

The Obligatory Indian

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Anthropologists are prone to convolution, and one reason is our penchant for thriving on category errors. One such error dates back to Columbus—that the first human inhabitants of the Western Hemisphere were Indians. This was an appealing misapprehension of a wide spectrum of people that has become essential to how other category errors—such as the white and black races—apprehend themselves. The many different indigenous peoples were promoted to a mythic realm, a doorway to utopia, which anthropologists have been slow to abandon. Now that more indigenous people are acquiring public voices and speaking with many different voices, serving as a doorway to utopia is frequently missing from their priorities. Elders who care deeply about their traditions do not know what to do with indigenous youth who want what their non-indigenous peers want—big-screen televisions, motor vehicles, and other high-end forms of consumption.

In the United States, it has become prestigious to be indigenous and financially rewarding for some, so the number of people claiming indigenous identity gallops forward with every national census; but in Latin America, where official multiculturalism has multiplied the ceremonial recognition of indigeneity, ordinary people who are stuck with indigenous identity still face lots of discrimination. Even when Latin Americans use indigenous markers to mobilize politically, they typically want what Nancy Postero and Leon Zamosc (2004 14) have called “a fluid mixture of livelihood and culture” in which ethnic demands seem less important than class demands. Anthropologists who wish to believe that indigenous peoples are inherent critics of capitalism must contend with indigenous elites who decide to capitalize themselves. Perhaps worst of all, many of the Latin Americans whom anthropologists regard as indigenous seem less interested in claiming this identity than shedding it.

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Yet in anthropology, indigeneity is still an important source of moral capital and a valuable currency. Hence the Obligatory Indian, who is expected to prioritize his/her ethnic identity to prop up the utopian hopes of anthropologists. Compare:

- the Invented Indian—the manufacture of the “maximum feasible number of Indians” for the purpose of harvesting subsidies from the U.S. government (Clifton 1990: 6,16).
- the Hyperreal Indian—“the perfect Indian whose virtues, sufferings and untiring stoicism have won for him the right to be defended by the professionals of indigenous rights” (Ramos 1994: 161).
- the Authorized Indian or *indio permitido*, who is rewarded by neoliberal multiculturalists for playing their game, at the expense of Indians who fail to cooperate (Hale 2004: 17).

My first encounter with the Obligatory Indian, although I did not know his name then, was Judith Friedlander’s (1975), *Being Indian in Hueyapan*. Her post-Nahuatl speakers in Morelos, Mexico, view indigeneity as a way for fellow Mexicans to keep them poor and oppressed. They are tired of occupying this subordinate structural position, they prefer to abandon indigenous identity, but they are expected to continue playing the role by middle-class intellectuals, chiefly government indigenists and cultural revivalists. That Indians shed a disadvantageous ethnic identity to move to broader regional and national identities is nothing new for anthropologists, hence the “Indians into Mexicans” process described by David Frye (1996) in northern Mexico, and many other scholars elsewhere. Anthropologists are accustomed to lamenting the loss of indigenous traditions, indeed this is still part of our job description, and for defensible reasons. In the bad old days, who else was going to stand up for the validity of indigenous cultures? But now that it is hip to be indigenous, the question arises, who is actually benefitting from all the fashionability? If the beneficiaries do not include presumed Indians who wish to stop identifying themselves as such, do we have the right to ignore, belittle, or undercount them?

I think not, hence the Obligatory Indian, whose name finally occurred to me after reading Carmen Martínez Novo’s, *Who Defines Indigenous?* The author went to Baja California expecting to find a hive of indigenous political organizing, among Mixtec speakers migrating from southern Mexico to labor in crops destined for U.S. markets. Instead, the ethnic agenda was to be found among leaders and intellectuals who typically were trained by the state and working for the state (p. 6). Union leaders had close ties with government officials, who were playing a cynical role in attracting indigenous labor and allowing it to be exploited. Those who promote ethnicity tend to be in a bureaucratic position that rewards it, Martínez proposes; those who pay the price for ethnic difference are more likely to be in favor of assimilation (p. 91). As for anthropologists, she suggests, some of us are still confusing the viewpoints of ethnic leaders, in particular of leaders serving as intermediaries with governments and institutions, with the viewpoints of the people they claim to represent (pp. 156–157).

