

***UNHEARD OF! 7***  
*Indigenous Languages  
of Mexico*

**Presented by:**

**Endangered Language Alliance &  
Mano a Mano: Mexican Culture without Borders**  
**with the support of  
Bowery Arts + Science**

# PROGRAM

**Introduction** Juan-Carlos Aguirre (Mano a Mano: MCWB)

**Introduction** Daniel Kaufman (ELA)

**Nahuatl poetry** Irwin Sánchez

– VIDEOS –

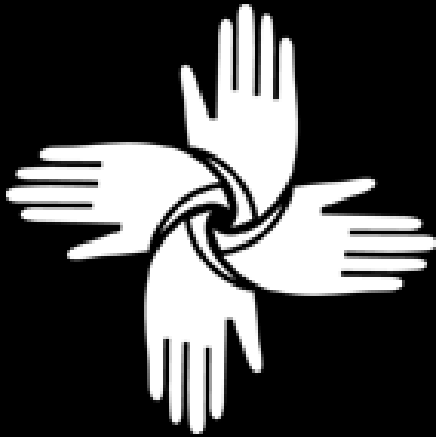
**Mixtec tongue twisters** Maximiliano

**Interview** Marta, Maximiliano & Zenaida Cantu

**Tlapanec Poetry** Zenaida Cantú & Jhoana Montes

**Totonac Poetry & Reflections** José Juárez

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mano a mano

MEXICAN CULTURE WITHOUT BORDERS

**Daniel Kaufman**  
*Executive Director*



**Endangered Language Alliance**

# Indigenous Languages of Mexico

- Mexican government officially recognizes 68 indigenous language groups
- Some languages are extinct (Cochimi, Opata, Tapachultec) or have very few speakers (Kiliwa, Kumiai, Mocho') while some have hundreds of thousands of speakers or more (Yucatec Maya, Nahuatl)
- All can be considered endangered because of the rapid changes taking place in rural communities and low transmission rates.

# Indigenous Languages of Mexico

- High linguistic diversity, both across families and within (macro-)languages
  - Uto-Aztecan
  - Yuman-Cochimi
  - Totonacan (Totonac & Tepehua)
  - Otomanguean
  - Mixe-Zoquean (Mixe, Zoque, Popoluca)
  - Mayan
  - Algonquian (Kikapú)
  - Seri (isolate)
  - Chontal (isolate)
  - P'urhépecha (isolate)
  - Huave

# Indigenous Languages of Mexico

- The languages of central and southern Mexico belong to the Mesoamerican linguistic area, and share many typological traits due to long-term contact (Campbell, Kaufman & Smith-Stark 1986).
  - Relational nouns
  - Base 20 counting system
  - Calques: bird-stone = 'egg', blood-road = 'vein', god/sun-excrement = 'precious metal', water-mountain = 'town'

# Indigenous Languages of Mexico

- There is renewed interest in maintaining Mexico's linguistic diversity
- National language status was conferred on all indigenous languages in 2003. In the last decade, bilingual schools have increased and educational materials have been produced in many languages.
- Economic concerns still pose a serious threat to the life of most Mexican languages.



# Indigenous Languages of Mexico

- 6 out of every 100 Mexicans speaks an indigenous language (INEGI 2010) but in NYC, that ratio is much higher, maybe even as high as 1 out of every 3.
- There are many Mexican languages spoken in New York that have never been properly described or recorded.



