

**Supplementary Notes & Resources
for viewers of
Maya Faces in a Smoking Mirror**

PART 1

- background
- issues
- resources
- song lyrics
- contacts
- and more

In making this documentary, in order to allow our participants to speak at length about where our questions took them, we did not include any narration. We realize that at every step of planning, preparing for shoots, shooting, and editing, we made decisions that necessarily reflect our points of view. Nevertheless, we believe that our method keeps a focus on the lives and thoughts of the participants and allowed them a range of free expression. All of the participants saw and approved of their part in the final documentary.

Inevitably though in the course of shooting, and especially of editing, there were points at which we said “Wouldn’t it be good if the viewers knew about....” or “What will our English speaking audience make of the lyrics in the songs they will hear.” or “What if some of them want to delve more deeply into a particular issue or history?”, and so on.

We have prepared these notes for those of you who may have wished for these things, or who would like resources to facilitate discussions or go further into the issues raised in the documentary

We have organized them according to the sequence of the documentary.

OPENING

TONINÁ

Site not far from the Highlands of Chiapas where most of our participants live.

It was active into the 10th century A.D.

Though in conflict with Palenque and Bonampak to the east, it traded for luxury goods with settlements in the Highlands to the west where most of the participants in our documentary live .

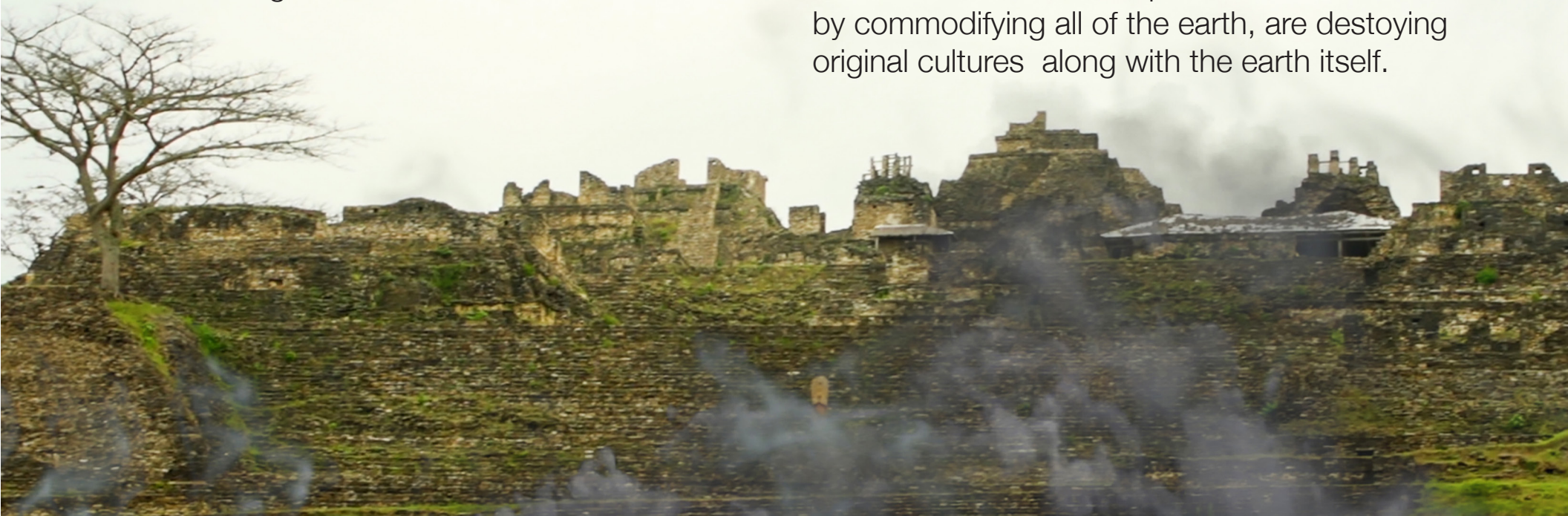
Archeologists in charge of the site have said that the latest, topmost temple was dedicated to Smoking Mirror.