Indigeneity sounds obligatory in some of the cases analyzed in Kay B. Warren and Jean E. Jackson’s, *Indigenous Movements, Self-Representation, and the State in*

Latin America (2002). Jackson has a long history of fieldwork in the Colombian Amazon, which means that she has plenty of experience with the collisions between indigenous Amazonians and would-be liberators. Warren has an equally long engagement with Guatemala and in the 1990s promoted the Maya movement there. They have come across many delicate situations, in which the deconstructive proclivities of anthropologists interfere with the strategic essentialism of indigenous leaders seeking to define their followings in terms of coherent traditions, boundaries, and populations. The intense localism of indigenous populations makes it difficult to pull them into larger political movements. This is why indigenous activists rely so heavily on the imported concept of culture. So what do anthropologists do with unpleasant information that could upset our local sponsors? Do we dare offend “activist-intellectuals”? Should “self-appointed foreigners” challenge indigenous activist-intellectuals who might also be self-appointed? Of all the competing voices and leaders, who really speaks for Indians? Do leaders at the national and international levels represent anyone but themselves? (pp. 6–8).

Such questions are inescapable for anthropologists who work in the Amazon. Indigenous Amazonians are few in number and face large colonization schemes, so they are especially dependent on outsiders for support. Unfortunately, donors tend to have little stamina for moral ambiguity. They are most attracted to struggles of good against evil, i.e., a moral agenda which is sure to be confounded by the need of Amazonians for pragmatic deal making (Conklin and Graham 1995; Ramos 1994). In the Jackson and Warren collection, Laura Graham and Terry Turner contrast the ritual display that captivates internationalists, the oratory of defending land and tradition, with what too many indigenous Amazonians want—modern hunting technology, trucks, and tractors that accelerate resource-stripping.

Meanwhile, indigeneity has become obligatory for preferential treatment from the state. In one illustration, Jean Jackson describes how a squabble over government funding set off a wave of indigenous militancy that won concessions but sharpened the underlying problem of who speaks for Indians. Debates over who represents Colombian Indians have come to resemble a teeter-totter. In Jackson’s words: “the more a person becomes equipped to deal with nonindigenous society (i.e., speaking Spanish fluently, receiving a university education, living in Bogotá or other urban site), the less ‘authentic’ (and hence the less legitimate a representative) that person will be considered by some sectors, and this of course applies to organizations as well (p. 107).”

If indigenous people are to have rights, presumably they must comply with laws. If they are to comply with laws, presumably they need to be led by professionals and politicians rather than shamans. In Colombia, according to Alcida Ramos, self-government has led to a decline in indigenous protest activism, entangled activists in bureaucratic labyrinths, and widened a generational rift between youth who are fluent in Spanish and elders who stand for the cultural diversity that the reforms are supposed to protect. The 1991 constitution, Ramos concludes, may have produced an “insolvable contradiction when it affirms the rights of indigenous peoples to their traditions and cultures and charges them with government-style management, while demanding from them a cultural authenticity that would justify these rights.” Beneath this she sees another contradiction, between “the legal rhetoric of

preservation of authenticity” and “the developmentalist impetus of both the government and economic groups such as oil companies” (pp. 262–264)—and, we might add, of indigenous people who wish to increase their consumption levels.

As indigenous leaders navigate this “Babel of interethnic cross-purposes,” in the words of Ramos, they find their warmest support in the international sphere, of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international forums whom Ramos calls “supranational powers and private managers of ethnicity (p. 275).” For leaders in search of operating funds, it is crucial to claim that they and their people are culturally different. For anthropologists, the key to keeping track of all the paradoxes is the concept of identity, especially ethnic identity. But identities are multiple, contextual, and transactional. Many exist more in the eye of the beholder than the beheld. What if the entire idea of identity is becoming psychobabble—how many of us who study identity wish to stress our own ethnic identity? Why should people whom we identify as indigenous, for our own ideological needs as anthropologists, prioritize that particular identity? What if they prioritize their locality or born-again religion?

A recurring issue in Jackson and Warren’s collection is how can anthropologists acknowledge all the competition in indigenous populations while doing justice to what they have in common? Two contributors, Joanne Rappaport and David Gow, emphasize the key role of cultural claims in pulling together an “inside” which is a “coherent sphere of operation” or “rubric” or “common experience” (p. 50) however inventive it may be. To this end, they analyze indigenous modernity (i.e., leadership battles) in the fascinating case of The Regional Indian Council of the Cauca (CRIC), about which Rappaport has gone on to publish, *Intercultural Utopias: Public Intellectuals, Cultural Experimentation, and Ethnic Pluralism in Colombia*. CRIC was the first indigenous organization in Latin America to call for self-determination, that is, autonomy or special jurisdiction. It consists mainly of Nasa (previously Páez) peasants and grew out of agrarian conflicts with landlords, in which sharecroppers and wage laborers mounted invasions to recuperate former *resguardo* (reserve) land.

