things differently or that our houses have dirt floors. They see our difference, feel better that they do not live like us, and go tell people about it (Tata Javier, 11/12/2009)." Tata Antonio, a P'urhepecha cultural advocate, also expressed that mestizos follow their curiosity after learning about P'urhepechas during a previous experience where a reference to P'urhepechas was made. He states,

Tourists come to our communities to look for something that someone told them related to how P'urhepechas live. They come to fulfill their curiosity about what

they heard. But in reality they see our language as a joke. They laugh at P'urhepecha-speakers; they say things like 'that language is not spoken here,' and 'they should learn to speak Spanish,' and 'those people are Indian.' There is a great deal of misinformation and intolerance. It begins with stereotypes and misinformation that mestizos experience when they first hear about us and it ends with them coming to our communities and then spreading more misinformation based on the judgements they make about how we live (Tata Antonio, 02/20/2010).

Like Tata Pedro, Tata Antonio believes that mestizos do not recognize P'urhepecha humanity and that mestiza/o visits to P'urhepecha communities are not effective in confirming indigenous humanity to mestizos. While visits between different groups of people are meant to garner intimacy and a better cross-cultural understanding, in this case it seems that P'urhepechas think that mestiza/o attitudes towards P'urhepechas are too entangled in the Mexican racial matrix which relegates indigenous people to the bottom.

For Antonio, the prevalent mestiza/o disrespect of indigenous languages is a major indicator that indigenous people are not viewed as equal and that a genuine mestiza/o desire to understand indigenous people simply does not exist. Antonio further believes that mestiza/o visits to P'urhepecha communities remain hypocritical and superficial because they lack a mestiza/o commitment to contemporary P'urhepecha political concerns. As he observes, "Their intention is never to learn about P'urhepecha realities or how to help P'urhepecha people. They have no interest in what our concerns are...so what is it that makes their visits good then? (Tata Antonio, 02/20/2010)" Antonio questions mestiza/o motivations for visiting P'urhepecha communities. For him, such visits are only motivated by the desire to experience myths about indigenous folklore and have nothing to do with understanding the current P'urhepecha human experience or with contributing to P'urhepecha struggles for social justice.

Reynaldo, a P'urhepecha *campesino* farmer-organizer from Uruapan, voiced similar critiques of mestiza/o visits during the Days of the Dead. Reynaldo found mestiza/o visits to P'urhepecha communities hypocritical and mysteriously contradicting. He cannot reconcile the virulent racism he has experienced as a P'urhepecha man for being dark-skinned, for being and looking 'Indian,' and for promoting P'urhepecha culture with the mestiza/o desire to visit P'urhepecha communities. For him, only racism could be at the root of mestiza/o curiosity and desire to visit P'urhepecha communities. Thus, like my other informants, he believes that mestizos visit P'urhepecha communities merely to distance themselves from 'the Indians' and from 'how the Indians live.' As he states, "The truth is that they view us as underdeveloped, as intellectually and academically inferior to them. Our humble houses and the unpaved roads in our communities influence them to consider us backward. Then they go back home to their relatives and friends and say, 'I saw how the Indians live. It's true the Indians still exist, it's true they still live like savages (Tata Reynaldo, 02/16/2010).'" One of the greatest insults for Reynaldo is being denied the autonomy to be considered a modern person. The fact that being modern and being indigenous seem to be a contradiction in the mestiza/o mindset deeply bothers him. "As a *campesino* indigenous organizer, I dedicate my livelihood to fighting the effects of policies like NAFTA. We have to exist with the modern problems that capitalism has created even though we are people who have traditionally lived from the land. To deny me the right to be modern in this

capitalist society is a racist insult. Why can't I be modern, be indigenous, and fight for a traditional way of life? (Tata Reynaldo, 02/16/2010)" Reynaldo voices the concern that the folklore of holidays like the Days of the Dead relegate P'urhepechas to the past and perpetuate the idea that P'urhepechas are uncivilized or backward. As a cultural preservationist, his politics are decolonial; he thus does not believe that pre-colonial P'urhepecha practices are primitive but rather understands that mestiza/o ignorance about such practices stereotypes them as primitive. Furthermore he wishes that the complexity of what it means to be an indigenous person navigating a capitalist world would be understood by more people so that P'urhepechas can be conceived as what MacCannell calls 'moderns' or people who are capable of articulating an analysis of the modern political economy and as indigenous people who have the autonomous right to incorporate traditional practices into modern living. Like the informants I have previously discussed in this section, Tata Reynaldo resents the mestiza/o desire to appropriate and tour the Days of the Dead. The following section will expand on the P'urhepecha critique of the Days of the Dead as a platform for reifying, appropriating, and celebrating dead Indians while devastating the contemporary communities where living P'urhepechas subsist.

Disturbing the P'urhepecha Dead and Exploiting Living P'urhepechas

Conceptually, the idea of touring other people's dead relatives and other people's gravesites is fascinating to consider. In the previous chapter, I suggested that mestiza/o tourists tour the P'urhepecha dead to appropriate living P'urhepechas as surrogates of their dead ancestors in order to experience pre-colonial México and to alleviate their mestiza/o melancholia for the pristine (indigeneity in its purest form). In *Cities of the Dead*, Joseph Roach (1996) uses the concept of surrogacy to suggest that people attach themselves to performative surrogates (such as corpses at public funerals) in order to understand death (Roach 1996:36). Within this context, the mestiza/o motivation to tour dead P'urhepechas seems to be to experience the past, to catch a glimpse of ritual, and to enlighten/enrich their own spiritual journeys through these gained experiences. These motivations seem to be read as rather superficial by P'urhepechas. P'urhepechas do, however, understand that their own dead relatives and their ancestors' gravesites (from the yacatas to the campo santo) function as tourist attractions because the ritual of the Days of the Dead is associated with their culture. What is harder to grasp is the contradiction between celebrating and loving dead Indians while seemingly despising living P'urhepechas. I gathered the following two findings from interviewing P'urhepechas on these topics: P'urhepechas believe mestizos visit Janitzio and other P'urhepecha communities during the Days of the Dead to experience/witness how P'urhepechas die and mourn, to appropriate their dead and devastate their graves, and not necessarily to learn about current P'urhepecha needs or current concerns. And, secondly, P'urhepechas believe that Indians are only valuable to mestizos when they're dead or when they are part of the local folklore because the living, breathing P'urhepechas are a nuisance to the State and to Mexican society. The fact the dead Indians are more valuable than living Indians is apparent to P'urhepechas because living P'urhepechas would not be mistreated for wearing their traditional clothing or for speaking the P'urhepecha language if this were not true. Their political concerns would be heard if they were valued as living people.

The contradiction between the tourist obsession with dead P'urhepechas and the tourist destruction of P'urhepecha homelands where today's P'urhepechas dwell was one critique

commonly voiced by the P'urhepechas I interviewed. Tata Esteban, a dancer from Janitzio, has seen the consequences of the tourist invasion of the island firsthand. As he states,

They are messy and invade the cemetery. Sometimes our people want to go take an offering to their dead and they can't because there is a hippy from D.F. sitting there. And the hippies don't get up, you can't get them up...even the authorities don't do the job because the tourists are very aggressive. For that reason I don't like seeing so many people come...if they were not such ignorant visitors, the situation would be different... That is a concern I shared with the community; we should put a policy in place or something like a wall, a barrier to keep people from coming into the cemetery, but instead allow outsiders to go around the cemetery. That is something I would like to see. I will talk to the people about it during an assembly (Tata Esteban, 11/10/2009).

Tata Esteban's concern that the congestion of tourists in Janitzio has gotten so bad that it deters locals from being able to access the cemetery in order to carry out their Days of the Dead observances is shared by Tata Dionisio, Tata Pedro, Tata Mario, and Tata Anselmo. Like Tata Dionisio, Tata Esteban also lamented the change that the influx of tourists has brought to Janitzio — more specifically, the fact that traditional P'urhepecha observances of the Days of the Dead cannot take place like they used to. As he recalled,

When I was a child, I would extend the petate by my grandmother next to our relatives' gravesite and we would sleep at the cemetery until the next morning. Now, there's none of that. If anything maybe an elder will build an altar at the cemetery, but sometimes the congestion of tourists doesn't even allow them do that. There are also too many people in the soccer field next to the cemetery! That area gets full of hippies. They play drums, they sing. This is their festivity now. They don't know what the festivity is for us; they only know that for them is a night to party. A lot of young mestizos come from Zamora drunk. One time I asked them why they come here. They told me that they come to drink and fight. If they don't get in a fight here, they fight over there. It is not just one bus of them that arrives, but 50 buses full of that type of people who come, who are messy (Tata Esteban, 11/10/2009).

The 'hippies' that Tata Esteban refers to are groups of urban young mestizos with new age spiritual inclinations who visit and camp out in Janitzio during the Days of the Dead. They bring tents and drums with them and see the Days of the Dead as an opportunity for spiritual awakening. They plan to drum during the night of November 1st to help welcome the spirits of the P'urhepecha dead who are believed to visit Janitzio's cemetery. For P'urhepechas like Tata Esteban, these encampments function as an appropriation of their sacred ground and of their dead. The dead that the 'hippies' play drums for and expect to commune with are P'urhepecha dead, they are not relatives to the 'hippies' and thus the hippies' actions seem silly to P'urhepechas. What's more — the loud drumming and the partying that these visitors engage in disturbs the serenity of the Days of the Dead observances on the island and interrupts the mourning process for P'urhepechas attempting to hold overnight vigils for their loved ones at the cemetery. Tata Esteban expressed that locals have tried to ask these groups of young people to leave but the tourists become aggressive and insist on staying and do not listen to Janitzio authorities. The second group of young people that Tata Esteban and other P'urhepechas

complain about are the young mestizos who visit Janitzio from nearby in-state cities such as Uruapan, Morelia, and Zamora. According to Tata Esteban and other locals, these young people visit Janitzio during the Days of the Dead with the sole intention of partying and drinking. For this second group of teenage and twenty-something urban mestiza/o tourists from Michoacán, the Days of the Dead on the island has a mystical haunting allure. Like the ‘hippies,’ these young people see the Days of the Dead in Janitzio as a way to commune with the dead but they also view the perceived chaos and lawlessness in Janitzio during the festivities as an opportunity to have free reign to drink and party. As a participant observer, I did witness many groups of young mestizos arrive in buses to Pátzcuaro and then make the trip to Janitzio for the festivities. I saw groups of young teenage and twenty-something Mexicans consuming alcohol, stepping on gravesites, hiring street musicians, and holding dance parties near the cemetery and on other parts of the island until the early hours of the morning of November second.

Tata Mario, a *maque* artisan and shop-owner in Pátzcuaro, has observed the same phenomenon from the perspective of a Pátzcuaro resident.²⁵ As I discussed in the previous chapter, Pátzcuaro is also overrun by tourists during the Days of the Dead. According to Tata Mario, “Seventy percent of the people that come are youngsters from nearby cities or other parts of México who only come to get drunk. So we do have a lot of people here, but by night there are way too many drunks. They turn Pátzcuaro into the biggest bar in Michoacán! That has disturbed us a lot. Families with more respectful ideologies, wanting to come see and buy no longer come. They must think, ‘What are we going there for? To see drunks?’ Our events have been disturbed by the drinking, this is why there is less quality tourism (Tata Mario, 10/01/2009).” As a longtime resident of Pátzcuaro and a frequent visitor to Janitzio and nearby towns, Tata Mario provided his observations of the devastation that plagues the Pátzcuaro area on the Days of the Dead. He described how tourists turn Pátzcuaro into a tremendous dump, how the streets are full of garbage and waste due to the city’s inability to accommodate the hordes of people. And he pinpointed that Pátzcuaro is in a better position to deal with the aftermath of the tourist visit during the Days of the Dead due to its access to waste management resources. For this reason, the damage in nearby towns such as Janitzio and Ihuatzio is exponentially maximized and multiplied compared to what happens in Pátzcuaro.

The Pátzcuaro Lake has become more polluted over time because the surrounding islands such as Janitzio and Yunuen are not equipped to handle the post-Days of the Dead cleanup. The population capacity of the islands is limited to its current residents—thus the waste left behind by visitors is truly beyond the islands’ resource capacity. Much of the everyday waste ends up in the lake and this waste grows beyond the islands’ control after the Days of the Dead tourist peak season. For Tata Mario, the problem is not just the disturbance to the environment. He feels more concerned about what tourism has done to the spiritual nature of the Days of the Dead. Like Tata Esteban and Tata Dionisio, Tata Mario is concerned that the congestion of sacred space in Janitzio disallows locals from practicing their traditional altar-building and overnight vigil activities. As he states,

More tourists have come and now they crowd the cemetery in Janitzio so much that they don’t let local people pass by with their altars. They block the access. Now people cannot take their time setting up their altars on the ground. If a family

²⁵ Maque: a Pre-Columbian technique to create lacquerware using pigments from plants and insects; the technique originated in Michoacán.

does not arrive to the cemetery on time, they will not be able to set up their altars. Now so many tourists get drunk. They don't respect the tombs and they step all over them. It's a big mess. Now All Souls Night has become a thing, not a ceremony, but a thing that even the local people from the island look towards to profit. If the locals let themselves be photographed in their traditional clothes, they charge tourists for it. Now everything has become a game of making money. The Days of the Dead became something really bad. So much tourism changed the essence of what All Souls Night used to be about in Janitzio (Tata Mario, 10/01/2009).

Here, Tata Mario describes the commodification and thingification of the Days of the Dead in the Pátzcuaro region. According to this analysis, the Days of the Dead went from being a ceremony with specific meanings to P'urhepechas to being 'a thing' that people can profit from. For Tata Mario, the Days of the Dead in the Pátzcuaro region has become an example of the commodification process—the phenomenon that takes place when culture stops being a process and becomes a thing. In Tata Mario's perspective, the Days of the Dead, the once-sacred remembrance of the ancestors which, according to P'urhepechas, has been taking place since 'times of the men who built the yacatas,' has become a desecrated performance that can be sold for profit. The fact that all tourist/indigenous interactions can be a negotiated transaction is proof of the commodification that Tata Mario describes. He referred to the occurrence of P'urhepechas charging tourists for pictures as an example. Such occurrences during the Days of the Dead would have been unheard of in the early 20th century but now they are commonplace. The fact that none of my informants could imagine the Days of the Dead in the Pátzcuaro region without tourists speaks volumes to how tourism has completely changed the observance and significance of the event.

Tata Anselmo concurs with Tata Esteban and Tata Mario's belief that tourists, including mestiza/o tourists, have hijacked and changed P'urhepecha Days of the Dead celebrations and have done so due to the peculiar belief that communing with the P'urhepecha dead is an acceptable means of understanding the indigenous dead and/or achieving spiritual enlightenment. As he states, "It's been years that these are no longer P'urhepecha events. They are now foreigner events. Mestizos don't respect the tombs or the altars. They respect nothing. They come to disturb the process. Tourism is corrupting the sacred parts of these events and making them social. This was not supposed to be a drinking party or a giant social gathering and now it is (Tata Anselmo, 11/26/2009)." For Tata Anselmo, who described himself as a medicine man, the mestiza/o lack of cultural competence is at the root of mestiza/o ignorance about how to appropriately visit with P'urhepechas. As he observes, "To understand P'urhepecha culture, you have to live it so the outsiders want to come understand P'urhepecha culture but they won't be able to. It is like all those people who want to cure a cold by reading a pharmacy book without knowing about medicine... same thing with P'urhepecha culture. Reading about it in books sounds nice but there is nothing like living it and understanding it (Tata Anselmo, 11/26/2009)." Like Tata Pedro, Tata Anselmo believes that mestiza/o visits to the island and to other P'urhepecha communities remain superficial and that there is little that can be done to bridge the distance between the mestiza/o mindset/upbringing and the P'urhepecha events they insist on participating in. According to these views, the P'urhepecha worldview is only accessible to P'urhepechas (and my informants insist that much of this has to do with the fact that the P'urhepecha worldview is mediated by the P'urhepecha language) and therefore it is not fully

possible for non-Purhepechas to engage in P'urhepecha events — especially for groups of people whose visits disturb those events. Intimacy cannot be achieved via tourist visits because tourists ultimately visit to destroy. One cannot destroy people's living space and then expect to build community with that group of people.

During his interview, Tata Pedro strongly articulated the belief that P'urhepechas need to be more aware about the destructive aspects of tourism and that a plan to protect P'urhepecha intimacy must be drafted and executed. Tata Pedro acknowledged that the profits from tourism on the Days of the Dead benefit families whose livelihoods in Janitzio depend on selling food, crafts, clothes, and tours but he objects to the tourist desecration of the cemetery and the *yacatas* and to the invasion of P'urhepecha privacy that must ensue in order for such profits to be made. As he stated,

Lately I have been visiting the celebrations of Janitzio and Tzintzuntzan and I have seen a tremendous amount of corruption. In the cemetery, which is sacred ground, millions of tourists enter and step over the tombs, drinking and wanting intoxicating drinks. Same thing with the *yacatas* in Tzintzuntzan. Last time I went to the *yacatas* it was an enormous bar where the young were bringing their bottles and their beverages. Youth were jumping on top of the *yacatas*, something that is not allowed. The Pátzcuaro area becomes an enormous bar. The mestizo youth which visits now are people that have no sense of historical memory. According to the tourist industry and the people they are inviting, there are no rules set for when outsiders come celebrate certain festivities like the Days of the Dead; there are no specific rules. There are reasons to undertake these celebrations...they are part of our cultural and natural patrimony. There has to be a way to defend the intimacy of the P'urhepechas. Programs and strategies should be created to not harm. Instead, there is a taking advantage of. I'm not saying we should be isolated, but tourism should not affect the most intimate part, like the sacred. Tourism should be productive so the people from the town can have jobs from the industry (Tata Pedro, 09/23/2009).

As a participant observer, I did witness people climbing the *yacatas* in Ihuatzio and Tzintzuntzan and jumping on top of them even though signs were posted asking visitors to respect the preservation of the *yacatas* by refraining from climbing them. For Tata Pedro, the cemeteries are equivalent to the *yacatas* because both spaces — one pre-colonial and one post-colonial — are final resting places for P'urhepechas. While he understands that some P'urhepecha families depend on tourism for economic survival, he does not understand how P'urhepecha people have allowed entry and utter violation of what he considers to be the most sacred spaces and the most sacred practices. As we continued with the interview, it became apparent that he is concerned that the current trend of allowing tourists to climb the *yacatas*, step on tombs, party in the cemeteries, disturb private Days of the Dead vigils, and drink in public spaces during the Days of the Dead will set a pattern and will eventually completely change the meaning of commemorating the Days of the Dead in Janitzio and other P'urhepecha communities. As he observed, "Even if our own people say, 'we need them to come, that is a source of money because the visitors buy.' Well, that is true, but if we analyze the situation, we should see that our values are being jeopardized. Our children will see that their grandparents used to allow entry and destruction into these spaces. So that way of living is passed on, the old tradition is

skewed. The new tradition becomes a pattern (Tata Pedro, 09/23/2009).” This is why Tata Pedro finds the invasion of P’urhepecha privacy and lack of preoccupation with P’urhepecha intimacy deeply disturbing. He is afraid that a new precedent will be set where destruction of sacred ground is acceptable and the Days of the Dead is solely a showcase for tourists. He fears that the tourist impact on changing P’urhepecha Day of the Dead practices will function like a second wave of colonization — one that will cause irreversible damage to P’urhepecha culture. For Tata Pedro, the benefits of tourism are short-term and minimal while the negative impacts can be dangerously permanent and long-term. Furthermore, Tata Pedro finds the fact that P’urhepechas are one of the only groups in the world who open their gravesites to tourism deeply problematic. As he states,

Tourists enter a sacred place, a place where the ancestors rest. The celebration of the Days of the Dead is a family-oriented commemoration, it’s personal. Let’s say, if one day we would go to some part of the First World, they would not let us enter their cemetery because that is where their dead are resting. Much less, they would not allow outside people to drink or throw a big party in that area. First world countries would not let us do that in places that they consider sacred, so why does it happen here? The dead are resting; it’s a sacred place that outsiders should not enter. That is the negative impact which should not happen (Tata Pedro, 09/23/2009).

Pedro connects the touristic desecration of P’urhepecha graves to the institutionalized power-structure, which relegates indigenous communities to the bottom of the ethnic/economic hierarchy, or turns them into the internal disempowered minorities of third world countries (the fourth world). While the rest of the interview indicated that he’s very aware of the exotification of indigenous people which feeds tourist desire, Pedro questioned whether touring gravesites in first world countries would ever become a trend or be allowed. He interprets the fact that visits to cemeteries for the purposes of drinking and partying would not be allowed in first world countries as a devaluing of P’urhepecha humanity. What makes first world sacred spaces untouchable and the first world dead worthy of respect while P’urhepecha sacred spaces are open fields for destruction and desecration and the P’urhepecha dead can be disrespected, commodified, and appropriated? The answer is not only that P’urhepechas and their dead are touristic attractions due to the way that P’urhepechas carry out Days of the Dead practices but also that P’urhepechas are a politically marginal minority without much of a voice or the economic power to control the tourist industry or to increase their local, statewide, or national political clout. Vulnerable indigenous people and racialized dead people are easier to prey upon. Pedro insists that while the P’urhepecha region can continue to open events to tourism, P’urhepechas should have input in the regulation of tourism to their communities.

An additional manifestation of commodification which seems to deeply bother P’urhepechas is the mestiza/o arrogant attitude of knowing more about the Days of the Dead than P’urhepechas. This attitude is manifested not only in mestiza/o tourists’ willingness to discuss everything they know about the festivities with P’urhepecha locals and other tourists but also in giving P’urhepechas advice about how to curate their altars, hold their vigils, and arrange their observances. This attitude sets Mexican mestizos apart from other tourists because non-Mexican tourists are not as knowledgeable or familiar with the Days of the Dead and therefore typically approach P’urhepecha locals with more humility about the event. P’urhepechas view the

instructive advice that mestizos try to give them about their Days of the Dead observances as insulting and paternalistic—and as an act of attempting to further appropriate their observances, their altars, and their dead. As Nana Guadalupe from Ihuatzio expressed,

They come to see the way we dress and the way we remember our dead. They come to Ihuatzio because some of the things we do are different from Janitzio. In Janitzio they mostly take flowers to the cemetery but we add fruit, candles, crowns of flowers, and objects. That is what attracts tourists to our town. I like seeing a lot of people at the cemetery, sometimes they stay until the following afternoon taking pictures. The only thing that bothers me is when the tourists try to give us suggestions of what to put on our altars. They suggest things because they want a bigger spectacle for better pictures. They don't understand that a family will put what they can on an altar, whatever is within their means. A family will build the altar thinking about what the dead person would have wanted it to look like. How can you tell us what to place on an altar if you did not know the person who is being remembered? (Nana Guadalupe, 11/05/2009)

Guadalupe perceptively identifies the motivation for mestizos suggesting improvements to altars as them wanting a 'bigger spectacle' in order to take more animated pictures. What she finds problematic about that equation is that mestizos/tourists simply do not know the person being remembered with the altar they are suggesting improvements for. Guadalupe's insightful critique reveals the contradiction inherent to mestizos touring P'urhepecha graves and attempting to commune with the P'urhepecha dead. Guadalupe questions how a tourist would know which items and objects belong on a particular altar without knowing the dead one being remembered on that altar. She voices the fact that families build altars with whatever is in their means and then thoughtfully decide which objects belong on the altar based on the dead one's personality and preferences. But an outsider would not know what belongs on an altar without knowing the person who passed. Thus, this mentality would make mestiza/o visits to P'urhepecha gravesites for the Days of the Dead seem almost absurd. Guadalupe interprets arrogant mestiza/o suggestions for altar improvement as a means for mestizos to appropriate that altar, to appropriate the dead relative as their own, and to hijack that moment of communion. Not only is the sacred space disturbed or invaded but the actual visit with the dead is interrupted by the tourist presence and by the tourist insistence on somehow acting as an intermediary between P'urhepechas and their dearly departed. As Guadalupe contends, it is not possible for P'urhepechas to achieve intimacy with their dead while such disturbances are taking place nor is it possible for mestizos to achieve intimacy with the P'urhepecha dead because the P'urhepecha dead do not have a relationship with mestizos or other tourists. The P'urhepecha dead belong to their grieving relatives and not to the tourists.