Totonac

Nahuatl

Mixtec

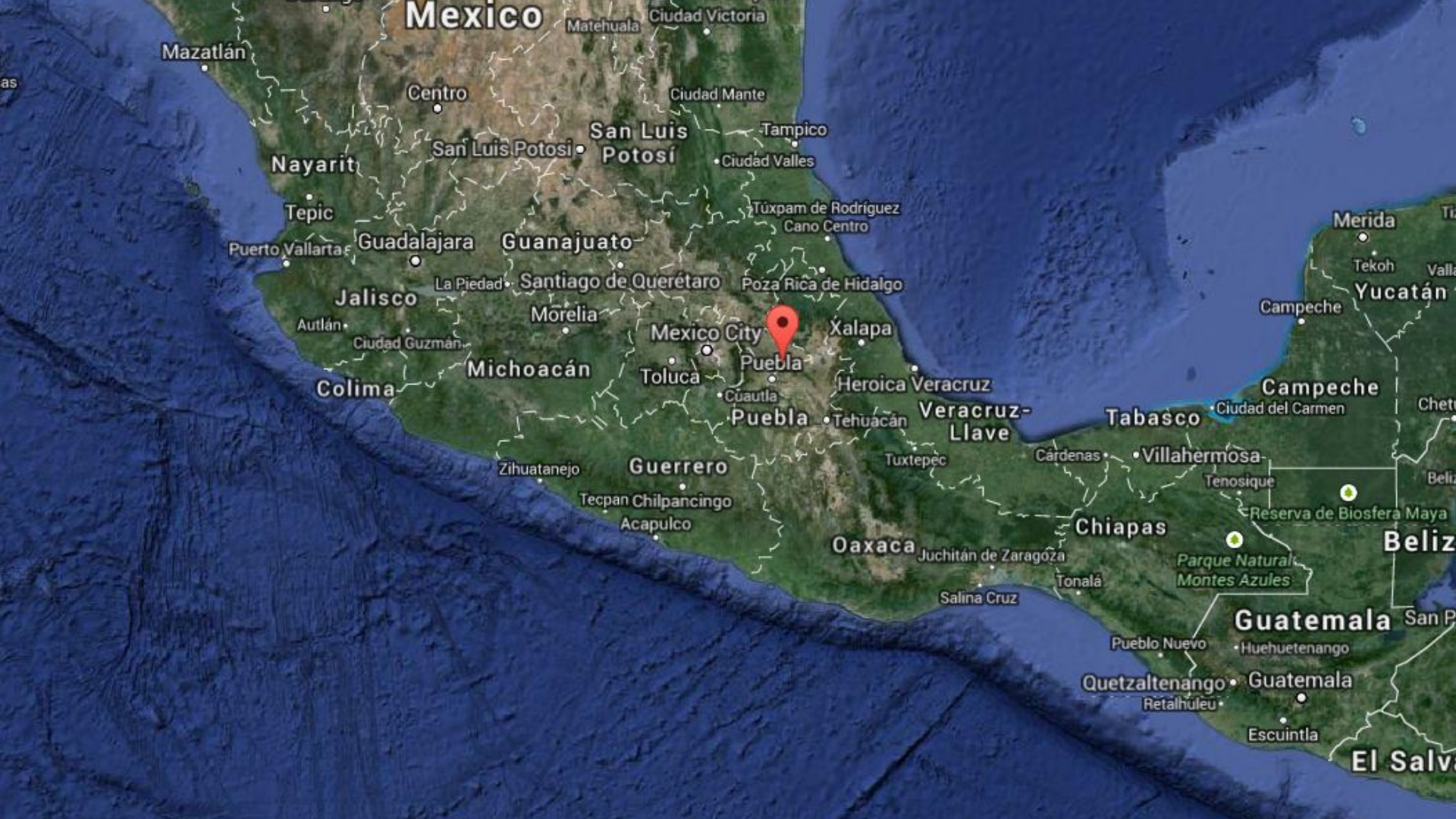
Tlapanec

Today: Four languages Guerrero and Puebla

# Nahuatl

- Uto-Aztecan family: from Idaho (Shoshoni) to Central America (Pipil)
- There are 1,544,968 speakers of all dialects of Nahuatl (INEGI 2010)
- Spread of Nahuatl from Post-Classic through early colonial period
- Nahuatl was the principal language of Tenochtitlan at the time of the conquest
- Many speakers in NYC are from Puebla and Guerrero





Mexico

Mazatlán

Centro

Matehuala

Ciudad Victoria

Ciudad Mante

Nayarit

San Luis Potosí

San Luis Potosí

Tampico

Ciudad Valles

Tepic

Guadalajara

Guanajuato

Túxpan de Rodríguez  
Cano Centro

Puerto Vallarta

Jalisco

Santiago de Querétaro

Poza Rica de Hidalgo

Autlán

Morelia

Mexico City

Xalapa

Colima

Michoacán

Toluca

Puebla

Heroica Veracruz

Campeche

Merida

Tekoh

Vallarta

Yucatán

Cuautla

Puebla

Tehuacán

Veracruz-Llave

Tabasco

Campeche

Ciudad del Carmen

Zihuatanejo

Guerrero

Oaxaca

Chiapas

Reserva de Biosfera Maya

Belize

Tecpan Chilpancingo

Acapulco

Juchitán de Zaragoza

Salina Cruz

Tonalá

Parque Natural  
Montes Azules

Guatemala

San Pedro

Pueblo Nuevo

Huehuetenango

Quetzaltenango

Guatemala

Retalhuleu

Escuintla

El Salvador

# Nahuatl

- Poetry and song were held in extremely high esteem by the Nahuatl.
- Every town and every person of means maintained an entourage of singers and dancers.
- The author Daniel Brinton, writing in 1890, describes the earlier setting of poetry concerts among the Nahuatl:

“...concerts were held on ceremonial occasions in the open air, in the village squares or courtyards of the houses. They began in the morning and usually continued until night, occasionally far into the night. The musicians occupied the centre of the square and the two most skillful singers stood or sat around them. When the sign was given to begin, the two most skillful singers, sometimes a man and a woman, pronounced the first syllables of the song slowly but with emphasis; then the drums began in a low tone, and gradually increased in strength as they proceeded; the other singers united their voices until the whole chorus was in action, and often the bystanders, to the numbers of thousands, would ultimately join in the words of some familiar song, keeping time by concerted movements of the hands and feet.

Each verse or couplet of the song was repeated three or four times before proceeding to the next, and those songs which were of the slowest measure and least emotional in character were selected for the earlier hours of the festivals.”

(Brinton 1890: Section 5)

# Nahuatl

- The Spanish not only destroyed as much of the written language as they could, they also tried to stamp out the oral tradition.
- Even Sahagun, the greatest documenter of Nahua language and culture, considered Nahua song the work of the devil and thus worthy of elimination.
- The allegories and allusions of Nahua poetry were seen as a grave threat to spread of Catholicism and Spanish rule.

Sahagun, the great historian and documenter of ancient Nahua culture:

"Our enemy on earth, has prepared a thick woods and a dangerous ground full of pitfalls, wherein to devise his evil deeds and to hide himself from attack, as do the beasts and venomous serpents. This woods and these pitfalls are the songs which the devil has inspired to be used in his service, as praises to his honor, in the temples and elsewhere; because they are composed with such a trick that they proclaim only what the devil commands, and are understood only by those to whom they are addressed. It is well known that the cavern, woods or depths in which the devil hides himself were these chants or psalms which he himself has composed, and which cannot be understood in their true significance except by those who are accustomed to the peculiar style of their language." (Sahagun, *Historia de Nueva España*, Lib. II, Appendice)



*CHILI uan XOCOLATL*  
*CHILE y CHOCOLATE*

*por Irwin Sánchez*

Ze tonal on kihto, kayamo ni  
kazi in pakiliztli, ihko ni  
machilia.

Ikano, ope ni temohtinemi  
keni ze mo kuitlaxkololoa, on  
yahtine nochka, tlen amo on  
temo.

One day I said, “I have not  
found happiness” and  
indeed so I felt.  
I began looking for balance.  
I walked everywhere.  
What didn't I look for?

ihkuak on azito ixpantzin to  
teotzintli uan o nexmaka zeki  
chili uan zeki cacahuatl.

ihki ni mo tekipano, on temo  
tlika o nex maka nin chili uan  
nin cacahuatl

When I reached the  
presence of the god, he  
gave me a few chiles and  
cocoa seeds.

So I started planting, while  
wondering why he gave me  
chiles and cocoa.

Axto onipe ikan chili:

hikuak oni tlakua in chili onex  
koko, onex chokti nochi no  
matzi omo totoni,  
nexkokoaya no tzonteko uan  
no ihte, onex ixkuahuinti uan  
oni melzi

First, the chile.

