

“CUANDO UNA MUJER AVANZA”:
FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN THE OAXACAN CIVIL UPRISING OF 2006
AS A FEMINIST MOMENT

by

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the

CENTER FOR LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

In the Graduate College

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

2022

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
GRADUATE COLLEGE

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Final approval and acceptance of this thesis is contingent upon the candidate's submission of the final copies of the thesis to the Graduate College.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Over the course of the two years that I have been a master's student at the University of Arizona (UA) there have been so many people who have guided and assisted me in my academic studies and research which culminate in this Master's thesis, all of whom I am deeply grateful. I'd like to thank the University of Arizona School of Social and Behavioral Sciences, Center for Latin American Studies, and the Coverdell Peace Corps Fellows for allowing me to pursue my academic goals at the UA. I'd like to thank the Graduate and Professional Student Council, the Tinker Foundation, and the UA Office of Global Initiatives for the support which allowed me to conduct fieldwork in Oaxaca, México from June 1st until August 13th, 2016.



My son, Julián, and I with our host family: Pati, Doña Pati y Don Luis, Carla, y Victoria.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my Oaxacan host family for opening their home to myself and my son, Julián, during our time in Oaxaca. Don Luis y Doña Patricia, Pati, Victoria, Carla, Tina, Mari, Marisol y Sol: Muchísimas gracias por abrir su casa y su familia a Julian y yo. Sin su ayuda con Julián durante mi visita a Oaxaca, no hubiera sido posible hacer mi investigación y cumplir la maestría. Ahora todos Ustedes son parte de nuestra familia y espero que podamos abrir nuestra casa a todos ustedes algún día.

I am also eternally grateful to all the people in Oaxaca who shared their knowledge and experiences with me and showed me such hospitality and patience. A todos los oaxaqueñ@s que contribuyeron a mi investigación: Quiero agradecerles por todo lo que han hecho y por mantener su coraje y el poder de los pueblos contra la injusticia y el monstruo del estado. A las mujeres oaxaqueñas: Muchísimas gracias por ser tan fuertes e inspiracionales. Ustedes han cambiado mi vida por lo mejor. Espero que pueda ser fiel a sus historias y palabras. Muchas gracias.

I'd like to thank my committee members, Dr. Marcela Vasquez-Leon, Oliver Froehling, and Antonio Bacelar da Silva who had the patience and wisdom to advise me throughout the research and writing process. I'd also like to thank the professors whose classes challenged me in ways that allowed me to learn and grow both personally and professionally. To Dr. Dawn Corso,

whose support and encouragement in my first semester gave me the strength to continue. To Dr. Elizabeth Oglesby and Dr. Linda Green whose work and bravery reminds me that if they can do the work they do, I can find it in myself to write my thesis. To Dr. Martha Few for her invaluable guidance on research and writing. To Dr. Thomas Sheridan and Dr. William Beezley for sharing their work and knowledge of Mexican history and culture. To Colin Deeds, Clea Conlin, Julieta Gomez for everything you are and everything you do to help us students. I'd like to thank the University of Arizona Coverdell Peace Corps Fellows for funding my education and the UofA Life and Work Connections for providing Childcare Support and Sick-Childcare that helped me retain a certain degree of sanity while attending graduate school as a single mother of a toddler.

I am eternally grateful to my parents and family for their life-long support and encouragement. I know you didn't always understand why I stayed home for Thanksgiving or Christmas those times, but you accepted it and allowed me to work. Thank you, Mom, for all the times you came to Arizona just to babysit while I studied and worked and those times I went out with friends to have a little break from the monotony. To my husband, Leonardo Ríos, thank you for deciding with me at the dinner table in our apartment in Santa Rosa that the pursuit of our academic and professional goals was the best thing we could do for ourselves and our son. You have been a great advisor, role model, and support over the last several years, even from across the country. I don't know how many times I asked myself, "WWLD?" what is this?

To my son, Julián, who is too little to even know of or care about all the times he was with a babysitter so that mom could write a paper or read those hundred pages. I hope someday you will value education as your parents do. You have no idea how often looking at you reminded me that everything was going to be okay or holding you in my arms put everything into perspective. Te quiero mucho, mi amor.

I am so thankful for all the friends and colleagues I've met at the UofA: Madison, Claudia, Sydney, Sarah, Emily, Claire, Cristina, John, Andrea, Jamie, Edgar, Xochilt. Without our bitch sessions and the collective suffering, I don't know where I would be, but probably not completing this Master's degree. Together we learned that feeling completely inadequate and inferior is just a part of normal academic progression. To think, there was a time we thought we were imposters because we had never heard of neoliberalism. Now look at us.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We respectfully acknowledge the University of Arizona is on the land and territories of Indigenous peoples. Today, Arizona is home to 22 federally recognized tribes, with Tucson being home to the O'odham and the Yaqui. Committed to diversity and inclusion, the University strives to build sustainable relationships with sovereign Native Nations and Indigenous communities through education offerings, partnerships, and community service.

DEDICATION

Para todas las brujas y guerreras chingonas del mundo.

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ABSTRACT

In 2006, the Mexican state of Oaxaca was the stage of a large-scale civil uprising against an oppressive state government hegemony. A violent attack by state & municipal police on striking teachers ordered by then governor Ulises Ruiz Ortiz sparked a backlash that led to nearly six months of civilian unrest in the state. The uprising was only brought to heel when the federal authorities sent federal troops into Oaxaca to regain government control. Coinciding with the ten-year anniversary of the uprising, I conducted research in Oaxaca to learn more about female participation in “el 2006” and discover what perceived impacts their participation had on the lives of Oaxacan women. Upon applying a feminist ethnographic methodology through the lens of Gramsci’s hegemony, I believe that the 2006 civil uprising in Oaxaca can be seen as a “feminist moment” in Oaxacan history. In conducting this research, I hope to address what I see as a gap in the academic literature on the subject and correct what is, at times, a misrepresentation of the event that either leaves women out of the narrative altogether or only discusses them within gendered aspects of hegemonic struggles.

KEYWORDS: Mexico, Oaxaca, social movement, uprising, feminism, women, hegemony

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

It was just after one o'clock in the morning when we finally arrived at Xoxocotlán International Airport in the city of Oaxaca, in the southern Mexican state by the same name. After nearly eighteen hours of exhausting travel with my two-year-old son in tow (who thankfully now slept peacefully in my arms), I felt a surge of excitement to finally be in the city that I had spent the last year researching in preparation for my Master's fieldwork. As we drove through the winding streets, I peered out the window at empty sidewalks and quiet buildings illuminated by store-front signs and street lights. It was hard for me to reconcile the peaceful landscape I was observing first hand with the chaotic scenes I had read about or seen in photographs from ten years prior. Ten years prior, these now vacant streets had once been the stage of one of the largest civil uprisings in recent history.

Introduction: Oaxaca El 2006

This thesis focuses on the events that took place during the 2006 Oaxacan civil uprising & subsequent social movement, commonly referred to by *Oaxaqueños* as “*el 2006*.” Beginning in the summer of that year, tens of thousands of Oaxacan citizens took to the streets in opposition of the state government headed by then governor Ulises Ruiz Ortiz, often referred to as URO.

The spark was ignited on July 14th, when state and municipal police, acting on orders of the Governor, staged an early morning paramilitary-style attack on striking teachers as they slept in their encampments where they had been occupying the *zócalo* (public square of a Mexican city or town). Word of the violent eviction spread quickly over independent radio and through the phone lines and text messages. The teachers called for help and the civilian response was quick and fierce. Thousands of people converged on the *zócalo* from all directions, surrounding the police and forcing them into a disorganized retreat. Caught off guard and unprepared for such a vehement

response from Oaxaca's citizens, the State Government collapsed. In contrast, the Oaxacan citizens used their momentum to constitute a united social movement unified on the single goal of removing URO from power. Although the civil uprising and subsequent social movement had a handful of small victories, including temporarily expelling state government and law enforcement for roughly six months, the movement was ultimately crushed when the Federal government finally sent in troops to Oaxaca and restored Ruiz Ortiz to power for the remainder of his term.¹ The historic 2006 Oaxacan civil uprising and social movement are the focus of my research.

Research Focus: Oaxaca Women in *El 2006*

When I first came across an article on the events that took place in Oaxaca in 2006, I found it remarkable that a spontaneous civil uprising could dislodge a State authority in a contemporary hegemonic state as powerful as Mexico. Driven to discover all that I could on the subject, I dove into research online and in the library. The academic and journalist work surrounding the events of 2006 in Oaxaca is quite extensive, but early on in my research, I noted that much of the discourse on the subject was heavily centered on the actions and perspectives of men within the movement. This led me to wonder: **What role did Oaxacan women play in the 2006 civil uprising and social movement?**

As Guida West and Rhoda Lois Blumberg note in their edited volume *Women and Social Protest*, "...politics in general and social protest in particular is an almost exclusively male domain. Women are visible mainly through their participation in feminist causes."² Initially, *El 2006* was not a movement that had a gendered focus of any kind, but was instead a political movement that

¹ Iván Arenas, "The Mobile Politics of Emotions and Social Movement in Oaxaca, Mexico." In *Antipode* 47, no. 5, (2015), 1121-140. 1122: (Accessed December 15, 2015) DOI: 10.1111/anti.12158 <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com.ezproxy1.library.arizona.edu/doi/10.1111/anti.12158/abstract>

² Why is there an indent here? Guida West and Rhoda Lois Blumberg. *Women and Social Protest*. OUP Catalogue. (Cary: Oxford University Press USA - OSO, 1990), 3.

united Oaxacan citizens from a broad spectrum of society. Aligned to West and Blumberg's criticism of the visibility of women in social protest, it was only when Oaxacan women within the movement started to apply a feminist lens to their roles and accepted forms of female participation that we see a gendered focus within the movement develop. With this new gendered branch of the movement do we see academic and journalistic work focused on women and female perspectives of the events. This all too typically androcentric portrayal of world events not only perpetuates a patriarchal view of history, it is grossly misleading and inaccurate.

Not new to the gendered shortcomings of "dominant" narratives, I sought out sources that centered on women in the movement and female perspectives. Thus, I traveled to Oaxaca the summer of 2016 to further explore the participation, perspectives, and perceived impacts of 2006 on the lives of female participants. The summer of my fieldwork coincided with the ten-year anniversary of *El 2006* making it an ideal time to conduct research on the subject. Not only were Oaxacan teachers once again striking in the zócalo, but there were many commemorative events planned including marches, rallies, lectures, and interviews giving many opportunities for observations and informal interviews.

Additionally, the summer of 2016 proved to be a unique opportunity for fieldwork on the subject when once again, Oaxaca became the stage for yet another clash between its citizens and the State, this time Nochixtlan. Although this created some challenges to conducting interviews, I was able to gather some substantial data for this project and it became clear that Oaxacan women were not only present in the uprising from the very beginning, in many ways they sustained and propelled the movement. As a result of this research I argue that although the 2006 Oaxacan civil uprising and subsequent social movement was not initially based on any gendered issues, upon analysis through a feminist lens, *el 2006* can be seen as a "feminist moment" in Oaxacan history.

Fieldsite

Oaxaca, one of thirty-two states in Mexico, is located in the southern edge of the country along the Pacific coast. The state capital, Oaxaca de Juarez, also known *Ciudad de Oaxaca* (Oaxaca City), is centrally located in the Valley of Oaxaca surrounded by mountain ranges in the northeast, the west, and the south. While the 2006 civil uprising took place throughout the state, I conducted the majority of my fieldwork in the capital, which was the epicenter of the struggle in 2006.

While in Oaxaca, I stayed with a host family in the Trinidad de las Huertas neighborhood of the capital, about a fifteen-minute walk from the historic city center and zócalo. I worked out of the *Servicios Universitarios y Redes de Conocimiento de Oaxaca* (SURCO) offices in the Colonia Aleman neighborhood where I also was enrolled in a research-based study abroad program. Through the study abroad program run by SURCO, I was able to travel throughout Oaxaca to speak with a wide-range of Oaxacans while seeing many different areas of the state from the Sierra Norte all the way down through Juchitán in the southern Isthmus of Tehuantepec.

Positionality & Methodology

My fieldwork explores the participation, perceptions and perceived impacts of Oaxacan women who took part in the 2006 civil uprising and social movement in Oaxaca. In order to do so, I employ a feminist, qualitative, ethnographic approach (Lather 2007). Taken as a whole, this is a study of power and power relations from a gendered perspective. Within such a framework, it would be hypocritical for me to not first consider my own positionality and the dynamics of the “researcher/researched” relationship.

While I was aware of my own privilege to a certain extent before traveling to Oaxaca, it was – not so subtly – pointed out to me on several occasions during my time in the field. As a

white, American (better- *estadounidense*) graduate student, I was only in Oaxaca for a short time and often felt like an interloper in the lives of the people who were and continue to be profoundly affected by the events related to my research. This raises many questions related to race, class, privilege and access in ethnography. I have personally struggled with these issues in the context of my own research.

As feminist methodologist Patti Lather (2007) noted, there exists a “crisis of representation” in ethnographic work causing one to wonder, “how can writing the other not be an act of continuing colonization?” (13).³ There may be no obvious answer to this question, but it is important that I acknowledge these problematic dynamics and, perhaps, by adopting a critical perspective of my research I might lessen the potential for harm that could occur when interviewing people about their lives and the past traumas they may have endured. As the eminent feminist scholar bell hooks has said, “there is no more critical method than feminist methodology” and it is for this reason that I have chosen a feminist methodology to guide my work.⁴ By approaching my research through a feminist lens, I am aware of my privilege and positionality and critical of myself and my role as a researcher throughout the process. This is especially important to me within the historical context of white feminists who have long not considered the intersectionality of the lives of women with whom they research or within the feminist worldview as a whole.

In her book *Getting Lost: Feminist Efforts Toward a Double(d) Science*, Lather describes how feminist methodology is a type of “doubled-science” meaning it is “both/and science and not-science, working within/against the dominant, contesting borders, tracing complicity” (14). This

³ In Edward Said’s Orientalist definition of “the other.”