Rappaport has been involved with this corner of Colombia for more than 30 years. She began working with CRIC in the 1990s, when it demobilized its Quintín Lame Armed Movement and leaders moved into electoral politics. Despite CRIC’s radical indigenist discourse, she reports, many of its leaders do not speak the Nasa language (p. 80). Moreover, while CRIC leaders have found their cultural heartland in the evocatively named Tierradentro, they have few loyal members in this area. Disappointingly, what holds sway in Tierradentro is not CRIC, but the Liberal Party and the conservative wing of the Catholic Church. CRIC’s strongest support comes from mainly Spanish-speaking *resguardos* outside Tierradentro that include many people without indigenous descent. Since the most culturally consistent Nasas tend to be deeply Catholic and politically conservative, CRIC leaders style themselves as “frontier Nasa,” which accords better with their marriages to outsiders and pursuit of urban careers (pp. 29–35, 189–190). Why go to all the trouble of indigenist discourse? That is what differentiates CRIC leaders from the class-based Colombian left and the progressive wing of the Catholic Church; it is their *raison d’être*.

Regional Indian Council of the Cauca has long been a magnet for Colombian intellectuals, but it did not have time for American anthropologists until it welcomed Rappaport and Gow. They got to know all the different kinds of thinkers competing for leadership, including early collaborators who wrote CRIC's key texts and who went on to become comandantes in the Quintin Lame guerrilla movement, as well as Catholic priests, university professors, foreign academics, and indigenist gurus from Mexico—few of whom have made any effort to learn the Nasa language (pp. 55–81).

As a guest in this hive of ideological experimentation, Rappaport refrains from cheerleading or attacking CRIC. The “intercultural utopias” in the title of her book are in the plural because every faction has its own version, to which Rappaport also refers with the less imposing term, “imaginings,” and which take the form, most concretely, of workshops. The purpose of workshops is to chew over interculturalism as a progressive alternative to mere bilingual education, multiculturalism, and inculturation—the precise differences between which, Rappaport concedes, are opaque to CRIC's peasant constituents (p. 146). Another function of the workshops has been to cook up ethnic claims—for example, that outsiders can never plumb the rich epistemology of an indigenous point of view.

Rappaport's analysis of ideological competition is so rich that she only sketches Nasa social life. But she does refer to the controversies that roil CRIC's constituencies. A popular response to criminals is corporal punishment in the form of the stocks and whipping (p. 234). Rival factions accuse each other of staging assassinations (p. 256). Traditional healers “are constantly being criticized for charging exorbitant fees to their patients, cabildos are accused of indulging in petty politicking, and families have become brittle entities in the face of labor migration, language loss, and rampant violence” (p. 239).

Nor does Rappaport say much about non-governmental organizations—apparently CRIC works only with small leftwing European organizations (p. 122) that hold no sway. If so, CRIC is exceptional because many indigenous organizations have become dependent on international donors to finance their operations in capital cities and project themselves in the media. The matchmakers between indigenous and international organizations, to borrow a term from the political scientist Clifford Bob, have often been anthropologists. Unfortunately, international NGOs will not take up indigenous causes unless these are tailored to their expectations. The disproportionate purchasing power of international donors not only provides leverage but breeds patron-client relationships rife with favoritism and opportunism, factionalizing the population they wish to pull together.

Anthropologists who have high expectations for indigenous political organizations tend to expect much from transnational advocacy networks, also known as global civil society. A useful reality check has been published by the aforementioned Clifford Bob, whose book, *The Marketing of Rebellion*, uses the Ogoni movement in Nigeria and the Zapatistas in Mexico to compare how insurgent “brands” are invented and marketed. The first step is stripping ambiguity from situations and the next step is clothing local agendas with environmental, human rights, or indigenous markers that may not have occurred to the rebels but will look good to international donors. Donors require just the right combination of local

authenticity and international savvy. They require assurance that they are funding a community or a people, not the most clever opportunists, so they usually favor organizations run by strong leaders or professional staff who can make underlings sing the same song, instead of genuine grassroots organizations with their arguments and splits. For moral and legal reasons, donors say they prefer nonviolence, but nothing attracts attention like violence, encouraging yet more circumlocution (pp. 30–48).

Far from being an equal-opportunity forum for the downtrodden, concludes Bob, global civil society is a “Darwinian arena” where “myriad weak groups fight for recognition and aid (pp. 8, 195).” “Despite the hype and the hope...for most movements the reality remains bleak.... On one side stand a host of challengers seeking aid, on the other NGOs who have resources, access, and clout. Sympathy and principle provide an important context for this market. Yet the magnitude of demand and the scarcity of supply mean that pragmatic considerations constantly vie with moral values (p. 179).” Worse, concludes Bob, this is “a winner-take-all market, which often appears irrational in its exuberance for some causes and its apathy toward others. In fact...there is a logic to this market but not one that necessarily corresponds to the real needs of local populations (p. 186).”