When I ate the chile, it hurt  
me. I cried and my whole  
body became hot. It gave  
me a headache and a  
stomach ache

I became dizzy and felt like I  
was drowning.

nima, in teotlak, oni tlakoni in  
xocolatl, onex zehui, no yeztli  
cuali onemi uan no yolo kuali  
otekiti, oni paki, onex chihchika  
uan oni machili nekiya ni temos  
aka ma ni tlazohtliliz

Later in the afternoon, I ate  
the chocolate. It calmed me.  
My blood flowed well and  
my heart beat stronger.  
I was glad. It strengthened  
me but now I felt a yearning  
for love.

kayamo on kaziaya in pakiliztli,  
ohuetz in tekato on kochuetz uan  
on temik:

ze kuakaltetzi ichpokato cualtzi  
tlakentitok ika ni kueitl chichiltik  
nima o mo nexti ze tlakatl  
hueyoti chikahuak uan cualtzi  
ahuiayak, in tlakatl o napalo in  
ichpokato

nima on kitak keni omochi ikan  
ninke ze kuali pakiliztli

But still I did not find  
happiness. At night, I went  
to lie down and I fell asleep.  
I dreamt of a beautiful girl  
dressed in a beautiful red  
dress and a strong man with  
a pleasing spirit.  
The man carried off the girl.  
Immediately after I saw  
how they themselves were  
transformed into  
happiness.

On izatehauk uan oni ope nin xochikuikatl:

MA MO CHIHUA IN ILUITZINTLI

TI KUECHOZKE NAIN CHILTZINTLI

TI KUECHOZKE NIN CACAHUALTZINTLI

T'NOCHTI TI TLAKUAZKE NIN

MOLIHTZINTLI

TO TEOTZI O KICHI NIN CHILTZINTLI

TO TEOTZIN O KICHI NIN

CACAHUALTINTZLI

UAN IKAN NIN TETLAKUILI TEX PALEHUIZ

TI CHIHUAZKE IN CUITLAXCOLOLIZTLI

TI KAZIZKE IN PAKILIZTLI

I began singing this song:

The great feast is made.

We will grind the chile.

We will grind the cocoa.

We will all eat this *molé*.

Our god made this chile.

Our god made this cocoa.

And with this great gift he

helped us achieve

balance and find happiness.

***TLEN NEXEHUA***

***That which lifts me up  
por Irwin Sánchez***





Tlen ni machilia axa, tla nex  
cocohua ni mo pachohua  
inahuak no ichpokato itek  
iyolohtzin, nin cihuatzintli i  
toka "JUANITA"

If what I feel now causes  
me pain, I enter the heart  
of my woman

This woman is called  
"JUANITA"

Nech napalohua, nech tema  
no yolotzin, no ielihtzi uan  
no tonaltzintli mo kahua  
chipahuak uan ihki kuali ni  
mahmachiliz tlen ka itek no  
ihtek, nima nikita kualtzi no  
chichilohtlitzintli, tlen no  
tonal amatzin kihtohua ni  
nehnemiz.

I bathe.

The heart, emotions, my soul,  
all become clean.

I can feel what is inside me.

I can see clearly my red path,  
which my destiny tells me to  
follow.

Ni mo yehuatlali ipan no  
petlatl uan ni tlahtlachia, no  
kuentla, no kuentlahtzin za  
zeka kate. Nehua amo nika,  
nika zan no mahuizotzin.

In mikilitzin uan n'nemiliztli  
mo nehnelohua uan mo  
chihua za ze uan motoka  
ilhuitzintli.

I sit on my mat and start  
looking at my space. My  
space and I are together.  
I'm not here. I only see my  
essence.

Death and life are stirred  
and made one, called  
“universe”.

Ni kuali cuatlahtoz axan,  
niek mati tlen nikpia no  
mahuzotzi uan tlen kihtoz  
melahuak zenka yez.

Tla ze tonaltzintli ni mo  
polohua uan ahueliti ni  
kuatlahtoz, no mo pachoz  
inahuak no Juanita uan  
yehuazti zan izeltzi  
nexehuaz.

I can speak with authority  
today. I know what I have in  
me and what I say will always  
be true.

If one day I stray and I cannot  
speak with authority, I'll  
approach my *Juanita* and she  
will lift me up.

***ZEKI XOCHIME OTI AXITIKO IPAN NO MAHUA  
UNAS FLORES HICISTE LLEGAR A MIS MANOS***

*por Irwin Sanchez*

Zan tlahko oni kixmati mo  
tlahuiltzin

Amo on hual kitak nochi

Tehuantzi ti mo  
tokayohtzino tlauialtzintli

Ikan mo tlahuiltzin o ti nech  
chokti

Ikan mo tlatzotzontli o ti  
nech pakti

I knew half of your light  
but couldn't see it.

You are called illumination  
and with your light you  
make me cry  
and with your music you  
heal me

Axan ni aziko kampa ni  
nekie aziti, mo nahuak

Uan ti azitia kampa ayek  
aka o azito,

Pampa ompa nichie omokuep  
tla tzopinyo.

Axan nochi mo polohti ipan  
nin ohtli

Now I've arrived at my  
destination, together with you.

And you are going where no one  
can reach.

Where everything is thorns.

Now everything is being lost on  
this path.

Mo polohua in tzopinyo uan mo  
melahua in xochime

Ni nehnemi tlahkoya in xochime

Axa in xochime nech yekana

Ni nehnemi ipan in xochisuatzin

Uan no xochitzinme ti mo  
huaxkatia

The thorns are lost and the  
flowers rise

A road between flowers

The flowers now guide me

A road between petals  
and of my flowers you take  
possession.



Uan ti pakiltia ikan mo  
tlatzotzontli uan mo tlahuiltzin

Nik tlakatia ipan mo altepemili.

You gladden them with your  
music and your light.

Because they are reborn on  
your land.

You gladden them with your  
music and your light.

Because they are reborn on  
your land.

Uan tipakiltia ikan motlatzotzontli uan motlahuiltzin  
Nik tlakatia ipan moaltepemili.

You gladden them with your music and your light.  
Because they are reborn on your land.