SMOKING MIRROR

Most well known as the Nahua/Aztec God Texcatlipoca who deceives and disgraces Quetzacoatl and who was celebrated by a priest dancing in the flayed skin of a sacrifice.

The Maya God K'awil corresponds in many particulars including a smoking mirror in his headdress.

The world can be seen as a mirror into which we look to see who we are. Here the smoke in the mirror is taken as a metaphor for the forces that, by commodifying all of the earth, are destroying original cultures along with the earth itself.





RURAL CITIES

The Rural Cities were envisioned in World Bank development plans and carried over into the Mexican proposed Plan Puebla/Panama.

They were presented as a solution to rural poverty and the need for consolidation of services such as health and education. They were wrapped in the terminology of “*Sustainable Rural Cities*”.

Peoples in original communities quickly reacted to them as schemes to get people off ancestral land to enable corporate exploitation. In Chiapas these cities were built in Nuevo Grijalva and Santiago de Pinar. They are both now semi-deserted.

Plans to build one in Chenalhó met strong resistance. A pastoral letter from the Catholic parish compared them to the *reducciones*, colonial era towns into which the indigenous peoples were forcefully collected. Thus Spanish colonialists could more easily extract free labor from them, tax them and convert them to Catholicism.

Currently plans to build more Rural Cities have been shelved but they could be unshelved.

RESOURCES

Lyrics of music over images of rural city at Santiago de Pinar

from Manifiesto de Primavera/
Manifesto of Spring
music and lyrics by Damián Martínez

A prayer, a new song
Which lifts up hope
A small smoldering light
Hidden in our dreams.

An **extended mini documentary** about the struggle against Rural Cities with a focus on Santiago el Pinar and the proposed one in Chenalho is available through a link on **www.mayafaces.com/resources**

This documentary uses some of the same materials used in Maya Faces in a Smoking Mirror but includes additional material and details.

The ABC of “Sustainable” Rural Cities in Chiapas

is available on line at:

<http://radiozapatista.org/?p=5581&lang=en>
where it can be downloaded in pdf format.

It gives an extensive and researched view of the rural cities from the point of view of people in resistance. CIEPAC and Radio Zapatista collaborated in its production.

Many other points of view can be found with an on line search on the term “Sustainable Rural Cities” or “Ciudades Rurales Sostenibles”.

MILPA

The milpa is a plot of land within walking distance of the home and generally of from half a hectare to two or three.

It is used to plant corn and perhaps beans and chiles for auto consumption and is seldom sufficient for year long needs. Additional food & clothing and other needs must be met from the earnings from wage labor or from growing a little coffee and/or making textiles.

The land is inherited or bought or rented. Ejidal land is community land that a family has been given the rights to use and to pass down, but traditionally not to sell.

Most families grow traditional varieties of corn. In Chenalhó alone there were grown in the 1990s 24 varieties of native corn, many suited for niche eco systems as the elevation, exposure to sun, amount of rainfall and the land vary. Most milpas depend completely on rainfall.

For any farmer who can grow a surplus of corn there is pressure to grow commercial monocultures for export. There is also evidence of the invasion of GMO corn.



Pre European Invasion Roots

Little is known about land tenure in Highland Chiapas prior to the Spanish invasion.

Indications are that much of the land was held collectively and divided for use among the families of the community with these rights passed down through families. This is the pattern that exists today in the ejidos, although this is threatened. (See panel on government policies). In the larger centers of power the elite may have had large land holdings that were farmed for them by peasants. Those who lived on the land came to sell their products in large markets that existed in these centers..

Government Land Policy

In the early 90s, when the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement was being negotiated, Mexican President Salinas Gotari was anxious to have the agreement and also to be considered to head the WTO after his

term. Schooled in the “Washington Consensus” at Harvard he considered the small subsistence land holders an obstacle to industrialized agricultural development.

Three policies of his were damaging to the small peasant and indigenous farmer.

He opened the door to the import of heavily subsidized US corn and lowered supports for Mexican crops.

He led the change to the Constitution that enabled families on ejidal lands to acquire title and sell the land.