⁴ bell hooks, *Feminist Theory from Margin to Center*, Third ed. 2015.

method “abdicates an axiomatic attitude to representation” and “endorses a problematic attitude, a doubled reading that is both critique and complicity, a way to move beyond inside and outside”(14). This aspect of feminist methodology appeals to me as a means of addressing issues of representation in my work previously mentioned that often had me asking myself questions such as: *What right do I have to be here? What purpose does my work serve? Who benefits? What harm might I be doing? How can I do what I am here to do while doing as little damage as possible?*

The feminist methodology is also ideal as it aligns directly with the counter-hegemonic and feminist discourse and theory that frames my understanding of my research. Lather describes how feminist method is a “double necessity of working from within the institutional restraints which “calls for a doubled epistemology where the text becomes a site of the failures of representation and where textual experiments are not so much about solving the crisis of representation as about troubling the very claims they represent” (37). My interest in this subject relates to a desire to understand how counter-hegemonic efforts can succeed when forced to work within the confines of hegemony. It seems like a fruitless struggle. Especially in the present-day world where neoliberal states have a monopoly on power through violence and patriarchy is alive and well hiding under the guise of false-equality. This method acknowledges the contradictions of counter-hegemonic research within the elite institution of academia.

Observations, Interviews, and Limitations

My fieldwork was conducted primarily in Oaxaca City over the course of ten weeks from June through August of 2016, in conjunction with the ten-year anniversary of the uprising. Numerous rallies, marches, and other commemorative events were planned and “*el 2006*” was present in the minds of the Oaxacan people. In addition, the annual Section 22 teacher’s strike was also underway. My data gathering techniques included participant observations, recorded semi-

structured interviews, and unrecorded unstructured interviews. My independent fieldwork was coupled with the information gathered as a participant in the University of Arizona Travel Study program in Oaxaca run by Oliver Froehling of SURCO, which provided me with many key connections and opportunities for research.

While being in Oaxaca during this time had many advantages from a research perspective, it also resulted in several obstacles to my fieldwork. Many participants in the events of 2006 were understandably occupied in planning and participating in commemorative anniversary activities and events, and I had some difficulty scheduling interviews. My initial goal was to conduct twenty semi-structured interviews, but I ultimately only conducted ten semi-structured, recorded interviews as well as an unknown number of unstructured, unrecorded interviews. While it was my intention to focus on female perspectives, only half (5) of my interview participants are women who participated during the 2006 uprising and social movement. To protect the identities of the women whom I interviewed, I have given them pseudonyms and changed any identifying information. These five female participants are the foundation of my primary research:

<u>Pseudonym</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>How they Self-Identify</u>
Patti	Early 50s	Counselor, Feminist activist
Alma	Early 50s	Former teacher, member of Mujer Nueva Collective
Marta	Late 30s	Teacher, Husband is a political prisoner
Xochitl	Early 30s	Work with Civil Organization, Feminist & Libertarian
Sarai	Mid 30s	Self-employed, Feminist Activist

In addition to the female participants, I interviewed the following men who were also present during the 2006 uprising. As public figures, I did not require pseudonyms.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Profession</u>
Flavio Sosa	57	Former leader of APPO
Fernando Lobo	53	Writer & Radio Plantón host
John Gibler	49	American writer and Journalist

I also conducted two more recorded interviews. One of which was the head of a local non-profit environmental organization who did not provide much useful information related to my research. In the other, I spoke with a local businessman (and his wife, although she did not speak much) who did not directly participate in 2006, but provided me with insight into alternative perspectives of the events from outside the movement. Through the Travel Study program with SURCO, I was able to conduct numerous unrecorded interviews with Oaxacans throughout the state, many of which provided additional information into my research. In retrospect, I wish that I had recorded those interviews as well, but they, nonetheless, helped provide perspective.

As previously mentioned, an additional barrier to my fieldwork came when demonstrators clashed with police who once again used violent paramilitary tactics on Oaxacan civilians. While the events that transpired in 2016 were serious and noteworthy from a research perspective, it is my opinion that international news media sensationalized coverage of these events. The media coverage then resulted in the U.S. State Department and the University of Arizona issuing a temporary travel ban and shelter-in-place order for all of Oaxaca despite the fact that these were yet isolated events that by no means impacted the entire state or even the entire capital.

Nonetheless, the heightened tensions made it both impossible and inappropriate to pursue interviews during the conflict and resulting travel restrictions. For this reason, many of the interviews I conducted were done at the very end of my trip, after the shelter-in-place order was lifted.

In addition to the ethnographic research that I gathered during my fieldwork, I have also collected primary and secondary source documents including government and NGO reports, transcripts, news articles, blog and website entries, and academic papers and texts. These sources are used to supplement my own data and provide context and depth of perspective.

Organization

In chapter two of this thesis I provide an in-depth look at the literature and theoretical framework that I use to center my analysis. I begin with a general look at relevant discourse around power, focusing primarily on the concept of hegemony. I then the this on to counter-hegemonic and sub-altern feminist struggle, and conduct a brief review of literature on social movements and feminism in Oaxaca. In chapter three I will describe the conditions and relevant social movements in Oaxaca and Mexico, leading up to the civil uprising in 2006 and describe the chronology of events as described by participants during my interviews and supplemented by archival and secondary sources. (Chapter 3) before detailing the female participation in and impact on events (Chapter 4) and the how female participation in social movements contributes to an increased feminist consciousness (Chapter 5).

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter I will lay out the theoretical framework and relevant literature that guided and grounded my thinking as I conducted my research and wrote this thesis. The idea for this project was birthed from my own introduction and exploration of intellectual discourse surrounding power. It began as an inquest into the power states hold over their citizens and gradually filtered down into more complex levels of power within both states and societies down to the individual. I noted early on that the predominant voices within this discourse were not just men, but European men. Within the works of Franz Fanon, Pierre Bourdieu, Michel Foucault, and others, I was drawn most to Antonio Gramsci's writing on hegemony and ideas of counter-hegemonic struggles. While Gramsci's hegemony is an important lens through which I viewed my research, it was lacking in that it was written in a different time, for a different audience, and lacked a gendered perspective. This led me to consider feminist theory as a foundation, especially I wondered how a woman might conceptualize the most framed my own perspectives on the subject of power, especially in relationship to the power of the state over its people. Still, the more I read the more interested I became in understanding the relationship between hegemony and gender, a relationship that was absent in Gramsci's work. Therefore, it is the concepts of hegemony and patriarchy that have mostly framed my research. I will begin with the important information necessary to understanding this project including the theoretical framework that structures my analysis, as well as important geographical and historical background essential to forming a more comprehensive picture of events and issues related to my work.

Feminist Methodology and Framework

As a work that focuses on women, namely women who identify themselves as feminists, it was only natural for me to explore the works of feminist scholars as I sought to better

understand feminist ideology and perspectives. Very quickly, I discovered that feminist scholars have developed a “feminist methodology” to their work. This methodology resonated with me in that it dealt with the complexities of the interviewer and interviewee dynamics that often left me feeling uncomfortable and even voyeuristic during my time in the field. Thus, I apply both a feminist methodology and framework to my work.

In her book, *Getting Smart: Feminist Research and Pedagogy With/In the Postmodern*, Patti Lather (1991) details the importance of a feminist methodology in research. She writes, “to do feminist research is to put the construction of gender at the center of one’s inquiry” and that “feminist researcher see gender as a basic organizing principal which profoundly shapes/mediates the concrete conditions of our lives.[...] Through the questions that feminism poses and the absence it locates, feminism argues the centrality of gender in the shaping of our consciousness, skills and institutions as well as in the distribution of power and privilege” (71). In my work in Oaxaca, women’s experiences, perspectives, and words were at the center of my research and as I analyzed what I heard, saw, and read, I considered the role gender played in the events that took place.

Within the feminist methodology, it is of primary importance for the researcher to explore their own positionality and privilege within their work and adopt a critical perspective of oneself as researcher. According to Lather, this self-critique seeks to minimize any potential harm done and also helps to mitigate the potential for continued “colonization,” which has often been a point of criticism of ethnographic research in the past. Another tool on the feminist method is to retain the original transcripts of those interviewed, whenever and wherever possible, which I have tried to do within this work. Challenges arise in maintaining the original words when translation from one language to another is required, but I have tried to stay true to the words or sentiments of the

speaker and when direct translation becomes difficult, I have provided the original Spanish as a footnote.

One aspect of Lather's work that I did not agree with was her view that scholarly works be written in a scholarly way, making it difficult for the common woman or man to comprehend the arguments. In her book *Getting Lost: Feminist Efforts Towards a Double(d) Science*, Lather writes that "Sometimes we need a density that fits the thoughts being expressed. In such places, clear and concise prose would be a sort of cheat" (2007, 86). Her writing was not just dense but, at times, was outright convoluted and difficult to comprehend. In my own writing, I hope to be more accessible following the example of bell hooks who writes in the Preface of her book *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* that "Since it was first published, feminist scholarship and theory has become far removed from the lives of most people in this society. And it is this distance that makes feminism thinking appear rarified and irrelevant to most people. [...] we need feminist writing that speaks to everyone, that without it feminist education for critical consciousness cannot happen" (2015, xv). One major issue in using both Lather's and hook's work within my own is that their works are set in a feminism of the United States. This is a critical difference to the women with whom I spoke who are not only not a part of the society and culture of the US, but who's feminism stems from a Latin American feminism and Mexican feminism that was unique from the feminist theory I was most familiar. Nonetheless, both Lather and hooks provide me with relevant context. Lather provides valuable insight into feminist methodology that I have employed through my work, and bell hooks has grounded me in the importance of intersectionality in feminist theory.

Gramsci's Hegemony and Counter Hegemony

Initially, my preliminary research was founded in theories that seek to describe and define power and violence, most specifically the concept of *hegemony*. Writing from his prison cell in

early twentieth-century Italy from a Marxist lens, Antonio Gramsci's theories on power in state and civil society have been widely discussed since the posthumous publication and widespread translation of his *Prison Notebooks* (1971) during the middle of the last century. Despite the fact that Gramsci's analysis specifically focuses on power within the context of fascism in Italy under Mussolini, his expostulations on power have been cited in discourses on power across a broad span of academic work. Of particular importance to the way I frame my understanding of my research (and the world) is Gramsci's notion of hegemony (a word of Greek origin first referenced by Karl Marx). For the sake of this work, hegemony is defined as the domination (i.e. power) of one elite group (ex. the State) over the rest of the population (ex. the masses) and the way in which that domination is established and maintained. In the context of my research, hegemony is key to understanding the ways in which the Mexican (specifically Oaxacan) State establishes and maintains control, but it also relates to the ways men establish and maintain control over women in Oaxacan society and culture, which will both be explored throughout my thesis.

In relation to Gramsci's hegemony is his description of the role of "intellectuals" in a society. Gramsci wrote, "All men are intellectuals, [...] but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals." (9) That is to say that while all people have the capacity of intellectual thought, not all people apply that capacity in relevant terms. He notes that there is no such thing as "nonintellectuals," but there are two distinct types of intellectuals in society: the "traditional" and the "organic." While traditional intellectuals are defined by their professions such as academic, scientific, ecclesiastic or literary professions, organic intellectuals are those who are not so much defined by their jobs, but by their influence over the thinking and organizing of a certain social class (12). Thus, Gramsci argues that intellectuals are present in every aspect of society and are key in moving any group of people towards hegemony. As Gramsci puts it, "The intellectuals are

the dominant group's 'deputies' exercising the subaltern functions of the social hegemony and political government" (12). Schools play an important role in the "intellectualization" of the people and, therefore, play an important function towards hegemony.

Equally important to understanding hegemony are understanding what Gramsci calls the two "superstructural levels" made up of "civil society" and "political society." (12) He explains, "These two levels correspond on the one hand to the function of 'hegemony' which the dominant group exercises throughout society and on the other hand to that of "direct domination" or command exercised through the State and "judicial" government."

According to Gramsci (1971), the state's primary role is to raise the masses to a particular cultural and moral level in order to promote productive development corresponding to the interests of the ruling class (75). Gramsci's thoughts are akin to the way in which Socrates and his contemporaries defined power as the ability to rule over others and have your will be done by them, but Gramsci goes much further in his analysis. In defining the state, Gramsci writes that it is "the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance, but manages to win the active consent of those over whom it rules" (Gramsci cited by Daldal 2014).⁵ In other words, hegemonic elites create conditions in which the masses agree to their own domination. As Asli Daldal (2014) describes, to do so "power is mainly exerted by the dominant bourgeois class through the medium of ideology: by working on the popular mentality via the institutions of civil society and thus establishing a hegemony using the State apparatuses" (150). These "institutions" and "apparatuses" include the government, the

⁵ As cited by Asli Daldal, "Power and Ideology in Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci: A Comparative Analysis," *Review of History and Political Science*, June 2014, Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 149-167.

judicial system, schools, the media, and so forth. This process within the hegemony is often referred to as “manufacturing consent.”⁶

Gramsci’s conception of power through hegemony is embedded in the Machiavellian “relations of force” and the relationship between force and consent is of particular interest to my work (Daldal 2014).⁷⁸ Force, sometimes referred to in terms of coercion, must be applied by the state under a facade of legitimacy, for example through the real or perceived threat of legal, social, or moral consequences.⁹ While force doesn’t always mean violence in its many forms: be it symbolic, structural or every day (Williams 2007), it does include violence. The use of violence by the state is sometimes referred to as a “monopoly on violence” because it is typically unlawful for any person or entity other than the state, through its officials, to employ violence of any means without approval or consent from the state. Meanwhile, the state itself remains within, above, or outside the law when it comes to the use of violence, more delicately termed “the use of force.”