Not only are the devastation, desecration, and appropriation of dead bodies and gravesites evidence that mestiza/o tourists and other tourists reject and undervalue living P'urhepechas, but my informants themselves described ways in which they have experienced mestiza/o dismissal and instances when they have felt less valuable than dead P'urhepechas. Having grown up and attended school in Uruapan, Tata Reynaldo recalls being bullied and mistreated by mestiza/o classmates as a child. With tears welling up in his eyes, he described one instance at age 10 or 11 when a teacher gave him a time-out and made him face the wall during recess. Some of his

classmates came back into the classroom to bother him. They hit him and called him names like ‘dirty Indian.’ “I carry that awful feeling of being considered less than human with me. To this day there is still a great deal of discrimination. I have a son who does not accept that he is indigenous and it hurts my heart (Tata Reynaldo, 02/16/2010),” he recalls. Reynaldo went on to describe how he learned to deal with mestiza/o discrimination as an adult.

Mestizos use name-calling and taunting to discriminate us in restaurants, stores, buses, especially when one is wearing traditional clothing. I had to learn how to hide who I was. I did not speak my language and I did not pass it on to my children. I had to learn to dress like them. I called it putting on my mestizo disguise or costume. Those of us who wear the mestizo costume can pass unnoticed but those who are marked by traditional clothing or by speaking our language cannot (Tata Reynaldo, 02/16/2010).

Scarred by the racism he experienced as a child, Tata Reynaldo had to learn how to ‘pass’ as a mestizo in order to survive in Mexican society. It was his reclamation of P’urhepecha spiritual life that salvaged his P’urhepecha identity. As Tata Reynaldo became more politically involved in the *campesino* rights movement with the CIOAC (*Central Independiente de Obreros Agrícolas y Campesinos*), other indigenous farmers he met in the organization introduced him to indigenous spiritual rituals which gave them a sense of connection to the land and which they incorporated into their farming practices. These influences allowed Reynaldo to remember and reclaim his own P’urhepecha identity and to relearn P’urhepecha spirituality as a way of life. As he states, “I don’t speak about these painful experiences with racism out of pessimism. We truly are very humiliated. For me, being on a spiritual path has taught me to revalue myself. When we can personally recognize us amongst each other, we can grow and unite more. . . . We are only valuable to the government as part of folklore or as descendants of the great leaders before us. As long as we are not educated or prepared, we are easy to oppress (Tata Reynaldo, 02/16/2010).” Here, Reynaldo explains that reconnecting with P’urhepecha spirituality and reconnecting with other P’urhepechas who live their spiritual practices daily helped him overcome the trauma of racism and the legacy of self-hate he had internalized due to his negative childhood experiences. He also alludes to the fact that México’s obsession with the contributions of dead Indians to building the country relegates living indigenous people to the folkloric scenery and contributes to the dehumanization of indigenous people in México. If people are folkloric, they are only acknowledged as props to performances of the past. They are not acknowledged as living human beings with political opinions and commitments like Reynaldo. Similarly, Tata Antonio discussed having to hide his P’urhepecha identity amongst mestizos after migrating to the United States. As he recalls,

More than one time, I’ve been discriminated against and treated badly. When I first arrived to the U.S., I noticed that mestizos were the dominant group amongst Mexican immigrants and they did not necessarily like indigenous people. As indigenous people, we are Mexican and we are fellow countrymen to mestizos but mestizo immigrants still call us by racial slurs, make fun of us for speaking our language, will not associate with us because they think we are dirty or that people will make fun of them for associating with us, and exclude us from the immigrant communities they are a part of in the United States. As indigenous migrants, we face more obstacles adapting to the United States. We don’t speak English and

some of us do not speak Spanish fluently. We are shorter and darker and have different features and we become targets for discrimination. After hearing mestizos talk badly about Indians, I tried not to speak my language. I changed the way I dressed so that I could hide amongst Hispanics. I also had to learn how to speak Spanish to perfection and understand the roots of the Castilian language in order to fit in (Tata Antonio, 02/20/2010).

Like Reynaldo, Antonio discusses how ‘passing’ functions for indigenous people; he negotiated the boundaries of passing as an indigenous immigrant amongst mestizos in order to survive the migrant experience. Passing becomes the way that indigenous people become human enough to live amongst mestizos. The act of passing demonstrates the fluidity of race and ethnic identity in México. Because the majority of mestizos share similarities in phenotype with indigenous people, passing can be as easy as abandoning indigenous clothing and choosing to speak only Spanish. Passing does demonstrate the damaging way that racism functions in México; it involves a complete rejection and erasure of indigenous identity.

In my interviews, P’urhepechas recounted their experiences with racism and being devalued in different parts of México. Even a seasoned traveler like artist/dancer Tata Mario became exposed to discrimination in his travels.

Well, there are people who have shouted at me and my sons, ‘look at those Indians in the street!’ They have more of an attitude of looking down on us instead of admiring us. I admire P’urhepecha women because they wear their clothing wherever they go. They don’t care if they will go to the movies, to the plaza; they still wear it and don’t care about what others have to say. I didn’t know that discrimination was that bad until one day I wore my white cotton pants, my woven belt, and my sombrero and I went with my son to Morelia to play the conch during a mass. When we left the church, we started walking on the street and that is when I felt it. We received a great amount of insults. There is no respect for the indigenous side of México, regardless of the fact that we are the ones who have the original history of the people. The history after the invasion is a history told from the point of view of the winners and they wrote a lot of lies (Tata Mario, 10/01/2009).

Here Tata Mario points out the correlation between wearing traditional clothing and being marked as indigenous. He felt the most discriminated when he wore his traditional clothing in an urban setting. He also discusses the fact that because P’urhepecha women are expected and encouraged and choose to wear their traditional clothes every day, they are more marked as ‘Other’ as they navigate their daily lives, they have less of an opportunity to pass as mestizas, and they in fact choose not to pass. Tata Mario felt awfully dehumanized by his experience in Morelia. He was embarrassed and ashamed by people publicly humiliating him and his sons for wearing traditional clothes. In questioning whether P’urhepecha women have these types of experiences every day, he sympathizes with P’urhepecha women as he imagines that they must suffer the type of humiliation that he was subjected to in Morelia daily.

Tata Mario also articulated that he understands indigenous people are exhibited in the state’s promotional materials for the Days of the Dead due to the fact that they are directly related to both their dead ancestors and to the dead who are being remembered. As he states,

For us the indigenous there is very hard discrimination. I feel it is really hard. When it comes to showing off what Michoacán has, that is when the government and tourism agencies highlight the indigenous. When it's not tourist season, the companies and government officials who highlight and parade us for the tourists are the same ones that wish we would hide so nobody would see us. When they are going to show you off, you come out; when it's not tourist season, no one can see you. You can feel it and you can sense it. In the indigenous communities you can feel it a lot because this attitude of valuing us only for certain seasons or only for our dead has created a lot of hard feelings. Our indigenous communities accept to be showed off out of necessity but most of the people are not too happy about it. It is out of necessity and economic need. At least you have something to feed your children and that's why you have to do it (Tata Mario, 10/01/2009).

Mario criticizes the hypocrisy of the local government's attitude that P'urhepechas are only asked to be visible when there are tourists around but are expected to hide once the tourists leave. What Mario describes is utter unapologetic exploitation. Mario resents not only the racism and discrimination that P'urhepechas are subjected to, but also the fact that P'urhepechas are asked to navigate the boundary between visibility and invisibility according to the government's need to cater to tourist desire. Within the tourist matrix, P'urhepechas function as a despicable commodity. They are rejected on a daily basis and are not viewed as integrated members of Pátzcuaro society yet they are expected to parade and receive visitors with open arms when the tourist season peaks. Their image is used to market and sell everything consumable in Pátzcuaro during the Days of the Dead. Ironically, Mario is a respected and celebrated local P'urhepecha artisan and his comments reveal that the norm in Pátzcuaro is for mestiza/o locals to discriminate against P'urhepechas yet promote them as part of the local folklore during the Days of the Dead. This is also something that I continuously observed during the time I resided in Pátzcuaro.

Another way that my interviewees discussed racism towards P'urhepechas was in relation to media representation of indigenous people in México (or lack thereof). The character of La India María came up several times during conversations. Both Tata Antonio and Tata Pedro discussed her image as an example of the racist caricaturing of indigenous people which is rampant in the Mexican media. Although indigenous people in México are solely represented through characters which stereotype Indians as unintelligible, clumsy, stupid, uncoordinated, illiterate, and buffoonish, watching her on TV does not mean that indigenous people necessarily identify with them or accept the images as appropriate/accurate representations of who they are as human beings. As Pedro states,

People from here do not see it... Well they see La India María as a woman, who makes fun of our culture to perform her character, but she is too foolish and indigenous people do not act like that. Our indigenous people laugh at her too. So they are not seeing it as something degrading that indigenous women do. She is acting funny as a character but indigenous people do not act like that. Like the Indigenous people we see on TV...their ways of walking and so on...it's not right. It has to do with the fact that the general public sees us like that. They make up that kind of character to make themselves feel better. Even in the morning shows here in México, they always have to have a character like that: an indigenous person who speaks funny, because they want to feel superior. It is not

enough, like they say, to have a winner. You also have to have a loser. For them, it's like that too. They want to feel superior and they make sure there is also a loser. And this happens as well in the tourist context (Tata Pedro, 09/23/2009).

According to Pedro, the fact that indigenous people find these performances funny does not mean that they identify with La India María or other such characters or that they internalize the degradation. Although indigenous people may be able to distance themselves from these horrible representations, Pedro still recognizes the horrendous racism behind the performances. For Pedro, the purpose of distributing such performances is to elevate the mestiza/o image of superiority at the sake of proliferating the image of assumed indigenous inferiority. The mestiza/o majority controls all Mexican institutions including the media and thus influences the popular representations of indigenous people. The fact that these archaic representations of indigenous people have remained the same over the centuries demonstrates that mestiza/o society is not invested in changing them or in allowing indigenous people to represent themselves. Like Pedro infers, in order to create winners there has to be losers and in this case, indigenous people have to look primitive and backward in order for mestiza/o society to look modern and advanced. Indigenous people recognize this institutionalized version of racism even if they can separate themselves from the dehumanizing and derogatory representations.

Mario, Pedro, and other P'urhepechas vocalize the contradiction between racializing P'urhepecha bodies as inferior and appropriating them as commodities used to sell the Days of the Dead. This appropriation happens at the expense of living P'urhepechas whose concerns are silenced with crumbs of the profits being made. Tata Pedro candidly articulated this opinion. As he elaborated,

The indigenous past, the way we died and the way we die... well they make it sound beautiful and they call it the best. But when it comes to the living indigenous people... The symbolism of us is useful, the history and the arts and the ritual are beautiful aspects, but the living indigenous people are not useful. That is what happens with the government, which is where it begins. For the government we are a cultural community. We have a Department for Indigenous Affairs but what is salient is the past, that our ancestors were the most courageous, that we would not allow ourselves to be conquered. That is the story being used by the government. Once we are talking about living indigenous people, we are invisible. That is what happens. That is what the tourist industry does. There are hotels where the maids dress like indigenous women. They use the symbolism, yet when an indigenous person is looking for job, she is not allowed into the hotel. That is what happens, that is where we are missing government intervention-- because the government is the one responsible of managing the tourist industry. That is where we need the change. If the mindsets of those who administrate and set the rules for the tourist industry changed, then we would have something different (Tata Pedro, 09/23/2009).

In this brilliant analysis, Pedro unravels how appropriation functions within the tourist industry. He argues that the tourist industry (government agencies and companies which cater to tourist needs) appropriate P'urhepecha symbolisms by dressing their employees in clothes, which imitates traditional P'urhepecha clothing, for the Days of the Dead or giving their restaurants and bus-lines names in the P'urhepecha language yet they do not preoccupy themselves with the

needs or issues that are important to P'urhepecha communities. In this way, dead P'urhepechas are more important not only to the tourists who seek an encounter with the P'urhepecha dead but to the government and the tourist industry. Dead P'urhepechas are useful because they can be appropriated for profit. Living P'urhepechas are only useful as stand-ins for their dead ancestors; otherwise they are invisible and disposable. Pedro also alludes to the fact that indigenous communities in México are defined as 'cultural communities.' He finds this problematic because defining P'urhepecha communities as cultural communities associates indigenous people with the folkloric. Doing so also denies indigenous communities their right to exist as political communities with contemporary interests. Pedro closed his remarks by recounting the following: "Days ago I was reading how a general from the U.S. said 'The best Indian is the dead Indian.' That mentality applies here too. Dead Indians bring tourism, but alive they are a problem because they live and they expect fundamental services for the community. To make good use of the culture and the symbolism, we would have to change the politics and the mindset of the tourist industry. Not only should they use the culture and symbolism for their benefit, but it should be a collective benefit that includes us and our needs (Tata Pedro, 09/23/2009)." Pedro is of course referring to General Phillip Sheridan's famous saying, "the only good Indians I ever saw were dead," which became popularized in the United States as 'the only good Indian is a dead Indian.'²⁶ The fact that Pedro finds relevance of the quote in México is telling of the political marginalization that indigenous communities face in México.

In the case of P'urhepechas, it was apparent from both my mestiza/o and P'urhepecha informants' interviews that dead P'urhepechas are not only sought and desired touristic experiences in Michoacán but are acknowledged more than living P'urhepechas. Living P'urhepechas are valuable for what they can teach people about dead P'urhepechas and because they can stand in for dead P'urhepechas as contemporary surrogates or embodiments of their ancestors or because tourists desire to see the way that living P'urhepechas remember and honor their dead. The fact that Mexican mestizos and foreign tourists can disrespect P'urhepecha gravesites and the P'urhepecha dead while living P'urhepechas engage in what they consider a sacred remembrance of their dead shows that neither living P'urhepechas nor the P'urhepecha dead are worthy of respect. Dead P'urhepechas can be appropriated and claimed by anyone and living P'urhepechas are simply viewed as an integral part of the landscape—an essential commodified authentication of the desired touristic experience. Although P'urhepecha opinions and voices on tourism in Michoacán are absent from newspapers, magazines, blogs, and marketing materials, this section has demonstrated that P'urhepechas have very real and significant critiques of how they are viewed, racialized, othered, and treated in touristic negotiations. Speaking from the 'hidden transcript,' they also pose an important analysis of their positionality within the tourist industry as well as substantial concerns about how tourism is impacting their communities and changing their traditions. Just like they have critiques of the tourist industry and of how they are being toured, P'urhepechas also have poignant opinions about mestiza/o society and more specifically about mestiza/o tourists. The next section will reveal a P'urhepecha critique of how mestiza/o identity functions within the Mexican racial hierarchy and of mestizaje as operational majoritarian dominance in Mexican society.

²⁶ ICTM Staff

2013 Nice Day for a Genocide: Shocking Quotes on Indians by U.S. Leaders Pt. 2. Indian Country Today. July 17, 2013. <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2013/07/17/nice-day-genocide-shocking-quotes-indians-us-leaders-pt-2-150465>, accessed 08/03/2015.

Ambakati P'urhepechas and Fragmented Mestizos

Although it would seem natural for P'urhepechas to internalize the victimization and inferiority that mestiza/o society is intent on bestowing on them, perhaps the most interesting finding I gathered from my interviews with P'urhepechas is that P'urhepechas feel they are culturally and morally healthier people compared to mestizos and more spiritually centered. What's more — P'urhepechas pity mestizos for being so spiritually poor and lost. My interviews revealed that P'urhepechas believe mestizos are culturally and spiritually lost people who come to Michoacán in a desperate attempt to learn about themselves and their past because their Mexican indigenous roots are much more accessible than their Spanish roots. My P'urhepecha interviewees also gathered that despite their visits, mestizos remain lost because they are only able to observe P'urhepecha customs for a few days at a time and must then return to their daily lives in the cities where they continue to live by Westernized cultural norms.

As the previous section demonstrated, P'urhepechas are well aware that mestizos view them as different and less than. My interviews revealed, however, that P'urhepechas also draw strict differences between themselves as a group of people and mestizos—and that these differences not only set P'urhepechas apart from Mexican society but also make P'urhepechas ethically and culturally healthier people. The first difference that P'urhepechas draw between themselves and mestizos is that P'urhepechas descend from a long history of resistance to invasion and territorial protection. A common theme among the P'urhepechas I interviewed was pride in their warrior roots and in the power and might which descending from a strong centralized tributary society insinuates. Not only do P'urhepechas recognize that they 'come from the men who built the yacatas,' but they also know that they have been resisting invasion since precolonial times. As Nana Magdalena states,

I've always taught my children that we come from the warriors. We built the yacatas and we won several battles against the Aztecs. We were the only people in México who were not invaded by the Aztecs. These are things to be proud of. We should also be proud of the P'urhepecha communities like Santa Fe de las Lagunas and Cherán who have fought hard to defend their territory. These things mean that P'urhepechas are *ambakati* or people of high quality amongst Mexicans. We are not just any people. We are strong quality people (Nana Magdalena, 10/18/2009).

Nana Magdalena used the term '*ambakati*' to speak of the high quality and strong integrity of P'urhepechas. This term was commonly used amongst my informants to refer to P'urhepecha pedigree: the high quality ancestral lineage of P'urhepechas which makes today's P'urhepechas descendants of greatness. Here, Nana Magdalena alludes to the fact that P'urhepechas were never invaded by the Aztecs who were intent on overtaking Michoacán and on incorporating P'urhepechas into the Mexica tribute system. P'urhepechas defeated many attempts at Aztec invasion in the 15th century before the arrival of the Spaniards. They were the only group in México to successfully hold their territorial borders against the Aztecs and amongst the few to keep a distinct culture free of Aztec influence. This is a fact that P'urhepechas boast to this day. According to my informants, although history has written off P'urhepecha resistance against the Spaniards, P'urhepechas did resist Spanish invasion. Narratives such as the story of Erendira, the P'urhepecha woman who learned to command horses in order to lead an army against the Spanish, continue being told by the people as examples of P'urhepecha resistance. In her

comment, Nana Magdalena also refers to land struggles in contemporary P'urhepecha communities such as Cherán, which has recently taken up arms to patrol its borders in order to fight illegal logging in its forest.²⁷ These territorial struggles are also cause of pride for P'urhepechas because they indicate that P'urhepechas are *ambakati* — high quality people — who protect and fight for their land without giving up even when they are pressured and threatened by the government and by organized crime. The historical pride in P'urhepechidad is then one example of what sets P'urhepechas apart from mestizos — making them stronger and more rooted people.

According to my informants, the retention of indigenous customs and what can be identified as a traditional P'urhepecha culture is another characteristic that differentiates P'urhepechas from mestizos. In other words, because they can still identify specific elements of P'urhepecha culture that is unrelated to Spanish influences, P'urhepechas do not necessarily consider themselves a conquered people. As Tata Esteban from Janitzio states,

As P'urhepechas, we have a direct history that ties us to Michoacán and nearby states. We have a set of cultural norms and standards that can be directly traced to our ancestors. Things changed after the arrival of the Spanish but if you study our community structures like the *barrio* system and the structure of our music, for example, you will see that even with Spanish influence, the fundamental organization of our communities and the structure of our music is indigenous. By that I mean that...we can point to what is P'urhepecha and what is not. Not many groups of people can do that in society. We have a strong sense of who we are. It doesn't make us better than any other group; it just means we are able to recognize each other like belonging to a nation within a nation. We know who we are (Tata Esteban, 11/10/2009).

Esteban speaks to the P'urhepecha sense of peoplehood which, he alleges, is based on the recognition of distinct pre-colonial P'urhepecha cultural influences in what is now considered P'urhepecha culture. Tata Esteban gives two examples of the contemporary manifestation of pre-colonial P'urhepecha influences: P'urhepecha community organization (the *barrio* system, which is based on precolonial P'urhepecha social organization) and P'urhepecha music (which is currently played on European instruments but has retained indigenous rhythms and structures). He argues that P'urhepecha influences can be partitioned from Spanish influences in the structures and performances of today's P'urhepecha customs and that this process of teasing out '*lo P'urhepecha*' [the P'urhepecha elements] differentiates P'urhepechas as distinct from mestizos and other groups. He calls it being a 'nation within a nation,' which implies that P'urhepechas not only recognize themselves as Mexicans but also as distinctly P'urhepecha.

Tata Esteban also advances that P'urhepechas live by a specific moral code that is distinctly P'urhepecha. According to Esteban and other P'urhepechas I spoke to, this moral code is not only defined by community standards but by what can only be identified as pre-colonial P'urhepecha priorities of what defines a functional and productive community/society.

²⁷ Associated Press

2013 Vigilante Groups Spring up in México in fight against cartels. Fox News. January 21, 2013.

<http://www.foxnews.com/world/2013/01/21/vigilante-squads-spring-up-in-mexico-in-fight-against-cartels/>, accessed 08/03/2015.

P'urhepecha communal identity feeds the moral code in a way that Tata Esteban claims does not happen with the moral code that mestiza/o society abides by. As he observes,

We still have a moral code that is fundamentally cultural. We live by standards that have some Catholic influences but are P'urhepecha at the root. This makes us different from other people in México. Mestizos have a moral code that is Catholic. They live by religious standards. Our community expects that we behave according to our moral standards which are in some way stricter than mestizo moral standards and in some ways freer. We don't do things just because we are afraid of sinning, we do things because we want to please the community and make it stronger. When mestizos sin, they go to church to ask for forgiveness or perhaps they just try to forget their mistake as individuals. They have to answer to God, to the church, and their families yet the family is a smaller unit than an entire community. We have to answer to the community that we live and exist in daily. If we make a mistake that goes against being P'urhepecha, it doesn't only hurt the individual. It hurts everyone we share the community with, it hurts the image of P'urhepechas, and everyone will know about it. The majority of us in our community want to keep our culture so we try to live by our cultural norms and our cultural morals. I think this cultural moral code means that we are culturally rooted—and what's more we are culturally rooted in a culture that has existed for thousands of years. Mestizos just don't have that...maybe that is why they are so lost and come here to learn from us (Tata Esteban, 11/10/2009).

Here, Esteban differentiates between the Catholic moral code, which he claims Mexicans abide by, and the P'urhepecha moral code which incorporates P'urhepecha standards for self and community representation. According to Esteban, P'urhepecha communal identity dictates that P'urhepechas do not only represent themselves in how they act and carry themselves, but they represent the entire group. The image and health of the community at large are always at stake. This is notable in the four teachings which, according to P'urhepecha cultural activists, have been passed on by the elders, the *Tata K'eriecha*. These teachings are the priorities that should shape P'urhepecha collective identity as well as the decisions of individuals; *Juchari Anchekuarhikua* [our work], *Juchari Kaxumbekua* [our communal honor] *Juchari Jakjkukua* [our cosmovision], and *Juchari P'urhékukua* [our warrior spirit]. These four principles dictate that P'urhepechas should value communal labor, communal honor, pre-colonial pride, and the cosmovision passed on through the P'urhepecha language. Communal P'urhepecha identity demands accountability to the entire community and is based on P'urhepecha cultural values such as reciprocity and caring for the land. When a P'urhepecha wants to say 'thank you,' for example, he/she says '*Diosmeamu*,' which is a hybrid word blending the P'urhepecha concept of reciprocity with the Spanish word/concept of God. *Diosmeamu* translates into "May God bestow good favor upon you" or "May God repay you for your kind action." This word emerged as a hybrid crossing between two languages because there is no concept of 'thank you' in P'urhepecha. According to Tata Antonio, reciprocity was the means to thank someone. When someone did something for you, you were expected to repay that person with a kind action in return. And, according to Tata Esteban, this cultural standard is still part of the P'urhepecha moral cultural code. While mestizos have a moral code, which dictates accountability to the law and to Catholicism, P'urhepechas can trace a set of morals and standards back to pre-colonial times and, according to Tata Esteban and other P'urhepechas, this makes P'urhepechas more

rooted and centered than mestizos. Tata Esteban claims that mestizos can learn from the P'urhepecha code of morality and code of conduct as they lack the connectedness to ancestral knowledge that P'urhepechas benefit from and he assumes that this may be why mestizos are interested in touring P'urhepecha communities.