He changed the constitution to specify that there would be no more distributions of land to landless peasants.

These changes contributed to a crisis for small subsistence farmers and helped precipitate the Zapatista uprising.

Population increase is also a strong contributor to the economic crisis in the Highlands. There is no way that the small land holdings can be divided among many children when land distribution has ceased. See the mini-documentaries on corn and coffee at www.mayafaces.com/resources

TRADITIONAL MUSIC

uses flutes, trumpets and drums of (updated) pre-Cortesian origin and plucked and bowed string instruments of Eastern origin like harp, violin and guitar that came through European contact, but hand built or manipulated to play intervals and note bends (listen to trumpet examples), rhythms and structures that share little with European music of the time.

Much of this music is used in ceremonial and religious contexts. A recent church dedication had such a group, along with a “banda” style brass band and a folk group.

Batz'i Rock • Tsotsil Rock

Most simply, rock in Tsotsil or other Mayan languages. Sak Tzevul, the group lead by Damián Martínez, was the first to take the leap, and now there are many bands playing many styles of this music.

Sak Tzevul is known for its musicality and the fine voice of Damián. Early on they adapted some traditional Tsotsil Maya music to the contemporary form, a move at that time very controversial.

Originals and adaptations are now being performed in many towns by a variety of groups.



LISTENING RESOURCES

Batz'i Rock and its kindred are increasingly available. Sak Tzevul for instance has 3 instrumental selections on Spotify.

Sak Tzevul has issued two CDs from which most of the music in the documentry is derived. *Xch'u'lel balamil* has lyrics almost totally in Tsotsil. *Selva Soñadora* is mostly in Spanish, but has some lyrics in Tsotsil. The albums are conceived as unified visions or "Poemas Rockfónicos" (Rock Poems). *Selva Soñadora* is dedicated to the indigenous people of the Lacondon jungle and to the pursuit for justice in the legacy of the 1994 Zapatista uprising. Unfortunately thes albums are difficult to find outside of Chiapas.

A YouTube search under Sak Tzevul will turn up a dozen or so performances or interviews.

A search under "Batsi Rock" will turn up other groups as well, such as the hard rockers, Lumaltok.

which are a vital element of expression and communication with the deities. The musico-vocal prayer can contain a very limited literary text or none at all. Its ritual importance lies in the very emission of the melody, which induces the state of ecstasy necessary to establish the link with the sacred. The perfect synchronicity of the voices, the handling of semitones in a scale of five sounds, the use of the falsetto and the type of melody in gradual descent, are some of the qualities of this piece, which may be related to the choral polyphony of the Christian liturgy, which came to these communities in the first years of Colonialism. Its interpretation is performed by the different characters and authorities of the Carnival, mixed together to form three groups. To each of them corresponds a different part of the song. In the case of the first two, their link is immediate, after the falsetto; the third is clearly detected by the silence prior to its entry, and is the longest. It is important to note that in this celebration the vocal element is not separated from the So-mobil string instruments, nor from the other aspects of the party. The example that we present here is an a cappella sample that they agreed to interpret.

TRADITIONAL RESOURCES

These examples of Tsotsil music from YouTube emphasize musicians that play for community functions rather than public performance. They also feature Chenalho (home of some of the documentary participants).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Rd3Z2EQ-hE> authentic reed, drum, trumpet

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1nMbgfDaQBo> for San Pedro

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lu3gKixqfU8> Chenalho violin, harp, guitar,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3uPN8k2gLI8> violin & guitar

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0GCh-Rde-6Q> Carnival vocal group

More examples available with a YouTube search on the term "Tsotsil music"

Translation of part of YouTube description for "Carnival" example

During this festivity they play with a woven straw bull, there is music of drum, flute and trumpet; of harp guitar and violin; and the songs are not lacking,

RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN

Indigenous women in Chiapas first came together to explore their rights in the context of meetings of peasant organizations in the 1980s. Conversations in these meetings included pastoral workers in the liberation theology movement who spoke of women's dignity and feminists who spoke of women's rights and male dominance.