This relationship between force and consent is of particular significance to my research because it explains that when consent cannot be manufactured through the hegemonic apparatus, so-called “legitimate power” cannot be maintained and the subaltern rejects hegemonic power and authority of the state. This may then lead to attempts by the state to construct a false legitimacy brokered through corruption and fraud. As Hannah Arendt (1970) points out, this is often the case when it is too risky for the state to employ force. In order to maintain legitimacy, the state must

⁶ *Manufacturing Consent* is the title of the 1988 book by Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman about political economy in mass media. The authors credit this title to 1922 book *Public Opinion* by Walter Lippmann.

⁷ Asli Daldal, “Power and Ideology in Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci: A Comparative Analysis,” *Review of History and Political Science*, June 2014, Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 149-167.

⁸ Antonio Gramsci, “State and Civil Society,” *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Q. Hoare and G. Nowell Smith, New York and London: International Publishers and Lawrence & Wishart, 1971; 228-70.

⁹ Raymond Williams, “Keywords,” *On violence: A reader*. Edited by Bruce B. Lawrence, Bruce B., and Aisha Karim (Duke University Press, 2007); 181-187. Among Raymond Williams many definitions of violence in *Keywords* he refers to “the use of physical force, including the distant use of weapons or bombs.”

stay within the constraints of the law or appear to maintain legality, even though a state may employ illegal “commando” tactics secretly, when in a weakened position.

Gramsci’s idea of maintaining the lens of legality aligns with French philosopher Michel Foucault’s writing on the State and punishment. French philosopher Michel Foucault wrote, “it is society that defines, in terms of its own interests, what must be regarded as a crime.” (Foucault, 445) Foucault’s descriptions of punishment detail how the State (i.e. the ruling class) uses the hegemonic apparatus of law (*vis a vi* punishment) to control the masses. For example, if you want people within civil society to act or not act a certain way, there must be a close association between crime and the punishment in that the very thought of such an act conjures in a person a fear of punishment that outweighs any perceived benefits of the crime. For this reason, Foucault also argues that all punishments should be public because they do not only serve the purpose of castigating the criminal, but also create a discourse among society preventing others from crime, but also allowing the public to perceive that they are the victims of such crime. A distance between the State and the punishment must be observed as not to be seen as an act of violence of man against man. When Foucault says the punishment “reanimates the useful, virtuous interests” he is assuming that so-called criminals have had a particular educational upbringing to allow for moral and ethical givens based on culture and ideology. With the hegemonic tools in place within civil society laws act as the State’s enforcers of the hegemonic.

While Gramsci’s hegemony is a Western/Eurocentric idea that does not consider gender, in fact he exclusively writes about “men,” the concept is frequently referenced in feminist and gender studies.

One of the notions that interested me most in my reading of Gramsci was the idea that any attempt to disrupt or change the hegemony was constrained by the reality that it must done from

within the confines of that very hegemony it hopes of overturning, making any counter-hegemonic efforts an uphill battle. How then can a hegemony be defeated? Gramsci addresses this question with the concepts of War of Movement (Maneuver) and War of Position, which theorize how the subaltern might successfully challenge the status quo. Where War of Movement, which refers to “direct frontal assault,” may have once been sufficient for victory in military conflicts for power, especially in less developed civil societies (which Gramsci refers to as “the East”), Gramsci argues would not be sufficient in more developed societies (i.e. “the West”) (Egan 2015). Instead, a War of Position must be employed wherein “a slower, more protracted process of siege warfare” takes place so that the “subordinate classes wear away the existing civil society and, through their self-organization, create a new one” (Egan 2015, 102). This is especially true within politics, because ideological and tactical efforts can continue long after apparent political defeat.

New Social Movement Theory

Another key theoretical framework for my thesis is the scholarly research that has been done on social movements often referred to as New Social Movement Theory, which highlights the culture of “New” social movements and how participation in social movements impact individuals and works to bring people together across individual differences. The article “The Mobile Politics of Emotions and Social Movement in Oaxaca, Mexico” by Iván Arenas was highly important in forming my perceptions of events of 2006 and in many ways, my work is a continuation of his argument laid out within this article.

Arenas describes how scholarly research on social movements has evolved within New Social Movement Theory. He cites Laur Luido when he states that “While political activists seek ‘to intervene in a particular set of material and social relations, it is also an exercise in creating and changing ourselves’” (2003; 51). He continues by pointing out that “Recent scholarship has

emphasized how social movements are personally transformative and open up collective possibilities. (Bosco 2007; Esteva 2008; Graeber 2004; Stephen 2013) In that we are discussing the same event, I've taken Arenas's argument and applied it more specifically to the individual women with whom I spoke and the transformations they underwent as result of their participation in 2006. "Emotional geographies can produce activists out of participants." (Arenas, 1123)

Arenas contends that "social movements are commonly assessed in relation to whether or not they achieve their primary political demand- or... whether they have any demands at all." Yet, he ascertains that "a social movement may at once be a political failure and yet profoundly transformative" and that "regardless of a movement's political gains or losses, spatial struggles during social movements generate transformative emotional geographies and collective sociality."(1121-1122).¹⁰ In analyzing the events that happened in 2006 in Oaxaca, Arenas argues that based on shifting concepts of success within social movements makes it necessary to not just consider whether a movement achieved its demands, but also what changes social movements cause in its participants. He argues, "A perspective that would limit the effect of Oaxaca's social movement to its capacity to curtail the governor's authoritarian policies can only conclude that Oaxaca's uprising was a colossal failure. Yet, post 2006, Oaxacans from all walks of life commonly note that Oaxaca is today another society."

"Scholars have increasingly turned to the role of emotions to understand the importance and effects of social movements for people's lives. (Bosco 2006)." "Increased attention to the critical role of emotions follows a recognition that social movements move people, mobilizing them both physically as well as emotionally and that this has effects that reach beyond a movement's political demands." (Arenas, 2015)

¹⁰ Iván Arenas "The Mobile Politics of Emotions and Social Movement in Oaxaca, Mexico"

Oaxaca 2006

In the early days of my Master's studies, I happened across an article about the large-scale civil uprising that took place in the Mexican state of Oaxaca in 2006. I was amazed to discover that everyday citizens of a powerful, hegemonic state were able to rise up and effectively expel the state government for nearly six months. As I read everything I could find on the subject, I started to feel as though the material seemed to focus heavily on the men in the movements: the male perspective and experience. This void in the literature made me want to know the roles of and impacts on women in the movement.

As I narrowed my search, I was able to find a few notable works that focused on Oaxacan women in 2006. John Gibler, an American journalist and writer, wrote a couple news pieces about the "guerilla women" who took over the CORTV station, a critical moment in the uprising almost exclusively women-led.¹¹ Lynn Stephen, an anthropologist from the University of Oregon who writes extensively about women in Oaxaca wrote an entire book on the subject entitled "We Are the Face of Oaxaca."¹² Despite these notable exceptions, I was left with more questions than answers about women during the struggle. With the upcoming summer marking the ten year anniversary of the 2006 Oaxacan Uprising, I felt it would be a perfect time to conduct field work in Oaxaca and attempt to answer some of my own questions.

During the 2006 civil uprising, the Oaxacan government (hegemonic power) employed police and paramilitary forces (violence) to repress the teacher's strike and APPO demonstrations (social movements) resulting in numerous false arrests, beatings, tortures, rapes, and murders (human rights

¹¹ John Gibler, "In Oaxaca, Women Rise" posted Feb 06, 2007
<http://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/is-the-u.s.-ready-for-human-rights/1637>

¹² Lynn Stephen, *We Are the Face of Oaxaca: Testimony and Social Movements*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2013.

violations), all without any consequences for those in power (impunity). For this reason, the 2006 civil uprising in Oaxaca provides an excellent case study to apply the argument that testimony can be a powerful tool of resistance in social movements and human rights, because it confronts hegemonic power structures, decries state violence and challenges impunity. To do so, I will cite the testimonies and discourse employed in Lynn Stephen's book *We Are the Face of Oaxaca*, which documents the experiences of Oaxacan citizens who have experienced, directly or indirectly, the power and violence of the Mexican state. Analyzing the specific ways in which testimony is a useful tool of resistance makes it possible to understand why testimony is commonly employed in social movements and human rights work.

The state of Oaxaca lies between the national capital of México City and the México-Guatemala border to the south. To this day it remains one of the most demographically indigenous states in the Republic. There are sixteen officially recognized indigenous groups in the state, the largest of which are the Zapotecs and Mixtecs, and just under half of the Oaxacan population identifies as indigenous.¹³ While indigeneity in most other parts of México often comes with prejudicial connotations of inferiority, poverty, and ignorance, Oaxacans have a deep-rooted sense of pride in their indigenous identity, which includes a strong cultural, linguistic and artistic heritage.¹⁴ Due to its long history of resistance to outside incursions, resistance itself can also be considered a characteristic of Oaxacan identity, deeply rooted in its indigenous heritage and, likewise, a source of great pride.

In contemporary times, this resistance often comes in the form of social movements. As Stephen describes, "The state of Oaxaca has a distinguished history of social movements, particularly

¹³ Lynn Stephen, *We Are the Face of Oaxaca: Testimony and Social Movements* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013); 3. According to _____, 48% of the population of Oaxaca identifies as indigenous.

¹⁴ John Tutino, "Ethnic Resistance" in *Zapotec Struggles: Histories, Politics, and Representations from Juchitán, Oaxaca*. Edited by Howard Campbell, Leigh Binford, Miguel Bartolomé, and Alicia Barabas. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993; 41.

during the last three decades of the twentieth century.”¹⁵ She briefly details the history of some of the more impactful social movements include the Worker-Peasant Coalition of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec (*La Coalición Obrero Campesino Estudiantil del Istmo de Tehuantepec*, or COCEI) in the 1970’s, and the teacher’s movement which involved the split of the National Coordinator of Educational Workers (*Coordinadora Nacional de Trabajadores de Educación*, or CNTE) from the National Syndicate of Education Workers (*El Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de Educación*, or SNTE) in the 1980’s.¹⁶ As previously mentioned, the Oaxacan teacher’s movement has a direct role in the 2006 uprising as their annual strike and its repression by the state led to over three hundred different social organizations, including that of the teachers, united to form The Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca (APPO). One common factor among all these movements is that they all oppose the Mexican state and all have experienced violent repression by the state.

Testimony, in social movements and human rights, confronts hegemonic power by bringing into question state legitimacy and weakening consent. This is especially true when the state is abusing or neglecting its responsibilities to its citizens (relating to Foucault’s notion of governmentality) and, in more extreme circumstance, employing violence, either in a display of power (like Mills and Weber assert) or resulting from the loss of power (as Arendt contests), because it allows for an alternative narrative to that of the state. In circumstances of state repression, the state usually formulates an account of events that portrays the state positively or, in the very least, legitimizes the use of force. This is exactly what was happening in Oaxaca during and since the 2006 uprising.

Stephen asserts that in 2006 “the legitimacy of the Oaxaca state government was strenuously questioned in a massive assertion of rights.”¹⁷ One aspect of challenging the state’s legitimacy was

¹⁵ Lynn Stephen, *We Are the Face of Oaxaca: Testimony and Social Movements* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013); 37.

¹⁶ Lynn Stephen, *We Are the Face of Oaxaca: Testimony and Social Movements* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013); 37.

¹⁷ Lynn Stephen, *We Are the Face of Oaxaca: Testimony and Social Movements* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013); 95.

calling into question what Stephen describes as the “official story” of what happened. In this narrative, the state is basically the just and legal protector of the citizens of Oaxaca who were endangered and manipulated by teachers and APPO associates. The governor acted in the best interests of the state and against the criminals who illegally barricaded streets and brought chaos to the city. Force was necessary to restore order and civility. This is the version of events that was promoted by the state and broadcasted via state media such as state aligned news outlets. However, Stephen’s tells a much different version of events as told by the people who participated in it. She summarizes the events of 2006 by writing,

The movement was met with strong repression. In the course of just six months (June–November 2006), at least twenty-three people were killed, hundreds were arrested and imprisoned, and over twelve hundred complaints were filed with human rights commissions. Since then the violence has decreased and human rights violations have continued. The state government repression of the Oaxacan social movement in 2006 involved explicit strategies of targeted assassinations, torture, fear and intimidation through unjustified detentions, and the leveling of false charges against those detained. It also included militarization of Oaxaca City and other regions by unmarked paramilitary convoys and marked police and military vehicles, the targeting of movement leaders and others on a website identifying them as “already eliminated” or needing to be eliminated, and the photographing and videotaping by security forces of movement participants in public marches and occupations.¹⁸

As seen in this quote, Stephen directly acknowledges the state’s role in the brutal repression of the uprising and associated social movements.¹⁹ However, more attention could have been paid to the

¹⁸ Lynn Stephen, *We Are the Face of Oaxaca: Testimony and Social Movements* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013); 6.

¹⁹ Stephen and many others refer to the events of 2006 in Oaxacan as a social movement. I have some hesitations with such a classification. I prefer to refer to the events of 2006 in as a mass uprising, rebellion, or

structures of power in Oaxaca and the use of violence by the state. Without directly discussing the issues being faced by Oaxacan citizens and the challenges faced by social movements, it is difficult to adequately argue testimonies of importance as a tool in human rights. Stephen is clearly aware of the notion of hegemony, as she mentions it several times in passing throughout the book, but a more detailed discussion of the hegemonic apparatus in Oaxaca would shed light on fundamental struggle and challenges of social movements and human rights in México.

The testimonial accounts in *We Are the Face of Oaxaca* speak directly of violence inflicted by the state or their actors that Stephen refers to as “frightening repression.”²⁰ One of the most obvious examples of this avoidance appears in the fourth chapter entitled “Testimony and Human Rights Violations in Oaxaca.” In this chapter that most directly deals with abuses of the state during the summer of 2006, Stephen gives the accounts of three men Ramiro Aragón Pérez, Elionai Santiago Sánchez, and Juan Gabriel Ríos, who were abducted, temporarily disappeared, and tortured by police. As she describes the events of their abduction, Stephen writes, “noticing a car following them, they turned around to go home but were blocked by another vehicle, a truck. Five men got out of the two vehicles and proceeded to ask them for their identification and question them about what they were doing.” Clearly there is some ambiguity here as to who these abductors are, but in the transcription Ramiro explains that later, “they pushed us into the back of a police truck. There we saw a policeman.” While Stephen does say that the men were “forcibly detained,” which might allude to police involvement, it seems safe to assume that these men were police, or in the least, working with the police. The question then is why would Stephen leave these details out of her discourse analysis.

resistance movement. Social movements were a huge part of 2006 in that many different social movements came together under APPO to form a unified collective social movement, but not all participants acted as part of these communities. This outlines one problem I perceive in the discourse surrounding Oaxaca 2006, as the misclassification of events in the most basic terms.