For P'urhepechas, being able to navigate the P'urhepecha world and the mestiza/o world is a characteristic that also marks them as different from Mexican society at large. The process of learning to be culturally competent in mestiza/o society is not necessarily looked at as a process of assimilation by P'urhepechas because it is expected that P'urhepechas will retain the P'urhepecha language and a sense of self. The process of acculturating oneself to mestiza/o society is rather looked at as a means for survival and a means to thrive economically. My informants described this process of navigating the P'urhepecha world and the mestiza/o world as 'living in two worlds' rather than as a process of adaptation or conversion. Being able to live in the mestiza/o world is viewed as overcoming an obstacle and is tied to being capable, intelligent, and successful. As Tata Dionisio observes,

What I will tell you is that we overcame obstacles and there is much evidence that we are better because of it. How many people can say they still speak their original language even though outsiders have lived in their territory for hundreds of years? Not many. We didn't just survive. We came out better because we can now live in two worlds. That is something mestizos don't know how to do. They make a life for themselves in the city, perhaps they make money and they are happy. We know how to organize things communally, how to grow crops together and organize big events together. Any fiesta in a P'urhepecha community has a sponsor but depends on everyone to contribute to make it happen. This is the way we have been doing things since before the Spanish came. We can sell and interact with mestizo society in the city and we can also grow things and make things successfully happen in a P'urhepecha environment (Tata Dionisio, 11/10/2009).

Here, Dionisio refers to P'urhepecha cultural preservation and P'urhepecha adaption to mestiza/o society as a form of resistance. He explains that the fact that P'urhepechas have retained their culture and customs in the face of foreign invasion demonstrates P'urhepecha strength and intelligence and he alleges that this skill is not something that mestizos in México have attained because they have not been challenged in the same way. As the majority population, mestizos enjoy majoritarian status and thus speak Spanish (the colonizing language), are raised monolingual in an assumed urban heterogeneous yet predominantly mestiza/o environment, and are born being acculturated into mexicanidad while P'urhepechas are born into a homogenous P'urhepecha environment and must learn to be bilingual and adapt to an outside culture in order to navigate the Mexican political economy.

Tata Javier elaborates on these same beliefs that P'urhepechas must learn to be bicultural and bilingual in order to survive in mestiza/o society.

I would not say we are bicultural because culturally we are P'urhepecha but we have learned to adapt to their culture while maintaining ours and that makes us more culturally capable than other people. Many of us are also bilingual because we have to be in order to sell things in the cities. Most of our people still speak

P'urhepecha if they live in P'urhepecha communities and then they must also speak Spanish in order to buy and sell things in Pátzcuaro. That is the way it works here. It's not like that for all people in México. It's like that for us because we are still P'urhepechas. That is why bilingual education is so important for our children. They can learn to deal with mestizos while still maintaining their own language. The bilingual child is a stronger child because they have to learn to speak to two different types of people. It will mean that they will be stronger people in the long-run (Tata Javier, 11/12/2009).

Both Dionisio and Javier allude to the fact that P'urhepechas must navigate survival in the city (which is viewed as a mestiza/o environment) while retaining P'urhepecha cultural knowledge and while continuing to be fully participating members of P'urhepecha communities. According to my P'urhepecha informants, these characteristics make P'urhepechas more capable of facing challenges than mestizos and thus stronger and more adaptable people. While some P'urhepechas internalize the desire to blend into mestiza/o society and choose to abandon their communities in order to 'pass' fulltime, the P'urhepechas I spoke to did not seem interested in narratives of assimilation. They insisted that P'urhepechas remain P'urhepechas even if they are faced with the complex challenge of having to navigate the world according to external influences and foreign rules. And doing so means that P'urhepechas live in two worlds and learn important skills that mestizos lack. With this bicultural identity, P'urhepechas demonstrate that they are capable of drawing important boundaries between their commoditized personas and their community identities.

The idea that mestizos are a lost people was also a recurring theme in my interviews with P'urhepechas. Not only was the concept of touring other culture's gravesites somewhat puzzling but mestizos' mixed race status was generally stereotyped as cause for confusion, displacement, and being in limbo. The liminality that mestizos live with in México was recognized and questioned specifically by the P'urhepecha medicine people that I interviewed. They identified the mestiza/o desire to tour P'urhepechas as a desire to understand indigenous roots amongst people that are unaware, wandering, and pitiful. When I asked Tata Anselmo, for example, if he had ever experienced racism at the hands of mestizos, he responded by saying, "No, if anything, I discriminate against mestizos (Tata Anselmo, 11/26/2009)." I asked him to elaborate, explaining that the other P'urhepechas I interviewed all said they had indeed experienced discrimination at the hands of mestizos. Tata Anselmo responded,

Well I am a medicine man... I am different. I have power. I have power over mestizos who want to participate in the ceremonies that I lead. I am one of the only P'urhepechas who leads sweatlodges in Michoacán. We pray in P'urhepecha and it is predominantly P'urhepechas from the *meseta* and the lake region who come to my sweatlodge. Sometimes mestizos want to come. As the medicine man, I decide how the prayer goes and how the circle is structured. Sometimes it is only appropriate for P'urhepechas to pray together without others and I exclude mestizos. They get upset and offer to pay to participate. So I have that power to discriminate against them. I can exclude them when I want to due to my status as a medicine man. I have something that they want and I can say 'No' if I want to (Tata Anselmo, 11/26/2009).

Anselmo's response indicated that he had formulated specific attitudes about mestizos who seek him to consult with him on indigenous spirituality or traditions. I asked him to tell me more about why he thought mestizos wished to participate in the Days of the Dead in Michoacán. He responded,

Mestizos, the way I see them is like this... they are 50% indigenous and 50% foreigner; however the indigenous side is always stronger because it is here in México and that is why many turn to wanting to learn about the indigenous side. Mestizos are always lost between the two sides. They suffer trying to find their spiritual home beyond Catholicism. Those that want to understand the elements, to understand how to live on earth, how to pray to the Creator...they struggle but they come to us as medicine people because we are here. They can't go to Spain to try to learn about how the Spanish understand nature or the earth or the Creator. After all, México is where their roots are not in Spain. So they come to us, to people like me. They don't know what to say, they don't know how to participate, what to sing or how to pray. Poor mestizos...but they can try. Mestizos will go back to the part of their roots they are closer to, they will go back to the ways of Mexicanidad, the journey of the eagle (Tata Anselmo, 11/26/2009).

Tata Anselmo identifies the mestiza/o sense of displacement as their motivation for wanting to tour P'urhepecha communities and other indigenous people. He explains that while mestizos are racially mixed with Spanish roots, it makes sense for them to try to search for the spiritual answers they are seeking in México — not only because they are born in México and identify as Mexicanos but because logistically Spain is too far. Mexican indigenous knowledge is more immediately accessible and so they search for people like him. Tata Anselmo insists that most mestizos are not successful in their spiritual quests because their two sides (Spanish versus indigenous) struggle against each other. They have a hard time acculturating into an indigenous mindset and adapting indigenous mentalities because they are influenced by Mexican society and by the Mexican government (both which are fundamentally anti-indigenous). As he states,

Mestizos are controlled by the government more than P'urhepechas. They are brainwashed by the government and the government is brainwashed by foreign ideas. The mestizo does not have very rooted ideology. He is a puppet of foreign ideology. They don't have nature, they come look for nature out in the mountains, but they don't really have much because they want to imitate everything the foreigner does. Poor them, poor mestizaje (Tata Anselmo, 11/26/2009).

Anselmo speaks to the internalization of anti-indigenous racism that mestizos adopt as a result of the government's rejection of indigenous people. He also speaks to the Europhilia that the Mexican government and Mexican society tend to fall into, an obsessive symptomatic love for Europe which relegates indigenous knowledge to the bottom — making indigenous lifeways seem unworthy and backward. As I outlined in my introduction, México has suffered from a strong case of Europhilia since the foundation of the country. The violent denigration of indigenous people during the Conquest coupled with the casta system's rejection of indigenous blood and indigenous intelligence diagnosed México with a strong worship of European influences, a case of internalized anti-Indian racism, and a desire for whiteness. These Europhilic ideologies, according to Anselmo, make both the Mexican government and Mexican society puppets of foreign ideology. Tata Anselmo believes that mestizos can escape the trap of

brainwashing and puppetry by retreating into nature and seeking indigenous spiritual knowledge but he insists that even such efforts fall short because when mestizos perform indigeneity, it is inevitably an imitation of the original. Thus, mestizos fall into the trap of mimicry and are destined to eternal displacement. Instead of the 'not quite/not white' result of mestizos trying to fulfill Europhilic fantasies, the result is 'not quite/not indigenous' for mestizos trying to engage indigeneity. For these reasons, Tata Anselmo pities the mestiza/o spiritual journey as it is a journey without a real destination, one of a lost people trying to find a home that is not easily accessible or open to them (or even necessarily always desired).

Tata Javier felt similarly to Tata Anselmo. When I asked him why mestizos go to Michoacán, he replied, "It's because they lack spirituality. A lot of them do not have spirituality. If you go to the cities, you see there is no spirituality. They come to Michoacán because they hear about spirituality and they feel comfortable coming here. They come looking for their roots. They have an internal desire to find spirituality. Catholicism doesn't seem to fill that fire (Tata Javier, 11/12/2009)." Javier believes that mestizos are spiritually confused due to the detachment from nature they must live with in the cities and due to the identity crisis they experience as Catholics and as indigenous people without access to indigenous knowledge. He feels that mestiza/o confusion has not resolved the seeming contradictions between Catholicism and indigenous spirituality whereas Mexican indigenous people have either utilized Catholicism as a vehicle to preserve indigenous spiritual practices or as a means to synchronize indigenous practices with Catholic practices. Javier feels that mestizos psychologically struggle with recognizing ancestral deities in nature and in their conception of God and such a journey is at the root of their confusion. As he states,

It can psychologically hurt you when you already have another God and another mindset. One thing is to recover the sacred practices and another is to recover the cultural practices. We do not ask you to leave your God in order to recover the ancestral knowledge or to know the elements. Mestizos who seek this journey seem to think that the Catholic God is at odds with the way we pray. We don't turn them away from being Catholic and we don't tell them to not think about Jesus Christ or about Catholicism when they pray with us. We have resolved our relationship with the church because the Creator is one and the same. The way we worship is different but we are still praying to the Creator. Mestizos think that they must abandon Catholicism in order to seek an indigenous relationship with creation or with the earth. We can incorporate the beliefs and practices into the same process in harmony and be fine. Mestizaje minds can't grasp that you can have both (Tata Javier, 11/12/2009).

For Javier and Anselmo, mestizos are lost and unable to put forth the spiritual work necessary to find themselves because they lack the resources and knowledge and don't know how to participate when they do engage with indigenous people. P'urhepechas do not have this problem according to Javier and Anselmo. P'urhepechas can engage with indigenous spiritual practices even if they are not as familiar with some practices and even if they do not pray in the indigenous way daily. As Javier stated above, the reason for this is because most P'urhepechas do not struggle with wanting to resolve contradictions between internalized Catholic beliefs and indigenous practices. The indigenous mindset allows P'urhepechas to accept and respect indigenous knowledge as truth and to participate in a meaningful way. Unlike mestizos,

P'urhepechas do not face a mixed race identity crisis or lack a sense of belonging in indigenous spaces (even indigenous spaces that they are not familiar with). I witnessed this as a participant observer in sweatlodges and peyote ceremonies during my fieldwork; P'urhepechas who were new to these practices were respectful and fully engaged participants. Part of this had to do with them speaking the P'urhepecha language (the language some ceremonies are held in) and part of it had to do with their reverence and respect for indigenous forms of prayer. As medicine men, Javier and Anselmo seem to pity mestizos who turn to them for guidance. They don't feel that mestizos can truly embark on an indigenous spiritual path until they resolve their spiritual confusion and psychologically recover from post-colonial traumas that they have not dealt with.

Tata Pedro also ardently articulated that mestizos cannot participate in P'urhepecha events meaningfully because they lack membership in the community and because they do not view P'urhepecha events as meaningful or treat P'urhepecha practices with respect.

Mestizos see these events as recreational. But there is a big difference. When a mestizo in the city wants to be an insider to what they call 'culture', they go to a theater. That is culture. Our people do not go to cultural events; they live them. In a festivity, what the children and the elders do is not something they do from observing. They live the festivity. When I was a child my mom would say 'you are going to wear your traditional clothes so you can go participate in our social dances.' So I learned to be part of the culture, not just to be an observer. Here the mestizo observes our dances, observes the music, they observe everything. That is the difference. So they come and say 'Oh how nice, it looks like a play.' But that is not it. The community lives the culture...something mestizos cannot do because they are so disconnected from communal living (Tata Pedro, (09/23/2009)).

For Pedro, mestizos are unable to meaningfully participate in P'urhepecha events due to their colonized concept of culture. Pedro claims that mestizos conceptualize P'urhepecha ceremonies as performances that are meant to be watched because, unlike indigenous people, mestizos learn to see culture as something to be observed not as something that people actively create or participate in. He compares mestiza/o observance of P'urhepecha cultural and spiritual events to watching a play at the theater. According to Pedro, this is problematic for two reasons. The first reason is that watching a play at the theater turns the watcher into a passive distant observer. The observer is not an active participant in the performance. The second problem is that by watching P'urhepecha cultural and spiritual acts as if they were part of a play, the mestiza/o observer turns P'urhepecha culture into a thing that is to be consumed through the act of viewing. The thingification of P'urhepecha culture objectifies P'urhepecha cultural events, objects, and ceremonies into commodified goods that can be purchased and consumed. Mestizos then treat P'urhepecha culture as a thing rather than a process and for Pedro the fundamental difference between being an observer and a participant is that the observer is not part of the cultural process. In other parts of the interview, Pedro discussed that he is sure mestizos talk about their encounters with P'urhepechas when they return to their cities. By doing this, mestizos are complicit in the objectification and commodification of P'urhepecha culture. These acts of proliferating images and stories about P'urhepechas and representing (or misrepresenting) P'urhepechas through the mestiza/o gaze are insulting to Pedro and other P'urhepechas. They support the idea that for mestizos (even those claiming to be on a spiritual journey), P'urhepecha culture is a recreational activity one can add to one's repertoire. Treating P'urhepecha culture

and P'urhepecha people as recreation or as temporary destinations contributes to the dehumanization of P'urhepecha people and the thingification of P'urhepecha culture because doing so perpetuates the idea that P'urhepecha culture is consumable and disposable and therefore of lesser value than mestiza/o urban culture (which is the mestiza/o daily way of life).

According to the P'urhepecha perception of mestiza/o tourists, mestizos who visit P'urhepecha communities do so because they suffer from spiritual disorientation and cultural confusion. The behaviors they learned from non-indigenous value systems and/or the imposed/imported culture (i.e. Europhilia, capitalism) are to treat culture as a thing to be consumed. Engaging in this type of behavior, however, is a weakness because such a mentality bars them from truly understanding indigenous traditions as they desire. Indigenous traditions require assimilation into an indigenous mentality (which is accessible through learning an indigenous language); they demand an engaged participation and spiritual investment from those who wish to acquire the knowledge being offered in the experience. Mestizos are spiritually broke and thus cannot make such a personal investment into the journey. Their visits, therefore, are fruitless. For Nana Ofelia and other P'urhepechas, mestizos are walking a perpetual journey to find themselves and watching them continue to struggle with mixed race trauma is sad. As Ofelia states,

I think your life is empty if you have to travel somewhere else to experience beauty, spirituality, and see a celebration...in fact, it's interesting because what mestizos see here is just a glimpse. They don't see that these things exist in our daily lives. I see them come here and think, 'What is wrong where they live that they have to come here to try to understand life? To understand death?' They must be lost without a sense of community, without a sense of their own selves (Nana Ofelia, 11/05/2009).

P'urhepechas can only infer that mestizos suffer a profound emptiness in their daily lives. Why else would they wander into P'urhepecha territory wanting to commune with other people's dead and wanting to consume the knowledge offered by another culture? As is evident by this section, P'urhepechas identify mestiza/o emptiness as a spiritual lack. P'urhepechas perceive mestizos as victims of post-colonial racial mixing which has caused their confusion and boundless wandering. The opposing philosophies through which mestizos and indigenous people see the world, however, stunts the mestiza/o ability to understand P'urhepecha communities and P'urhepecha practices. Mestizos are then doomed to remain lost and confused without a sense of self. They have not recovered from the post-colonial trauma induced by violence and rape because they were not taught or provided with the proper cultural/spiritual capital to do so. They are thus condemned to an eternal search for indigenous knowledge to satiate the thirst and feed the hunger that seems to plague the emptiness they experience in their daily lives. When they do access indigenous knowledge, the healing and/or experience is fleeting or temporary because mestizos eventually return to western living in Mexican society at large and its symptomatic Europhilic worship. Additionally, accessing indigenous knowledge does not grant mestizos an authentic experience. To the contrary, when mestizos try to participate in P'urhepecha spiritual practices, the result is a copy of the original, a not quite/not indigenous slippage which condemns mestizos to grapple with the distorted mixed race image they see in the mirror. Mestizos are a weaker people due to these ailments and are to be pitied. P'urhepechas are a more stable group of people because they have a sense of peoplehood, they have developed cultural and spiritual resilience and adaptability, and they are able to live their culture on a daily basis.

The P'urhepecha diagnosis of mestizos as spiritually lost and doomed is an example of P'urhepechas reversing the tourist lens. Although, as my previous chapter demonstrated, mestiza/o tourists assign the pathologies of being poor, voiceless, and backward to P'urhepechas, this finding demonstrates that P'urhepechas also have their own readings of mestiza/o tourists and of Mexican society more generally and that their readings are not necessarily generous. In her article, "Predatory Voyeurs," Jane Hoskins (2002) posits that while tourists who visit Sumba have a deep desire to witness bloody inter-tribal violence because they stereotype native Sumbanese people as primitive and bloodthirsty, native Sumbanese people associate foreignness with danger. Sumbanese narratives indicated that they became especially weary of tourists capturing images of children or of tourists using cameras as a way to attract and then kidnap children. By relating local narratives of how the Sumbanese view tourists and their cameras, Hoskins demonstrates that indigenous people are capable of effectively reversing the lens on the tourist gaze. Hoskins contends that by spreading fear and caution around touristic photographic consumption, the Sumbanese turn the vision that tourists have of them as violent predatory primitives back on themselves because according to the Sumbanese — the tourists are the predatory voyeurs who can capture people with their metal boxes (Hoskins 2002:809). As this section has demonstrated, while P'urhepechas understand that mestizos view them as inferior and less than, they formulate their own narratives about mestizos and mestizaje, diagnose mestizos with their own set of pathologies and effectively consign P'urhepecha people and P'urhepecha culture to a healthier psychological state, a more empowered positionality in their ability to navigate the world, and a superior moral code. Speaking from the hidden transcript, P'urhepechas not only articulate a critical perspective on commodification and tourism and but also on mestizaje as an identity and a vehicle to marginalize indigenous people due to its monopoly of México's majoritarian politics.

Summary

This chapter explored P'urhepecha negotiations of touristic interactions and articulated a P'urhepecha critique of tourism and of mestizaje. Although P'urhepechas allow mestizos and foreigners to tour their dead out of economic necessity, they are keenly aware that they function as a spectacle during the Days of the Dead and that mestizos and other tourists view them as less than. The fact that P'urhepechas engage with tourists out of economic necessity speaks to the vulnerable position that P'urhepechas and other indigenous people face in the Mexican political economy. P'urhepechas are clearly concerned with P'urhepecha intimacy but feel they must cater to tourism in order to survive due to the lack of employment and other opportunities to formally participate in the Mexican economy. P'urhepechas understand that mestizos tour their communities in order to confirm their superiority in the face of P'urhepecha difference and perceived inferiority. P'urhepecha inferiority is assumed based on both stereotypes attached to indigenous people and on performances of traditional P'urhepecha living which are read as primitive, poor, or backward.

Rather than internalizing their assumed inferiority, P'urhepechas see their communities as cohesive and morally healthier and view the government as a false entity and mestizos as lost people. P'urhepechas wish to be perceived as modern, intelligent people who are capable of navigating indigeneity in a capitalist society and of incorporating traditional lifeways into

modern living. The next chapter will explore the P'urhepecha hidden transcript or the 'back regions,' which housed P'urhepecha resistance, as well as the implications of conducting a decolonial ethnography in Michoacán. I will deconstruct my subjectivity in the field as a Chicana/P'urhepecha ethnographer and will explore how my subjectivity allowed/restricted access to the back regions within the P'urhepecha hidden transcript.

Chapter Three: P'urhepecha y Mestiza: Reflections on Conducting a Decolonizing Ethnography

As I related in my introduction, I was motivated to conduct fieldwork in Michoacán not only due to having conducted previous fieldwork amongst P'urhepechas, but also because I wished to understand the dynamics of P'urhepecha resistance to commodification within a globalized neoliberal capitalist economy. I approached the field as a graduate student at a prestigious university in the United States, as a first-generation Mexican immigrant to the U.S. who was born in Michoacán, and as a P'urhepecha woman. These subjectivities fed my desire to explore the 'back regions' of P'urhepechidad and the counteractions that P'urhepechas engage in to resist oppression and cultural appropriation. In this chapter, I will analyze the following: how my subjectivity both facilitated and restricted access to the back regions in the field, the steps I took toward conducting a more decolonizing ethnography, and how my subjectivity as a P'urhepecha woman shaped a code of accountability to the community. I will begin by narrating details of my personal history, which shaped my numerous subjectivities and how these subjectivities were read and negotiated in the field. I will also explore instances where these subjectivities allowed access to restricted P'urhepecha back regions where I encountered P'urhepecha forms of resistance. I will end by discussing the implications of conducting a decolonizing ethnography within the framework of community accountability.

A P'urhepecha/Mestiza Ethnographer's Engagement with Her Family History

I was brought into the world by a traditional midwife in my grandfather's *jacal*, an adobe house that was barely standing in the town of Atapaneo, Michoacán. My mother left me to be raised by my grandparents when I turned one to pursue economic opportunities as a migrant farm-worker in *el otro lado* ["the other side," how Mexicans colloquially refer to the United States]. She came back to retrieve her first-born when I was five years old. I was then raised by a single mother and migrant farm-worker who followed the crops from labor camp to labor camp up and down the United States West Coast. Even though I grew up attending U.S. schools, every winter during the low crop season, we made the trek to México for extended holiday stays in Atapaneo if my mother could afford it. This allowed me to grow up with a binational identity and to maintain ties with the community of Atapaneo.

I also grew up in a mixed Mexican family — not 'mixed' in the same way that the majority of Mexican families are 'mixed' through mestizaje, but in a family split between indigenous worldviews/languages and what I can best describe as a conflicted mestiza/o rejection and romanticization of Indianness. My mother was born in the mestiza/o town of Atapaneo, Michoacán, a town established as a result of agrarian reform after the Mexican Revolution. Atapaneo was founded to grant land to landless mestiza/o peasants who originally hailed from Uruetaro, Michoacán. Although she did not recognize her own P'urhepecha roots or the P'urhepecha roots of the peasants who founded Atapaneo, my mother chose to become romantically involved with indigenous men from the neighboring Matlatzinca/P'urhepecha-identified town of Charo, Michoacán. Charo was established by Matlatzinca Indians, a group allied with P'urhepechas, before the arrival of Spaniards. Matlatzincas were net-builders who supported P'urhepecha fishermen as well as warriors who carried messages and fought alongside P'urhepechas to defend P'urhepecha territory. Although linguistically and culturally distinct

from nearby P'urhepecha towns, Charo was modeled in accordance to P'urhepecha social organization and absorbed into the P'urhepecha Empire. Presently, Charo prides itself in being one of the only remaining towns with Matlatzinca-speakers where indigenous traditions such as *torito de petate* dances are still practiced.²⁸

My sister and I were the daughters of different fathers who were both from Charo. We learned about our indigenous roots in Charo through family references to our indigeneity. Growing up, I often heard Charo being cast off as darker and more Indian than Atapaneco. Charo was known as a place where residents shared a similar — even uniform — facial phenotype. People from Charo were presumed to speak unintelligibly and were mocked for their facial features and their indigenous customs. Relatives made fun of my mother for getting involved with the ‘inditos’ from Charo or ‘*los charillos*,’ an infantilizing slur used to identify people from Charo. Hearing that both of our fathers were from Charo made my sister and I realize that we were different than people from Atapaneco. The majority of villagers in Atapaneco seemed to proclaim and know about our difference.