Through participating in peasant, religious and women's organizations in the 80s and 90s, indigenous women worked together to confront the oppressive aspects of traditions, asserting the right to attend school and to control their reproduction. With the Zapatista movement in 1994 came an influential document defining the rights of indigenous and all women – The Zapatista Women's Revolutionary Law. Although some of these tenets may not seem revolutionary to women in other cultures, in the rural indigenous communities of Chiapas they often signal great changes. (See panel on right.)

Despite the implementation of the Revolutionary Women's law, women in both rural and urban contexts in Chiapas continue to struggle against male privilege and to transform cultural traditions, including well-defined gender roles. All too often, women confront violent retaliation for their organizing and sometimes just for being women. This may take the form of violence from their kinsmen, especially young men with no land or opportunities for work; to violence from the army and paramilitaries; to the symbolic violence of being rejected by their families and communities for contesting the status quo.

Nevertheless, women's organizational efforts combined with migration and the increased importance of their cash contributions to family income, have tended to shift power in families and to redefine gender norms.

The Zapatista Women's Revolutionary Law

“taking into account the situation of the woman worker in Mexico, the [Zapatista]revolution incorporates their just demands of equality and justice in the following

Women's Revolutionary Law:

1. Women, regardless of their race, creed, color or political affiliation, have a right to participate in the revolutionary struggle in any way that their desire and capacity determine.
2. Women have the right to work and receive a just salary.
3. Women have the right to decide the number of children they have and care for.
4. Women have the right to participate in the matters of the community and to take charge if they are freely and democratically elected.
5. Women and their children have the right to primary attention in their health and nutrition.
6. Women have the right to education.
7. Women have the right to choose their partner and are not obliged to enter into marriage.
8. Women have the right to be free of violence from both relatives and strangers. Rape and attempted rape will be severely punished.
9. Women will be able to occupy positions of leadership in the organization and hold military ranks in the revolutionary armed forces.
10. Women will have all the rights and obligations which the revolutionary laws and regulations give.”

Weaving

Increasingly women are turning to weaving for sale, rather than only for family needs. Women's cash earnings from selling whatever they raise or produce began to gain importance in the household economy in the 1970s when several forces converged to make the system of wage labor combined with subsistence farming more difficult to maintain. During the 1970s nongovernmental organizations began to work with indigenous women to create co-operatives. In the 1990s, the formation of weaving cooperatives gained impetus with the Zapatista movement. While many weavers still sell independently to tourist markets, women who sell through co-ops are able to earn a fairer price for their work and exercise greater control over their work and lives. In recent years of coffee crop failure, income from weaving has become the primary source of cash income for many families.

Weaving itself is a form of resistance in its preservation of Maya identity, symbols and cosmovision. Some of the designs that women weave on backstrap looms today are the same or slightly altered versions of designs that can

be seen on garments sculpted on stone figures in Classic Maya sites like Yaxchilán. At the same time, as Zenaida says in the documentary, young weavers are adding new designs that appeal to their fancy and to markets in far away places.



RESOURCES ON WEAVING IN CHIAPAS

www.weaving-for-justice.org - purchase weavings from volunteer group that distributes weavings by Tsobol Antsetik (Women United), the weavers in the documentary, and two other weaving cooperatives

BOOKS

Artisans and Advocacy in the Global Market: Walking the Heart Path. Edited by Jeanne Simonelli, Katherine O'Donnell, and June Nash. .

Our Clothing by members of Tsobol Antsetik with the Chiapas Photography Project, 2017. In Tsotsil, Spanish and English. Available on the Weaving for Justice website (see above).

Weaving Chiapas: Maya Women's Lives in a Changing World. Translation by Charlene Woodcock of Voces que tejen y bordan by members of Jolom Mayaetik. .

Weaving Transnational Solidarity: From the Catskills to Chiapas and Beyond by Katherine O'Donnell.

Books by Walter F. Morris, Jr.

Living Maya

Maya Threads: a Woven History of Chiapas

A Textile Guide to the Highlands of Chiapas

A Millennium of Weaving in Chiapas

REFERENCES: RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN

Dissident Women: Gender and Cultural Politics in Chiapas, edited by Shannon Speed, R. Aída Hernández Castillo, and Lynn M. Stephen.