**Video intermission**



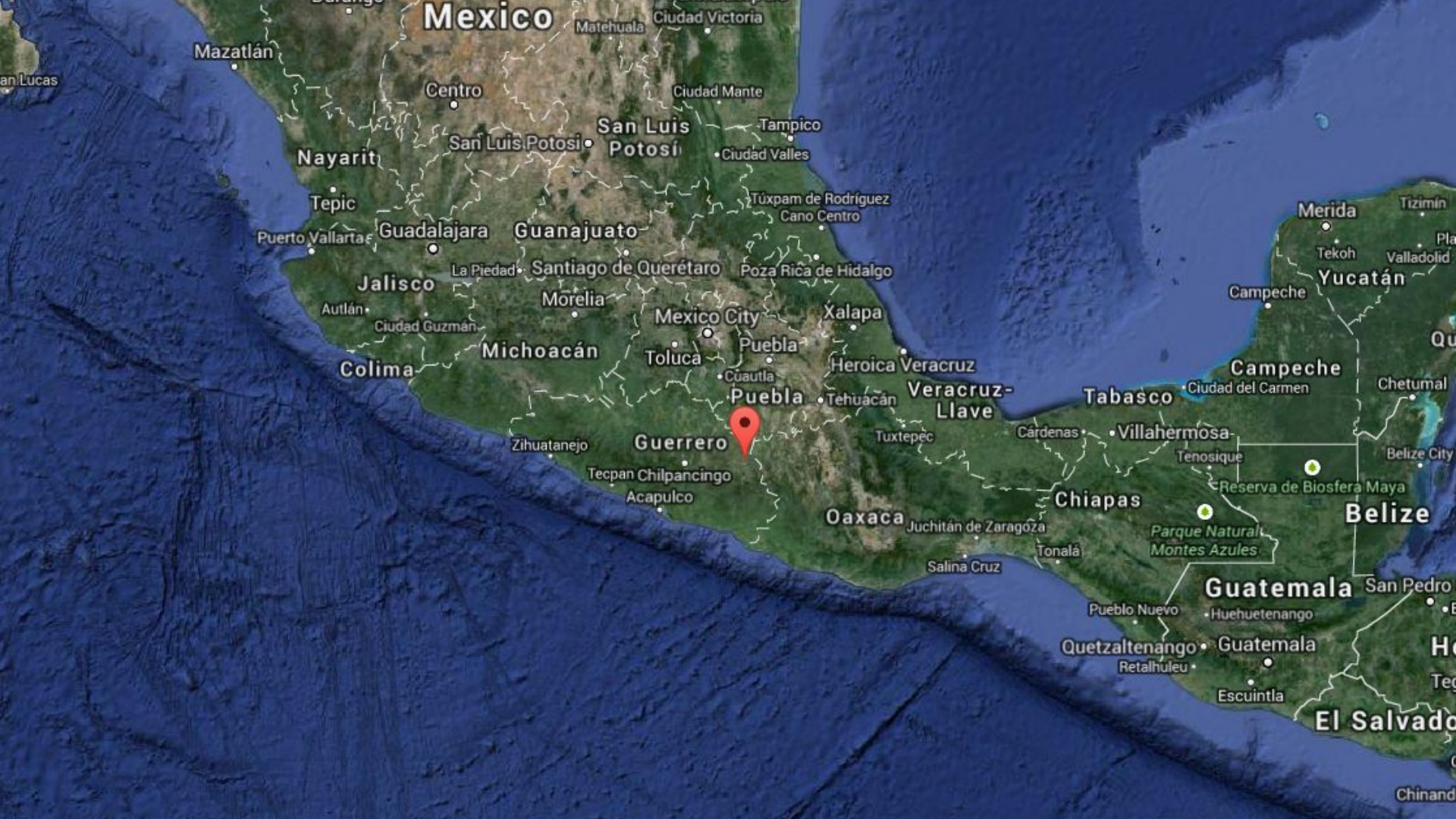


**Ellos pueden hablar pero nuestros hijos**

# Mixtec

- Oto-Manguean family: from central Mexico (Pame, San Luís Potosí) to Central America
- 471,710 speakers of all Mixtec varieties (INEGI 2010)
- High internal diversity, varieties located at the intersection of Oaxaca, Guerrero and Puebla
- Many speakers in NYC are from eastern Guerrero





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Matehuala

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Ciudad Mante

Tampico

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Ciudad Valles

Tepic

Puerto Vallarta

Guadalajara

Guanajuato

Túxpam de Rodríguez

Cano Centro

Jalisco

Santiago de Querétaro

Poza Rica de Hidalgo

Colima

Michoacán

Mexico City

Xalapa

Toluca

Puebla

Heroica Veracruz

Veracruz-Llave

Tabasco

Campeche

Campeche

Ciudad del Carmen

Zihuatanejo

Guerrero

Tecpan Chilpancingo

Acapulco

Oaxaca

Tehuacán

Tuxtepec

Cárdenas

Villahermosa

Tenosique

Chiapas

Reserva de Biosfera Maya

Parque Natural Montes Azules

Belize

Guatemala

Pueblo Nuevo

Huehuetenango

Quetzaltenango

Retalhuleu

Guatemala

Escuintla

El Salvador

Chinand

*Mixteco tongue twisters*  
The chicken & the worm

Adapted from Ricardo Ortiz García's 'Nduxu' In *Ña kúu ta yíyo yatin xi'in tu'un savi I* (Vivencias y sucesos cercanos en la lengua mixteca). Secretaría de Educación Pública. 2008.



**Ndyuxí ndúkún tikuxi**

chicken search worm

The chicken looks for the worm

**Tikuxi xínu nuu ndyuxí**

worm run front chicken

The worm runs from the chicken

**Ndyuxí na'andukun tikuxi  
worm**

chicken go-search worm

The chicken goes looking for the

**Tikuxi na'andukun ndyuxí**

worm go-search chicken

The worm goes looking for the chicken

**Xínu tikuxi nuu ndyuxí**

run worm from chicken

The worm runs from the chicken

# *Mixteco tongue twisters*

## Poor auntie

Adapted from Catalina Nazario González's 'Xixi-i' In *Ña kúu ta yíyo yatin xi'in tu'un savi I* (Vivencias y sucesos cercanos en la lengua mixteca).

Secretaría de Educación Pública. 2008.

Xíxi xixi-i xi'i  
eats auntie mushroom

Auntie eats a mushrooms.

Xi'i xíxi xixi-i  
mushroom eats auntie

Mushrooms, Auntie eats.