²⁰ Lynn Stephen, *We Are the Face of Oaxaca: Testimony and Social Movements* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013); 17.

A common issue noted in *We Are the Face of Oaxaca* is impunity. Impunity is often an issue in human rights cases throughout Latin America. When speaking of truth commissions in Latin America, Stephen highlights, “This justice, of course, usually came with impunity for the perpetrators of violence.”²¹ While discourse on the importance of testimony in truth commissions is important to recognize, its application as a framework is somewhat flawed because México does not have a national truth commission and the recently established state truth commission in Oaxaca holds no power to punish even if they determine crimes have been committed. Stephen recognizes this when explaining, “While the significant scale of the violence and the high number of human rights abuses, cases of torture, and assassinations would suggest the necessity for a national truth commission to investigate what happened, such a national commission has not been created.”²² This is a testament to the fact that impunity in México is a national issue. It reaches from the bottom to the top ranging from the security forces who carry out the orders to the government officials giving the orders. In fact, the higher up in the structure of power, the more unlikely it is that there will be any consequences, even in the most extreme cases.

In Oaxaca, this impunity protects the police and paramilitary forces who beat, torture, rape, disappear and torture any real or perceived threat to the state. As Stephen explains during trials of the three men who were falsely accused of crimes after being detained, beaten and tortured by police, their testimonies in court were not taken seriously and directly contradicted by the testimonies of the police. In these cases, the word police carry far more weight than individuals. Part of this problem, which I have not fully researched myself but is detailed in the documentary *Presunto Culpable*, lies in the fact that justice in México is based on a system of guilty until proven innocent.²³ Within this system, anyone

²¹ Lynn Stephen, *We Are the Face of Oaxaca: Testimony and Social Movements* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013); 9.

²² Lynn Stephen, *We Are the Face of Oaxaca: Testimony and Social Movements* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013); 7.

²³ *Presunto Culpable/Presumed Guilty*. Dir. Hernández, Roberto (Hernández Ruiz), Geoffrey Smith, Layda Negrete, et al. (Icarus Films, 2009)

stepping before a judge is automatically assumed to be a criminal, making it an uphill battle from that starts, before even considering corruption and ineptitude in the judicial system. It is only outside the court the testimonies gain legitimacy and make public, not only the state violence endured by Oaxaca citizens, but also the impunity that follows. But what of impunity for those in positions of leadership who are making the decisions on a state-wide or national level that normalize and sanction the use of violence?

It could be argued that injustice and impunity have only been perpetuated by the conflict in 2006. The current governor of Oaxaca, Gabino Cué, who once was considered a symbol of hope and change for Oaxaca, has refused to charge his predecessor with any crimes. In 2015, Cué told a local reporter, “I don’t have any elements with which I can detain Ortiz Ruiz,” despite the fact that authorities have determined substantial mismanagement of state finances under Ortiz Ruiz totaling a loss of more than four million pesos.²⁴ Ortiz Ruiz has repeatedly ignored requests to testify before the state’s truth commission to the alleged human rights violations committed during his administration. Further complicating matters, many of the heads of police and unites responsible for the abductions and assassinations during the conflict, who were presumable the ones receiving order from URO were themselves assassinated in the years following the uprising, leaving no one who could implicate URO.²⁵

Yet, despite this fact that social movements have been violently repressed in Oaxaca, the resistance movement is alive and well. The use of testimony has not only contributed to the fight against hegemonic authority, state violence, and impunity, it also helps create unity and hope which foster a belief that change is possible. This might be one of the most significant results of social

²⁴ Pedro Matías, “Gabino Cué exonera a Ulises Ruiz ‘porque no se robó ni un televisor,’” *Página 3*, August 24, 2015, accessed December 14, 2015. “No tuve en mis manos ningún element como para poderlo detener.”

²⁵ Interview with Oliver Froehling, Director of Servicios Universitarios y Redes de Conocimiento de Oaxaca, December 5th, 20216.

mobilization, even in the face of repression, and Lynn Stephen's book is an archive of testimony that captures both aspects. Amidst accounts of resistance and brutality, there is also a sense of strength.

CHAPTER 3: BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Throughout Oaxaca's history, there is a recurring theme of repression and resistance in which oaxaqueños have rejected repeated attempts by internal and external figures to assert dominance and authority over them (Tutino 2010).²⁶ This history relates directly to the emergence of numerous social movements in the state, most notably over the last three decades (Stephen 2010). As always, women have been a presence in these movements from the beginning and while the majority of these movements were not directly driven by or focused on gendered issues, the involvement of women in these movements has led to an increased feminist consciousness for both female and male participants. This chapter will provide a brief history of repression and resistance in Mexico, in general, and Oaxaca, in particular, and introduce the reader to the most significant social movements in Oaxaca leading up to 2006.

The state of Oaxaca, one of thirty-two states in Mexico, is located in the southern edge of the country along the Pacific coast, positioned roughly between the national capital, México City, to the northwest, and México-Guatemala border to the east. The state capital, Oaxaca de Juarez, also known as Oaxaca City (*Ciudad de Oaxaca*), is centrally located in the Valley of Oaxaca surrounded by mountain ranges in the north-east, the west, and further to the south (see Figures 1 and 2 below). Oaxaca state's territory is composed of diverse landscapes including deserts, mountains, rain forests, and beaches. The climate makes it an optimal place for certain types of agriculture, with agriculture, mining, and lumber making up a proportion of economic activity and tourism, remittances, and drug-trafficking being other sources of economic income for the state.

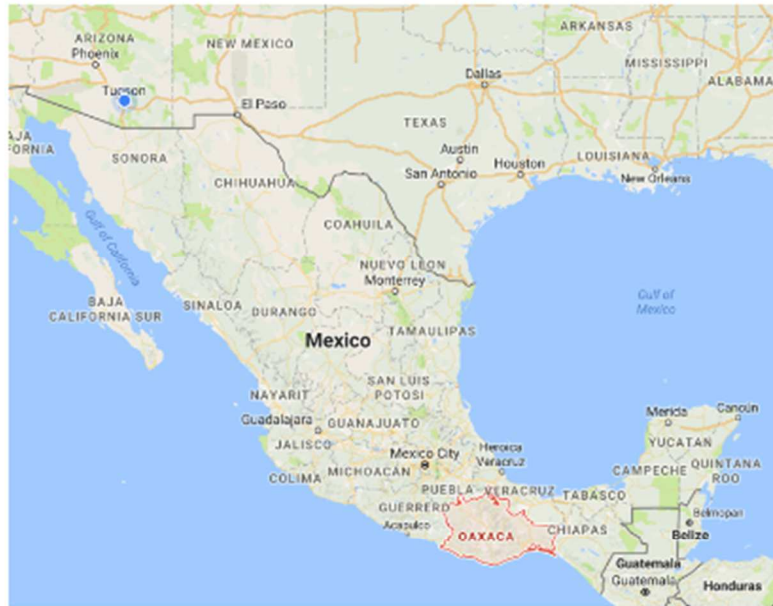


Fig. 1. Map of Mexico showing the State of Oaxaca in the south. (Google Maps Screenshot 2017)



Fig.2. Details of the state of Oaxaca. (Google Maps Screenshot 2017)

According to the National Commission for the Development of the Indigenous Peoples (CDI), Oaxaca has the highest indigenous population in Mexico at 48%.²⁷ On the lower

²⁷ La Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas (CDI) <http://www.gob.mx/cdi>

end, The National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) estimates that 34% of the population is indigenous, but defines indigeneity based solely on the ability to speak one (or more) indigenous language.²⁸ There are many Oaxacans who identify with one (or more) of the sixteen officially recognized indigenous groups who do not speak that respective language.²⁹ With such a strong indigenous presence, Oaxaca's indigeneity is both a source of pride and exploitation. Just as the Mexican government adopted certain facets of indigeneity into the construction of Mexican national identity (*mexicanidad*) starting in the 1920s, the state of Oaxaca has also conveniently embraced Oaxacan indigenous culture (more accurate- cultures) into state propaganda and marketing, especially for the promotion of tourism, Oaxaca's leading source of revenue.³⁰ Even academics, I have found, tend to romanticize aspects of Oaxaca's indigeneity and I want to be careful not to do so in my own research.³¹ Nonetheless, indigenous heritage is an increasingly important aspect of personal and collective identity and is a growing movement in Oaxaca over the last several decades.

As stated by Electa Arenal, Oaxaca is "among the richest and poorest of Mexico's thirty-one [now 32] states: rich in resources, languages, and cultures; poor from plunder and neglect" (2007, 107). Based on the Mexican government's definition of poverty, CONEVAL ranked

²⁸INEGI

<http://cuentame.inegi.org.mx/monografias/informacion/oax/poblacion/diversidad.aspx?tema=me&e=20>

²⁹ Officially recognized indigenous groups, in order of populations: Zapotec, Mixtec, Mazateco, Chinanteco, Mixe, Chatino, Trique, Huave, Cuicateco, Zoque, Amuzgo, Oaxacan Chontal, Tacuate, Chochotec, Ixcateco, and Popoloco.

Oaxaca 4th poorest in 2012 and 3rd in 2010 (Appendix A).^{32,33} While Oaxaca's poverty is frequently noted in academic texts, this valuation is meaningless if not contextualized, which it seldom is.³⁴ For my research, poverty levels in Oaxaca are significant, especially in comparison to the rest of the country and those in positions of power, to show a disconnect between those making policy in Mexico City and even Oaxaca City and the lived experiences of urban and rural Oaxacan people. The inequality, neglect, exploitation, and abuse of poor and marginalized people in Oaxaca are the more telling issues and will be addressed more throughout my thesis.

Oaxaca Social Movement History

When examining the events of the 2006 uprising in Oaxaca it is relevant to understand the history of social movements that came prior in order to examine the interconnectivity and progress of such resistance movements. Two such movements in Oaxaca are the the Coalition of Workers, Peasants and Students of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec (*La Coalición Obrero Campesino Estudiantil del Istmo de Tehuantepec*, or COCEI), which was started by students in Juchitán from the 1970s and 1980s; and the National Coordinator of Educational Workers (*Coordinadora Nacional de Trabajadores de Educación*, or CNTE)), a national teacher's movement that took root in Oaxaca during the 1980s. While there is a large body of academic literature on each of these individual movements, it is also relevant to academic study to explore the relationship between them. When writing about the events of the civil uprising in Oaxaca in 2006, very little attention is paid to the history leading up to such an explosion of direct action and civil rebellion. Looking at the history

³² Consejo Nacional de Evaluación de la Política de Desarrollo Social (CONEVAL) or the National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy is a Mexican federal agency to evaluate and monitor social policy and poverty.

³³ It is interesting to note that all the Mexican states with more than sixty percent of the population living in poverty are located in the south. This must cause one to wonder what factors contribute to such economic displacement in Mexico. Perhaps something I will look into more at a later time.

³⁴ In the Neoliberal context, poverty, or the lack thereof, is often a marker of progress, development, and overall economic success, but does it mean that wealthier people are living better, happier, and or healthier lives?

of COCEI and CNTE that precede the formation of APPO in 2006, will allow us to better understand what happened in 2006 and the larger conditions in Oaxaca that have fostered such a long history of resistance. Below I will provide a brief description of each of these three movements in order of chronology, although there is some overlap between them.

COCEI Struggles in the Isthmus³⁵

The Coalition of Workers, Peasants and Students of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec (*La Coalición Obrero Campesino Estudiantil del Istmo de Tehuantepec*, or COCEI) was founded and based in the Oaxacan city of Juchitán, on the Pacific coast of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, about half-way between the state capital, Oaxaca de Juárez, and the state of Chiapas. Local lore says that Saint Vincent rejected more fertile terrain choosing instead to found the city in a more difficult landscape in order to foster strength and resilience in its people.³⁶

Well-known for its strong Zapotec heritage and culture, Juchitán is also famous—or infamous, depending from what side you look at things—for its history of resistance to outside incursions.³⁷ *Juchitecos* are credited with at least three major rebellions including the 1660 Tehuantepec Rebellion, the rebellions of the 1840s led by Gregorio Meléndez, and the 1911 rebellion led by José “Che” Gómez. Juchitán fighters also successfully defeated a battalion of

³⁵ Additional sources for this sections include: Manuel Robles, “Electores, campesinos, periodistas, los más agredidos,” *La Redacción* (México,) December 27, 1986. Juan M. Vasquez, “Mexico Left- Toehold in Oaxaca,” *The Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, California) February 5, 1982. Jeffrey Rubin, “Mexico- A Tale of Two States,” *The New York Times* (New York, New York) January 7, 1994. Oakland Ross, “Mexican Experiment in Reform Ends Violently,” *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto, Canada) December 26, 1983. Oakland Ross, “Pawns in Party Games- Violence Plagues Mexican Town,” *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto, Canada) December 28, 1983. Oakland Ross, “Chief Fights Anarchy in Run-Down Mexico,” *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto, Canada) December 27, 1983. Oakland Ross, “Mexico- Blues Go Home,” *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto, Canada) December 24, 1983.

³⁶ Jeffrey Rubin, *Decentering the Regime: Ethnicity, Radicalism, and Democracy in Juchitán, Mexico* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997).