The Journey of a Tzotzil-Maya Woman: Pass Well Over the Earth, by Christine Eber with "Antonia." (Spanish translation available on www.weaving-for-justice.org)

Women of Chiapas: Making History in Times of Struggle and Hope. Edited by Christine Eber and Christine Kovic.

TRANSLATED SONG LYRICS

Accompanying visuals of tropical Chiapas landscape in rain after Zenaída's story.

From **Sangre de Selva** (Blood of the Jungle) Parte 1
lyrics by José Antonio Reyes Matamoros
music by Damián Martínez

The jungle creates voices and passions
that money cannot buy
That even wars don't destroy
From the jungle you can see a star

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The EZLN (Zapatista Army of National Liberation) rose up on January 1, 1994, the day that NAFTA went into effect. They temporarily took over several small cities and San Cristobal de las Casas. The fighting was particularly fierce in Ocosingo. They occupied large tracts of land which in many cases they still occupy. Their makeup was overwhelmingly indigenous with some high ranking mestizos, notably Subcomandante Marcos.

After destroying government records and documents prejudicial to the rights of indigenous people they melted back into the jungle but left a large non-combatant base in many townships. As the government prepared to use its army (well equipped by U.S. anti drug aid) to eradicate the EZLN, Civil Society rose up in massive demonstrations in Mexico City affirming that the grievances of the indigenous people were just and pressuring the government into negotiating. The government complied on the face of it but began to arm anti-zapatista indigenous para-militaries who drove tens of thousands of people from their homes.

In San Andres, under the sponsorship of Archbishop Samuel Ruiz, government representatives and the representatives of the EZLN sat down to negotiate. After long discussions punctuated by breakdowns in the process they arrived at what was to be the first accord which prescribed a level of autonomy for the indigenous people, involving control over their own lands and their own local legal systems. But the government failed to ratify what its representatives had negotiated.

The frustrated EZLN began to unilaterally install autonomous governments in their areas of strong Base support. For instance they have their own administrative seat, Polhó, within

the township of Chenalhó.¹

At his point the displacement of sympathizers and supposed sympathizers by the government armed paramilitaries reached huge proportions. This culminated on December 22, 1997 in the massacre at Acteal in the township of Chenalho when paramilitaries with heavy weapons killed 45 members of the Abejas (this organization is described later in the guide) all unarmed and mostly women and children.

The intellectual authors of this act at the highest level of the federal government were never prosecuted. A governor had to resign. Some of the lower level actors were sentenced to jail terms and later released on “technical” grounds by the courts. They are back in their communities where they have recently been involved in more armed aggressions over an old land dispute between Chenalhó and its neighbor Chalchihuitán. They have caused the displacement of over 5,000 people from their homes, most of them fleeing to the mountains without food or other necessities where a number of them died. Though aid is now (January 2018) arriving, many people are afraid to return to their homes because guns are fired during the night. The government has not disarmed or arrested anyone.

Meanwhile the EZLN Base communities struggle on, refusing to take any of the aid that the government occasionally offers to try to undercut this Base. They have their autonomous government made of of frequently rotating ordinary community members.

1. Small or large groups of unarmed bases of support composed of men, women and children over 15 began to form after the uprising. One of the most important things people in these support bases began to do was organize economic projects, cooperatives, in order to take over greater control of their lives and not have to depend on government hand-outs. People spoke of feeling “clean” through these projects and their participation in them.

MAYA FORMAL EDUCATION

A full moral, cultural and technical education has always been offered in the family and community through the passing on of stories, lessons in thrift and respect for mother earth, weaving and farming

instruction and more. But with the economic pressures and the lack of land for the young, formal education is increasingly seen as a necessity for living. With or without parents' support, young men and especially young women are going further than ever with primary, secondary even preparatory, undergraduate and graduate studies.