Xíxi xixi-i xi'i  
eats auntie mushroom

Auntie eats mushrooms

Xa'a xi'i nixi'i xixi-i  
because mushrooms died auntie

And due to those mushrooms auntie died

# *Mixteco tongue twisters*

## Juana

Adapted from Araceli Castañeda Gonzalez's 'Ñá Juana' In *Ña kúu ta yíyo yatin xi'in tu'un savi I* (Vivencias y sucesos cercanos en la lengua mixteca).  
Secretaría de Educación Pública. 2008.

**Ve'e ñá nana Juana, yíyo naña**  
In Juana's house there's *chayote*.

**Naña, kútoo ñá nana Juana**  
Juana likes chayote

**Nana Juana, xá'nda ñá naña**  
Juana cuts the chayote

**Níkoyo naña, xata ñá Juana**  
The chayote falls

**Kutoo ñá Juana naña.**  
on Juana's feet.

# *Mixteco riddle*

Adapted from Antonio Villegas Francico's riddle in *Ña kúu ta yíyo yatin xi'in tu'un savi I* (Vivencias y sucesos cercanos en la lengua mixteca).

Secretaría de Educación Pública. 2008.

Yoo xitin ya.

It has a nose.

Ñuu si'va tixin ya.

It has seeds in it.

Yoo xitin ya,

It has a nose,

ta chí'yo ya yaxi yo.

and we cook it and eat it.

Nda ku ya?

What is it?

Yoo xitin ya.

It has a nose.

Ñuu si'va tixin ya.

It has seeds in it.

Yoo xitin ya,

It has a nose,

ta chí'yo ya yaxi yo.

and we cook it and eat it.

Nda ku ya?

What is it?

Ikin

Pumpkin



**Indigenous Mexicans  
of Oaxaca & Guerrero  
in NYC  
An interview**

¿Cómo se llama y de dónde viene usted?

*What is your name and where are you from?*

¿Puede describir la vida en su pueblo?

¿Cuáles son los trabajos a que se dedica la gente de su pueblo?

*Can you describe what life is like in your town?*

*What kinds of work do people do?*

¿Qué fiestas celebra la gente de su pueblo?

*What holidays are celebrated in your town?*

¿Cuáles son algunas de las (muchas) diferencias entre Nueva York y su pueblo?

¿Cuáles son algunas de las diferencias entre la gente de aquí y allá?

*What are some (of the many) differences between NYC and your town?*

*What are some of the differences between the people here and there?*

¿Qué tipo de problemas enfrentan sus comunidades en Nueva York?

*What kind of problems face your communities in NYC?*

En su experiencia, ¿los niños indígenas en NY hablan las lenguas de sus padres?

Si no hablan, ¿porqué no?

*In your experience, do indigenous children in NY speak their parents languages?  
If not, why do you think they don't?*

¿Cree que sus lenguajes están en peligro de desaparecer?

*Do you think your languages are in danger of disappearing?*

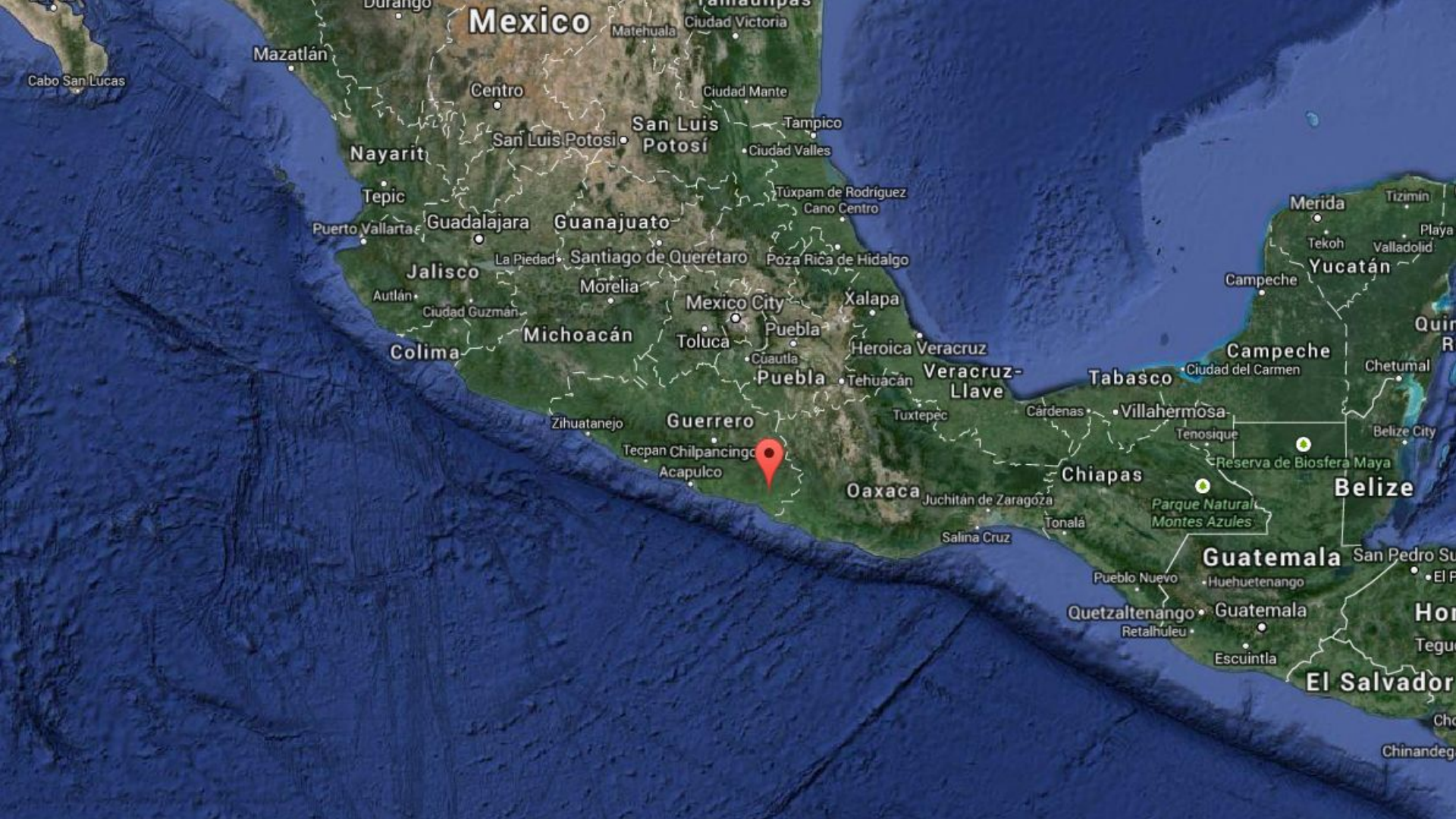


¿Qué cree usted que se pierde cuando se pierden las lenguas?