My mother carried on her love affairs with both of our fathers while on the migrant trail. It was typical for migrant farm-worker men to hold love affairs with different women or even to have wives in México. My father was abusive towards my mother and wanted to wed a younger woman from Morelia and so my mother had to fend for herself when she became pregnant with me. My sister Suguey’s father was my father’s cousin, a fact that my mother denies knowing before becoming involved with him. Although she claims they were in love, his family disapproved of the relationship due to his familial ties with my father and due to the fact that my mother was not from Charo. My mother’s resentment towards our fathers and towards the community of Charo manifested itself whenever she got angry at me or at my sister. As a mixed woman, she never grappled with the anti-Indian racism she had been raised with and had subsequently internalized. When we did something bad, she said we reminded her of our fathers and used violent racializing slurs such as ‘*India prieta* [dark Indian girl],’ or ‘*India patarrajada*’ to refer to us. These terms were commonplace in our household and in our extended family — not only when we induced my mother’s anger, but also when our aunts described women who were from Charo or from neighboring P'urhepecha towns in the Pátzcuaro region. Ironically, when my sister and I were praised for doing well in school or when we were complimented for looking nice, it also was attached to our Indian roots in Charo. Other stereotypes such as high levels of intelligence, inherent regality, and natural leadership abilities were also attached to being Indian. When we refused to help with household chores, it was attached to our Indianness because indigenous people from Charo were allegedly ignorant about hygiene and were prideful and stubborn. It was difficult to make sense out of the desire/curiosity my mother and her sisters expressed towards learning about being P'urhepecha and their simultaneous racism towards P'urhepecha or Matlatzinca women who ‘spoke differently,’ ‘dressed differently,’ ‘had mud houses,’ and were ‘dirty and/or ignorant.’ We grew up with a

²⁸ Torito de petate dances are dances typically performed in Mexican indigenous communities to celebrate weddings. The dance is led by men who wear character masks (sometimes diablito or devil masks) to taunt the toro (bull). The bull is made out of paper mache and woven palm fibers/reeds. The dances are sometimes performed in processions. Community members surround the bull as men take turns wearing the bull to dance with the people. In Charo, the torito de petate is traditionally performed for the youngest son’s wedding.

confused sense of self, knowing we looked indigenous and we somehow were Indian, and at the same time, rejecting Charo as part of our heritage.

Our paternal grandparents were the most influential links we had to learning about Charo. My grandfather was proud of his full-blooded Indianness and he told me stories about Charo and, with my grandmother, even baptized me with a P'urhepecha name (a name which my mother subsequently changed). However, it was difficult to attribute validity to his ethnic pride and his lament over displacement as his alcoholism prevented him from being fully present and coherent and de-legitimized him as a role model in our family. My grandfather's sister, *Tia-abuela* Antonia, was one of the matriarchs we turned to for answers about indigenous identity. She still wore traditional clothes and told us stories about the times when more people in Charo spoke Matlatzinca. We also had uncles from Charo with militant indigenous politics who called themselves P'urhepechas. Their presence in our family helped legitimize our desire to learn more about our links to Charo as we became young women. We are still searching for answers. Presently my sister and I struggle to fully understand the broken stories, the broken sense of identity, and the loss of land/language that both sides of our family went through.

Navigating an Indigenous Subjectivity and Positionality in the Field

The role of subjectivity in ethnography and in social analysis has long been a point of contention in the field of anthropology. Like other academic disciplines, anthropology has traditionally encouraged objectivism as a lens to conduct field research and as a perspective from which to engage in resulting analysis. Anthropology as a field was founded on the presumption that Western (white) researchers were meant to venture off into the field (a non-Western setting) in order to report back about non-Western cultural practices to white audiences. Western researchers were considered 'objective' due to their removal from non-Western settings and could therefore produce believable unbiased research about their non-Western (indigenous) subjects. This model produced a racializing subject/object dichotomy, which relies on the notion that an all-knowing subject (the white lone ethnographer) can research and report on the Other (the exotic/primitive non-Western subject), and that the lone ethnographer's findings can be taken as truth.

American Indian scholar Vine Deloria (1969) was one of the first indigenous scholars to critique anthropology's problematic relationship with indigenous communities. In his famous article, "Anthropologists and Other Friends," Deloria argued that the hordes of anthropologists who flood Indian country produce useless unfounded research from removed perspectives while perpetuating racist stereotypes about Native Americans in their publications. As he states, "The fundamental thesis of the anthropologist is that people are objects for observation, people are then considered objects for experimentation, for manipulation, and for eventual extinction. The anthropologist thus furnishes the justification for treating Indian people like so many chessmen available for anyone to play with (Deloria 1969:81)." For Deloria, white anthropologists had no place on Indian reservations when he wrote the article in the 1970s. According to Deloria, anthropologists who came to Indian country were self-serving ignorant academics who sought to improve their careers based on naïve expeditions to Indian reservations where obvious questions were asked of Indian informants for the purpose of producing publications read by predominantly white audiences. Deloria questioned why Indian reservations should continue to

be ‘private zoos for anthropologists’ and why Indians should compete with anthropologists for funds when their scholarly publications were irrelevant and did not represent reality on reservations (Deloria 1969:95). Deloria’s critique shook the anthropological world as it was one of the first occasions that the ‘subaltern’ spoke back to question the subject/object dichotomy, which was so established in the discipline.

In his 1997 follow-up to the article, Deloria argues that not much has changed in anthropology’s approach towards ‘studying’ Native communities. He alleges that anthropologists continue to view Indians as representative of the primitive past and that the idea of an Indian ethnographer continues to be an anomaly (and even an unwelcome idea) in the field. As he states,

If I press any anthros in a prolonged discussion on exactly why they study Indians and other tribal peoples and why they study anthropology at all, I am almost always informed that tribal people represent an earlier stage of human accomplishment and that we can learn about our past by studying the way existing tribal peoples live. I continue to argue that this attitude is the base of anthropology and will always be cited as justification for doing what anthros do (Deloria 1997:214).

Deloria’s observation pinpoints the problematic foundations of the discipline and of the academy in general. Anthropology has relied on the romanticization of indigenous people. Like the Spanish friars who reduced Indians to being infantile and innocent (and thereby innately good), white anthropologists have traditionally revered Indian ‘primitivity,’ which not only puts traditional communities on a pedestal but also discredits those that have been ‘tainted’ by modernity as ‘inauthentic.’ For Deloria, the fact that the idea of the indigenous intellectual is an anomaly reveals that indigenous people are still not seen as modern intelligent beings. Furthermore, he contends that when Indians do become anthropologists, research on their own communities is not considered objective enough to be trusted as accurate (Deloria 1997:211).

In *Culture and Truth*, Renato Rosaldo (1989) also critiques the contradiction drawn between the norm of objectivity and the Native anthropologist. Like Vine Deloria, Rosaldo claims that the academy and the discipline of anthropology have relied on objectivity as the only legitimate means to approach research and ethnography. Instead of applauding the detachment that is encouraged by objectivity, Rosaldo claims that the pursuit of knowledge can be undertaken from both intimate ‘insider’ perspectives and from a distance. As he states, “Disciplinary norms instead require that a cultural gap separate analysts from their subjects. Without a certain distance, it seems, one cannot see things clearly. My argument, of course, is that social analysis can be done—differently, but quite validly — either from up close or from a distance, either from within or from the outside (Rosaldo 1989:188).” As an alternative to privileging distance and objectivity, Rosaldo offers the possibility of recognizing multiple sources of knowledge while conducting research from multiple perspectives and identities. Like other scholars of color, Rosaldo sees value in scholarship conducted from the margins. Arguments for advancing subaltern perspectives concur that the oppressed have an enlightened perspective on oppression, which is granted by their insider status. Rosaldo argues that anthropology and other disciplines must grant importance and voice to these perspectives by scholars of color and by native ethnographers in order to redefine how social analysis is conducted within the discipline. He

concludes, “The discipline only stands to lose by ignoring how the oppressed analyze their own condition. Indeed the dominated usually understand the dominant better than the reverse. In coping with their daily lives, they simply must (Rosaldo 1989:189).” Whether the researcher is white or a person of color — Rosaldo advocates conducting self-reflective research from multiplex subjectivity or from many cross-cutting identifications; by being aware of how her many identities affect experiences in the field, an ethnographer can also be more reflective about her access to different spaces, her interactions with different informants, her findings, and how she undertakes any subsequent analysis.

Kirin Narayan (1993) partly relies on Rosaldo’s theory of multiplex subjectivity to explore the concept of the native ethnographer’s ‘insider’ status in her article “How Native is the Native Anthropologist?” Narayan addresses her title question by exploring her own subjectivity as a mixed East Indian ethnographer while conducting fieldwork in East Indian contexts. Narayan arrives at the conclusion that even ‘native’ ethnographers grapple with different identities in the field such as navigating the delicate balance between being a professional researcher and being read as a local. Narayan insists that it is more critical to pay attention to the relationships built with the informants that researchers seek to represent in their publications rather than becoming engulfed in the complex significance of ‘insider’ representation. As she states,

Instead, what we must focus our attention on is the quality of relations with the people we seek to represent in our texts: are they viewed as mere fodder for professionally self-serving statements about a generalized Other, or are they accepted as subjects with voices, views, and dilemmas—people to whom we are bonded through ties of reciprocity and who may even be critical of our professional enterprise? (Narayan 1993:672)

Narayan argues that ethnographers are always navigating different subjectivities in the field and that the subjectivity an ethnographer chooses to identify with at any point in time depends on power relations in the field (Narayan 1993:676). Even as ‘native’ ethnographers, we are distanced from the societies we are supposed to represent by factors such as class, emigration, and education (Narayan 1993:677). Every anthropologist, she contends, carries both a personal self and an ethnographic self. All researchers possess hybrid multi/bicultural identities by belonging to both their everyday life and professional worlds. Instead of trying to separate the authentically ‘native’ anthropologists from the outsiders, it is more beneficial to explore how an ethnographer is situated in relation to the people he/she studies whether he/she is an ‘insider’ or not.

Like Rosaldo, Narayan advocates for approaching the field with an understanding of possessing a multiplex subjectivity based on many crosscutting identifications. She poses that embracing the implications of a multiplex identity will allow ethnographers to explore both the facets of self that join them to the people they study as well as the facets of difference. A self-reflective exploration of how subjectivity impacts fieldwork should include an analysis of both relationship- building with informants as well as the communication ruptures or disjunctures than can result from the distances between ethnographers and informants. Exploration of these disjunctures can reveal important differences and teach us how barriers of communication can be bridged (Narayan 1993:680).

In this chapter, I would like to propose that my subjectivity in the field as a bicultural Mexican/P'urhepecha female ethnographer granted me access to specific backstage regions while denying me access to certain public spaces in México. I would also like to propose that I approached my fieldwork with a multiplex subjectivity as both native and non-native, insider and outsider, community member and professional and that my hybridity both created opportunities for relationship-building and caused communication disjunctures. Because I conducted my fieldwork with my husband as my field assistant, I would also like to explore how his presence as an Ojibwe facilitated access to specific spaces for me as the researcher. Finally, I will conclude by examining how my multiplex subjectivity and my identity as an indigenous ethnographer influenced my research framework, which attempted to conduct a more decolonizing ethnography that would ultimately be empowering to the P'urhepecha community.

The Bicultural Mexican/P'urhepecha Ethnographer

As you may gather from the introduction to this chapter, my relationship to Michoacán and to indigeneity is strong but I still consider myself a mestiza woman because I am the daughter of a mestiza and an indigenous man. I can best be described as a mestiza with recent and identifiable indigenous roots. I was born in Michoacán and I still have direct ties to both my father and my mother's pueblos. In this way, I was read as a native Michoacana (a person from Michoacán) from the time I began contacting P'urhepecha cultural activists online to establish community ties in 2006. The cultural activists that I contacted through MySpace and Facebook and through the website xiranhua.com were involved in a P'urhepecha pride reclamation movement. They were invested not only in promoting community and communication between the four P'urhepecha regions in Michoacán but also in establishing a network of communication with P'urhepechas living in the United States. At the time, the purpose of the xiranhua.com website was to stream P'urhepecha news and music twenty four hours a day and to build connections between P'urhepechas living all over México and the United States and throughout the world. I began contacting the website's creator, Tata Pedro, and the P'urhepecha Pride movement leader, Tata Antonio, and soon realized that despite my own reservations about calling myself a P'urhepecha, these P'urhepecha cultural activists considered me a P'urhepecha. Although I was honest about my roots in Atapaneco (a mixed community whose pre-agrarian reform roots are in Uruetaro) and Charo (a Matlatzinca community), it became apparent to me that I was being recruited into the P'urhepecha Pride movement and recognized as a P'urhepecha living in the United States.

In 2007, the first *Re-encuentro P'urhepecha* [Re-encuentro roughly translates into 'reunion; the event was seen as a re-gathering or reunion between P'urhepecha migrants living in the United States] was organized and held during the annual 'Mexican Fiesta' in Milwaukee. The purpose of this gathering was to attract P'urhepechas living in the United States to showcase and celebrate P'urhepecha culture. P'urhepecha musicians, dancers, and artists were invited to participate and Tata Pedro was flown in from Michoacán. I was invited to attend in order to connect with other P'urhepechas living in the United States. During the gathering, I met P'urhepecha leaders, musicians, artists, and student activists who were involved in the P'urhepecha Pride movement. The movement was described as an effort to unite P'urhepecha migrants and to recruit 'the next generation of P'urhepecha migrants' in order to give the

P'urhepecha Pride movement sustainability and to foster future promotion of the P'urhepecha culture in the United States. During conversations I had with the older (age 40 and older) cultural activists, it became apparent that they were organizing around three main concerns: 1.) reversing the assimilation of P'urhepecha migrants into Hispanic culture in the United States by promoting pride in the P'urhepecha culture and P'urhepecha language use amongst P'urhepecha youth, 2.) standing up against the discrimination that P'urhepechas are subject to in the United States at the hands of both Mexican Hispanic migrants and U.S. citizens, and 3.) providing services to P'urhepecha migrant communities in the United States. These older cultural activists were quite concerned that the younger generation (their children and other P'urhepecha youth) were losing interest in their language and in their customs and that their possible internalization of anti-indigenous discrimination would motivate them to assimilate into United States culture or into Americanized Hispanic culture. They also seemed to recognize that the emergent generation of P'urhepechas (teenagers and people in their 20s) are getting educated in the United States and can serve the P'urhepecha community both in Michoacán and in the United States with the vocation they chose to pursue. As a 27 year-old woman pursuing a Ph.D., it became apparent to me that I was being included in this category of younger educated P'urhepechas who could become invested in the P'urhepecha community if my own P'urhepecha pride was awakened. After the event, Tata Pedro, Tata Antonio, and other cultural activists began contacting me to include me in future event planning and for advice on how to recruit other young P'urhepechas to promote P'urhepecha culture online and by attending the events. Although none of the cultural activists I met in the U.S. or the ones I corresponded with online were from the Pátzcuaro region, they had established ties with activists in that region and helped me arrange some of my interviews (explaining who I was and what my project was about ahead of time).

Even though Tata Pedro and Tata Antonio introduced me to P'urhepecha artists who became interviewees, I also arranged interviews out of my own accord by meeting people in the field. I approached P'urhepecha dancers, vendors, and business-owners in person during events to set up interviews and sometimes interviewed them on the spot. Sometimes I travelled to the communities that P'urhepechas originated from if they were not originally from the Pátzcuaro area or if we were invited there for family or ceremonial events. I did not identify myself as a P'urhepecha when I set up my own interviews although sometimes people assumed that I was. I also did not identify myself as a P'urhepecha when I attended community events or ceremonies but I welcomed the label if people associated it with me or introduced me as such to their family and acquaintances. My hesitation with announcing or flaunting my P'urhepechidad was not a result of insecurity in my identity or authenticity. I do identify as a P'urhepecha woman and I am very proud of my heritage and of my close familial ties to indigenous languages and to indigenous communities. Rather this hesitation stemmed from my realization that as a mixed person and as a researcher/student, I was in a much more racially and socioeconomically privileged and biculturally nuanced position than my informants. Although I would not necessarily say that I would ever 'pass' as non-indigenous based alone on my looks (in fact, I have experienced anti-indigenous racism at the hands of both Mexicans and non-Mexicans all of my life and the discrimination I experience only increases when I wear my indigenous clothing), I could pass as mestiza by dressing differently and by speaking in academic jargon and by identifying myself as an educated person — a privilege that my informants may not all enjoy.

As a student, I am perceived as an educated person in México (a social positionality which carries weight in Mexican society) and I have access to resources and spaces that are typically closed to Mexican indigenous people. As I related in my opening paragraph, I have navigated various aspects of bi-culturality throughout my life. I subscribe to living in what Gloria Anzaldúa terms the ‘nepantla state’ or ‘mestiza consciousness’ of continuously navigating two worlds — a condition which my informants also vocalized (*Anzaldúa 2002:1-5*). The liminality I experienced from dwelling in a space of linguistic hybridity (between Spanish, English, and the remnants of indigenous languages in my family), racial hybridity (the indigenous and Spanish mixtures in my blood), bi-nationality (as a Mexican-born immigrant naturalized into United States citizenship), multi-culturality (growing up Mexican with United States cultural influences and politically embracing a Chicana identity), hybrid spirituality (practicing a very indigenous Catholicism as well as indigenous spiritual practices), and now class hybridity (going from extreme poverty to my current middle class status) has informed my place in the world, my professional goals, my identity as an academic, and my studies (I did not land in an interdisciplinary field by coincidence!).

I approached my fieldwork as a bi-cultural Native anthropologist with a hybrid identity who carried out her ethnography from multiplex subjectivities. Although I do not physically reside in the third world and I am well-aware of the privilege I carry as a naturalized citizen of a first world nation, I am also an immigrant and a woman of color who grew up in the United States experiencing a third world upbringing and who continues to have a third world identity. My mother’s migration story precedes my birth. She had been transgressing the fluidity of the U.S./México border by constantly crossing *la línea* [“the line;” a colloquial term that Mexicans use to refer to the U.S./Mexico border] to work in the United States and to visit my grandparents in México long before I was born. My migration story begins when I was conceived in Oregon and when my mother fled to my grandparents’ home in México to escape my biological father’s abuse. It begins when my mother returned for me and crossed the mountains surrounding Tijuana to bring me to the United States when she was 8 months pregnant with my sister. It dates back to my upbringing in labor camps as my mother followed the crops while working as a migrant farm-worker in order to provide for her daughters.

We grew up in a third world within a first world. The labor camps and trailer parks where Mexican farm-workers lived were completely impoverished (and in some cases condemned by the county). We were treated as racial others by white Americans. I recall sitting next to a Caucasian girl at the first elementary school I attended in Oregon and having my hair pulled every time I mispronounced a word in the Pledge of Allegiance. Her actions reminded me that I was perceived as inferior by my peers because English was my second language. I also recall the name-calling aimed at undocumented students at the various schools I attended. I tried to learn English fast in an attempt at passing as documented so that I could escape the insults. Although my parents did not understand English and did not always catch what white U.S. citizens said about our family in public places, I was soon able to understand everything. Most of the times, I kept the insults to myself as my parents smiled on to these strangers in hopes of earning their good grace or their respect. I understood when we were called ‘dirty,’ or ‘illegals’ or ‘wetbacks.’ I understood when we were perceived as potential thieves or violent criminals. I understood and it hurt every time.

I suffered the pangs of hunger and the effects of parental neglect due to the chains of poverty. I was born in my mother's hometown during a time when it became more difficult for traditional farmers to survive and when jobs were scarce. As a single parent, my mother worked 14-16 hour days and I was left to tend to my younger siblings on the days when she didn't bring us to the fields because she couldn't afford a babysitter. Although my mother will no longer admit it, I recall us having to sleep outdoors in the park on one occasion due to not having shelter. My mother was too proud to seek government assistance. My mother worked hard yet she was still not human enough to escape sexual harassment and mistreatment at work and to be sprayed with pesticides; and she still did not make enough money to free us from the desperate poverty we lived in. Stanford nearly covered all of my tuition expenses yet I still had to raise the money to cover the transportation expenses to get there, money for my textbooks, supplies for my dorm-room, and I had to work part-time to send money home to my family. Although I clawed my way to the top against the odds for a chance at the American Dream, my third world background has informed how I have been treated by U.S. society and how I now identify. I am a person of color and a third world woman; as an indigenous person I also dwell in a place of dispossession, cultural genocide, and invisibility — the fourth world that indigenous people have been relegated to.

My third world subjectivity has existed alongside my first world researcher subject position since I became a student. I have been educated at Stanford University and the University of California Berkeley — expensive, elite, and selective institutions that only a subset of the world's population can access. My educational background facilitated my access to the mestiza/o tourists, business owners, and government workers I interviewed. My UC MEXUS fieldwork grant required that I have an institutional sponsor in the field. I applied for institutional sponsorship from El Colegio de Michoacán and was offered a residency as a Visiting Student from their Center for Anthropological Studies. Being able to verify my institutional sponsorship with a letter from the Center of Anthropological Studies on university letterhead legitimated my work and my status as a scholar. Standing out as a "Licenciada" (a person with a B.A.) and as a "Maestra" (a person with a Master's Degree) granted me the privilege of being perceived as an educated Mexican whose opinion and purpose could be trusted by Mexican society.

Mestiza/o tourists trusted me and openly shared their opinions often assuming that I shared their attitudes towards the 'less fortunate' because of our shared status as members of México's educated elite. The majority of the mestizos I interviewed had heard of both Stanford and U.C. Berkeley and were impressed with my credentials. They congratulated me on being an educated Mexican and saw me as one of them; a Mexican and a tourist-of-sorts experiencing indigenous communities from the outside in. I dressed in business casual wear for my interviews with both mestizos and P'urhepechas. While I often discussed my indigeneity with P'urhepechas because they assumed or already knew where I was from, I did not always openly reveal my own indigenous background to my mestiza/o interviewees (while I asked them to discuss their ethnic identity, they didn't often reciprocate the question to shine light on my own). I therefore found that I passed as mestiza amongst mestizos and that the reason they were so open about discussing controversial (sometimes racist) attitudes with me was because I was fully identified as one of them by them. They read me as an intelligent and educated Mexican mestiza who was studying Mexican indigenous peoples from a scholarly distance. It is notable to mention that I also paid all of my informants and often treated them to coffee or meals during the interviews. While my

P'urhepecha informants sometimes declined the money and were very modest about what they ordered off the menus at the few locales where I met interviewees (or, instead, offered me food from their homes), the majority of my mestiza/o informants wanted to meet at upscale coffee shops or restaurants and ordered lavish meals and desserts, which sometimes made me go over my budget.

One assumption, which mestiza/o tourists made about me, was true; I was indeed trained to approach the field from a researcher's perspective as a participant observant or an interviewer. I took methods courses, which introduced me to the debate over objectivity and representation. My methods course at Stanford barely entertained the possibility of the indigenous researcher complicating the distance between subject and object. The debates over methodology within courses I took as part of my graduate program at U.C. Berkeley included conversations over decolonizing the subject/object dichotomy and problematizing the concept of objectivity. We have to, after all, consider the fact that every researcher, including upper middle class and wealthy white male researchers, have a positionality and that our positionalities all impact how we approach the field. In my case, I found that while I did perceive people, objects, and events in the field from a researcher's/anthropologist's perspective, I did not necessarily distance myself from my informants. I was, after all, interviewing Mexicans and the conversations I had could have been with members of my own family and the ceremonies I was incorporated into were just as spiritually significant to me as if they had happened in my own communities of Charo or Atapaneo.

In this way, I navigated my way through my fieldwork simultaneously inhabiting the roles of the outside researcher and the indigenous insider all while trying to absorb the intellectually significant knowledge and the emotionally healing spiritual gifts that were granted to me. My multiplex subjectivity granted me access to spaces that are typically closed to non-indigenous researchers. I always revealed that, aside from participating, I was also observing these events from an academic perspective to document them in my dissertation. When I asked one of the medicine men leading a peyote ceremony I was invited to whether I could take notes, he said, "We trust you, our blood. You will know what to share." His words resonated with me as I debriefed each ceremony in my field notes and journal entries. I was never interested in writing down or revealing the prayers, the most intimate and emotional moments that either I or other participants experienced in these closed spaces. To do so would feel like a violation of my own identity and of the privilege I was granted when accessing the spaces. But, I was interested in observing and analyzing the dynamics between cultural workers and medicine people and both the indigenous and mestiza/o ceremony participants who were invited to be part of the spaces.