³⁷ John Tutino, “Ethnic Resistance” in *Zapotec Struggles: Histories, Politics, and Representations from Juchitán, Oaxaca*. Edited by Howard Campbell, Leigh Binford, Miguel Bartolomé, and Alicia Barabas. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993; 41.

foreign forces that invaded the isthmus during the French Intervention in 1866. The idea that Juchitecos are built strong and resilient contributes to a sense of pride in this history of resistance.³⁸

In recent history, COCEI carries on the tradition and reputation of Zapotec resistance.

COCEI was founded in the early 1970's by students, inspired by the student movement in México City, who united with peasants and workers to create an organization independent of the government that would actively work towards the improvement of living and working conditions in Juchitán.³⁹

The relationship between indigenous heritage and resistance is a theme that is often heard in reference to COCEI. La Jornada reporter Elena Poniatowska wrote, "We All know that if there is an Indian state in Mexico, that state is Oaxaca and if there is a politicalized state it is Oaxaca. Oaxacan peasants and Indians, have always fought against state intervention, and COCEI was one the results of that struggle."⁴⁰ Howard Campbell notes that, "According to COCEI, an essential feature of Zapotec people is the long and continuous struggle that they have waged against domestic and foreign interference in Isthmus affairs."⁴¹ He connects the legacy of resistance from past to present by asserting that:

COCEI also depicts contemporary Zapotec society and character as the product of a continuous history of social struggle stretching from the pre-Columbian period to the present... The organization draws on oral and written accounts to construct a

³⁸ Howard Campbell, Leigh Binford, Miguel Bartolomé, and Alicia Barabas, editors, *Zapotec Struggles: Histories, Politics, and Representations from Juchitán, Oaxaca*, (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993).

³⁹ I am attempted to locate primary source documents from COCEI that outline their goals.

⁴⁰ Elena Poniatowska, "La COCEI," *La Jornada*, (México City, México) June 3, 2007.

⁴¹ Howard Campbell, Leigh Binford, Miguel Bartolomé, and Alicia Barabas. *Zapotec Struggles: Histories, Politics, and Representations from Juchitán, Oaxaca*, Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993. 25.

millenarian vision of Isthmus history that differs substantially from that held by national politicians, bureaucrats, and most Mexican and foreign intellectuals.⁴²

This speaks directly to COCEI's counter-hegemonic resistance to the Mexican state's attempts to manufacture consent in provide legitimacy to hegemonic domination. The state provides a narrative that promotes its authority, but COCEI's count-narrative challenges that claim to legitimacy.

COCEI was able to achieve a great deal of political success. In the 1980's COCEI allied with the Mexican Communist Party and in 1981, it was able to win political offices in the local elections. This event is highly significant as it was the first time in Mexican history that a leftist government won elected positions anywhere in México.⁴³ Of the 1981 election, Poniatowska wrote, "COCEI showed that it was able to mobilize more than ten thousand people and remove, if it decided to, the then governor of the state, as before *Juchitecos* defeated the French in Tehuantepec, in 1866."⁴⁴ In this statement, Poniatowska once again connects past and present by comparing present day political victory to the military victory of Juchitecos over a century prior. It is relevant to note that participants and supporters of the COCEI movement considered their efforts a defense of Oaxaca, not just a form of resistance. In the Los Angeles Times, COCEI leader Arnoldo Martinez Verdugo was quoted as saying to a large crowd of supporters after the victory, "Your cause is our cause!... We are committed to the defense of Juchitán!"⁴⁵ Campbell states that

⁴²Howard Campbell, Leigh Binford, Miguel Bartolomé, and Alicia Barabas. *Zapotec Struggles: Histories, Politics, and Representations from Juchitán, Oaxaca*, Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993. 25.

⁴³ Elena Poniatowska, "La COCEI," *La Jornada*, June 3, 2007.

⁴⁴ Elena Poniatowska, "La COCEI," *La Jornada*, June 3, 2007.

⁴⁵ Juan M. Vasquez, "Mexico Left- Toehold in Oaxaca" *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, Ca) February 5, 1982.

They [Zapotecs in the form of COCEI members] continue to resist with remarkable tenacity and notable successes the encroaching powers of the centralizing Mexican State...Opposition to Mexico's centralizing State usually is blocked by the overwhelming power and resources of that State.⁴⁶

In many ways, the Oaxacan social movements of contemporary times are a present day manifestation of the resistance struggles against colonization that began in the sixteenth century.

Just as those efforts threatened the colonial powers of the time and were brutally repressed for this reason, so too are social movements repressed by the modern Mexican state. In December of 1983, the newspaper *La Redacción* published a description of the photographic exhibitions detailing "The chronology of attacks on COCEI," as it was presented in a by photographer Rafael Doniz and writer Carlos Monsivais. While I have not been able to locate the accompanying photographs, the newspaper piece outlines the succession of violence exacted by PRI government supporters and officials including murders, shootings, assaults, vandalism and intimidation.⁴⁷ One estimate states in the first twelve years of the movement, thirty COCEI "militants" were killed and 600 imprisoned.⁴⁸ The attacks on COCEI are not unlike those experienced by social movements and political opposition groups throughout México, past and present. The ultimate goal of the state is to crush dissent, no matter the cost.

While the COCEI movement achieved major victories, they were ultimately crushed. In 1983, just two years after their historic victory, COCEI leaders in Juchitán were forced out of

⁴⁶ Howard Campbell, Leigh Binford, Miguel Bartolomé, and Alicia Barabas. *Zapotec Struggles: Histories, Politics, and Representations from Juchitán, Oaxaca*, Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993. 41

⁴⁷ "Cronología de agresiones a la COCEI," *La Redacción*, December 31, 1983.

⁴⁸ Dudley Althaus, "We Have a History of Interchange- Indigenous Group Runs City, Lights Way for Chiapas Rebels," *Houston Chronicle*, (Houston, Texas) February 16, 1994.

government by the PRI officials who sent in the military to take over the town. Soldiers established barracks in the city and placed armed soldiers in the tower of the city hall.⁴⁹ PRI officials won local elections that same year and in 1986, amidst allegations of fraud and corruption, and the military occupying the city for more than four years during this period to ensure PRI domination.⁵⁰ So under circumstances of temporary success, but ultimate failure under extreme repression by the state, how do we determine the value of such a movement? The events that took place in the Isthmus in Juchitán with COCEI and PRI's use of force mirror the events that later took place with APPO in Oaxaca and show how the PRI government has a history of using force and violence to silence and eliminate opposition.

Teacher's Movements: SNTE & CNTE

The National Coordinator of Educational Workers (*Coordinadora Nacional de Trabajadores de Educación*, or CNTE) is an offshoot of the National Syndicate of Education Workers (*El Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de Educación*, or SNTE) that has also been brutally repressed in the state of Oaxaca from the time of their emergence in the state in the 1980s. SNTE, which was founded in 1943, is what might be described as a national teacher's union that has very close ties to the central PRI government. In the 1970's, this relationship between CNTE leadership and the PRI officials, led many to grow disenchanted with the organization and sought democratic reform.

⁴⁹ "Pawns in Party Games- Violence Plagues Mexican Town," *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto, Canada) December 28, 1983. Oakland Ross, "Chief Fights Anarchy in Run-Down Mexico," *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto, Canada) December 27, 1983. Find another newspaper article on forcing COCEI from office. This is interesting in that it seems similar to tactics used by APPO in 2006, minus the weapons.

⁵⁰ Oakland Ross, "Mexican Experiment in Reform Ends Violently," *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto, Canada) December 26, 1983. Manuel Robles, "Electores, campesinos, periodistas, los más agredidos," *La Redacción* (México City, México) December 27, 1986. Dudley Althaus, "We Have a History of Interchange- Indigenous Group Runs City, Lights Way for Chiapas Rebels," *Houston Chronicle*, (Houston, Texas) February 16, 1994.

In 1979, CNTE was founded in Tuxtla, Chiapas. Although being first established in Chiapas, this may once again demonstrate the relationship between indigeneity and resistance movements. Chiapas, like Oaxaca, is one of the most indigenous states in México. Journalist Luis Hernández Navarro wrote that many of those who formed CNTE were bilingual indigenous teachers who worked in areas with active peasant struggles and indigenous *caciques* (local political bosses).⁵¹ Also similar to Oaxaca, Chiapas has one of the highest rates of poverty and many of the teachers who joined CNTE worked in the poorest areas of the country. These teachers were asking for a thirty percent pay raise and the democratization of SNTE.⁵² Many of these teachers both lived and worked in some of the poorest communities in Oaxaca and many of the teachers are women.

In Oaxacan, many teachers were working in similar conditions of poverty in demographically indigenous rural communities and felt the same doubt in their SNTE leaders. Oaxacan teacher Rogelio Vargas Garifias, who participated in the founding of CNTE in 1979, describes how CNTE was incorporated in Oaxaca in the 1980s.

We Oaxacan teachers, although we were a small group in '78, attended this event [the CNTE congress in Chiapas.] Oaxaca began participating in this national movement in 1980. The first directors of CNTE's Section 22 [the branch in Oaxaca] were PRI members. Due to their political ties, they strongly opposed Oaxaca's integration into CNTE... Oaxacan teachers were fighting in an internal battle to join CNTE. It wasn't until '83 that we won Oaxaca's first sectional congress and were able to incorporate CNTE.⁵³

⁵¹ Luis Hernández Navarro, "Cero en conducta: Crónicas de la Resistencia magisterial," Mexico City: Fundación Rosa Luxemburgo y Para Leer en Libertad, 2011) Cited by Lynn Stephen, *We Are the Face of Oaxaca: Testimony and Social Movements* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013); 39.

⁵² Lynn Stephen, *We Are the Face of Oaxaca: Testimony and Social Movements* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013); 38-39.

⁵³ Rogelio Vargas Garifias, Leader of Section 22 of CNTE, Oaxaca in an interview with Lynn Stephen in 2009.

In their efforts to democratize the system of educational leadership, CNTE teachers were forced to confront PRI officials and supporters who felt threatened by such defiance to their domination on political power. As Rogelio explains, “In Oaxaca, these were years of extreme conflict with the state politicians and SNTE sellouts who collaborated with the federal government and hired assassins and contract killers to combat what they saw as an enormous threat in Section 22.” Despite the personal risk of violence and intimidation CNTE teacher’s persisted and in 1989 CNTE and Section 22 in Oaxaca consolidated power. However, the struggle against the government persisted for CNTE in Oaxaca with strikes, demonstrations, and clashes with state government and security forces and annual occurrence.

The history of the teacher’s movement in Oaxaca is very important due to the direct connection with the 2006 uprising. What started as a teacher's strike escalated into a six-month rebellion that took over the capital city and was brutally repressed by the state. In fact, the events of 2006 are often miscategorized by some academics and the media as a teacher’s movement. The book *Organizing Dissent: Unions, the State, and the Democratic Teacher’s Movement in Mexico* describes the history of the teacher’s movement in Mexico and describes how in Oaxaca the teacher’s movement was influenced by COCEI, the communist party, and indigenous movements, making Section 22 in Oaxaca a unique sector of the CNTE.

Section 22 Strike 2006 & The Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca

The Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca (*Asamblea Popular de los Pueblos de Oaxaca*, or APPO) was formed in Oaxaca City during the uprising of 2006. Local teachers from Section 22 for CNTE began their annual strike in May, which had been employed for nearly forty years as a negotiating tactic for pay raises and better working conditions for teachers. When the

governor Ulises Ortiz Ruiz refused to give in to the teacher's demands, he ordered state security forces to break up the strike. On June 14th, in the early hours of the morning, striking teachers were asleep in their makeshift encampment in the town square when police began dropping tear gas from helicopters and ground forces violently attacked the disoriented teachers.⁵⁴ The scene was chaotic as seen in the documentary by Gabriela Martínez Escobar *Rebellion in Oaxaca*, which shows scenes of the violence between protestors and municipal police who beat the teachers and burned their belongings.⁵⁵

The next day, an estimated 300,000 thousand Oaxacans marched in protest, demanding the resignation of governor Ortiz Ruiz. Shortly thereafter, more than three hundred organizations came together to form APPO, rebuilt the encampment that had been burned by police and built barricades in the streets in an effort to prevent any future police attacks. After several clashes between both sides, forcing government officials and police to flee the city, APPO took control of the capital. During one significant moment in the struggle in August of that year, local women, many of whom participated in indigenous rights struggles, took over state TV and radio, broadcasting their grievances and demands consistently while facing violence attacks from government supporters.

For more than six months APPO managed to control the upper hand, keeping government offices and services at a standstill. Some, like author Lynn Stephen, believe that APPO improved many city services during this period.⁵⁶ However, many people that I spoke to in Oaxacan during the ten-year anniversary believed that APPO had no power and were not able to accomplish

⁵⁴Gustavo Esteva, "The Oaxaca Commune and Mexico's Coming Insurrection," *Antipode*, vol. 42, no. 4, (2010); 978-993. DOI:10.1111/j.1467-8330.2010.00784.x. Lynn Stephen, *We Are the Face of Oaxaca: Testimony and Social Movements* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013)

⁵⁵ Gabriela Martínez Escobar, *Rebellion in Oaxaca*,

⁵⁶ Lynn Stephen, *We Are the Face of Oaxaca: Testimony and Social Movements* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 37. Gustavo Esteva, "The Oaxaca Commune and Mexico's Coming Insurrection," *Antipode*, vol. 42, no. 4, (2010); 978-993. DOI:10.1111/j.1467-8330.2010.00784.x.

anything substantial and, in retrospect, did not believe the movement was worth it.⁵⁷ The idea that APPO was able to improve some conditions contradicts the government's portrayal of events. In this “official story” the State is the just and legal protector of the citizens of Oaxaca who were endangered and manipulated by teachers and APPO associates. The governor acted in the best interests of the state and against the criminals who illegally barricaded streets and brought chaos to the city. Force was necessary to restore order and civility. This is the version of events that was promoted by the state and broadcasted via state media such as state aligned news outlets.