*What is lost when a language is lost?*

# Tlapanec

- Like Mixtec, also Oto-Manguean
- Tlapanecan languages are most closely related to Subtiaba, an extinct language of Nicaragua
- There are 120,072 speakers of all dialects of Tlapanec (INEGI 2010)
- Spoken in Guerrero



Mexico

Mazatlán

Cabo San Lucas

Centro

Matehuala

Ciudad Victoria

Ciudad Mante

Tampico

San Luis Potosí

San Luis Potosí

Ciudad Valles

Nayarit

Tepic

Puerto Vallarta

Guadalajara

Guanajuato

Túxpam de Rodríguez

Cano Centro

Jalisco

Santiago de Querétaro

Poza Rica de Hidalgo

Autlán

Colima

Michoacán

Morelia

Mexico City

Xalapa

Puebla

Veracruz

Puebla

Toluca

Cuautla

Puebla

Heroica Veracruz

Veracruz-Llave

Tehuacán

Tuxtépéc

Tabasco

Villahermosa

Zihuatanejo

Guerrero

Tecpan Chilpancingo

Acapulco

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Quetzaltenango

Retalhuleu

Guatemala

Escuintla

Campeche

Campeche

Ciudad del Carmen

Chetumal

Belize City

Belize

Guatemala

Huehuetenango

San Pedro Sula

Guatemala

Escuintla

Guatemala

El Salvador

El Salvador

El Salvador

El Salvador

El Salvador

El Salvador

El Salvador

El Salvador

**THE FORGOTTEN ONES  
FROM THE MOUNTAIN  
LOS OLVIDADOS DE LA  
MONTAÑA**

**Zenaida Cantú**

**Translated from Spanish into English  
by Luz Aguirre**

I am a woman from the countryside; I grew up ignoring many things but with the strength forged by hard work and an intangible wisdom that the passivity from the countryside gifts to those that appropriate it.

Yo soy una mujer de campo, crecí ignorando muchas cosas pero con la fortaleza que el trabajo arduo deja y con la sabiduría intangible que la pasividad del campo regala a quien se la apropia.

When I left the village, I left many things but I brought with me my jet black hair, my brown skin, my indigenous face, my short stature, I brought those things that say where I come from and how I've lived.

Cuando me fui del pueblo, abandoné muchas cosas pero traje conmigo mi pelo tan negro, mi piel morena, mi cara indígena, mi corta estatura, me traje esas cosas que dicen de donde vengo y como he vivido.

I have lived in obscurity  
because nobody  
remembers how my people  
lived and few care about  
how they will live on. How  
have they been able to  
forget about us? How are  
we not brought to light by  
their curious gaze on me?

He vivido en el olvido  
porque nadie recuerda  
como ha vivido mi pueblo y  
pocos se preocupan por  
cómo vivirán, ¿cómo han  
podido olvidarse de  
nosotros? ¿Cómo esa  
mirada curiosa sobre mí no  
les revela quienes somos?



Now far from home and  
amidst large cities; I  
observe how people place  
on me that which clutters  
them, that which makes  
them despise themselves,  
helps them forget...I see  
guilt in their eyes for  
looking at me differently  
as well as an encouraging  
relief that what they see is  
not them.

Ahora lejos de mi casa y en  
medio de las grandes ciudades,  
observo cómo las personas  
depositan en mí eso que les  
estorba, eso que los hace  
despreciarse a sí mismos, eso  
que les ayuda a olvidar... veo en  
sus ojos una culpa por mirarme  
diferente pero también veo el  
alivio de quien confirma que eso  
que ve, no es él.



Although you might not think so, I go proudly, I walk with the demeanor of a champion; I display my lineage this way.

Aunque se pueda pensar lo contrario yo voy con orgullo, camino con el porte de quien se sabe vencedor, así porto mi linaje.

I do not find superiority in my blood but I do find hypocritical their discrimination, did they forget that magically they got rid of the link that binds us? Do they forget that all the humiliation that distinguishes my people is the result of hunger, exploitation, haggling, of breaking my back just to survive?

No encuentro superioridad en mi sangre pero si encuentro inferior su hipócrita discriminación, ¿ya olvidaron que como por arte de magia hicieron desaparecer el vinculo que hay entre nosotros? ¿olvidan que todas las vejaciones que distinguen a mi pueblo son el resultado del hambre, de la explotación, del regateo, de partirme el lomo para apenas sobrevivir?

But although they strive  
and scheme and make  
every effort to forget me,  
they will never succeed  
me away, I stand here to  
remind them who I am,  
speaking my language,  
defending equality.