My fieldwork assistant, the man who later became my husband, also contributed to my multiplex subjectivity in the field. At first, I was interested in bringing him to Michoacán with me to put my parents at ease. The idea of their daughter travelling to México to live on her own in a new city and to conduct fieldwork during a time when our home-state was being ravaged by cartel-infused drug violence frightened my parents (to say the least) and it also intimidated me. I was worried about having limited access to the field as a single woman because I would have to restrict myself to 'safe spaces' and to only working during daylight hours if I travelled alone. When Chester volunteered to accompany me as my fieldwork assistant, I knew that his male privilege would open more spaces to me and would make my parents feel better. People

automatically assumed we were a couple. We blended into Mexican society and it was presumed that I was a married woman. Not only did his company keep me safe from sexual and other public harassment in a highly patriarchal society, but it also made it okay for me to interview my predominantly male P'urhepecha informants for several hours. Chester's company facilitated my access to working with P'urhepecha men and also opened the field in a completely unexpected way.

Chester is a mixed Dakota/Ojibwe American Indian; his father was a full blood Ojibwe from the Red Lake Reservation while his mother is a mixed Caucasian/Indian woman who is enrolled at the Crow Creek Reservation. Born and raised in Minnesota, Chester grew up practicing Ojibwe spirituality and Ojibwe culture and is extensively knowledgeable about Ojibwemowin (the Ojibwe language). He is also a card-carrying enrolled member of the Red Lake band of Ojibwes. The cultural activists that I interviewed happened to be well-read about U.S. Indian law and were extremely curious about Chester's identity, about his 'Indian ID,' and about blood quantum (being that most of the P'urhepechas I worked with were full-blooded Indians and found the blood quantum issue both puzzling and fascinating). When we revealed Chester's Ojibwe background to P'urhepecha cultural workers, the word spread amongst other cultural workers and medicine people in the community of Caltzontzin. Visits from Native North Americans to indigenous communities in Central México are rare.

Despite his interesting mixed heritage, phenotypically Chester is the spitting image of his Ojibwe father. His forehead, nose, lips, eyes, facial structure, long hair, and tall stature resemble the pictures of Native Americans that have circulated the world for centuries. It didn't take long for us to realize that P'urhepecha people, especially the P'urhepecha cultural activists working on language revitalization, community development, community advocacy, and spiritual revitalization projects, were extremely interested in Chester. They wanted him around to discuss cultural, spiritual, and linguistic similarities, to review books and articles written by Native North American authors which they had read, to learn about the political issues most important to Native North Americans and about the demographic positionality of Native people in the United States, and to debate issues of indigenous/tribal identity. P'urhepecha curiosity about Chester opened up the field for me in a myriad of ways. I was able to listen in and take notes on the conversations that Chester had with P'urhepecha men about indigeneity and cultural/linguistic/spiritual similarities. When P'urhepecha leaders and medicine people wanted to invite Chester to ceremonies only open to indigenous people, we were invited as a couple. During the ceremonies, I was able to observe that P'urhepechas singled out Chester for special honors because they considered him a special guest amongst participants; they were happy that a 'brother from the North' had made it down to Michoacán to share their fire, join their prayers, to exchange songs, and to learn about their rituals, and they were enthused to display the best of P'urhepecha hospitality for Chester.

Both my own indigeneity and Chester's different indigeneity granted me access to the back region which I explored in the previous chapter (P'urhepecha articulations about mestiza/o racism) and to the back regions (ceremonies) which I will explore in this chapter. Yet the intimate access I had to the field was also disrupted by moments of disconnection with some of the P'urhepechas I interviewed. At the beginning of my interview with Dionisio, the owner of a boating company from Janitzio, he asked if we could conduct the interview in the P'urhepecha

language. His question created one of the more tense moments I experienced in the field and made me hyperaware of the many degrees to which my indigeneity has been colonized. I had to explain to Dionisio that I was not able to conduct the interview in P'urhepecha because I was just learning the language. He told me that he assumed that I spoke the language due to my phenotype ("you look exactly like my niece!") and due to my roots in Charo. I told him that I had never learned to speak the language because I had grown up in the United States. He told me, "well you should learn fully. Don't you think all of these interviews would go better if we only spoke P'urhepecha?" I told him they probably would go better. He proceeded to explain that in order to access the P'urhepecha worldview, one needs to speak the language and that some concepts and words cannot be translated into Spanish and that so much would be lost in my research and in what P'urhepechas were trying to tell me between the translation from P'urhepecha to Spanish and from Spanish to English. I told him that I couldn't agree more and we proceeded to conduct the interview in Spanish.

This uncomfortable moment reminded me of my inability to speak the P'urhepecha language. Though I may have shared lineage and phenotype characteristics with my informants, I did not share the richness of a P'urhepecha upbringing. I am a product of hybridity and although I have made some headway in the process of retracing my family history, I have not fully recuperated all that has been lost from generation to generation. Dionisio was right. In order to conduct my fieldwork in a truly decolonizing matter, I would have had to conduct the interviews with P'urhepechas fully in P'urhepecha to give P'urhepecha people absolute freedom of expression without anything getting lost in the translation or in the subsequent transcription. This moment of disjunction made me aware of my very real distance from P'urhepecha communities and from P'urhepecha identity. I believe that Dionisio's nudge came from a loving place. He was not making fun of me or mocking my inability to speak the language; by pointing out the fact that I couldn't fully access everything he had to share about the tourist industry from his P'urhepecha perspective due to my inability to speak the P'urhepecha language, he pinpointed an important blind-spot in my research and in the research of so many anthropologists in P'urhepecha territory who came before me.

Another instance, which highlighted my difference from the P'urhepechas I worked with, was when Reynaldo, a P'urhepecha community organizer, posed what he felt was a very important question after our interview. He wanted to know how I could afford to travel and how I could leave my home-base so easily in order to conduct research elsewhere far from where I lived. Reynaldo asked this question not to point out my difference from him but because he was genuinely interested in the answer. As a grassroots organizer invested in building pan-indigenous alliances, he had the desire to travel to other places to study indigenous community organizing models and to build connections with other indigenous agrarian activists but he was unable to due to familial ties, community responsibilities, and lack of funds. It was puzzling to Reynaldo that a woman my age was not tied to family or community and that, as a young woman, I could afford to travel to another country to research a topic that I was interested in with institutional support. In order for Reynaldo to travel even for a week, he would have to arrange coverage of his community and family responsibilities and would have to have the community's financial backing due to the Mexican government's and Mexican society's financial divestment from indigenous causes.

I explained to Reynaldo that I didn't have any children and that although I still had ties in Charo and in Atapaneo, I didn't have too many concrete community responsibilities in the United States. To Reynaldo, being part of a community or a family meant contributing to sustaining both units with labor or support on a daily basis because traditional P'urhepecha/indigenous communities strongly value and rely on reciprocity. I explained that I lived in cities where I belonged to communities but not to communities with communal structures and that my monetary support was entirely institutional and that I had 'earned' the institutional sponsorship due to my affiliations with universities to which I had been admitted by excelling academically and which I used to pursue studies on topics I am passionate about. I also explained that although I was not contributing to my family or to Charo or to Matlatzincas or P'urhepechas by helping sustain these communities on a daily basis, my reciprocal contributions to my family and community structures were borne from my intellectual contributions.

I explained that I was the first in my family to go to college and the oldest child and thus my admission into selective universities had motivated my siblings to focus on their studies and to work hard in order to follow an educational path. I explained that in the United States, becoming educated was one of the only means of empowerment for working class and poor families and that travelling to México to pursue my research and writing a dissertation to complete my Ph.D. was thus a big contribution to my family which I executed on a daily basis. I also told him that both Charo and Atapaneo were poor rural towns where people seldom got educated and that my education was my means of reciprocity towards Charo and Atapaneo where I had established mentoring relationships with youth both residing in the United States and in México interested in going to college. Reynaldo's question, while logical and well-intended, made me painstakingly aware of my privilege. My ability to travel, my access to monetary resources made available by my affiliation with a university, my mobility, my lack of concrete daily familial and community responsibilities made me different and freer than most of the P'urhepecha people I worked with. This moment of disjuncture with Reynaldo also reminded me of the fact that another one of my interviewees had made a conscientious decision to not get married; another P'urhepecha activist told me he had decided to forgo marriage in order to minimize his familial ties and be able to focus entirely on service to community and to empowering P'urhepechas.

Although the moments of disconnection, which I described above, highlighted my difference from P'urhepechas in my multiplex subjectivity, other moments in the field reminded me that I was unable to escape the indigenous subjectivity which is assigned to me in Mexican society due to my skin-color and phenotype. On a rainy night when my partner and I were on our way to Corupo for a ceremony we had been invited to, I was singled out by bus station workers for a full search of my possessions before boarding a bus from Pátzcuaro to Uruapan. When I asked why only my possessions were being searched (and not my partner's), I was told that women like me usually carried 'things to sell' and that large quantities of merchandise were not allowed on the bus. I told the male worker helping me that I had never heard of that policy and that I had travelled on many bus-lines in México where people carried much more luggage than I had on that occasion and that I didn't understand why my bags were suspicious. My partner reminded me to calm down because we were already delayed for our destination. I let the issue go after enduring the humiliating search but I knew that I had been profiled as an indigenous vendor and that these types of humiliating experiences were commonplace for indigenous women who travel on buses in México.

On another occasion, my partner and I were enjoying an indoor dinner at El Patio, one of Pátzcuaro's popular restaurants. I was wearing a huanengo while my partner was dressed casually. I got up to use the restroom inside of the restaurant when I noticed one of the restaurant owners following me. I turned around when she said, "*Disculpe* [Excuse me]," to get my attention. She then explained that only patrons could use the restroom and that the restroom was not open to people off the streets. She asked me to leave and said she would show me to the door. I felt humiliated and singled out and I tried explaining that I was having dinner with my significant other and that I had been sitting with him for the last half hour eating. She said she had not seen me sitting inside of the restaurant at all that evening. I pointed at my partner and she still insisted that I leave. I then left the restaurant while she followed close behind. My partner was confused and just as shocked when I explained the situation. He gathered our things and demanded to speak to the restaurant owner in English. He explained that I was a graduate student conducting a research study on tourism in the area and that the treatment I received in their place of business was deplorable. The restaurant owner did not apologize saying that the restaurant worker had confused me with a street person because of how I looked and how I was dressed. Chester told her that we would not be returning to the restaurant and that we would be sharing our unsatisfying experience online and with our networks in the United States.

Although my partner was shocked, I later told him that these were experiences I was accustomed to having in México. I told him how I was escorted from hotel steps while teaching a study abroad course in Veracruz and how I was called names like 'Maria' and 'guarecita' even when I was not wearing indigenous clothing. In my experience, suffering public humiliation comes with the territory of having dark skin and fitting an indigenous phenotype in Mexican society. These experiences taught me that although I am educated, speak near-perfect Spanish (and English), and have access to business casual clothing, I cannot fully shed indigeneity in México. Being read as indigenous (and particularly as an indigenous woman) was part of my multiplex subjectivity in the field. It affected how I was treated by mestiza/o society, by the mestiza/o tourists I interviewed, and by P'urhepechas. I was marked and could be treated as less-than or as a 'street person' due to the way I looked but unlike the P'urhepecha people I worked with (in particular, P'urhepecha women), I could abandon the consequences of suffering discrimination due to my education and my class status rather swiftly. I chose to wear indigenous clothing. For many of the P'urhepecha women I worked with, wearing huanengos and pleated skirts is part of their daily life. Being indigenous is not an identity they can distance themselves from with the ability to pass which is granted to me. I am well aware of this privilege even when I experience shame and humiliation because of how I look or who I am.

Experiencing the P'urhepecha Hidden Transcript

This section will explore what P'urhepecha informants describe as the actual intimate spaces and/or back regions that tourists don't see — or the P'urhepecha private performances within what political scientist and anthropologist James C. Scott (1990) would consider their hidden transcript. My exploration of the P'urhepecha hidden transcript invokes Scott's work, "Domination and the Arts of Resistance," where he submits that resistance is organic to any relationship involving domination and that resistance emerges as a struggle between the public transcript and the hidden transcript. According to Scott, the 'transcript' involves a complete

record of what was said and what transpired in a social interaction including non-speech acts such as gestures and expressions; the public transcript refers to the open interaction between the subordinate and the oppressors who dominate them. Scott argues that performances within the public transcript replicate roles that are purposefully staged by the subordinate due to the constant surveillance to which they are subjected (Scott 1990:4). According to Scott, virtually all interactions between the dominant and subordinate represent the encounter of the public transcript of the dominant with the hidden transcript of the subordinate. The hidden transcript emerges organically from its encounter with the public transcript and manifests itself as the discourse, speeches, gestures and practices that take place offstage, beyond the direct observation of the power-holders. The hidden transcript engenders acts of resistance which confirm, contradict, or skew what appears in the public transcript (Scott 1990:27).

The 2002 fieldwork that I conducted in Michoacán for my undergraduate Honors Thesis taught me what numerous ethnographic texts, which I previously read, confirmed: P'urhepecha communities have a rich, empowering, and vibrant hidden transcript (particularly in the island communities and mountain communities), which is manifested in the practices they choose to hide from the official record (and from the officials patrolling the public transcript) and in their relentless exercise of autonomy through both visible and hidden acts of rebellion. It is important here to differentiate between the hidden transcript and autonomy. In the introduction to *Indigenous Autonomy in Mexico*, Mexican sociologist Rudolfo Stavenhagen presents an overview of how collective autonomy has come to be understood based on the relationship between subaltern groups and then nation-state. The principles of autonomy that he identifies include linguistic autonomy, control and management of educational policy and institutions, control over the natural resources of autonomous territory, and the right to define identity (Stavenhagen 2000:14-18). The predominantly Maya *Ejercito Zapatista para la Liberación Nacional* (EZLN) movement in México defines autonomy as, “the concrete expression of the exercise of the right to self-determination, within the framework of membership in the National State” in the 1996 San Andres Accords. As the document states,

The indigenous peoples shall be able, consequently, to decide their own form of internal government as well as decide their way of organizing themselves politically, socially, economically and culturally. Within the new constitutional framework of autonomy, the exercise of self-determination of indigenous peoples shall be respected in each of the domains and levels in which they are asserted, being able to encompass one or more indigenous groups, according to particular and specific circumstances in each federal entity (The San Andres Accords).²⁹

The document details the facets of indigenous autonomy as follows; the right to develop specific forms of social, cultural, political and economic organization; the right to recognition of traditional governments; the right to agree collectively to the use and enjoyment of natural resources; the right to promote the development of the various components of indigenous identity and cultural heritage; the right to political representation in government and in the administration of justice; the right to organize with other oppressed groups around common

²⁹ Narco News

2000 Narco News Publishes San Andres Accords in English. Narco News. November 26, 2000 <http://www.narconews.com/mextransition2.html>, accessed August 6, 2015.

interests, and the right to promote and develop their languages and their social, religious and cultural customs and traditions (San Andres Accords). Manifestations of autonomy typically happen outwardly in the face of state repression; subaltern groups rebel and ignore the oppressive system. The hidden transcript is a resource that oppressed people use when forced to comply with orders from agents of repression. In performance studies, the hidden transcript is manifested in acts of resistance that take place offstage, outside of the public (recorded) transcript. Within the context of my field site, I defined the hidden transcript as acts of resistance and performances (spiritual ceremonies) that happened outside of the realm of control by tourist agencies and out of reach for consumption by tourists. I do, however, recognize that these acts are also part of P'urhepechas' practice of cultural, linguistic, and religious autonomy.

For P'urhepechas, the hidden transcript lives in every conversation which transpires in the P'urhepecha language; a language that has survived more than 500 years of linguistic colonization due to the communities' commitment to pass it on to current generations and due to the language's adoption of P'urhepecha-Castellano hybridity. Today, it is a language that largely remains in P'urhepecha communities. It is not studied or learned in mainstream Mexican society but it has a stronghold in P'urhepecha communities due to P'urhepecha language activists' ardent passion for its preservation. P'urhepecha today is preserved via bilingual education in elementary schools, textbooks for elementary school-aged children, in *pirekuas* and on computer software being developed to make the language fun and accessible to teenagers, young adults, and even adults like myself who are still working on learning it. Yes, there has been a steady exodus of P'urhepechas who have been migrating to Mexican cities and to the United States since the 1990's and while the language is less spoken and the rates of assimilation are higher amongst displaced urban P'urhepechas and their children, there are currently more than 100,000 P'urhepecha language speakers in Michoacán with others living in the neighboring state of Guerrero and in cities dispersed throughout México.³⁰ P'urhepechas currently access this aspect of the hidden transcript to communicate messages that they do not want mestizos and tourists to hear amongst them, to hold ceremonies, to network internationally with other P'urhepechas, and to organize against the state.

The P'urhepecha hidden transcript also exists in the practice of indigenous customary law and in the implementation of traditional political structures (most commonly known as "*usos y costumbres*") in Michoacán. It exists in P'urhepecha communities, which have decided to completely abandon Robert's Rules and ties with local municipalities and political parties, and have instead implemented traditional P'urhepecha governance based on documents like *La Relación de Michoacán* as recently happened during Cheran's armed uprising against illegal loggers. During these particularly unstable and violent times in México, P'urhepecha autonomy is practiced via grassroots political movements erected by P'urhepecha mothers and grandmothers — organized resistance which has evolved into 24-hour community patrols and the arming of young P'urhepecha men to fend off abuses at the hands of the Mexican government

³⁰ INEGI

2009 Perfil Sociodemográfico de la Población que Habla Lengua Indígena. Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía. pg. 111.

http://www.inegi.org.mx/prod_serv/contenidos/espanol/bvinegi/productos/censos/poblacion/poblacion_indigena/len_g_indi/PHLI.pdf, accessed 07/30/2015.

and drug cartels.³¹ As my first chapter demonstrated, the P'urhepecha hidden transcript exists in the intimacy preserved within the P'urhepecha home and the P'urhepecha family — in the small and special rituals undertaken daily or on Los Días de los Muertos to remember loved ones away from the tourist gaze and once the tourists have left. It exists in familial traditions and ceremonies that are closed and have not been commoditized such as baptisms and weddings to which tourists are not invited. The P'urhepecha hidden transcript is also present in larger community-wide and P'urhepecha-wide celebrations and ceremonies that are organized specifically for a P'urhepecha awakening or for a P'urhepecha audience such as; community-specific patron saint fiestas, *El Festival de la Raza P'urhepecha* [the Festival of the P'urhepecha Race] in Zacan and at the *Kurhíkueri K'uínchekua* Lighting of the New Fire [P'urhepecha ceremony of renewal dedicated to *Tata Jurhiata*/Father Sun], which happens in a different hosting community and region each February 2nd.³² The P'urhepecha hidden transcript was present in my P'urhepecha informants' opinions about mestizaje and tourism as articulated in the previous chapter. My partner and then-fieldwork assistant and I also experienced the P'urhepecha hidden transcript in the ceremonies we were invited to.

During our stay in the Pátzcuaro region, I observed a notable resurgence of P'urhepecha identity operating through the reclamation of pre-colonial P'urhepecha spiritual traditions. My conversations with Tata Pedro, Tata Antonio, Tata Anselmo, Tata Javier, and Tata Reynaldo were especially revealing of an interesting phenomenon taking place in Michoacán whereby middle aged P'urhepechas are attempting to reclaim pre-colonial P'urhepecha spirituality by; 1.) engaging in online forums to exchange interpretations of pre-colonial P'urhepecha history and spiritual beliefs based on documents like *La Relación de Michoacán* and based on pre-colonial P'urhepecha artifacts displayed in museums, 2.) going directly to the elders and to medicine men for information, 3.) participating in pan-indigenous cultural exchanges, and 4.) reinventing traditions and organizing ceremonies and events.

It is apparent in all regions of the P'urhepecha nation that P'urhepechas practice syncretic Catholicism. In my first chapter, I discussed some of the ways the Days of the Dead represent a mixture of Catholic and P'urhepecha spiritual practices in Michoacán but other hybrid forms of Catholicism are found throughout the state. In some P'urhepecha churches I have visited, the Virgin of Guadalupe or *Nana Iurixi Guadalupeeri* is at the center of the altar, which is indicative of P'urhepechas' reverence for a mother goddess/matriarchal figure. In other communities I have visited, the image of Jesus has dark skin and resembles an indigenous man instead of resembling the light-skinned/blue-eyed version of Christ that has been popularized in Western society. *Copal* [Resin from the copal tree (*Burseraceae*) traditionally used amongst Mesoamerican Indians for ceremonial/purification purposes] is burned by P'urhepecha women to lead prayer or cleanse the space in all P'urhepecha communities I have visited and the gospel is, of course, preached in the P'urhepecha language. In addition, I noticed a renewed interest in learning about

³¹ Associated Press

2013 Vigilante Groups Spring up in México in fight against cartels. Fox News. January 21, 2013 <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2013/01/21/vigilante-squads-spring-up-in-mexico-in-fight-against-cartels/>, accessed 08/03/2015.

³² P'urhepecha ceremony of renewal dedicated to Tata Jurhiata/Father Sun which has been equated with a New Year's observation according to the P'urhepecha calendar and happens every February 2nd in a different community and region in Michoacán. Since 2010, a Kurhíkueri K'uínchekua observation happens simultaneously in Washington State every year for P'urhepecha migrants living in the United States.

and embracing pre-colonial P'urhepecha traditions and in understanding the pre-colonial roots of existing P'urhepecha traditions amongst the P'urhepechas I interviewed and amongst other P'urhepechas I met at the various P'urhepecha communities I visited and during various spiritual practices that I participated in.

The first couple of ceremonies that Chester and I were invited to were sweatlodge ceremonies held in Catzontzin, an indigenous town in the outskirts of Uruapan. Chester and I were invited to a sweatlodge when we began discussing the significance of the *jurhinhekua* [sweatlodge] to Ojibwes with Tata Anselmo at his home in Uruapan. We shared that the sweatlodge continues to be one of the primary spaces for prayer and healing amongst Native North Americans and that it is a way for people to connect to the elements as all four elements are incorporated into a sweatlodge. In North America, the sweatlodge continues to be a medium to connect to the ancestors (through the burning of stones), to re-connect with the earth (through the symbolic entering of her womb), to physically purify from toxins, to heal from disease, and to pray to the Creator. Tata Anselmo concurred that many of these beliefs about the *jurhinhekua* were shared by P'urhepechas. He explained that since the turn of the 20th century, P'urhepechas have mostly used the sweatlodge to prepare pregnant women for childbirth and to provide them with post-partum healing. The sweatlodge purifies a pregnant woman's body from toxins to prepare it for childbirth, provides relief for muscle pain and swelling, and promotes bonding between mother and child before birth. After birth, the sweatlodge promotes physical healing, provides further disintoxification, and incorporates herbal teas to promote breast-milk production. Tata Anselmo explained that although the sweatlodge is more popular as a purification ritual for expectant mothers and mothers who recently delivered babies, there is a movement amongst medicine people in México and amongst P'urhepecha cultural activists to recover traditional knowledge about the sweatlodge beyond understanding it as a purification ritual, to build sweatlodges that are accessible to P'urhepecha communities, and to reincorporate P'urhepecha prayer songs, the drum, and the pipe into the sweatlodge.

According to both Tata Anselmo and Tata Pedro, the drum and the flute were two of the original instruments used for indigenous prayer songs amongst P'urhepechas and amongst various indigenous groups in México. Although music for traditional P'urhepecha dances has retained its traditional elements and structures, the drum and flute have been replaced by instruments such as the guitar and violin (in the Dance of the Elders, for example, the drum has been replaced by the percussion provided by the dancers' feet and the melody of the flute has been replaced by music played on the violin). Today there is a growing interest amongst P'urhepecha medicine people and amongst P'urhepecha cultural activists to regain knowledge about both making traditional drums and playing traditional P'urhepecha songs on the drum. Similarly, P'urhepecha cultural activists have noticed clay pipes on display throughout museums in Michoacán. Medicine people know that the pipes, which were once buried in the earth, were used for ceremonial purposes and that tobacco was sacred to P'urhepechas. The sacredness of tobacco is evident in a ritual, which still takes place in P'urhepecha communities today. Tata Pedro explained that when a request is made of an elder, the person making the request must give the elder cigarettes or alcohol (such as tequila). Pedro recognizes that this ritual has replaced giving elders tobacco or *pulque* [inebriating beverage made from fermenting the sap of the maguey plant or the *aguamiel*] in

exchange for prayers.³³ Today, P'urhepecha medicine people and cultural activists are regaining traditional knowledge about the use of pipes and tobacco by speaking to elders, going to sources such as *La Relación de Michoacán*, and participating in pan-indigenous cultural knowledge exchanges both online and at *encuentros* (gatherings amongst medicine people in México and pan-indigenous ceremonies).