The participants of the 2006 uprising united under APPO for the primary objective of forcing Ortiz Ruiz from office, yet they were unable to do so and instead sustained substantial abuse from the state. By the time the federal government regained control of the capital, hundreds were arrested, over twelve hundred complaints of human rights violations were filed, and at least twenty-three people were killed.⁵⁸ Despite what might appear to be a failure of the movement, I contest that the value of the movement will only be clearly ascertained over time when we are able to see how the legacy of resistance in Oaxaca is affected by the events of this struggle. Given that it brought together hundreds of thousands of people from hundreds of different social movements and sectors of society, I feel that the impact of the summer of 2006 in Oaxaca will be positive to future social movements and human rights efforts.

Interconnectivity in Social Movement History

The 2006 Oaxacan civil rebellion is often characterized by academics and journalists as a “teacher’s movement.”⁵⁹ This narrow categorization detracts from the significance of such a large-

⁵⁷ During my time in Oaxaca, I repeatedly heard that “el 2006 no valió la pena.”

⁵⁸ Lynn Stephen, *We Are the Face of Oaxaca: Testimony and Social Movements* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013); 6, 94.

⁵⁹ See Alejandra Favela’s “Lasting Lessons from Oaxaca: Teachers as Luchadores Sociales: An Inside Account of the Historic 2006 Oaxacan Teachers' Movement and Why it is Still Relevant Today.” *Radical Teacher* 88, (Summer 2010): 63-72, and Eric Larson, “In Oaxaca, Teachers Won’t Give Up the Fight.” *NACLA: Reporting on the Americas* December 1, 2015.

scale popular rebellion which unified hundreds of social movements under one mass movement. While the local teachers of Section 22 of CNTE did play a significant role in the organization and leadership of the resistance movement, there were actually hundreds of organizations and institutions who officially declared their alliance with APPO. That is not to say the efforts of the CNTE, during 2006 and prior were not significant. Lynn Stephen argues that the teacher's movement was the "backbone" of APPO due to their experience in organizing from years of political and social struggle.

The misguided focus on the teacher's movement is, at least in part, due to the fact that writers too often focus only on the events of 2006, briefly looking back a short distance, if at all, using only newspaper articles and personal testimonies from that specific time. If strictly focused on linear chronology of events, the conflict does seem to be ignited by the teacher's movement alone. But why was it that so many Oaxacans commiserated with the striking teachers and deplored the violence used by the state? Failure to look back into history leaves a gaping hole in the body of academic work pertaining to the Oaxaca Commune: the fact that indigenous communities, peasants, women's groups, and urban networks all came together in this historical moment.

According to Iván Arenas, in the discourse of social movement theory, success or failure of social movements is often determined by whether or not the primary goals of the movement are achieved.⁶⁰ In that sense, these three social movements would be considered failures to varying degrees. The COCEI movement was able to obtain historic political victories that united the people of Juchitán to form an alternative system of government apart from the dominant and corrupt PRI system, and yet they were only temporarily able to stay in power before the state used its monopoly

⁶⁰ Arenas, "The Mobile Politics of Emotions and Social Movement in Oaxaca, Mexico," 1121.

on violence to crush the democratically elected COCEI municipal government.⁶¹ The CNTE movement also was able to succeed in breaking off from the PRI control and the cronyism engrained in SNTE by incorporating and consolidating power in Oaxaca. But CNTE's success is limited and they continuously struggle against repression to obtain small raises annually. And as for APPO, they were unable to achieve their main unifying goal to oust Ulises Ortiz Ruiz from power was not accomplished. Furthermore, injustice and impunity seem only to have been perpetuated by the conflict. The current governor, Gabino Cué, who once was considered a symbol of hope and change for Oaxaca, has refused to charge his predecessor with any crimes. Cué was formerly a member of the PRI party who changed allegiances to run against PRI and the legacy left by Ulises Ortiz Ruiz and won, largely in part to the support of APPO. Yet, APPO was able to unite thousands of people, hundreds of social movements, and take control of the Oaxacan capital for more than six months. Only time will be able to truly show how impactful the events of 2006 were.

⁶¹ However, they came back and have been a dominant political force in Juchitán and other parts of the Isthmus since the 90's.

CHAPTER 4: OAXACA 2006 AS A FEMINIST MOMENT

*“Here we are, compañeras, in the revolution and we
are cooking and cleaning.”*

- Female Participant in the 2006 Struggle

While there is no doubt that the events of 2006 had a powerful impact on the lives of many Oaxacans, for the women with whom I spoke, their participation in these events was a formative life event and their involvement and contributions to the movement should be recognized and documented in the historical and academic record. Using a feminist ethnographic framework, I argue that the events that transpired in 2006 can be viewed as a “feminist moment” in Oaxacan history. I support this argument by using the direct words of the women with whom I spoke as often as possible and doing my best to translate both their words and their sentiment with loyalty and fidelity to what they said in the original Spanish. At times, some of the contextual meaning or sentiment may get lost in translation, so I will provide the original Spanish as well for comparison. In conducting this research, I hope to address what I see as a gap in the academic literature on the subject and correct what is, at times, a misrepresentation of the event that either leaves women out of the narrative altogether or only discusses them within gendered aspects of the struggle.

To avoid making these same mistakes myself, I detail how 2006 can be seen as a “feminist moment” in Oaxacan history by separating this chapter into three main sections. First, I posit that women’s movements and feminism ideologies existed in Oaxaca prior to 2006 and that Oaxacan women were involved in various forms of activism leading up to and throughout the events of 2006. Second, female participants in the movement only became a focus of academic and

journalistic interest when they began looking at their roles within the movement through a feminist lens and acted to demand change. Finally, for the women with whom I spoke, their involvement and experiences in the 2006 civil uprising and the ultimate failure of the social movement, contributed to the development of a uniquely Oaxacan form of feminism ideology. These three areas combine to demonstrate that the 2006 civil uprising and social movement was a feminist moment in Oaxacan history. By “feminist moment” I am referring to the acknowledgement of and focus on the contributions and participation women have made in history.

Female Activism Leading Up to and During 2006

My motivation for this work is selfish in the sense that I write this for myself and all the other women like me who might have read or will read about these or any events in history and be left wondering where the women were, what they were doing and thinking during historic events. In their work *Women in Social Protest*, West and Blumberg attest, “Television, newspapers, magazines, books, and journal articles have tended to portray politics in general and social protest in particular as an almost exclusively male domain. Women are visible mainly through their participation in feminist causes” (1991: 4). This is true for the case in Oaxaca because the movement itself was not initially founded on gendered issues- that is to say, issues that deal specifically with gender related topics- and therefore women were not made visible until, in many ways, they themselves demanded to be seen.

As I conducted interviews, it became evident that women were already participating in various forms of activism leading up to 2006 and were involved in every stage of the 2006 civil uprising. The five women I spoke to exemplify this involvement on various levels. Prior to the outbreak of the movement, women worked in non-profit and civil organizations in various

capacities, both in gendered (specific to one's gender such as women's rights) and non-gendered arenas (that are not tied to directly to gender such as taxes or politics). They were students at the University in Oaxaca or other academic institutions. They belonged to women's groups in their communities or within their churches. Women also made up a large portion of the teachers involved in the CNTE teachers strike. When the teacher's called for aid when they were being attacked by police, women heeded their calls and showed up at the zocálo. As the uprising turned into a statewide movement, women participated in APPO and contributed to sustaining the movement on various fronts. And women were not only direct victims of violence and intimidation, they grieved for and fought for the men in their lives who were victims of violence and false imprisonment, all while struggling to balance the physical and emotional toll of the struggle while holding together their families.

On June 7th, 2016, I met with Patti in her apartment in central Oaxaca. She was 52 years old, with glowing copper skin and salt and pepper hair just past her shoulders. Maybe it was her slender, toned build or something about the way she carried herself that reminded me of a yoga instructor that I knew back home. She described herself as a psychologist, therapist, and activist for the past thirty years. Unlike some of the other women I had spoken to, Patricia had been involved in activism long before the events of 2006. I was curious to know more about the women's groups and feminist ideology that existed in Oaxaca prior to 2006.

I asked Patricia how many feminist organizations existed before 2006 and she told me that she didn't know the specifics, but that they "did exist and always had." "*Siempre habían y han habido.*"⁶² This was just one of the many times I felt myself question my own preconceived notions about what I thought I knew or understood about Oaxaca and Oaxacan women. Of course, there

⁶² Interview with "Patricia", activist and therapist. June 12th, 2016. Oaxaca City, Oaxaca.

were women's movements in Oaxaca previously, as there had been through the rest of the world wherever women have lived. I had simply not come across any mention of them in my preliminary library and internet research, but that did not mean they hadn't existed. Patricia recalled several such organizations including *Las compañeras del Consorcio Previa*, *Las compañeras de la casa de la mujer*, *LILAS*, *Las compañeras de DDESER*, and *Las compañeras of the Isthmus*, which was a civil organization that operated a refuge for victims of violence. [04:20-4:40] She described to me her own history of activism leading up to and including the events of 2006:

Sí, empecé a los 18 años. En 2006 ya tenía un buen rato trabajando, básicamente, en organizaciones civiles, participé en la fundación de varias organizaciones civiles, en diferentes lugares: una en Zaachila, otra en Huajuapán y una aquí. En 2006 estaba participando en un colectivo de organizaciones de mujeres, estaba participando en el colectivo Huaxyacac, que era una red de organizaciones de mujeres. Por ejemplo, cada organización hacía cosas diferentes, pero el colectivo, básicamente, era para trabajar el tema de visibilizar la violencia contra las mujeres; entonces, por ejemplo, organizábamos actividades para el día 25 de noviembre, que es el Día de la No Violencia contra las Mujeres. En una ocasión, me acuerdo que una mujer había sido violentada durante mucho tiempo por su pareja -por su expareja, porque ya no eran pareja-. Un día, él llegó a agredirla a su casa, y ella en defensa propia lo mató. Entonces, inmediatamente la metieron a la cárcel y le quitaron a los hijos. Nosotras, como colectivo, hicimos toda una serie de actividades para demandar su libertad, porque había sido en defensa propia, y había antecedentes de la violencia de él -era en una violencia extrema-, y para que le devolvieran a sus hijos. Cosas así. O sea, cada quien hacía sus actividades, pero, en

*determinadas ocasiones, nos juntábamos todas para presionar al gobierno o apoyar a las familias.*⁶³

I started [in activism] when I was 18 years old. In 2006 I had already been working for some time, basically, with civil organizations. I have participated in the foundation of several civil organizations, in different places: one in Zaachila, another in Huajuapán and one here [in Oaxaca]. In 2006 I was participating in a collective of women's organizations: the collective Huaxyacac, which was a network of women's organizations. Each organization did different things, but the collective, basically, worked on making violence against women more visible. So, for example, we organized activities for November 25, which is the Day of Nonviolence Against Women. On one occasion, I remember that a woman had been raped for a long time by her partner-- by her ex-partner, because they were no longer a couple. One day, he came to attack her at home, and she, in self-defense, killed him. Then, [the police] immediately put her in jail and took her children away. Therefore, we, as a collective, did a whole series of activities to demand her freedom, because it had been in self-defense, and there was a history of his violence --an extreme violence-- and [we demanded] to have her children returned to her. We did things like that. In other words, [every organization] did their own activities, but, on certain occasions, we all came together to pressure the government or to support families.

The history of women's movements and feminism in Oaxaca is one opportunity for future research that I came across during my own investigation. Lynn Stephen, an anthropologist from the University of Oregon has written much about women in contemporary Oaxaca, but I was unable

⁶³ Interview with "Patricia", activist and therapist. June 12th, 2016. Oaxaca City, Oaxaca.

to find much information dedicated to feminist movements or organizations in the region written in English. I am almost certain that this research has likely been done, especially in Spanish, but it was not easily located in my preliminary library and internet searches. This is one aspect that I would have liked to be able to further develop if given more time. What is important to note is that women's groups and organization already existed and Oaxacan women were involved in feminist movements and had feminist considerations long before the events of 2006.

Before going to Oaxaca, I had read many articles and essays referring to the civil uprising in 2006 as a "teacher's movement." The truth is much more complicated and referring to everything that took place as a "teacher's movement" diminishes the scale and significance of the civil resistance that took place. This was not just a teacher's movement, but a movement that brought Oaxacan citizens together from diverse sectors and backgrounds from across the capital and the state. However, it is important to acknowledge that while this was not just a teacher's movement, Oaxacan teachers did play a critical role in events leading up to and during 2006 and among these teachers, nearly half were women. These women teachers actively participated in activism in their communities and participated each year during the annual teacher's strike. Of the five interviews I have with female participants in 2006, three were or currently are teachers, Alma, Marta, and

Going back to at least the 1980s, teachers from Section 22 of the CNTE teacher's union would strike as a bargaining tactic to attain small concessions during contract negotiations. During their strikes, the teachers would set up and occupy an encampment in the city square or zócalo, which previously housed the offices of governor and other municipal officials. Patricia's brief explanation of her past involvement as an activist in civil organizations, naturally arrived at the events that transpired in the zócalo on June 14th, 2006. She segued into 2006 by pointing out that

at the time, the civil organizations to which she was a part did not participate in many activities with the teacher of Section 22, but as social movements, they sympathized with their cause.

Patti told me that during the teachers' strike that year, it was widely acknowledged that there was a possibility that the teachers could be forcibly evicted from their encampment in the zócalo. She told to me how she learned what was taking place in the zócalo in the early morning of June 14th, 2006:

Sucedió el 14 de junio, yo estaba en casa de una amiga muy cerca del Zócalo. En ese momento tenía una pareja que participaba en una organización social. Entonces, me preocupé mucho porque ellos estaban en el Zócalo también. En cuanto me enteré del asunto -alguien me mandó un mensaje al celular de que estaba el desalojo-, primero fui a buscarlo a su casa, porque no me contestaba al teléfono, y después me fui al Zócalo. Pero en lo que hice eso -ir hasta su casa, regresar, colocar a mi hijo, que estaba más pequeño, con mi amiga- ya amaneció. Entonces cuando yo llegué al centro, los maestros ya habían sacado a los policías; los maestros y la gente.⁶⁴

It happened on June 14. I was at a friend's house very close to the zócalo. At the time I had a partner who was working with a social organization that was also located in the zócalo, so I worried a lot because he was there too. Someone sent me a message on the phone that the eviction was taking place. As soon as I heard about it I went to look for him, at home first, because he did not answer the phone, and then I went to the zócalo. By the time I had gone to his house, returned home and took my son, who was little at the time, to a friend's house, it was already dawn by the time I reached the zócalo. The teachers, along with the people, had already removed the police.