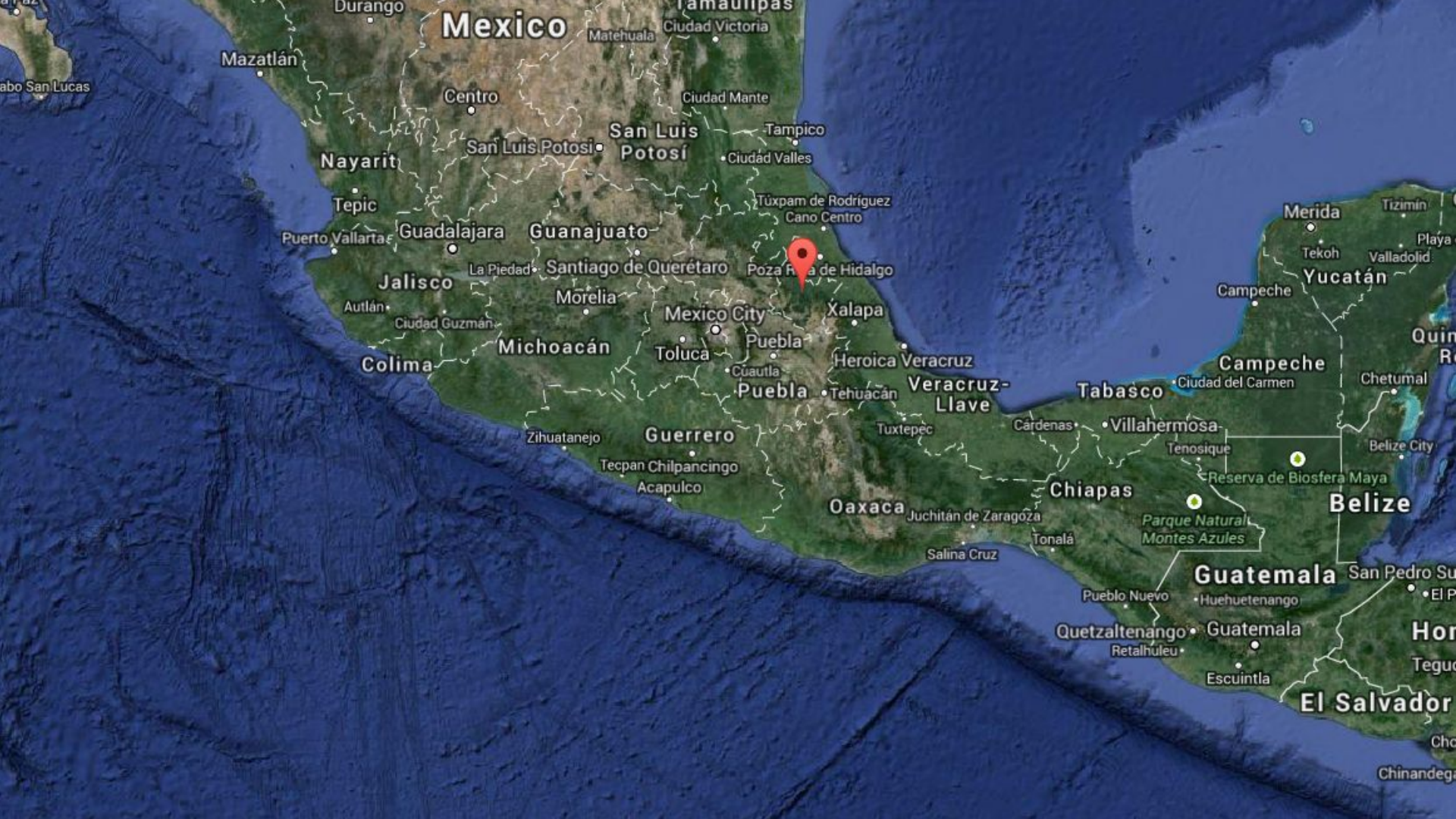
Pero aunque se esfuerzen por  
olvidarme, aunque todos se  
coludan y pongan todo su  
empeño en ello, nunca lograrán  
apartarme, aquí estoy de pie  
recordándoles quien soy,  
hablando mi lengua y  
defendiendo la igualdad.

Pero aunque se esfuercen por olvidarme, aunque todos se coludan y pongan todo su empeño en ello, nunca lograrán apartarme, aquí estoy de pie recordándoles quien soy, hablando mi lengua y defendiendo la igualdad.

But although they strive and scheme and make every effort to forget me, they will never succeed in pushing me away. I stand here to remind them who I am, speaking my language, defending equality.

# Totonac

- The Totonacan language family is made up of Totonac and Tepehua, spoken primarily in the states of Veracruz and Puebla
- 244,033 speakers of all varieties of Totonac (INEGI 2010)



Mexico

Mazatlán

Nayarit

Centro

San Luis Potosí

San Luis Potosí

Tampico

Tepic

Puerto Vallarta

Guadalajara

Guanajuato

Jalisco

Morelia

Mexico City

Xalapa

Colima

Michoacán

Toluca

Puebla

Heroica Veracruz

Veracruz-Llave

Tabasco

Campeche

Merida

Yucatán

Guerrero

Tecpan Chilpancingo

Acapulco

Oaxaca

Juchitán de Zaragoza

Chiapas

Tonalá

Guatemala

Huehuetenango

Quetzaltenango

Retalhuleu

Escuintla

Belize

Guatemala

Guatemala

El Salvador

# **Ti palhuhua tachuhuin tapatzankgama**

**Lenguas en peligro de  
extinción**

**by Don José Juárez**



Ti palhuhua tachuhuin tapatzankgama

Lenguas en peligro de extinción

Languages in danger of extinction

¿Tuxla kinkga okgpuzaman?

¿Qué nos está pasando?

What is happening to us?

¿Ni xla ki ni amahui?

¿A dónde vamos?

Where are we going?

Chali, chali lhuhua tachuhuin makgnu mahui

Todos los días muchas lenguas estamos enterrando,

Every day, we bury many languages



akgxni xla ma Tamakgnu tachuhuín

Cuando una lengua se entierra,

When a language is interred

ta makgnú kgi lilatamatkan,

enterramos nuestra vida,

we bury a new life,

patzakgayahui ki kilhtzucutkan.

olvidamos nuestras raíces.

and we forget our roots.

Kgapolhhua xla tzucuyahuiki latamayatkan.

Empieza a oscurecer nuestra existencia.

It begins to obscure our existence

Makgapatzakgayahui.

Nos equivocamos.

We err.

Akgtzankgayahui.

Nos perdemos.

We stray.

Nalhli kgalhtitumi latamayahui.

Ya no vivimos una vida ejemplar.

We no longer live exemplary lives.

Ankgalhin li lakganunahui tahuilalahui

Todo el tiempo nuestra cara no es real, enmascarada,

Our faces are no longer real, masked,

tzukgu xla ki lilatamatkgan,

nuestra vida empieza

our life begins to be

lilakga kgolo, huan

una vida de carnaval

a carnival life.

Mali puhuanياهوי kin tatakan.

Entristecemos nuestros abuelos.

We sadden our grandfathers.

Mali maxananahui kin tatakan.

Avergonzamos a nuestros abuelos.

We shame our grandfathers.

Mali tasayahui kin nanakan.

Hacemos llorar a nuestras abuelas

We make our grandmothers cry.