The first sweatlodge ceremony that Chester and I were invited to was attended by about forty people. I met some of the informants I eventually interviewed at the first sweatlodge. Upon arrival, Chester and I walked around to introduce ourselves to the people in attendance. There were people there of both genders and of all ages mostly from Santo Tomas and Caltzontzin. P'urhepecha women walked around the sweatlodge smudging³⁴ people with copal and then smudged the sweatlodge itself by circling it as the smoke emanated out of the *sahumador* [clay pot used to burn copal since pre-colonial times]. Women and men both wore crowns of marigolds and other flowers. Men were shirtless and dressed in shorts and women wore lightweight skirts and traditional skirts with huanengos. Before beginning the ceremony, Tata Javier from Santo Tomas made an announcement in P'urhepecha. He looked straight at Chester and me as he spoke. He then translated his announcement into Spanish. He said, "Brothers and sisters, we have been praying for today to happen. When we built this sweatlodge, we asked that our brothers from the North would join us to pray here one day so that we could learn from each other. Today is that day as an Ojibwe is here amongst us and will be praying with us today. We would like to welcome him." Chester looked at me and then put his head down in prayer and said the word, "*Migwetch*." "That means thank you in my language," Chester said. "I would like to acknowledge that I had heard of the hospitality I should expect from indigenous people throughout Turtle Island and it is heartwarming to experience it today," he continued.³⁵ Tata Javier shook Chester's hand and Tata Anselmo presented us both with crowns of flowers, clay mugs, and embroidered doilies. We then entered the sweatlodge and participated in seven rounds of prayer.

We were told that there were seven rounds to honor the four directions, the above, the below, and the center. During the fourth round, people had the opportunity to share. I offered my thanks for inviting us to participate and Chester felt inclined to share a song on the drum in Ojibwe and to offer his insights on the significance of the sweatlodge to his people. Others shared that they were either new or that this was their second/third/etc. time in the sweatlodge, which community they were from, and then offered prayers for their family members in Spanish and P'urhepecha. Most of the sweatlodge ceremony was conducted in P'urhepecha. Tata Anselmo and Tata Javier took turns leading each round. The songs were sung in P'urhepecha on the drum and most were sung to *Curicaveri*, *Nana Echeri* [Mother Earth], and *Tata Jurhiata* [Father Sun]. Some people cried during the songs and while they prayed. After the final round, we all shook hands and embraced each other and enjoyed a potluck feast as a community.

³³ Pulque was traditionally consumed by Mesoamerican communities for ceremonial purposes and during political meetings. Today, it is still used in states like Oaxaca to bless the earth before opening it for harvest.

³⁴ Smudging is the act of purifying a person or an area with smoke. North American Indians are known to use sage for smudging while copal, palo santo, and other plants are used in the southern part of the continent.

³⁵ Ojibwe people refer to the Americas as "Turtle Island." The Ojibwe creation story recounts how the earth's animals and *Nanaboozhoo*, the lone survivor of a great flood, helped rebuild the earth on a turtle's back with the blessing of *Gitchi Manitou* (the Creator).

After this initial sweatlodge, Chester and I were invited to participate in other sweatlodge ceremonies hosted by P'urhepechas in both México and the United States. Tata Anselmo held a sweatlodge to pray for Chester's missing sister in 2009 and we attended a thank-you sweatlodge held in her honor when she was found in 2010. The most moving sweatlodge for me, however, was a sweatlodge held after I presented findings at the Society for Applied Anthropology conference in Seattle of 2011. Community members from Quinceo held a sweatlodge at their home in Pacific, Washington for communal prayer. This sweatlodge ceremony was particularly moving because it was mostly attended by P'urhepecha immigrants who expressed feeling far from their homeland and from their families. They sang *pirekuas* together and, at one point in time, everyone inside of the sweatlodge was crying and praying together. The ceremony in that sweatlodge felt like a communal emotional release of trauma and it opened an opportunity for community healing.

During our time in Michoacán, Chester and I were also invited to peyote ceremonies. Although peyote was originally consumed by Mesoamerican indigenous people, it was introduced to Native Americans in the United States in the late 1800s. As peyote use spread in the United States, consuming it for religious purposes became formally recognized with the institutionalization of the Native American Church in 1918 and legally protected under the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978. Peyote use amongst indigenous people in México can be traced back to pre-colonial times. Its use is most notable amongst the Wixarika (Huichol) people in Jalisco but as more medicine people organize and attend conferences/exchanges in México, peyote has been reincorporated into spiritual ceremonies amongst other indigenous groups in México. The elders I have spoken to in Michoacán have confirmed the pre-colonial use of peyote and other hallucinogenic plants like mushrooms amongst P'urhepechas.³⁶ *La Relación de Michoacán* is ripe with images of P'urhepechas consuming pulque for political meetings and ceremonial purposes. I recall my grandmother consuming mushrooms while praying and my grandfathers consuming and pouring pulque on the earth before planting when I was a small child in México. As peyote use has become a movement amongst indigenous people throughout North America, it is not surprising that some P'urhepechas also want to reclaim the use of peyote for spiritual and healing purposes in Michoacán.

The first peyote meeting we were invited to was held in the community of Corupo in the heart of *la Meseta P'urhepecha* (the P'urhepecha plateau). We were invited by Temoc, a P'urhepecha migrant who had recently returned to his home community after working in Washington State for several years. Temoc adopted Mexica spiritual beliefs as a *danzante* [traditional Aztec dancer] during his time in Washington State and had met many Native American and Mexican American roadmen of the Native American Church during his stay in the United States. One of the first things that Temoc did upon his return to Corupo was to situate himself within the P'urhepecha traditionalist community by contacting P'urhepecha medicine men and asking them how he could contribute to the spiritual reclamation movement amongst P'urhepechas. Having been immersed in *Danza Azteca* in the United States had ignited Temoc's curiosity about the cultural

³⁶ For further reading on pre-Hispanic medicinal practices amongst P'urhepechas, see: "Etnomicología Purépecha: el conocimiento y uso de los hongos en la Cuenca del Lago de Pátzcuaro, Michoacán" by Cristina Mapes, et al. in *Cuadernos de Etnobiología* (no. 2) published by UNAM in 1981 & *La medicina entre los purépecha prehispánicos* by María Teresa Sepúlveda y H. published by UNAM in 1988.

beliefs of his own people. He wanted to learn but he also wanted to contribute. Tata Anselmo shared with Temoc that P'urhepechas have had a growing hunger to learn about peyote. Temoc then volunteered to facilitate a P'urhepecha/Native American cultural exchange by contacting roadmen in the United States and Native Americans from Washington State who actively practice in the Native American Church. One of the roadmen who showed interest in coming to Michoacán to teach P'urhepechas about peyote was CrowBear, an Native American/Mexican American man with roots in Michoacán, who wanted to lead an NAC-style peyote meeting in Michoacán in exchange for lessons about P'urhepecha culture. A date was set and members of various tribes in Washington State were invited to participate. Chester and I were invited due to my interest in Indian-only ceremonies in Michoacán and due to Chester's potential contributions to the pan-indigenous cultural exchange that was to happen after the ceremony.

The ceremony in Corupo happened under the open sky in what looked like a school or community recreational gymnasium. We sat up all night, consumed medicine, passed around the sacred instruments (drum and gourd rattle), and sang songs as the roadman explained the significance of each ritual in English. Translation to Spanish and then to P'urhepecha was necessary. Temoc translated between English and Spanish and some of the P'urhepecha medicine men translated between Spanish and P'urhepecha. I do not feel compelled to deeply describe each part of the ritual involved at this ceremony. As I recall Tata Javier's words, "We trust you, our blood. You will know what to share," I did not have permission to document aspects of the ceremony and I think those descriptions should remain in my personal journal entries. What I do want to share is that both the American Indians from Washington State and the P'urhepechas I spoke to at the ceremony were excited and happy to pray together, participate in the ceremony, and partake in the cultural exchange. The P'urhepechas I spoke to were from different communities in the Meseta and from around the Pátzcuaro basin. From my observations, there was a deep curiosity and hunger amongst the P'urhepechas in attendance to both understand the medicine and to learn how to pray with it. Some participants offered *pirekuas* traditional to their communities of origin which are usually not sung at NAC peyote meetings, but were welcome as part of the communal prayer. I saw elderly *nanas* and *tatas* kneel with completely surrendered faith before the peyote as they pled for the people in their family who were suffering and were otherwise in need of prayer. I saw politically-involved P'urhepechas hold their eagle staffs throughout the ceremony to receive the knowledge granted to them by the opportunity to learn from this trained roadman. And I saw P'urhepechas who are committed to studying, tracing, and documenting P'urhepecha culture humble themselves to the medicine in order to consume it and understand it in the way the ancestors did.

These acts of faith were common amongst P'urhepechas at other peyote meetings that I attended in Michoacán. We were invited to other peyote meetings led by P'urhepecha medicine men who had adopted teachings by how meetings are led in the Native American Church. As someone who was familiar with the Native American Church ceremonies through my sister Suguey's practice, I did note some differences in P'urhepecha practices. Not only did the peyote meetings that were exclusively P'urhepecha incorporate traditional prayers in the P'urhepecha language, but they also were more likely to occur out in the open under the night sky rather than in a *teepee* as is customary in the United States. I believe that this is more common in México for two reasons: the first is that spiritual practices amongst Mexican indigenous people tend to happen outdoors in nature, and secondly, Mexican indigenous people lack access to *teepees* and to

knowledge about building teepees. Another notable difference is that P'urhepechas incorporate consuming pulque into peyote ceremonies because the drinking of pulque is a traditional way to connect to the earth (as pulque is considered blood of the earth) in many Mexican indigenous communities. Peyote meetings gave Chester and me a glimpse into the P'urhepecha hidden transcript. Not only did we witness the vulnerable humility with which P'urhepechas are approaching the reclamation of traditional medicine and the re-learning of indigenous spiritual practices, but we ourselves communed with the medicine and with the people as equally vulnerable participants. It is worth mentioning that Chester, in particular, approached the ingestion of new medicine with caution. As an Ojibwe traditionalist who adheres to the teachings and practices in the Ojibwe-only Midewin Society, Chester was hesitant to practice ceremony outside of his teachings and to engage with medicine with which he was not familiar. But the P'urhepecha medicine men and cultural workers we met incorporated us into their spiritual family (what is termed as 'invited us into their fire' amongst Native people) and Chester became more trusting and open over time. During one peyote ceremony, he felt that the medicine was making him sick and he tried to concentrate on the prayer. Chester began to panic as he felt himself slipping into a trance, something he was not familiar with. The medicine man at the head of that ceremony coached him through some meditation and instructed him to 'walk with the medicine' away from the crowd for a while. When Chester returned, he was full of joy, laughter, and glee and seemed peaceful and centered. He later shared with me that the experience had led to a conversation with his late father which had filled him with so much joy and peace and healing. I believe that the experiences at these peyote meetings were healing and powerful for both of us because we allowed ourselves to be vulnerable.

Observations of the Kurhíkueri K'uínchekua otherwise known as the P'urhepecha New Year ceremony, in both Michoacán and the United States, offer another avenue to explore the P'urhepecha hidden transcript. Although the observations have become more publicized and popular, the *Concilio de ExCargueros de la Festividad* [Advisory Council of Former Sponsors of the New Fire] have gone to great efforts to uphold the integrity of the observance by purposefully limiting marketing exclusively to P'urhepecha communities, by banning tourism, and by banning participation from the Catholic Church, political parties, and municipal authorities. The only 'politicians' who can participate are those who hold posts in traditional governments although they are not announced, given special treatment, or recognized by name at the ceremonies. Even though outsiders are not turned away, organizers circulate propaganda through social media, newspaper, and other media outlets to explicitly communicate that the ceremony is meant for P'urhepecha people and should not be treated as a tourist attraction.³⁷ Tourism is limited by banning vendors and carnival attractions, which are typically present in other open P'urhepecha festivities. Although artisans are encouraged to exhibit their artwork, they do not engage in selling at the Kurhíkueri K'uínchekua. In true P'urhepecha tradition, the ceremony is hosted and organized by a different community each year. The hosting community or *T'erunchitiecha*, under the advice of the Advisory Council of Former Hosts of the New Fire,

³⁷ Cruz, Pedro V.

2010 Carta Aclaratoria A La Jornada De Michoacán; El Turismo y La Celebración del Fuego Nuevo P'urhépecha. Página Comunitaria del Pueblo P'urhépecha, February 26, 2010. <http://www.purepecha.mx/threads/3448-Carta-Aclaratoria-A-La-Jornada-De-Michoacan-El-Turismo-Y-La-Celebracion-Del-Fuego-Nuevo-P-urhepecha>, accessed August 8, 2015.

which is under the advice of the *Tata K'eriecha* [Council of Elders], organizes all the logistics of welcoming and feeding hundreds of participants in order to light the new fire.

The Kurhikueri K'uinchekua has roots in a pre-Hispanic ritual, which employed fire to honor Curicaveri, the P'urhepecha principal male deity who represents the sun. The Spanish Crown forbid the ritual in 1530 after the assassination of Tangaxoan II by Nuño de Guzman. Organizers recuperated the festivity in 1983 by turning to the *Tata K'eriecha* for wisdom and advice about how to curate the festivity in order to bring it back. Today, the festivity's purpose is to replenish and strengthen the P'urhepecha people by promoting the four principles upon which, according to oral traditions passed down by the *Tata K'eriecha*, P'urhepecha life and culture are based upon. These include; *Juchari Anchekuarhikua* [our work], *Juchari Kaxumbekua* [our communal honor], *Juchari Jakjkukua* [our cosmovision], and *Juchari P'urhéjkukua* [our warrior spirit].³⁸ The observation of the Kurhikueri K'uinchekua takes place on the eve of the first of February. The pre-colonial P'urhepecha count and oral tradition dictates that the change of the agricultural cycle for P'urhepecha people begins when *Araro Joskuecha* [the Orion star constellation] completes half of its journey. This is known to happen around midnight and so the new fire is lit right before midnight every February first.

The ceremony opens with a march circa January 28th or approximately four days before the Kurhikueri K'uinchekua; the procession begins in the community, which hosted the ceremony the previous year (the old host), and continues on to the newly hosting community (the new host). The purpose of the march is to transport the 'old fire' and the three symbols of the P'urhepecha nation to the new hosts. The old fire is a piece of wood preserved from the fire at the previous year's Kurhikueri K'uinchekua; salvaging a piece of the fire each year has been done since the ceremony's reclamation in 1983 because doing so creates a cycle of continuity between the old fire and the new fire. During the culmination of the ceremony (the moment when the 'new fire' is lit), a piece of the old fire is used to spark the new fire so that the same fire burns each year for the renewal of P'urhepechas. The symbols of the Kurhikueri K'uinchekua are also transported from the old host to the new host during the opening walk. These include the *mindantskuarhekua*, a calendrical stone made out of volcanic rock, which has four faces and two bases, —an upper base of small dimension and a lower base of larger dimension. The *mindantskuarhekua* contains a symbol for each of the communities, which have hosted the Kurhikueri K'uinchekua. Up to fifty-two symbols will go on the *mindantskuarhekua* to represent the equivalent of one century according to the pre-colonial P'urhepecha count. The P'urhepecha flag or *Añatsikukua* is another symbol of the Kurhikueri K'uinchekua. It is made up of four colors, which represent the four territorial regions of the P'urhepecha Nation. These include green for the *P'ukumindu* [the sierra or the Meseta P'urhepecha], blue for the *Japunda* [the lake region], purple for the *Tsakapendu* [the cienega of Zacapu which includes P'urhepecha communities located in the municipalities of Zacapu and Coeneo], and yellow for the *Eraxamani* [*'la cañada de los once pueblos,'* a region in the municipality of Chilchota and Tangancicuaro which runs along the river valley of the Duero River]. The center of the flag consists of the tip of a flint, which is surrounded by four arrows pointing towards each cardinal direction to symbolize

³⁸ Orgullo P'urhépecha - P'urhéngiticha - P'urhépecha Pride Facebook Page 2015 ¿Qué es Kurhikuaeri K'uinchekua? <http://www.purepecha.mx/threads/4098-Para-Saber-Mas-Sobre-Kurhikuaeri-Kuinchekua>, accessed January 15, 2015.

the four P'urhepecha regions. The flint symbolizes *Curicaveri* and both points towards and upholds a fist. The center sits on top of the words "*Juchari Uinapikua*," which translate into "our strength." The community of Santa Fe de la Laguna incorporated the flag into the Kurhikueri K'uinchekua when they hosted the ceremony in 1990.

The ceremony provides ample space and opportunity for reflection about what it means to be P'urhepecha, about the needs of the nation, and about one's intention for family/work/community in the upcoming year. Hosting communities incorporate other ceremonies along with the procession besides the lighting of the new fire itself. Holding a jurhinhekua for the T'erunchitiecha (hosts), for the members of the Advisory Council of Former Hosts of the New Fire, and for the Tata K'eriecha is common at the Kurhikueri K'uinchekua. Ceremonies to acknowledge the gifts of creation and *Nana Kuerajperi* [Mother Earth] are also incorporated into the Kurhikueri K'uinchekua. These ceremonies are meant to express gratitude for the previous agricultural year's harvest and can include the blessing of the new seeds of beans, corn, squash, and chile for the new year's harvest.

I attended two observations of the Kurhikueri K'uinchekua. The first was held in Auburn, Washington in 2009 and the second in Uruapan, Michoacán in 2010. The observation of the Kurhikueri K'uinchekua that I attended in Washington State was organized by *Orgullo P'urhepecha* ["P'urhepecha Pride," a network/organization of P'urhepecha migrants based out of Washington State] as the second of its kind in the United States. I was involved in helping promote the ceremony in California and recruited some volunteers to help serve food at the celebration. I was also asked to stand in one of the four cardinal directions when the new fire was lit. Doing so was an honor for me but the most impactful experience was witnessing a beautiful reinvention of the Dance of the Elders as conducted by Leobardo Mota and his sons, a family of musicians known for their conjunto band "El Emperador de Tzintzuntzan." The Mota brothers designed their regalia and added feathers and jewelry based on drawings from *La Relación de Michoacán*. They also incorporated masks but theirs were not the traditional masks that contemporary dancers don to mock Spaniard conquistadores. Rather, they were masks of colorful other-worldly humanoid faces meant to emulate spirits. These spirit masks are typical to southwestern tribes in the United States as well as amongst various indigenous communities in México. The Mota family altered the musical arrangement of the *sones* typically associated with the dance; the brothers danced the *zapateado* [rhythmic dancing characterized by percussive footwork] while their father played the *sones* on the flute and drum (rather than on the violin and guitar). The end-result was quite breathtaking and gave the ceremony's participants a glimpse into how the Dance of the Elders would look, sound, and feel during pre-Hispanic times. While the Kurhikueri K'uinchekua in Washington State was intimate and mostly attended by P'urhepecha migrants from Oregon, Washington State, and California, the Kurhikueri K'uinchekua in Uruapan allowed me to experience the ceremony as a more expansive communal celebration of P'urhepechecidad in Michoacán.

Community members from all four P'urhepecha regions were present at the Kurhikueri K'uinchekua hosted by Uruapan in 2010. Because Uruapan is also a more urban area, the celebration was also well-attended by mestizos – some locals there out of curiosity and others who came from other places in México to experience what they considered to be 'authentically P'urhepecha.' While there were dance expositions and *pirekua* singing from various regions

similar to the dance expositions at the Days of the Dead, the Kurhikueri K'uinchekua did not feel commodified or overwhelmed by tourists. Instead, the musical exchanges and expositions of artisan craftwork felt like communal sharing between P'urhepechas. People onstage collaborated and joined in during each other's songs and performances. I did not notice vendors or sales transactions going on at the event and the feast was completely free. The most memorable moment for me was the actual lighting of the new fire; after lighting the fire with fire sticks, the *Uandari* [medicine person/elder/speaker] explained the meaning behind the ceremony, reminded everyone to keep the four principles (P'urhepecha work, P'urhepecha honor, P'urhepecha cosmovision, and the P'urhepecha warrior spirit) in mind as they laid out their prayers and set out intentions for the new year, and officially proclaimed that the new phase for P'urhepechas had begun as the community had been renewed. During this time, blocks of lumber from the fire were passed out to attendants. P'urhepecha women dressed in traditional clothing circled the crowd with *sahumadores* burning copal. I saw people hold their burning blocks while bowing their heads in silent prayer. The respect for the ceremony and the people's faith was evident. The overwhelming P'urhepecha presence while the ceremony was conducted almost entirely in the P'urhepecha language gave it a feel unlike anything I had experienced at the Days of the Dead. Chester and I were invited to a peyote meeting held by Tata Anselmo after the ceremony. Members of the Council of Former Hosts of the New Fire were at the peyote meeting. While Tata Anselmo gave his advice and critiques of the Kurhikueri K'uinchekua, most were focused on their prayers and intentions for the new year.

Like previous scholars who have analyzed the Kurhikueri K'uinchekua in the context of P'urhepecha identity development, I propose that even though the ceremony is, in fact, a defiant P'urhepecha act of decolonization within the hidden transcript (as it represents an opportunity to oppose the spiritual and political conquest and ongoing colonization of P'urhepechas), the festivity also presents an opportunity for P'urhepecha nationhood to be publicly visible. In its insistence to remain an intimate P'urhepecha gathering, the ceremony is one of the only opportunities for Mexican society to publicly see traditional P'urhepecha ceremonial life and P'urhepecha nation-building. This has been the case since the early observations of the Kurhikueri K'uinchekua. In *Los Señores de Utopía*, Eduardo Zarate-Hernández (1993), a Mexican anthropologist who has conducted extensive ethnographic work on social organization in P'urhepecha communities, argues that the P'urhepecha New Year evolved into a festival of P'urhepechecidad organized around promoting group continuity, unity, and equality. He describes the festivity as “a dramatization of the complex social and political relations engulfing P'urhepecha identity, as well as a ritual attempt to recuperate the past by demarcating the ethnic limits and making [the group] almost impenetrable (Zarate-Hernández 1993:41).” According to Zarate-Hernández's analysis, the P'urhepecha New Year, more than any other festivity, constructs P'urhepecha ethnic identity by invoking the common origin and the common destiny of P'urhepechas in the way it is promoted, curated, and executed. As he states, “This ritual consists of an ideal representation of P'urhepecha society in which ethnicity appears as a womb from which the destinies of all [P'urhepecha] individuals emerge (Zarate-Hernández 1993:52).”

Zarate-Hernández claims that the P'urhepecha New Year constitutes an authentic recreation of the ancestors' rituals for participants through the invocation of both pre-colonial deities and the group's imagined community. The incorporation of pre-Hispanic beliefs and practices ensures

that the group is able to reclaim and display its continuity despite colonization. As Zarate-Hernández observes,

P'urhepecha pride is maintained in great measure thanks to the gratifying memory of having had an epoch of greatness, of having controlled a great territory and other groups. This is the last aspect where the myth of continuity of the essence appears with all its force, it functions as a self-gratifying belief which permits the group to overcome adverse or negative situations such as surviving colonization over a period of 500 years (Zarate-Hernández 1993:54).

For Zarate-Hernández, the festivity's emphasis on the continuity between pre-Hispanic P'urhepechas and contemporary P'urhepechas is key to establishing the permanency of P'urhepechidad in the face of modernization, the disintegration of the P'urhepecha Empire, and the forced imposition of oppressive social systems by colonization and by the Mexican nation-state. Although each hosting community defines the facets and events they want to incorporate yearly according to their knowledge, priorities, and needs, the festivity offers an opportunity to celebrate the P'urhepecha 'glorious past' as well as to establish equality and uniformity amongst P'urhepechas. At the New Year's celebration, poor P'urhepechas are on equal standing with elected officials; because the value of reciprocity dictates that being P'urhepecha is defined according to service regardless of social status, class status, or possessions, people generally do not get special treatment at the celebration. Everybody eats the same thing at the same time, and everybody gets a burning lumber of fire to join the prayer. By promoting equality and unity and uniformity amongst P'urhepecha people, the festivity constructs the notion of an imagined P'urhepecha community amongst participants and observers and to the general public, thereby effectively building nationhood amongst P'urhepechas. Zarate-Hernández argues that the P'urhepecha New Year provides P'urhepechas an opportunity to display nationhood to the interior members of the nation by incorporating known symbols and customs that are recognizable to P'urhepechas and to the exterior society through a public display of cooperation and the use of shared resources. As he states,

In this case, ethnic symbolism functions as an ethnic metalanguage, which is presented as a necessary aspect in the process of ethnic reconstitution... Metaphorically, this ritual constitutes a representation of ethnic reconstitution through which [P'urhepecha identity] legitimizes itself before P'urhepecha society and before society in general as many and various symbols are invoked both consciously and unconsciously during the celebration, such as images, special use of the language, a characteristic way of conducting oneself, a specific form of social organization and of carrying out the celebration (Zarate-Hernández 1993:40).