⁶⁴ Interview with "Patricia", activist and therapist. June 12th, 2016. Oaxaca City, Oaxaca.

On the morning of June 16th, nearly half of the teachers sleeping in the encampment were women and when the police stormed the encampment, many of those women were sexually assaulted and there were even reports that some women were raped during the attack. This is a very sensitive subject that I did not broach when questioning participants unless they brought up the subject on their own, but it has also been documented by the “Truth Commission” that was charged with investigating the events of 2006.

Their final report entitled *¡Ya sabemos! No más a la impunidad en Oaxaca*, states, “Sexual violence during the [zócalo] operation, transferred to prisons and detention centers, were a constant that many of the victims described in their offered testimonies to the Truth Commission of Oaxaca” and goes on to cite rape as a torture tactic to obtain a confession or to intimidate.⁶⁵ Based on my interviews, I am lead to believe that sexual violence was far more common than even described in the Truth Commission’s report. Rape and sexual assault are often under reported due to the sensitive nature of such trauma and guilt and shame on the part of the victims who are not willing or able to come forward to report such crimes.

The Truth Commission's report also states that during their investigation, of the total victims interviewed “the majority were men, 73% versus 27% of women.” It was brought up in my interview with Patti that although all those killed were men, and the majority of the victims of civil rights violations such as false imprisonment and detention, torture, and physical violence, women also suffered at equal numbers being that they were the wives, daughters, relatives, and friends of those men and suffered through being left to care for their families without their partners and family members, while also experiencing intimidation and the mental and emotional toll of

⁶⁵ Comisión de la verdad de Oaxaca, *¡Ya sabemos! No más a la impunidad en Oaxaca (Versión Condensada)*, pg. 588-89.

having men in their families killed, detained, or disappeared. I was able to interview one such woman.

My interview with Marta had been set up by another woman who I interviewed who was an activist and former teacher who ran a women's organization. I met with Marta in the SURCO offices and we spoke for over three hours. Unlike many of the other women I had spoken with, Marta had not been involved in activism or feminism prior to 2006. Marta was a wife, mother, and homemaker. On June 14th, Marta had been listening to Radio Plantón as she often did while she did her housework. Marta explained to me that many women like her, "were asleep" prior to 2006. As the attack and eviction of the teachers began, she heard the calls for help over the radio. She explained, "I believe that from then on, the social movement was no longer a teacher movement, but rather one in which the teachers needed support. Maybe not as teachers, but as human beings and as someone who is fed up with the situation. So, there for me - personally - was when I said: 'I have to support them.'⁶⁶ When the teachers called on parents and mothers to come out and support them, Marta answered their call.

During what is called "La ofensiva de 26 de julio" or the July 26th Offensive, where APPO decided to take over and occupy the various government buildings, each organization in APPO was assigned a building. While all the high-profile building went to the larger, more well-known organizations, the small women's organization that Marta participated in volunteered to "defend" the less glamorous State Treasury Finance Offices. She told me, "as a housewife I would finish my chores in the house and in my free time I would go there, and I would take my daughter, because there are no classes." When her eleven-year-old daughter would ask her why they were going to the Finance offices, she explained to her, "Look, this is what is happening and we need

⁶⁶ Interview with homemaker, wife and mother. August 4th, 2016. Oaxaca City, Oaxaca.

to do something, we cannot stand with our arms crossed and pretend that it is not happening. All the people... we are fed up with the government and its lies, so we are going to come here to support the people.”⁶⁷ While many Oaxacan women were already activated and involved in social and feminist issues, for other women like Marta, the events of 2006 activated her into the movement.

Female Participants Began to Look at the Movement Through a Feminist Lens

I interviewed the American writer and journalist John Gibler on July 1st, 2016 at Los Cuiles cafe in the historic center of Oaxaca. Gibler was reporting in Oaxaca in 2006 and witnessed many of the events first hand and interviewed participants in the moment. Gibler told me that from the beginning women were involved at every point in the movement, during which they would have what he described as “women’s moments”- experiences that caused them to question their role as women within the movement. As an example, he describes to me that during the time of the APPO, you had to be a part of a civil or community organization in order to be eligible to vote in the assembly and be a part of the decision-making process. Many of the participating groups in APPO were huge organizations such as the Organization for Human Rights. In order to be able to fully participate in decision making as a voting member within the APPO, a popular women’s neighborhood association forms their own officially recognized organization.

One night, as tensions were running high and rumors were circulating amongst reporters, they got unconfirmed reports that civilian police were “cruising” in front of the State Treasury. Gibler volunteered to go check it out. When he arrived, he found nothing there, but since he was there he asked if he could interview the women who were occupying the State Treasury and they agreed. He said the moment they invited him in, they started feeding him, giving him coffee, *atole*,

⁶⁷ Interview with homemaker, wife and mother. August 4th, 2016. Oaxaca City, Oaxaca.

and *tortas* and told him the story of how they created their neighborhood women's organization in order to join APPO. Gibler described how organized the women were with a kitchen there that they were using to mass produce *tortas* and *etole* to send to other encampments at other government buildings. They had a cleaning "commission" to keep the building clean and it was "impeccable, probably cleaner than when they got there."

When I commented to John how "inspirational it is to hear that they were cooking and cleaning" he told me that even at the time, the women had a hardcore gender and sex analysis because they would laugh at themselves and say, "here we are, compañeras, in the revolution and we are cooking and cleaning." As a response to this criticism of themselves, they had decided to do something "tough." They told him that on August 1st, he should go to the Fountain at Siete Regiones, which he did, for what turned out to be the famous Women's March. Marta's narrative describes the same decision. The women at the Finance Building were growing restless with the movement and "nothing happening." The women began to discuss their experiences working in the movement. Someone had the idea to have a march to have their voices heard.

The Women's March that led to the CORTV Channel 9 takeover of state-run radio and television station was the one event of 2006 that has been most written about is the. Despite having read several articles about it, I still wanted to hear first-hand what took place. I got my chance when I interviewed Alma, an activist and leader of the women's collective *Mujer Nueva*. At the time, Alma had been a member of the teacher's union and participated in 2006 and I was excited to hear her account of the Women's March and Channel 9 station takeover. She begins her story where John Gibler left off.

We men and women adhered to the APPO. As [an association] of the *colonias*, they ordered us to take the Ministry of Finance [building], which was close by. When we took over the

[Treasury] office a beautiful thing happened: All of the neighborhoods came out to support us. Men came and women came to take care of and protect the place. But there also came women who had already been involved in organizing movements before 2006, and many of us women already knew what the situation was going to be, more or less. They began saying "Why do we always have to be doing the *talacha*?", like sweeping and making food. "We also want to participate. We are able to participate and do something other than cook," not because it is bad [to do those things], but because we wanted our voices to be heard... And then someone proposed to us, "Why not do a march like we're done in Argentina and Chile?" And we all said, "Yes, yes, yes!" So, we started to organize the march. We called all the teachers, because we were pueblo. We went to their encampment to talk with the teachers and tell them to send their wives, their mothers, their sisters, and their aunts to participate. And we called on the teachers, because-- that's the beautiful thing-- that is, it did not come from the teachers, but it came from the people of the town. [...]As it turned out, so many women arrived, so many very happy women.

As narrated by Alma and John Gibler, the march was organized by women who were already participating in the 2006 social movement, but who were not satisfied with the opportunities they were being given to participate, often being relegated to the gendered roles of cooking, cleaning, and caring for others in the movement. The Women's March, or the March of the Pots and Pans (as it is called due to the pots and pans women brought and banged as they marched) was an opportunity for women both within and outside the movement to call action to the struggles of Oaxacan women. Nearly 5,000 women participated in the march according to Gibler.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ John Gibler, "In Oaxaca, Women Rise" Feb 06, 2007 <http://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/is-the-u.s.-ready-for-human-rights/1637>

Alma tells me that as the March progressed, the idea was proposed that they continue marching all the way to the Channel 9 state television and radio station to spread the news about what was happening. Throughout the conflict, the control of the media was constantly fought over. State sponsored media outlets controlled most of the messaging coming out of Oaxaca during the conflict and misrepresented the teachers, APPO, and the movement.⁶⁹ In response, Oaxacan citizens started their own guerilla radio stations, such as the teacher's Radio Plantón, and when those were crushed by state forces, the people began taking over state owned and operated radio stations in order to spread the truth about their motivations, demands, and intentions and to organize and mobilize their efforts. Therefore, it is not surprising that the first gun shots fired during the conflict were directed at the citizen-held Radio Universidad.⁷⁰

The women leading the march knew how important it was to control the message and when they arrived at the station, they asked to be put on the air. When the station operators refused, the women decided that since they were already there, they would just take over the station.⁷¹ Alma said that there were about 20 or 30 women who took over the station and that they were not afraid at the moment because they were together. Just as Gibler recounted of the women who occupied the State Treasury, the women who controlled CORTV/Channel 9 had been very organized and had created different "commissions" to organize the different jobs that needed to be done to maintain control. There were commissions for who was controlling the radio, who had the television station, who was on surveillance, who was making the food, and so on. The only people allowed inside were women who were known and trusted because they feared being infiltrated by the opposition, which Alma says happened anyways.

⁶⁹ Jill Freidberg, "A Little Bit of So Much Truth" Documentary 2007 <http://www.jillfreidberg.com/a-little-bit-of-so-much-truth-trailer.html>

⁷⁰ From interview with John Gibler (reporter) on July 1st, 2016.

⁷¹ From interview with "Alma" (activist) on July 7th, 2016.

They remained for the day, but as night approached, they began to worry that they faced the possibility of being forcibly removed from the station, just like had been done with the teachers in the zócalo. After some debate, it was decided that they would contact the APPO to let them know that they had taken over the station so that news of their movement could be broadcast across the state, but they needed help defending it. Although reluctant, the APPO leaders agreed to help because the rest of the people were glad about what they had done. In total, the women held control of the station for twenty days and on the twenty-first day, the radio antennas were destroyed to stop them from transmitting the stories.

As Ivan Arenas has pointed out, “The women’s march produced emergent and emotionally charged political subjects as they traversed the city and how, in turn, these emotional geographies enabled a collective sociality that challenged and changed normative gender relations in this highly patriarchal and socially conservative state.”⁷² Women participants in the movement—a movement that was not initially founded on any gendered issues or aspects—applied a feminist lens to their circumstances and experiences in APPO and challenged the patriarchy and sexism that existed within the movement and within society.

Oaxacan Feminism Post-2006

For the women with whom I spoke, participation in 2006 had a significant impact on their lives in a diverse number of ways. While some looked back on the impacts of their participation, others talked of the present impact they experienced on a daily-basis even ten years later. While some of these impacts were superficial, others displayed deep emotional and mental wounds that remained fresh and unhealed. Although the women I spoke to played different roles at the time and had diverse experiences both during and after 2006, I observed that a number of these women

⁷² Iván Arenas, "The Mobile Politics of Emotions and Social Movement in Oaxaca, Mexico." 1123.

shared a unique feminist ideology that blended traditional feminism with elements of a uniquely Mexican form of anarchist sentiment.

The women whom I spoke to recognized that their participation in 2006 changed them. One of the women told me directly

Fíjate, que yo creo que sí hay un antes y un después del 2006, definitivamente más para las mujeres, las mujeres abrimos los ojos en el 2006. Como yo te digo, nos permitió tener más confianza en nosotras, fortalecernos entre todas, aprender muchísimo, tenemos muchas experiencias. Pero fíjate, que aparte de que peleamos con el sistema, o sea, con el Estado, también tenemos que luchar en contra de los hombres. Porque te digo, viven como en una comunidad y no quieren que uno avance, pero bueno eso es otra cosa. Creo que el 2006 nos dio esa confianza en nosotras, nos dio esa seguridad de nosotras que nos hace tanta falta. Nos empoderó, no me gusta muy bien la palabrita, pero finalmente creo que a eso puedo llegar, que nos dio tanta confianza y nos fortalecimos, que creo que ahora nosotras tenemos una visión diferente de las cosas. Una, y la otra que pensamos que este mundo nada más tiene la visión del hombre.

I think there is a before and after 2006. Definitely more for women whose eyes were opened in 2006. 2006 gave us confidence in ourselves, we learned a lot, it gave up the certainty of ourselves that we needed so much. It empowered us. It gave us so much confidence and strengthened us so much that I think we now have a different vision of things. The world only has the viewpoint of man. Only with the viewpoint of women will we be able to move forward and change this way of life... Change the world for one another and make it a little better and friendlier. What worries me the most is not that the work of men and women is very divided, but also that the words of men are heard, but not the words of women. I

believe that the voice of the woman must be present. We have to fight and fight a lot for women's voices to be heard. We have made some small advancements, but overall not much has changed.⁷³

For these women, their participation in 2006 and the subsequent failure of the movement, as they perceived it, caused them to shift their focus from large-scale social mobilization for change, to small-scale local and individual focus, with no participation in government or political participation. I asked if things had changed since 2006 or if the same things were happening ten years later in 2016 and Alma told me that she believed things were different; things were worse.

For me no, for me this is something worse. Now all the strength of the State comes. When structural reforms are at stake it will not be so easy to break them down. [...]The State comes with everything, the proof is in what happened in Nochixtlan, the proof is how many political prisoners we have, how many people have died.⁷⁴ And [the State] does not care how many children are without classes at the national level. [...] In Mexico City, there have been many protests, but there is no way to make these people understand that they are wrong. So I think the question of violence is much stronger now. And why? Because in the same country there is a lot of violence with the *narcos*, drug trafficking, that is, and the women are the ones who are paying. How many femicides have there been? And femicides are on the rise. They are not decreasing, no, they are increasing. The trafficking of women, also. It is now women who are the victims of war and that worries us a lot.