As a consequence many will leave their home communities to find the work opportunities for which they have prepared. Some will find ways to spend at least some of their time in service to their communities. To what extent will they be able to continue to identify themselves as Maya? Some of the participants in this documentary give witness to the elasticity of that identity as well as the strength of the forces that pull Mayas back to language, customs and land.



SAN CRISTÓBAL de las CASAS

The largest city in the Highlands, this is the former state capital and conservative stronghold Ciudad Real. Its monuments, now a big tourist draw, were built by compulsory indigenous labor. Until 30 years ago indigenous non-domestics could not overnight in the city and had to step off walkways to make way for Ladinos.

This changed with the huge influx of Mayas who settled in the surrounding open lands when they were expelled from their communities for adopting new religions or later due to their sympathy with and support for the Zapatista rebellion.

That rebellion has caused a major shift in Maya attitudes, even among non-Zapatistas, and a corresponding need to change behavior among the non-indigenous population. For many Mayas seeing other Mayas rise up and occupy the city and begin to define terms of autonomous liberty enabled them to see themselves as carving out a place for themselves in the city. Increasingly many split their time between city and the home village. Now there is even a Maya member of the city council. Someday it may be a Maya city.

The Maya Education Foundation provides scholarships and other support for young Mayas in Chiapas, Guatemala and Belize.
www.mayaedufound.org

ABOUT SAN CRISTOBAL AND CHIAPAS

The City of Kings The Nine Guardians both by Rosario Castellanos

CHILD WORKERS

With the growth and gradual improvement of the new indigenous neighborhoods of the city many families focus on craft production and members go to sell to tourists in the public places of the city. Many children take on this role and sell either accompanied by adults or older siblings or on their own. Some children are unable to attend school because of this activity.

Children working is not unusual in this society. In the countryside from an early age children are taught to weed fields, to weave, to make tortillas, etc. It is part of their education and their economic contribution within the family where everyone must work together to insure survival.

Organizations like the one Norma in the documentary worked for aid children by teaching them about their rights (they are sometimes harassed by public safety officers) and working to help them acquire skills that will help them succeed in a non-agrarian setting.

GENOCIDE IN GUATEMALA

In 1954 the elected Guatemalan government of Jacobo Arbenz was overthrown in a CIA engineered coup at the behest of the United Fruit Company with its high connections in the U.S. State Department. Arbenz had enacted land reforms to return land to the campesinos.

The military coup caused great unrest among the poor Maya farmers who make up 41% of the population and the country was in civil war from 1960 on. In the mid 1980s the government campaign took on the proportions of genocide as whole Mayan villages were massacred. Other villages were herded into “Model Cities” (based on U.S. “Strategic Hamlets” in Vietnam) where the Maya population was imprisoned by the military and forced to go on patrols to hunt down their rebel Maya brothers and sisters. In this context many attempted to flee to Mexico and many were drowned crossing rivers or killed by Guatemalan army patrols.

Mexico’s ambiguous reception was based partly on its tradition of providing haven for political refugees, partly on fears of loss of work by Mexican agricultural laborers and partly on its deal with the U.S. to provide a

buffer that would limit the amount of refugees who would proceed to the U.S. and make legitimate asylum claims under United Nations accords.

As Kixtup points out, the camps were very close to the border and the Guatemalan army often crossed into Mexican territory unimpeded to attack people in the camps.



RESOURCES

FILMS

Pamela Yates' documentaries series
WHEN THE MOUNTAINS TREMBLE
GRANITO: HOW TO NAIL A DICTATOR and
500 YEARS

catch the generals off guard, follow to the subsequent trial of ex-president Rios Montt and show us the popular movements that are trying to change Guatemala.

John Sayles' movie **MEN WITH GUNS**, though it doesn't specify its location, is based on the genocidal war in Guatemala and gives a sense of its horrors

Gregory Nava's film **EL NORTE** gives a good sense of what Guatemalans were fleeing from, but also the exploitation, rejection and dangers if they tried to make it the U.S..

BOOKS

How to Turn Paradise into Ashes by Beatriz Manz

Silence on the Mountain by Daniel Wilkinson

The Art of Political Murder by Francisco Goldman