Lihua xla kgaskinkga xla na lakgmaxtuyahui

Es esencial rescatar

It is essential to rescue

king kilhtzukutkgan,

nuestro origen,

our origins,

na lakg maxtuyahui kin tachuhuinkgan

rescatar nuestra lengua,

to rescue our language,

hua xla na kga talilakgapastakgyahui

que es nuestra identificación

which is our identification.

Nana xla katlankga

Es enorme

Enormous is

xla huiliyahui king kilhtzukutkan.

el trabajo de revitalizar nuestra raíz.

the work of revitalizing our roots.

Tliwaklhi na layahui

Tenemos que ser fuertes

We must be strong

chali chali

todos los días.

every day.

Lakgxtum nalayahui kin.

Tenemos que unirnos todos.

we must all unite

Pakgs li tala na la ukgxilhahui kin

Todos tenemos que vernos como hermanos.

we must all see each other as brothers

Mima chiyu tum kilhtamaku.

Viene el tiempo diferente.

The new time comes.

Pakgsi katuxahuat natalakgpali.

El mundo cambiará.

The world will change.

Pakgsi na talakgapaliyahui kin.

Todos a vamos a cambiar.

We will all change.

Pakgs stlani na la ukgxilhahui kin.

Todos nos veremos bien (entre nosotros).

We will see each other as good.



Lakgxtumi na la akgtiniyahui kin

Nos conduciremos de una forma correcta.

We will conduct ourselves in a correct  
manner,

Akgtankgs lakgatitumi kilhtzukuma kiltamaku,

empieza una vida correcta,

begin a correct life,

Kgastlani xla na tzuku talatamati,

empieza una vida hermosa.

begin a beautiful life.

pakgs lakgxtumi xla na la ukgxilhahui

Todos nos vamos a ver

We will all see,

pakgs na kga kiskulunahuiyani kin Puchini kan.

todos nos bendecirá nuestro Dios.

our God will bless us all.

Kga ti palhuhua xla li tamakuhui

Tiene muchos nombres

He has many names,

puru kga chatumi xla

pero es el mismo,

but he is the same,

pakgs xlakgs kgatani kin

todos somos sus hijos

and we are all his children.

King kga ukgxilhahui kin

Así nos ve a nosotros

That is how he sees us.

Two Totonac poems by Jun Tiburcio (Chumatlán,  
Veracruz)

From: *Sueño en grande/Lank Tamanixni* (Coatepec,  
Veracruz: Banco de Ideas, 2001).

republished in:

*Words of the True Peoples,*

Volume II: Poetry

Carlos Montemayor and Donald Frishmann eds.

University of Texas Press, 2005

**Jununu**  
**Hummingbird**  
**Culibri**

**by Jun Tiburcio**

Akit chuchut  
kmastakgay  
xatlan tiyat

I am water  
that moistens  
the earth.

Soy un agua  
que humedece  
a la tierra.

Akit xkgakgatat  
kpuntanuy  
k'kakiwin.

I am light  
that penetrates  
the plants.

Soy rayo de luz  
que penetra  
a las plantas.

Akit sakgsinat  
nikuma mastay  
xtalhtsi.

I am fruit  
that produces  
the seeds.

Soy un fruto  
que produce  
las semillas.

Akit chankat  
nikuma chitnikan  
ksakgsi

I am a field  
that offers  
its corn.

Soy milpa  
que ofrece  
la mazorca.

Akit xawat  
nikuma mastay  
xapatum kuxi.

I am a tear  
that dries  
on your face.

Soy lágrima  
que se seca  
en tu rostro.

Akit milakgaxtajat  
nikuma lakatlawanan  
kmi lakan.

I am the cane  
that spills  
its honey.

Soy caña  
que derrama  
la miel.

**Tachuwin xa tutunaku**

**Dulce idioma tutunaku**

**Sweet Tutunaku language**

**by Jun Tiburcio**



¡Stlan! Kin tachuwinkan xa tutunaku  
xtaskgolh-tachuwin laktsu tsiktsi  
chu ama un akan tla'wan makasanan.  
Lakgasu taxtuyacha k'kekgapixni.

My sweet Tutunaku language,  
song-language of birds  
and of the sonorous, passing wind.  
It glides gently from my tongue.

Mi dulce idioma tutunaku,  
canto-lenguaje de pájaros  
y del viento que pasa sonoro.  
Tenuemente de desliza en mi paladar.

Kin kilhpin mapakglhay  
akgatum xanat tachuwini  
a tlokgonit xuntilhnin  
lhpitkgonit nak chiwix.

From my lips, there blossoms  
a spiral language sign  
created by my ancestors  
and carved into stone.

Mis labios hacen florecer  
un signo espiral de lenguaje  
que hicieron mis antepasados  
labrados en una piedra.

¡Stlan! Kin tachuwinkan xa tutunaku  
xtaskgolh-tachuwin laktsu tsiktsi  
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y del viento que pasa sonoro.  
Tenuemente de desliza en mi paladar.

Watiya a makawan tuwan  
akan lakchikiy kiwi un,  
la makasanan xa skakni  
akan klaktayamiy ktiji.

The silent speech of the leaves  
that sway in the gentle breeze,  
the rustle of fallen mountain leaves,  
stirred by my passing feet.

Silencio hablar de las hojas  
mecidas por el viento sutil,  
sonido de hojarasca motaños  
que mis pies provocan al caminar.

¡Stlan! Kin tachuwinkan xa tutunaku  
xtaskgolh-tachuwin laktsu tsiktsi  
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canto-lenguaje de pájaros  
y del viento que pasa sonoro.  
Tenuemente de desliza en mi paladar.

¡Xtajalhpanin Yohualichan!  
Taxtumacha kmakgtsaps.  
Xtachuwin Sempoala.  
¡Xatakni tachuwin!  
Xtatlakgni ¡Tajin!  
Skima latamat.

The cries of Yohualichan  
that emerge from its palaces!  
The words of Zempoala:  
living words!  
The music of Tajín!  
It proclaims eternity!

¡Lamentos de Yohualichan!  
Que brotan de sus palacios.  
Palabras de Zempoala.  
¡Palabras vivas!  
¡Música de Tajin!  
Que clama eternidad.