⁷³ Interview with "Alma" (activist) on July 7th, 2016.

⁷⁴ As mentioned previously in Chapter 1, in 2016 while I was conducting fieldwork in Oaxaca, police forces attached unarmed civilians in Nochixtlan.

Mujer Nueva was born. One of the women described the origins of their women's collective like this:

Este colectivo surgió a raíz del movimiento social del 2006, nos conocimos allá en el 2006 y coincidimos con la misma lucha, nos hermanó. Y entonces en el 2007, cuando las cosas todavía estaban muy álgidas, nos conformamos en un colectivo, aunque muchas de nosotras ya veníamos de un proceso organizativo que se llamó La Coordinadora de Mujeres Oaxaqueñas, que es la COMO. Pero nos salimos de ahí porque no cumplía nuestras expectativas, y pensábamos que estábamos luchando por otras formas de relacionarnos y no nos gustó. Entonces fue que nos salimos de ahí en Enero y en Julio nos conformamos, ya vamos a cumplir-- dentro de ocho días cumplimos nueve años. Entonces, somos mujeres de diferentes edades, de diferentes actividades, pero creo que compartimos la rebeldía en nuestro corazón.

This group emerged as a result of the 2006 social movement. We met during 2006 and we all agreed on the same struggle. We were united. And then in 2007, when things were still very [tense], we started this collective. Many of us came from an organization called the *Coordinadora de Mujeres Oaxaqueñas*, or COMO, but we left it because it did not meet our expectations. We left it in January and in July we were organized. In eight days, we will be nine years old. So, we are women of different ages, of different backgrounds, but I think we share the rebellion in our hearts and that is why we joined the collective.

I had heard that during and following 2006, women in the movement had discovered that although they were working for a united purpose that brought together social movements and organizations from all different sectors of society, the movement itself had a problem with how women were treated and what roles women were allowed to play in the movement. This eventually led to the

formation of COMO. However, the women in COMO seemed to hold two different visions for the group and ended up splitting after a year. I was not able to interview anyone from COMO who had been a part of the original organization that remained with COMO after the split, but it would have been useful to hear their perspectives on 2006 as well as get their side of the story.

Alma, one of the women I interviewed, told me that a lot of the women that remained a part of COMO believed that women could participate in the larger movement and that they still believed in democracy and participation in the system, while the women who broke off did not believe enough was being done to challenge sexism and patriarchy within COMO and were disillusioned that participation in civil society and politics would produce any real change for women. Thus, the women of Mujer Nueva decided to disengage from the system and work to support each other through small-scale community activities.

One such activity is the organization of local *tianguis* or open-art markets where women sell crafts and products they make themselves. Alma tells me how these markets are self-sustained and not part of any NGO or outside entity. It is a “self-management project for making ointments and soaps with medicinal herbs, that allows us to pay for the expenses that arise within the group.” This is both an act of feminism as well as a protest against capitalism, all of which is seen as a way of improving the health and wellbeing of women. Alma tells me:

Dentro de todas las actividades que nosotras hemos realizado, hay una muy especial, el hecho de que no queremos-- queremos cambiar nuestro estilo de vida en cuanto a la salud y en cuanto a la utilización de los recursos que tenemos. Por ejemplo, aquí la herbolaria es muy tradicional en el contexto oaxaqueño. Y además queremos de alguna manera, ir agrietando al capitalismo a través de la formación de grupos solidarios, de economía solidaria, de bienestar común. Y entonces nos decidimos a formar un tianguis donde

vender productos que son plantados y conservados de una manera natural, entonces eso es lo que vendemos en el tianguis. Y aparte de eso todos los productos que se elaboran, son productos que hacemos nosotras mismas, y para eso nos conformamos en otro grupo que se llama Tianguis Mujer Nueva, donde vienen otras compañeras que no son del colectivo pero que de alguna manera nos conocemos, somos de la lucha social, pertenecemos al movimiento social y nos integramos también acá.

Among all the activities that we have done, there is one that is very special: the fact that we want to change our lifestyle in terms of health and in terms of the utilization of the resources we have available to us. For example, here the herbalist is very traditional in the Oaxacan context. And in some way, we also want to break from capitalism through the formation of solidarity groups, solidarity economy, and common welfare. And that's why we decided to start an outdoor market where we could sell products that are planted and preserved in a natural way. And apart from that, all the products that are made are products that we make ourselves, and from this we have formed another group called Tianguis Mujer Nueva, where other women come that are not from the collective but that we somehow know- we are from the social struggle or we belong to the social movement- and we also come together here... And we are nothing more than mutual, that is, out of pure love, out of pure love for social struggle, because we do not use any NGO or anything like that. We have a self-management project for making ointments and soaps with medicinal herbs, and that allows us to pay for the expenses that arise within the group.

This is a sentiment I heard from many of the women I interviewed. Their participation in 2006 and the impacts it had on their lives caused them to reevaluate their priorities and focus on small-scale organizing and, most importantly, within themselves. As one of the only things they could control,

they focused on who they were internally and what they did to nurture their physical, mental, and spiritual health.

One interesting fact that came out of my research, is that many of the women who participated in 2006 identified with a feminist ideology that has anarchist elements. This was most apparent in my interview with Xochitl, a thirty-something woman who worked in the civil sector. I was told by other women that I interviewed that Xochitl was an anarchist, but when I asked her about it, she said that while she could be described as an anarchist, she preferred to call herself a libertarian.⁷⁵ I explained that I was unfamiliar with the term in a Oaxacan context and she explained libertarianism as follows:

Es como una pelea interna. También soy feminista, pues soy feminista comunitaria. Entonces es como que el anarquismo y el feminismo lo occidentalizaron mucho. Entonces, en la búsqueda de la identidad y de todo esto también se perdió mucho de eso, qué significaba realmente. Pues el anarquismo-- hay una persona aquí en Oaxaca que se llama Ricardo Flores Magón, que es uno de los pilares del anarquismo a nivel teórico; pero él se basa también como en la comunidad y en la práctica comunitaria, que se hace en un montón de lugares de Oaxaca. Entonces por eso que sí soy más libertaria que anarquista, porque el anarquismo lo volvieron muy de Europa... Te digo es como una cosa-- te digo sí, sí podría decirte que soy anarquista, o sea, partiendo del anarquismo pero de aquí, no el europeo. el anarquismo de Ricardo Flores Magón se basa más en la experiencia comunitaria, como en el vivir sin el Estado pero partiendo de que el estado es esa cosa que nos impusieron. Y también de la idea del poder, la idea del poder que -en realidad- yo

⁷⁵ Interview with “Xochitl” (civil sector worker) on August 4th, 2016. Xochitl used the word “libertariana.”

*no aspiro poder Yo creo que sí es contra el Estado, porque es lo que está; pero también es partiendo de la idea de que se puede construir una cosa muy diferente al Estado.*⁷⁶

There is this internal fight. I am an anarchist and I am also a feminist- a community feminist. Anarchism and feminism have been Westernized a lot. So in a search for identity, there is a search for what was lost and what it really means to be these things. As for anarchism, there is a person from Oaxaca named Ricardo Flores Magón, who is one of the pillars of anarchism at the theoretical level; but he is also based on community and community practice, which is practiced in many places in Oaxaca. So that's why I am more libertarian than anarchist. Because anarchism came from Europe... I could tell you that I am an anarchist, but anarchism that is from here. Not from Europe. Anarchism from Magón is based more on the community experience, living without the State because the state is something that was imposed on us. It also has to do with the idea of power. I do not aspire to power. We do not see power as the best thing to fight for. To us, the best thing to fight for is to be able to live under your own rules, be happy, growing, sharing. I believe in being against the State, because of what it is, but also believe in building something very different from the State.

What Xochitl described to me in very definitive terms were the same sentiments expressed to me in more subtle terms by the other women I interviewed. Many of the other women self-identified as feminist, but would also describe particular thoughts or feelings related to a separation from any activity related to the State. It did not matter whether the activities were in support of or opposition

⁷⁶ Interview with "Xochitl" (civil sector worker) on August 4th, 2016. Xochitl used the word "libertariana."

to the State, all forms of participation were thought to be pointless. I asked her how she developed these beliefs and she made the connection to her experience in 2006.

Vamos a las asambleas; pero nosotros desde nuestra postura de: "no queremos llevar una asamblea a las elecciones, no queremos que vengan aquí partidos", no queremos como esta cosa que sí se metió a la asamblea grandota del 2006, a la asamblea del APPO. Pero nosotros dijimos: "no vamos a contribuir con eso, no creemos que sea desde ahí, no creemos que un sistema que legitima un robo de elecciones sea lo que estamos buscando para también hacer esto". O sea, ese mismo que legitima, ese presidente -que no es el presidente, que no ganó- o ese gobernador que tampoco ganó, es el mismo que te va a decir a ti cómo hacer las cosas. Entonces algo está mal, no puede ser que nosotros nos rijamos por esas reglas.⁷⁷

We would go to the APPO assemblies and participate and eventually we said: “we do not want present representatives in the elections, we do not want [political] parties to come here, we are not going to participate in that. We do not believe [this system] is from here. We do not believe that a system that legitimizes an election theft is what we are looking for.” That is the same system that legitimates a president, who is not really a president, a president who did not win an election or a governor who did not win either. This is the same system that will tell you what to do. Something is wrong and we cannot be governed by those rules.

It is in large part that I claim that 2006 is a “feminist moment” in Oaxacan history, not just because of the participation of women, but just because women teachers were there at the teacher’s strike in the zócalo, or because they responded to the call for help and retook the zócalo

⁷⁷ Interview with “Xochitl” (civil sector worker) on August 4th, 2016. Xochitl used the word “*libertariana*.”

driving out police, not just because they participated in the movement and demanded to be seen and acknowledged, but because their experiences led them to create a form of activism that they could control and find success in. This unique form of Oaxacan feminism allows women to better themselves, support each other, and make an actual difference on a small-scale. I see this group of women and their continued activism as a positive impact of the 2006 civil uprising.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

When I first arrived in Oaxaca, my initial research questions were not only “What roles did women play during the events of 2006?” and “What impact did their participation in 2006 have on the lives of women?” but also: “After ten years, do female participants believe it was worth it?” The answer to this last question was echoed throughout my time in the field. Over and over I heard participants in the 2006 civil uprising and social movement, both men and women, declare that their efforts and sacrifice were not worth it. “*No valió la pena.*”

It was easy to understand this sentiment when, after all, the federal government sent in troops and smashed the movement in 2006, restoring the power of the state government at great cost to the lives of Oaxacan citizens. During my time in the field, much of what I was witnessing in present day Oaxaca was reminiscent of the events of ten years prior. The zocalo was again occupied by striking CNTE teachers of Section 22. The state elections took place that summer and Oaxacan citizens seemed disillusioned and indifferent about State politics. Tensions were high as citizens remembered, recounted, and commemorated the ten-year anniversary of the 2006 uprising. Then, on June 19th, 2016, police forces used lethal force against Oaxaca citizens in the community of Nochixtlan.⁷⁸ After ten years, it seemed as though state oppression was not only the same, many shared that things now were actually worse. This time, the State was not even attempting to disguise their use of violence against its people and were now openly shooting at them in the streets for all to see.

As I argue in this thesis, the 2006 civil uprising and social movement in Oaxaca can be seen as a feminist moment in Oaxacan history. Oaxacan women were involved in feminist and

⁷⁸ Patrick McDonnell, “*Protesters say a massacre took place in this Mexican town. Now it’s become a rallying cry against the government*”

social activism prior to 2006 and participated in the 2006 civil uprising and social movement every step of the way. As active participants within the movement, oaxaqueñas applied a feminist lens to the movement itself, deciding to hold a Women’s March to call on their friends, families, organizations, and colleagues within the movement itself to recognize and acknowledge their contributions to the movement. This organized march then led to the spontaneous takeover of the CORTV media station. Their participation in the events of 2006 and the repercussion of their and their loved ones participation came with great sacrifice and had long lasting impacts that can be classified as both negative and positive. One impact that I observed was the emergence of a uniquely Oaxacan form of feminism that included a disengagement from direct political activity and a renewed focus on self-sufficiency, small-scale community organizing, and personal health and doing their best to not participate in capitalism.

I came to this conclusion by conducting fieldwork in Oaxaca in the summer of 2016, amidst the ten-year anniversary of the events that I was researching. Through participant observations, semi-structured interviews, and internet and library research, I collected data on how women participated in events and what impacts their involvement had on their lives. During my time in Oaxaca, tensions boiled over yet again and protesters and police clashed. In Nochixtlan, police forces overtly used violence towards unarmed civilians. These events had considerable impact in the level of stress and trauma of the people that I interviewed and those that I intended to interview, but was not able to for a variety of reasons. Safety and security concerns at the local level plus travel restrictions from the US State Department and the UA, made conducting interviews a challenge. I was only able to conduct half of the intended interviews. Despite the limitations, there were clear patterns that emerged from the interviews pointing to Oaxaca 2006 as a feminist moment in Mexican history.

At many times during my research and after the analysis of my data and the writing of my thesis, I felt overwhelmed by the vast amount of information I had collected that touched on so many different concepts and themes that I had learned about and explored during the course of the Master's course work. That is to say that during my time in Oaxaca, there were countless avenues for future research and it was a struggle to keep my own research within manageable parameters. Within the exploration of the events leading up to, surrounding, and following the 2006? civil uprising and social movements there we aspects of my research that dealt with racism, indigeneity, colonialism, globalization, capitalism, environmentalism, and could be viewed from countless theoretical perspectives. It was only with some time and distance from my research that I was able to gain enough clarity of thought to formulate this argument. While there are numerous possibilities for future research, I would personally choose to go deeper into researching the history of the women's movement in Oaxaca and conduct a historical investigation into the women's groups and development of feminist consciousness in Oaxaca.

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