Zarate-Hernández claims that organizers purposefully engage specific practices and rituals that are recognizable to P'urhepechas before and during the event. These include; using the system of *cargueros* or rotating hosts (which is typically employed to carry out P'urhepecha events), carrying out the procession in a rotational pattern (which is traditional to P'urhepecha communities), utilizing specific images, carrying out the ceremony in the P'urhepecha language, and asking participants to conduct themselves in ways that are characteristically P'urhepecha

(engaging in reciprocity, observing the lighting in somber silence, etc.). Zarate-Hernández claims that it is politically important for P'urhepechas to display unity and nationhood despite any internal conflicts that may exist between P'urhepechas because doing so promotes ethnic political consciousness that transcends the local level. Like Luis Vásquez de León, Zarate-Hernandez believes that displaying peoplehood as an indigenous nation grants P'urhepechas visibility and that such visibility gives them more political clout than they would have being treated as individuals or simply being seen as poor people.

The examples of the P'urhepecha hidden transcript included in this chapter speak to a reclamation of P'urhepechidad that has been taking place in Michoacán since the 1970s. In *Ser Indio Otra Vez*, Luis Vásquez León (1992), a Mexican anthropologist and notable ethnographer of P'urhepecha social movements, argues that rural communities in the Meseta P'urhepecha have undergone a process of re-indianization/re-*P'urhepechización* since the 1970s. According to Vásquez León, mid 20th Century anthropological work in the region and México's 1915 Law of Agrarian Reform were the primary forces that influenced the reclamation of P'urhepecha identity in the Meseta P'urhepecha. Because anthropologists have been identifying the region as the Tarascan region and the people as tarascos and purépechas in their publications, Vásquez León contends that anthropological fieldwork, and more specifically anthropologists' demarcation of the region as P'urhepecha, gave residents of the sierra a legitimate source from which to learn and legitimate their identity as indigenous people. The use of the word was also popularized by P'urhepecha radio stations like "*La Voz de los Purépechas*," which adopted the word in their names and promoted the term by uniformly applying it to inhabitants of the different communities in the sierra.

Vásquez León claims that the Law of Agrarian Reform was the most crucial influence to the reclaiming of P'urhepechidad in the sierra because it established that only members of communal farming cooperatives with historical heritage bonding them to that specific region would have rights over land, forests, and water. As he contends, "ethnic reorganizations prospered quickly throughout the Meseta P'urhepecha once the new status of the Indian gained legal presence (Vásquez León 1992:117)." After the law legally granted Indians communal status and rights to patrimonial property, Vásquez León contends that P'urhepechas were motivated to abandon regional factionalism and instead organize around their 'ethnic' affiliation.

As Vásquez León poses, "Under what social situations is the election of being Indian and the social action which indigenous identity invokes in the group and in the individual useful? (Vásquez León 1992:80)" He argues that Marxist analysis of P'urhepecha subjugation based on class stopped being useful when the Law of Agrarian Reform granted Indians privileges over land ownership, ecological resources, and patrimony. P'urhepechidad in and of itself became a strategic social construction for P'urhepechas in the sierra. As he states,

When I speak of the Meseta Purépecha as an ethnic purépecha region, I am unequivocally referring to specific political actions undertaken by indigenous people who longed to be, through these actions, more indigenous in others' eyes and in their own eyes, which makes modern ethnicity a question of honor, legality, social organization and power. Because of this, and in accordance with

my argument, the ethnic region is not unique in analysis per se, but a product of social action by social actors (Vásquez León 1992:80).

Vásquez León treats the reincorporation of cultural symbolisms into P'urhepecha identity as selectively strategic.

It may well be true that in certain strategic situations (such as campaigning around specific issues or making particular demands from the state), it was valuable for P'urhepecha people to accept identification as an ethnicity within the Mexican nation-state. But, my informants would contest the claim that P'urhepecha identity emerged from anthropological findings or from one specific social movement or land struggle. While it is possible that P'urhepecha identity gained momentum as more P'urhepecha communities accessed radio/newspaper outlets and as a result of having land rights under the Law of Agrarian Reform, the claim that P'urhepecha identity emerged solely from any one of these factors or from anthropological work negates P'urhepecha autonomy. Applying the term 'ethnicity' to indigenous peoples is inevitably limiting. P'urhepechas did not need anthropologists or the state to classify them as an ethnic group in order to be P'urhepecha. According to my informants, P'urhepecha identity originates from oral tradition, from the P'urhepecha language, and from the textual and physical relics of P'urhepechidad left by the ancestors such as the stone and clay replicas of deities, the *yacatas*, and *La Relación de Michoacán*. To say that P'urhepecha identity emerged from political convenience or from a historical event that happened *to* P'urhepechas denies the influences that are organic and inherent to P'urhepecha culture and to P'urhepecha peoplehood.

In her article, "Commoditizing Culture," U.S.-based anthropologist Laurie Kroshus Medina (2003) posits that locals in Succotz have turned to publications by archeologists and ethnographers to learn about pre-Hispanic Maya heritage in order to incorporate such knowledge into their interactions with tourists and into the souvenirs they construct to sell to tourists. Kroshus Medina found that Succotzenos enroll in classes taught by archeologists to learn about Maya traditions, read books on ancient Maya culture and cosmology, decorate the ceramics they produce by tracing designs they find in publications, and many also re-learned ceramics through a Canadian ceramics workshop. In the case of Succotz, the desire to participate in the tourist industry has promoted a re-connection to Maya traditions through which Indigenous people engage in re-appropriating ancient traditions in order to succeed in the tourist market. As she states, "Thus, in this case tourist servicing is not generating a new, 'emergent' culture, per se. Nor is tourism generating a commoditized culture that is distinct from an authentic or traditional culture. Rather, servicing tourism has prompted Succotzenos to utilize new channels to access traditions that may have persisted across centuries (Kroshus Medina 2003:365)." Kroshus Medina further argues that re-learning Mayaness through books and workshops to cater to tourism provides opportunities for Succotzenos to re-evaluate and revalue Mayaness. Locals learn to accord higher value to 'things Maya' than to mestizo material culture. Tourism's commoditizing process then places a quantifiable value on indigenous knowledges, indigenous objects, and indigenous identities, making indigenous people in Succotz re-value their indigeneity.

While in Succotz, according to Kroshus Medina, Mayas have relearned Maya knowledge in order to cater to tourists and in the process have learned to re-value Mayaness, P'urhepechas in Michoacán did not 'learn' or re-learn to identify as P'urhepecha from anthropologists. P'urhepechas are not undergoing a process of reclamation to cater to tourists. The current wave of indigenous reclamation amongst P'urhepechas is a result of the evolving transborder P'urhepecha diaspora. Increasing migration from Michoacán to the United States has prompted an unprecedented historical occurrence: community-building and connections between P'urhepechas and American Indians. P'urhepecha migrants in the United States are turning to American Indian tribes and people in order to re-learn traditional knowledge about spiritual practices that were historically integral to P'urhepecha beliefs and practices. These include the sweatlodge, pipe-smoking, and the consumption of hallucinogenic plants. American Indians have responded to the P'urhepecha hunger for knowledge and have begun to participate in cultural exchanges — a collaboration which has allowed this knowledge to travel to Michoacán and to disperse amongst P'urhepecha communities. The reclamation of indigenous spirituality amongst P'urhepechas through both re-learning old knowledge and reclaiming old traditions (such as the Kurhikueri K'uinchekua) is not happening as a response to tourism; it is happening as a response to transnational P'urhepecha hunger for ancestral traditions, a renewed pride in P'urhepecha identity, and a redefinition of the P'urhepecha political agenda.

Accountability and Conducting a Decolonizing Ethnography

To close this chapter, I would like to explore the theoretical and methodological implications of conducting a decolonizing ethnography. As an indigenous researcher, it was critical for me to consider how my research would both impact and empower the indigenous communities I worked with in Michoacán. I thus modeled my research questions and methods according to Linda Tuhiwai Smith's (1999) prescription for conducting decolonizing research. In *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, Tuhiwai Smith reverses centuries of Western philosophy by exposing the flaws of Western theory and by demonstrating how it is diametrically opposed to indigenous philosophies and therefore not applicable to indigenous contexts. She proposes that histories must be rewritten from an indigenous perspective in order to reverse the damage of colonization; to do so, she develops a set of indigenous methodologies and approaches towards conducting research in indigenous communities in a way that is ultimately empowering to indigenous cultures, indigenous identities, and to indigenous people.

For Smith, rewriting the history of conquest and colonization would involve critiquing the way History has been understood in a Western context as a pure and innocent master narrative and as a linear totalizing discourse, which espouses development and progress. Rewriting history would require articulating different knowledge about indigenous histories and experiences from an indigenous perspective. Smith proposes that indigenous people should use theory and the academy to their own advantage. As she states, "Decolonization, however, does not mean and has not meant a total rejection of all theory of research or Western knowledge. Rather it is about centering our concerns and world views and then coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes (Smith 1999:39)."

Smith's model for conducting research in indigenous communities proposes survival, recovery, development and self-determination as priorities, which can be attained through the interdependent processes of decolonization, healing, transformation, and mobilization. This model differs from any 'development project' proposed by the West because it is based on communal good and on a circular understanding of time and because it poses self-determination and/or social justice as its political goals. Social good in the West is based on beliefs that uphold the individual while community-based views predominate amongst indigenous people.

Smith contends that indigenous groups must come up with codes of conduct for non-indigenous and indigenous researchers to follow when working in their communities. As an example, she shares the Maori set of culturally-sensitive responsibilities, which include; presenting oneself face-to-face, observing and listening with care, sharing generously with the community, being cautious, respecting the *mana* of people [the way that people define themselves], and not flaunting one's knowledge. The Maori code emphasizes reciprocity, open communication, respect, and accountability. These responsibilities resonate with other prescriptive models for conducting decolonizing research such as Eva Marie Garroutte's 'radical indigenism' and Alfred Taiaiake's 'warrior scholarship.'

In *Real Indians: Identity and the Survival of Native America*, Cherokee sociologist Eva Marie Garroutte (2003) claims that the academy is colonized because it prioritizes scientific models, which are used to sanitize and downgrade the spiritual elements of knowledge. Within this model, spiritual elements can only exist as primitive beliefs or as symbolic fables. Radical indigenism, on the other hand, allows indigenous scholars to resist discourses that strip Native epistemologies of their ingrained spirituality (Garroutte 2003:104). Radical indigenism forces the researcher to enter tribal philosophies and tribal relations, a commitment which demands respect for community values in the search for knowledge. As she states, "It is a scholarship in which questions are allowed to unfold within values, goals and categories of thought, and models of inquiry that are embedded in the philosophies of knowledge generated by Indian people, rather than in ones imposed upon them (Garroutte 2003:144)." By respecting tradition as a sacred concept and respecting the tenets of indigenous philosophies of knowledge, researchers can be more personally invested in the indigenous communities they work in. Similarly, in his essay, "Warrior Scholarship: Seeing the University as a Ground of Contention," Mohawk Political Scientist Gerald Taiaiake Alfred (2004) claims that one of the major problems facing Native communities is the adoption of government-defined citizenship and capitalist-driven identity bred among indigenous scholars and amongst indigenous students. He worries that this trend among indigenous scholars drives Native academics to abandon Native traditional culture, thereby accommodating and encouraging colonialism. Alfred presents two ways to resist assimilation in the academy: the Native value of respect, which honors and values difference (independence), and the Native value of sharing space, which encourages interdependence. Instead of assimilating to the demands of government-defined citizenship, Alfred advocates for a 'warrior scholarship ethic,' which demands a performance of self-sacrifice on the part of indigenous scholars (Alfred 2004:95). These models along with other prescriptive indigenous scholarship for decolonizing the academy informed how I designed my research methods and how I conducted my ethnographic work in Michoacán.

When I was first accepted into my graduate program, I wanted to study how Native/indigenous hip hop music influences identity development amongst indigenous youth. I wanted to conduct ethnography with Native hip-hop artists and their audiences. That is a worthwhile and interesting project but I questioned whether conducting that project would address a timely and relevant issue for indigenous communities and specifically for P'urhepecha communities (and for the P'urhepecha people I had worked with during my 2002 fieldwork). I recalled a conversation I had with Professor Renato Rosaldo at Stanford as I was brainstorming the topic of my first project. I knew I wanted to work with indigenous people and thought about working with the Jemez Pueblo because I had once read that they share linguistic similarities with P'urhepechas. Dr. Rosaldo interrupted my brainstorm by suggesting that I go to Michoacán to work with P'urhepechas directly rather than work with Jemez Pueblo people to learn about P'urhepechas. I was young and naïve and unsure about myself but his advice was sound – and more than a decade later as I brainstormed my dissertation topic, I decided to take his advice again.

I began consulting with my own family about which topics related to Michoacán would be interesting and timely and impactful to them. Although different topics emerged, my family members repeatedly suggested Janitzio as the field site because “so many types of people and cultures collide there during los Días de los Muertos.” When I became involved with Orgullo P'urhepecha, I sought to find out what was important to P'urhepecha people by talking to some of the group's seasoned leaders. They pinpointed topics related to the lack of visibility, voice, and political clout of the P'urhepecha people. I then made the connection between my family's fascination with Janitzio and the prevalence of tourism in the area as a means to examine a phenomenon that both makes P'urhepechas hypervisible but doesn't necessarily grant voice to their concerns. I decided to conduct research in the Pátzcuaro area after consulting with P'urhepecha people on a topic that would be relevant and impactful and could potentially lead to the collection of knowledge that would empower P'urhepecha people. Allowing P'urhepechas to influence my choice of research topic was the first step of conducting a decolonizing ethnography.

As the dates of my field research approached, I also sought to form a mini-council of P'urhepecha consultants to guide my research methods. Amongst the people I sought the most advice from were Tata Pedro in Michoacán and Tata Antonio in the United States. Both Tata Pedro and Tata Antonio agreed that participant observation would be an appropriate field method because it would allow me to both participate in events and ceremonies as a P'urhepecha woman and observe and analyze the events from a scholarly perspective as an academic. I debriefed several of my experiences and observations with Pedro and Antonio in order to seek their opinions and ask any questions in areas where I needed clarification, particularly in regards to specific customs and with use of the P'urhepecha language.

I also reviewed my questionnaires with Tata Pedro, Tata Antonio, and other P'urhepechas that I am connected to in the United States before I started the fieldwork. I sought their opinions on whether my questions were appropriate, intrusive, and whether they would produce fruitful results. Both Pedro and Antonio gave me feedback on questions they wanted to ask mestizos in regards to why they visit P'urhepecha communities. Most of the P'urhepechas I consulted before heading to the field concurred that the open interview method was a good way to conduct research with P'urhepecha people because an interview could be treated as a casual conversation

even with informed permission being sought at the beginning. They gave me advice on pace, tone, and note-taking (I decided not take notes during interviews so as to maintain eye-contact and attentiveness with my informants to ensure that they felt heard and respected).

After I returned from the field with my first round of findings, I was due to present at the National Association of Chicana and Chicano Studies in Seattle close to the home-base of Orgullo P'urhepecha and to Tata Antonio's home. Tata Antonio and fellow community members he knows from Quinceo and from Tzintzutzan were unable to attend my session but they invited Chester and me to a *carne azada* [Mexican BBQ] at their home the day after my presentation. We attended and I was asked to give a presentation of my findings to community members who were present at the *carne azada*. We then discussed the implications of my findings in regards to the impact of tourism in the Pátzcuaro region and brainstormed how P'urhepechas could be more in control of how they are treated by the tourist industry and toured by both Mexican and international tourists. Presenting at the *carne azada* and the community discussion which followed made me realize that I was working with two dissertation committees: the dissertation committee of Ph.D.'s officially assigned to me at U.C. Berkeley and the committee of P'urhepechas in both Michoacán and the United States who were holding me and my work accountable. The P'urhepecha consultants who informed my methodology and helped me review my findings ensured the accuracy of my work when I had questions and integrated a process of accountability into how I was conducting (and analyzing) my work. My P'urhepecha dissertation committee has greatly assisted my attempt to conduct a decolonizing ethnography.

Another way that I ensured accountability was by seeking official institutional sponsorship and partnership in Michoacán. El Colegio de Michoacán offered residency in their Center for Anthropological Studies and assigned Dr. Andrew Roth as my mentor in the field. Although, in my experience, the concept of conducting decolonizing research in indigenous communities is fairly new in México, Dr. Roth and his colleagues were experienced in working with indigenous communities and with P'urhepecha communities. Besides running my research questions by my dissertation chair, I also met with Dr. Roth to discuss my research questions. He gave me insight on both the questions addressed to tourists (mestizos) and to P'urhepechas. He also assigned a reading list of contemporary ethnographies conducted in P'urhepecha communities by local and international scholars. El Colegio de Michoacán supported my work by offering an official letter on letterhead explaining who I was and what I was doing in Michoacán. The letter officially and symbolically granted me institutional support in Michoacán and allowed me to identify myself to municipal authorities, community members, and to my informants. A further measure of accountability will involve my having to provide a copy of my dissertation to El Colegio de Michoacán. This ensures that my work will be publicly available in Michoacán (and perhaps translated). Transparency, then, is an important factor that I take into account as I write this dissertation.

Perhaps the best part of conducting an ethnography that seeks to empower communities (rather than take from communities) is foregrounding the value of reciprocity and building relationships with people and with communities. I began my reciprocal relationship with P'urhepechas when I first got involved with Orgullo P'urhepecha and participated in the first Kurhikueri K'uinchekua held in the United States. Although I have not been able to participate in another since then, I continue to support Orgullo P'urhepecha's efforts by participating in fundraisers and promotion

efforts for the annual Kurhikueri K'uinchekua. A few of the P'urhepecha informants I met in Michoacán sometimes request collaboration from me to support events or causes. I help as much as I can because I owe them a debt that I cannot ever repay. During my fieldwork in Michoacán, Chester and I were invited to a meeting/retreat that was being held to plan the Michoacán route of the Peace and Dignity Journeys. An eagle staff run that seeks to connect indigenous people from north, central, and south America through running, the Peace and Dignity Journeys have been happening across the continent since 1992, the quincentennial of Columbus's landing in the Americas. Every four years, runners simultaneously take off from Chickaloon, Alaska and Tierra del Fuego, Argentina carrying two staffs: a staff with condor feathers and a staff with eagle feathers. The staffs then travel relay-style from runner to runner throughout various indigenous communities where runners are greeted with local ceremonies and finally meet in central America to unite the eagle and the condor.³⁹ The purpose of the run is to promote unity amongst indigenous people and to pray for Mother Earth and for her different needs (i.e. in 2012, the run was dedicated to the water).

My husband is a longtime runner who helps organize and run annual eagle staff runs with the Minneapolis-based organization, First Nations United. As a result, he was naturally interested in going to the Peace and Dignity Journeys organizing retreat and in participating in the run. We attended the retreat and were asked to help organize the Midwest route due to Chester's ties to Ojibwe and Dakota communities and to First Nations United. In the summer of 2012, I was able to connect the Spears brothers, the main organizers of First Nations United, to Peace and Dignity Journey runners who were running through the Midwest. As a result, First Nations United runners helped run the Midwest route, sponsored sweatlodges, and provided food and lodging in the states of Minnesota and Wisconsin; they continue to maintain participation in the run by planning similar support for 2016. Chester and I continue to work on envisioning a P'urhepecha/Ojibwe transnational cultural exchange, an effort that we hope to bring to fruition by 2016. These are community collaborations and connections, which seek to empower and strengthen P'urhepecha communities and P'urhepecha people, and which were originated by my fieldwork.

Conducting a decolonizing ethnography is extremely challenging even for indigenous researchers because we indigenous researchers have also been programmed to value Western theory and Western methodology and to forefront Western knowledge. I am hesitant to say that I successfully conducted a decolonizing ethnography. I would like to think that my ethnography and my fieldwork at least did not cause damage or further colonized Michoacán, P'urhepecha people, and P'urhepecha knowledge. I would like to think that by articulating a P'urhepecha critique of tourism and acknowledging P'urhepecha resistance, the P'urhepecha hidden transcript, and P'urhepecha autonomy, I have granted importance to P'urhepecha voices and empowered P'urhepecha people. My cultural upbringing dictates that I approach my work with

³⁹ The prophecy of the Eagle and the Condor is an Amazonian/Inca prophecy widely known and discussed within indigenous circles throughout the continent. It indicates that the journey of the condor from the South must meet the journey of the eagle from the north so that indigenous people in the Americas can come together.

Source: Remle, Matt

2014 Fulfillment of Prophecy the Eagle and Condor and Embracing Our Indian Children. Last Real Indians. July 22, 2014. <http://lastrealindians.com/fulfillment-of-prophecy-the-eagle-and-condor-and-embracing-our-indian-children-by-matt-remle/> accessed May 25, 2015.

humility and not take credit for accomplishments that came about through communal efforts. If this ethnography is at all decolonizing, it is because it was informed by P'urhepecha elders and by the research and theories espoused by the radical indigenous thinkers that came before me.

Concluding Thoughts: Supporting Indigenous Struggles in the Time of War and Hashtags

As I reflect upon conducting my fieldwork in 2009, I am overwhelmed with feelings of emotion and mourning because conditions in my homestate of Michoacán and in my beloved country of birth have worsened (perhaps I am experiencing my own mestiza melancholia). I enjoy the privilege of distance from the immeasurable violence caused by México's 'War on Drugs' that many of my *paisanos* [compatriots/countrymen] do not have. Using this privilege, I will end my dissertation by naming the very real violence that many of my informants currently live under and by analyzing how the violence that has wreaked havoc across our México has impacted indigenous communities and now informs the future of P'urhepechas.

Avery Gordon's work (1997) on social haunting speaks to México's social context. Gordon's analysis of the power of haunting calls for scholars to consider how ghosts are always present in the materiality of every-day social life. In *Ghostly Matters*, Gordon posits that haunting is present in the material production of things as well as in the social relations between people. She states, "When a ship, a bridge, an inert object, an ordinary building, a familiar workplace, a patch of grass, a photograph, a house becomes animated, becomes haunted, it is the complexities of its social relations that the ghostly figures. This sociality, the wavering present, forces a something that must be done that structures the domain of the present and the prerogatives of the future (Gordon 1997:179)." For Gordon, history is always a site of struggle between the living and the ghostly and the ghosts present in the materiality of every-day life demand a something to be done, especially in situations where oppression or injustice have taken place.

Gordon contends that the ghost cannot be tracked back to an individual loss or trauma but instead has its own desires, which may speak to addressing the consequences of institutional violence (such as the long-term impacts of slavery), or to addressing invisible entities (such as racialized/gendered capitalism). For example, Gordon poses that Toni Morrison's *Beloved* addresses the silencing of those left out of the historical record and of those who were not permitted to influence the structural forces that shaped past social life (Gordon 1997:139). She claims that oppressed people in this scenario (for example the descendants of African slaves) are then trapped in a constant state of remembrance where they are bound to develop ghostly haunts and must call for an official inquiry into what happened. The ghost in *Beloved* then asks: how can we be accountable to the people who were left out of the historical record? The question demands that the 'something to be done' results in the inclusion of people who were left out of the inscription of history and that we view ourselves as agents who can come to terms with our own contradictions and privileges in owning our responsibility for the atrocities that ensued. For Gordon, haunting calls for a recognition of the social effects of history, a means for us to experience what she terms the "If you were me and I were you" glue of social fabric—that which holds us responsible for the way our ancestors treated each other in the past and for how we treat each other in the present (Gordon 1997:189).

Gordon's work is applicable to the Mexican context because México, like the United States and like other countries in the Americas, is a giant grave of indigenous people who were the victims of dispossession and genocide, of Black people who were victims of slavery, and of the poor and disenfranchised who labored to build the country. Mexico is laden with the historical trauma

caused by the violence of the Conquest; mestizos suffer post-traumatic stress disorder from being products of rape while indigenous people carry the trauma of experiencing genocide. Every pyramid, every yacata, every artifact trapped in a museum, the scrolls of the codices written by indigenous historians, the statues to national heroes like Yanga (the runaway slave) and Emiliano Zapata (the freedom-fighter), the structures of buildings that were repaired by the labor of working class Mexicans after the 1985 earthquake, the *pasamontañas* [ski masks] shielding the faces of *comandantes* [commanders] of the EZLN, every relic that reminds us of our past as Mexicans – invokes ghosts that demand a ‘something to be done’ as we face the future. And, like other countries in the Americas, México has not atoned for the atrocities committed against people of color and against those it oppressed to rise as a nation-state. Every year, as Chicanos and Mexicans, we observe los Días de los Muertos, but we don’t often speak to the social hauntings by naming the injustices (our unfinished business) that need to be addressed nor do we speak to the increasing body-count as the current War on Drugs continues to ravage *la tierra del sol* [“the land of the sun” as México is often referred to in Mexican popular culture].

Today, more than ever, every part of México is haunted; the War on Drugs has turned into a Civil War between corrupt politicians and drug cartels and the primary casualties have been thousands of innocent Mexicans. Since December of 2006, when Mexican President Felipe Calderón deployed more than 6500 Mexican soldiers to Michoacán to fight drug traffickers (and two months later, deployed another 20,000 troops throughout México), more than 26,000 Mexicans have gone missing⁴⁰ and more than 138,000 people have been killed. The majority of those atrocities are accredited to organized crime.⁴¹ The United States has been complicit in the Mexican War on Drugs by providing 2.3 billion dollars in aid since 2008 to purchase equipment and to train police and K9’s while United States citizens continue being the number one consumers of drugs imported from México.⁴² Mexicans are being slaughtered in the hundred thousands to support a multi-billion dollar business that only benefits Mexican drug cartels and the politicians on their payroll.

The 2012 Presidential election, which declared Enrique Peña Nieto of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) the victor, was considered a stolen election with accusations of the PRI

⁴⁰ CNN Library

2015 Mexico Drug War Fast Facts. CNN. July 13, 2015. <http://www.cnn.com/2013/09/02/world/americas/mexico-drug-war-fast-facts/>, accessed July 25, 2015.

⁴¹ Heinle, Kimberly et. al.

2015 Drug Violence in Mexico Special Report. Justice in Mexico Project of the University of San Diego. April 2015. <https://justiceinmexico.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/2015-Drug-Violence-in-Mexico-Report.pdf>, accessed July 25, 2015.

⁴² See

Gomez, Alan.

2015 After years of drug wars, murders decline in Mexico. USA Today. April 30, 2015.

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2015/04/30/mexico-drug-war-homicides-decline/26574309/>, accessed August 10, 2015.

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2009. U.S. Drug habit help finance Mexican cartels. NBC News. May 26, 2009.

http://www.nbcnews.com/id/30946730/ns/us_news-crime_and_courts/t/us-drug-habits-help-finance-mexican-cartels/#.Vcvjl0X2im4, accessed August 10, 2015.

purchasing poor people's votes with gift cards and tampering with ballots running rampant.⁴³ In the boldest move during his Presidency, Peña Nieto committed an unimaginable sin against Mexicans by reforming the Mexican constitution in order to privatize Mexican oil. The move was widely considered a violation of Pemex, once termed '*el patrimonio Mexicano*' [Mexican patrimony], the pride and joy of Mexicans. Peña Nieto's '*Reforma Energética*' [Energy Reform Bill] opened Mexican oil for drilling by foreign companies and so far has not been economically fruitful for Mexicans. The impunity and injustice continues as journalists and activists are murdered for trying to expose corruption and Mexicans couldn't feel more disillusioned and betrayed by the current conditions and the current government.⁴⁴

Mexican people in different states and municipalities have risen up against the corruption by forming *autodefensas* [self-defense armies] to take up arms in order to defend themselves from drug cartels. Currently, *autodefensas* operate in more than 13 states and 68 municipalities.⁴⁵ Following in the footsteps of the EZLN, many of those who have taken up arms are indigenous people. As mentioned in previous chapters, one of the first *autodefensas* was born in Cherán, Michoacán where P'urhepecha people began organizing against illegal logging coordinated by drug cartels as early as 2008. After being victimized by drug cartels, which taxed local communal farmers and orchestrated illegal logging operations that led to the deforestation of 70% of *Pakua Karakua* [their forest], Cherán's *comuneros* [co-owners of communal land, community members] collected weapons and took up arms. Cherán's declaration of autonomy became official in April of 2011 when P'urhepecha women were almost run over by a truck of illegal loggers during their attempt to stop them. The community then organized able-bodied men into armed patrols while the women held watch over *fogatas* or bonfire barricades in order to stop the pillaging of their forest by drug cartels. When Cherán *comuneros* realized that their local government was complicit in the illegal logging of their forest, they turned to *La Relación de Michoacán* for wisdom on erecting an autonomous government modeled after traditional

⁴³ Escalona, Alejandro

2012. México 2012: Fraude Electoral Imperfecto. The Huffington Post. August 7, 2012.

http://voces.huffingtonpost.com/alejandro-escalona/mexico-fraude-electoral_b_1657960.html, accessed August 9, 2015.

⁴⁴ For murder of reporters, see

Bonello, Deborah

2015. For reporters in Mexico, journalist's death underscores job's growing danger. Los Angeles Times. August 3,

2015. <http://www.latimes.com/world/mexico-americas/la-fg-mexico-city-safety-death-20150802-story.html>,

accessed August 12, 2015.

For murder of activists like Miguel Ángel Jiménez Blanco, see

Jenkins, Nash

2015 The Mexican activist who led the search for missing students has been killed. Time. August 10, 2015.

<http://time.com/3990126/mexican-activist-missing-students-miguel-angel-jimenez-blanco/>,

accessed August 12, 2015.

&

For evidence that Enrique Peña Nieto's approval ratings recently decreased from 39% to 34%, see

Partlow, Joshua et al.

2015 Mexico's Economy was supposed to Soar, It's Starting to Flop. The Washington Post. August 8, 2015.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/mexicos-economy-was-supposed-to-soar-its-starting-to-flop/2015/08/07/ecbf00dc-3ab4-11e5-b759-e3c43f009486_story.html, accessed August 12, 2015.

⁴⁵ Espach, Ralph. H. et al.

2013 The Rise of Mexico's Self-Defense Forces. Foreign Affairs Magazine. July/August 2013 issue.

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/mexico/2013-06-11/rise-mexico-s-self-defense-forces>, accessed August 1, 2015.

P'urhepecha governance.⁴⁶ A general counsel of community elders was elected and the municipal authorities were kicked out. Currently, their demands are safety, justice, and the reforestation of their territory — all goals that the community is actively working towards.⁴⁷ Campaigns and politicians affiliated with Mexican political parties are no longer allowed in Cherán. There have been more than 18 murders and kidnappings of P'urhepechas from Cherán since the rise of the community's autodefensa.⁴⁸ These murders and disappearances remain unsolved as indigenous people's lives continue to be undervalued in the current wave of mass violence in México.

In September of 2014, 43 Me'phaa, Nahua, and Mixteco *normalistas* (student-teachers) from Ayotzinapa, Guerrero were disappeared in Iguala after the group of students claimed three government-owned buses in order to attend a protest in remembrance of the 1968 massacre of student demonstrators in Tlatelolco. The student-teachers were kidnapped by the 'Guerreros Unidos' drug cartel and reportedly shot and burned. The case sparked international outrage against the Mexican government after suspects revealed that Ángeles Pineda Villa, the woman married to the mayor of Iguala, ordered the students' disappearance. Recently the body of Miguel Angel Jimenez Blanco, the activist who has been leading the efforts to find the missing student-teachers, was found riddled with bullets.⁴⁹ The kidnappings and killings of these poor rural indigenous student-teachers and of Miguel Ángel Jiménez Blanco, like those of the missing Cherán comuneros, demonstrate the devastating effects that México's War on Drugs has had on indigenous people.⁵⁰

The social haunting of the past is ever-present during these turbulent and bloody times when Mexicans are being slaughtered and are slaughtering each other. While Mexicans are desperately turning to each other to ask, 'Where do we go from here?' Avery Gordon's work begs us to ask, 'What does the ghost demand?' Due to the devastating effects that the drug war is having on poor Mexicans and on indigenous people, until we address the past injustices and atrocities committed against México's disenfranchised, we may never know where to go from here. While Michoacán is being ravaged by drug violence, my informants currently continue to subsist and organize in these social conditions.

⁴⁶ The Fault Lines Digital Team

2014. How a Mexican town toppled a cartel and established its independence. Al Jazeera. May 1, 2014. <http://america.aljazeera.com/watch/shows/fault-lines/FaultLinesBlog/2014/5/1/how-a-mexican-towntoppledacartelandestablisheditsindependence.html>, accessed July 20, 2015.

⁴⁷ Sedillo, Simon

2013. Self-Determination and Self-Defense in Cherán, Michoacán. El Enemigo Común. January 4, 2013. <http://www.elenemigocomun.net/2013/01/self-determination-defense-cheran/>, accessed July 20, 2015.

⁴⁸ Pacheco, Juan

2014. Exigen aclarar 18 asesinatos y desapariciones de comuneros en Michoacán. Quadratin Oaxaca. July 27, 2014. <https://oaxaca.quadratin.com.mx/Exigen-aclarar-18-asesinatos-y-desapariciones-de-comuneros-en-Michoacan/>, accessed July 20, 2015.

⁴⁹ Jenkins, Nash

2015 The Mexican activist who led the search for missing students has been killed. Time. August 10, 2015. <http://time.com/3990126/mexican-activist-missing-students-miguel-angel-jimenez-blanco/>, accessed August 12, 2015.

⁵⁰ Godoy, Emilio

2015. Missing Students Case Highlights Racism in Mexico. Mint Press News. January 31, 2015. <http://www.mintpressnews.com/missing-students-case-highlights-racism-mexico/201719/>, accessed July 21, 2015.

In the meantime, tourists continue to frolic in indigenous communities throughout México and continue to tour the P'urhepecha dead. According to the Mexican Secretary of Tourism and the Michoacán State Government's estimates, 130 million people visited Michoacán during the Days of the Dead (November 1st to November 2nd) and spent 128.5 million pesos in 2014.⁵¹ While recreationally consuming the P'urhepecha dead through touristic commodification is more convenient than engaging in an invested analysis of how past atrocities inform the current conditions of México's indigenous people, Avery Gordon's work provokes us to address the social haunting brought on by los Días de los Muertos and by the current rising death toll provoked by México's Civil War with a 'something to be done.' In that spirit, I would like to present the political issues of importance to P'urhepechas as expressed by my P'urhepecha informants. I will close by addressing how Mexican mestizos can concretely demonstrate solidarity with Mexican indigenous communities.

Vindicating the P'urhepecha Dead; A Set of P'urhepecha Political Demands

As I posited in my second chapter, P'urhepechas understand that they are not seen as contemporary political subjects with a stake in the Mexican political economy. Tourists do not consider that P'urhepechas have a critical analysis of how globalization and capitalism affects their daily lives and their political goals. Tourists, including Mexican mestizos, are not informed about current P'urhepecha realities and are not well-versed in current P'urhepecha political concerns. Tourist ignorance about the P'urhepecha political agenda is not surprising because P'urhepechas, like other Mexican indigenous people, lack visibility in the media and are disenfranchised from Mexican national political life. The majority of my P'urhepecha informants were tuned in to current Mexican and world events and verbalized issues of importance to them, to their families, and to P'urhepecha communities.

One of the issues of most importance to the P'urhepechas I interviewed was the right to practice P'urhepecha autonomy. For the most part, it doesn't seem as if P'urhepechas feel protected under the Mexican "Indigenous Law" (*Ley de Derechos y Cultura Indígena*), a watered down version of the San Andres Accords signed by President Vicente Fox in 2001. Most indigenous communities rejected México's Indigenous Law for three reasons: it does not define the concept of autonomy, it does not recognize the indigenous right to self-governance or indigenous traditional governments, and it does not establish indigenous control of natural resources in sovereign territories.⁵² P'urhepechas like Reynaldo spoke about "a real Indigenous law." As Reynaldo stated, "We can't have autonomy — our own government. An Indigenous Law, which respects autonomy so we can decide what is best for our communities on our own (Tata Reynaldo, 02/15/2010)." Reynaldo also spoke about having freedom of speech, a right that was also important to the vendors I interviewed from Cherán. Nana Magdalena and Nana Agustina, women from Cherán, expressed that P'urhepechas should be able to speak and organize without fearing persecution.

⁵¹ Source: <http://www.michoacan.gob.mx/cgcs-630/>

⁵² BBC

2001 México: nueva ley indígena cuestionada. BBC. July 13, 2001.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/spanish/latin_america/newsid_1437000/1437021.stm, accessed August 11, 2015.

Controlling tourism and protecting natural resources was important to Tata Esteban and Tata Dionisio, my informants from Janitzio. Both expressed concerns about limiting tourist entry into Janitzio's cemetery and decreasing the waste that goes into the Pátzcuaro Lake during the Days of the Dead. Alongside other P'urhepecha informants, Esteban and Dionisio also wanted support, incentives, and grants for P'urhepechas to start tourist-related businesses so as to make the touristic experience more sustainable and profitable to P'urhepechas in a way that it hasn't been before.

Javier and Anselmo spoke about the importance of religious freedom for P'urhepechas and the need for increased respect for P'urhepecha spirituality. They want the Catholic Church to respect P'urhepechas' request for freedom to practice ceremonies such as the Kurhikueri K'uinchekua without interference from priests or other entities of the church. They also want for P'urhepechas to have the right to carry peyote and other medicine and instruments of healing without being persecuted by law enforcement. Tata Anselmo also spoke about the importance of protecting P'urhepecha sacred sites like the yacatas from further trampling and damage and about P'urhepechas having the right to access sacred instruments kept in museums (such as clay pipes) for ceremonial purposes.

For Mario, Guadalupe, and Ofelia, it was important for indigenous artisans to have opportunities without facing racist barriers. As Tata Mario stated,

I just want more funding to support traditional Indigenous artisans. Indigenous artisans should be treated the same as other artisans. Agencies and government institutions should trust that we are authentic without making ridiculous demands just because we are indigenous. Once I went to Morelia and I was dressed in slacks and dress shirt to see a man at an agency about funding my work. The secretary asked us if we were artisans. We said we were artisans and the secretary made a comment about how we had to wear Indigenous clothing to see the man! Those things happen (Tata Mario, 10/01/2009).

For my informants who are artisans, it was important to be treated with dignity and to have opportunities to professionalize and promote their work.

Tata Antonio voiced his concerns about increasing P'urhepecha migration to the United States. As he stated, "There is no self-sustainability in the communities. How are we to survive as an indigenous nation? If we continue on that route, P'urhepecha speakers will also decrease and we can disappear as an ethnicity. It's no longer an issue of 'I want to migrate,' but rather 'I have to migrate' (Tata Antonio, 02/20/2010)." Tata Antonio, like other P'urhepechas, fears that the neo-liberalist divestment from rural indigenous communities will increase the exodus of P'urhepechas from Michoacán and will result in further loss of language and acculturation amongst the next generation of P'urhepechas.

For Tata Pedro, the most important issues for the P'urhepecha people are regaining historical memory and reinvigorating (and officializing) P'urhepecha identity so that P'urhepechas can live by their values. Pedro understands that rights accorded to indigenous people are hard to enforce in México because indigenous identity is solely tied to language. Not only is this problematic because some indigenous people no longer speak their languages, but the fact that indigenous

people are not able to officially identify themselves as ‘indigenous’ sometimes means they cannot access specific rights (such as rights to land, religion, etc.). Pedro would like to see the Mexican government create a document for indigenous identification as he feels that such a document would help enforce P’urhepecha autonomy. As he states,

No, the government does not care about P’urhepechas or about indigenous people. They are interested at the general level. They do not want to talk about indigenous subjects as people. Without visibility or official recognition, indigenous communities do not exist... politically, they do not exist. They exist in the abstract and culturally, but not legally or politically. So [the indigenous form of identification] is one of our priorities, there are also other political factors. First if the government recognizes the P’urhepecha community then other factors would come into play like, ‘Who are the members? What rights do we hold? How can we organize?’ (Tata Pedro, 09/23/2009)

Official recognition is important to Pedro because it would grant P’urhepechas visibility and legitimacy before the state. For Pedro, institutional support would mean that P’urhepechas would have more resources to live autonomously. As he states, “It is a matter of having the institutions work better in our favor so we can live according to our values. It is also about the P’urhepecha people wanting to recover their historical memory and live it. We have all the cultural resources to make our community find our own values and principles. We even have other attributes that we can share with other cultures, which make us a strong community with a great deal of knowledge (Tata Pedro, 09/23/2009).”

Addressing the ‘something to be done’ requires listening to what the ghost demands. It requires healing the post-traumatic stress disorder caused by the bastardization of mestizos and addressing the embodied historical trauma that indigenous people live with every day. In the context of my fieldwork, it requires for tourists to stop reifying dead P’urhepechas and to promote justice for P’urhepecha people by listening to their current concerns. While my interviews with mestizos demonstrated that mestiza/o tourists experience a problematic racializing melancholia upon their encounters with P’urhepechas, they also exposed a genuine (yet misguided) concern with the future of P’urhepecha people. I believe that many Mexicans today are setting the example for what concrete mestiza/o solidarity with indigenous causes could look like.

Walking Together in a World Where Many Worlds Fit

Despite the paralyzing fear driven by staggering drug violence, Mexican society is not mute or complicit. This is apparent in the social movements that persist and continue to demand justice for all those murdered and disappeared under México’s current conditions. Millions of Mexicans took to the streets in masse after results of the 2012 election were announced. Mexicans have strategically relied on social media to mobilize people into social action. The movement #YoSoy132, mostly led by mestiza/o college students, organized protests against the election of Enrique Peña Nieto and provided a platform to voice the concerns of disenfranchised young people. The success of #YoSoy132 successfully sparked other Twitter hashtags, such as #MexicoMeDueles and #YaMeCanse, which gave Mexicans a platform to denounce political corruption. Most recently, #TodosSomosAutodefensas and #AyotzinapaSomosTodos allowed

Mexicans to demonstrate solidarity with indigenous people affected by the drug war. The kidnappings and killings of the 43 student-teachers in Ayotzinapa sparked international outrage thanks to Mexican journalists and everyday Mexican citizens who have continued to leak information; this campaign of outrage on social media has been largely fueled by mestiza/o solidarity (members of what the EZLN terms '*la sociedad civil*'). It is important to note that the parents of the missing 43 student-teachers have been at the forefront of the movement as leaders and speakers while Mexican mestizos have shown up by the hundred thousands to demonstrate their solidarity on the streets and on social media. The fact that Mexicans have not shied away from framing the killings as violent acts fueled by anti-Indian sentiment and prejudiced racism is also noteworthy. Ayotzinapa activism and #AyotzinapaSomosTodos are a good example of Mexican mestizos demonstrating meaningful solidarity for a timely and important indigenous cause.

The most interesting result, perhaps, of the use of Twitter hashtags to express political outrage amongst Mexicans is that these hashtags have sparked discussions about race in México in a way that past forums have not. As an example, people tweeted against Tijuana's director of the Municipal Women's Institute using the hashtags #LadyEuropa and #LadyIndigena after she posted an anti-Indian comment on Facebook, "What if all that is mine is in Europe and here I am suffering amongst these Indians?" The tweets led politician Lilliana Sevilla to post an empty apology (blaming the post on humor) and to quit her public post just days after her racist comment was denounced on social media.⁵³ Similarly, in May of 2015, a video of Lorenzo Córdova, the President of México's National Electoral Institute, was leaked on YouTube; in it, he insulted the parents of the missing student-teachers from Ayotzinapa whom he had met with to discuss voting barriers for indigenous people. In the video, Córdova mocks the speech of the Ayotzinapa parents, claiming they are unintelligible because Spanish is their second language. At one point he says, "I almost thought the guy was going to say, 'Me Great Chief Sitting Bull, Leader of the great Chichimec Nation.'"⁵⁴ Córdova's tone and language demonstrated his complete ignorance and disrespect towards indigenous people. His racist comment poured salt on the wounds of a nation still mourning the disappearance of the student-teachers; people took to Twitter to call him an incompetent racist and to demand that he be removed from his post. Like Sevilla, Córdova issued a non-apology, which according to Twitter discussions, was not accepted by Mexican Twitter users.

To best address Gordon's question of the 'something to be done,' mestizos must look for meaningful ways to express solidarity with indigenous people such as joining social movements and actions protesting racism like those discussed above. It is important for mestizos to shed their ignorance and to view indigenous people as contemporary political subjects. Additionally, mestizos can turn to decolonizing models created by Mexican Indians such as the challenges posed to all Mexicans by the EZLN. In their "*Cuarta Declaración de la Selva Lacandona*" [Fourth Declaration from the Lacandon Jungle], the EZLN calls for Mexicans to build 'a world

⁵³ Salinas, Arturo

2015. Renuncia funcionaria que posteo 'yo aquí sufriendo con estos indígenas.' Periódico Excelsior. March 3, 2015. <http://www.excelsior.com.mx/nacional/2015/03/03/1011323>, accessed August 11, 2015.

⁵⁴ El Economista

2015 Lorenzo Córdova sobre indígenas y padres de Ayotzinapa. El Economista. May 19, 2015.

<http://eleconomista.com.mx/sociedad/2015/05/19/lorenzo-cordova-sobre-indigenas-padres-ayotzinapa>, accessed August 10, 2015.

where many worlds fit.⁵⁵ The EZLN has insisted that building autonomy should not rely on one universal model or on the belief-system of one people. Rather, EZLN leaders advocate for the co-existence of different worldviews within a movement for social justice. This means that there's room for mestizos in the EZLN's vision for a just world for indigenous people and that mestizos should fight for a 'world where many worlds fit.'

In their "*Sexta Declaración de la Selva Lacandona*" [Sixth Declaration from the Lacandon Jungle], the EZLN calls for a model of '*caminando juntos*,' or walking alongside each other. La Sexta calls upon all oppressed sectors of Mexican society, including the women, the poor, the disabled, indigenous communities, and LGBT people to walk alongside each other, to struggle together, for their own vision of a Mexican government that will deliver justice to those who have experienced oppression.⁵⁶ The EZLN, however, defines '*camindando juntos*' as building autonomy according to one's own local context. The EZLN wants support but is not necessarily calling for everyone to join the EZLN army or to move to Chiapas to directly become involved in the movement. Indeed, remaining autonomous to them means being able to define and lead their own movements rather than take cues from outsiders. Instead, the EZLN calls for people to struggle for autonomy within their local contexts and to build autonomy according to their own desires and rules. This may mean deep soul-searching and re-evaluation of values, a re-envisioning of social justice for mestizos. Within circles I have inhabited, which model themselves after the EZLN's call for autonomy, it means acknowledging our first world privilege, evaluating our relationship to capitalism and our contributions to the exploitation of indigenous people, working on ourselves to become more vulnerable and more compassionate human beings (as painful as that journey is), promoting self-determination in our communities by building food and education cooperatives (even in urban spaces), and using our access to resources to support indigenous causes first locally and then nationally and internationally.

The EZLN is intent on indigenous movements being indigenous-led and so solidarity from mestizos would mean 'walking alongside each other' without intruding on indigenous sovereignty. In my experience, P'urhepechas feel the same way. This is an important lesson for mestizos to learn; indigenous communities are not looking to be led into freedom by a mestiza/o savior. Meaningful solidarity means meeting indigenous people where they're at and respecting the number of years of struggle they have endured and the socio-cultural context that informed their modes of organizing. Being led by indigenous people (rather than attempting to consume indigenous identities) and allowing (and supporting) indigenous people's quest for their own liberation is an effective way to respond to México's indigenous hauntings and to address the 'something to be done.'

⁵⁵ Ejército Zapatista para la Liberación Nacional

1996 Cuarta Declaración de la Selva Lacandona. http://palabra.ezln.org.mx/comunicados/1996/1996_01_01_a.htm, accessed August 13, 2015

⁵⁶ Enlace Zapatista

2005 Sixth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle. <http://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/sdsl-en/>, accessed August 13, 2015.

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<http://www.cnn.com/2013/09/02/world/americas/mexico-drug-war-fast-facts/>, accessed July 25, 2015.

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<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Orgullo-Purhepecha-Purhngiticha-Purhepecha-Pride/277539908924612?fref=ts>, accessed January 15, 2015.

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