The indigenous brand that I know best is Maya of Guatemala. Here indigeneity has clearly become obligatory for anyone who wants to attract an NGO. Guatemala’s long civil war (1962–1996) has been rebranded as the genocide of the Mayas. The key figure in this marketing campaign—“at least 200,000 dead”—comes from a statistical extrapolation for a United Nations-sponsored truth commission. The number of dead and disappeared that the Commission for Historical Clarification could actually count was 29,830, a figure approximated by two other systematic tabulations; the commission then decided to multiply this already horrifying head-count by 6.7 (Ball 1999). During this same period, at the height of the Maya boom, advocates took to claiming that two-thirds or more of the Guatemalan population is indigenous (even Warren and Jackson put the figure at 63%, p. 36). Yet the website of the government’s statistical institute provides no figure—only a position paper on the difficulties of measuring indigenous identity (Instituto Nacional de Estadística 2009). Apparently the most recent, more or less verifiable published figure for the percentage of Guatemalans who are indigenous is from the 1994 census, which identified 42.72% of the population as such. Whatever proportion is indigenous, just 50–60% of it still speaks Mayan languages according to the careful estimates of a team of Mayan linguists (Richards 2003: 44–88, quoted by England 2003: 733).

Where did all the Mayas go? For generations, a critical decision has been made by parents who grow up in a Mayan language but decide to raise their own children in Spanish. In the 1950s, Richard N. Adams borrowed the most common term for non-indigenous Guatemalans, *ladinos*, and coined the term “ladinization.” A decade later, he was accused of using the term to justify the destruction of indigenous culture. This was anything but the case. Yet at the height of the Mayan boom, Adams (1994) announced that he was retiring ladinization as an analytical term. Nonetheless, in the impressive survey of Guatemalan ethnicity that Adams has co-edited with Santiago Bastos, contributor Victor Montejo reports “massive

ladinization” in his hometown of Jacaltenango including the abandonment of dress, other traditions, and the Jacalteco language (Adams and Bastos 2003: 279).

Maya is a term that dates back to Columbus but was not used much until American anthropologists revived it as a way of grouping speakers of related languages and emphasizing continuities from pre-Columbian times. Few Guatemalans who spoke indigenous languages identified themselves as Mayas until the 1980s. Then it became a way for intellectuals to distance themselves from the Marxist guerrilla organizations that claimed to represent *indígenas* in their unsuccessful insurgency against a military dictatorship. Not only did the label make sense to potential leaders in most of Guatemala’s 22 Mayan languages; foreign donors loved it, anthropologists vouched for it, and the Guatemalan state embraced it as a banner of multicultural inclusivity. Maya has become the obligatory name for the country’s indigenous population. Yet support for Mayan organizations has always been patchy; the campesinos they claim to represent tend to view them as self-serving networks of cronies; and they have coalesced and splintered in the scramble for international donations. Most Guatemalan Indians prioritize more local forms of indigenous identity—such as their town and language—or their religion (many have joined Pentecostal Protestant churches). According to Victor Montejo, “Mayan leaders who talk about decolonization and autonomy are mainly immersed in the political and international patronage of institutions like UNESCO, AID, and the World Bank that maintain the neocolonialist system in Guatemala” (Warren and Jackson, p. 126).

Ethnic claims as a way for indigenous elites to join the international jet set or at least the state—where have we heard this before? Montejo is far from the only Mayan intellectual to bemoan the role of NGOs in financing the Maya movement and, contrary to their intention, undermining it. “When the project ends,” states Pop No’j, “the Maya movement ends.”¹ “Non-governmental” is a misnomer because, while some of the money from prosperous countries is from private sources, much of it actually originates in governments. Wherever it comes from, international funding tends to widen the gap between leaders and followers and produce state-like effects—hence Fernando Cardoso’s quip about non-governmental organizations turning into neo-governmental organizations (Warren and Jackson, p. 269). In historical perspective, NGOs are the latest of a succession of visions for transforming the subordinate populations of Latin America. The first such projects were pushed by Catholic missionary orders in the sixteenth century; they were followed by state-building programs such as Mexican *indigenismo*; and now they are exemplified by a competitive array of political, religious, and technocratic missionaries, most of whom can claim to be carrying out the wishes of one indigenous organization or another.

¹ Pop No’j as quoted by Hugo Cayzac in an informative collection of postmortems on the Maya movement by European, Guatemalan and Mayan activists (Amigo, Bastos and Brett 2010: 147). My translation of “cuando se acaba el proyecto, se acaba el Movimiento Maya.”

Mayan *conferencianistas*—a Spanish term for people who make their living going to conferences—provide the moral high ground in Charles Hale’s widely cited, *Más que un Indio: Racial Ambivalence and Neoliberal Multiculturalism in Guatemala*. Hale earned his spurs in Nicaragua as an activist in the Sandinista Revolution. His mission was to study, and hopefully improve, the tense relations between the Sandinista state and Miskito Indians prone to rebellion. After the Sandinista Revolution ended suddenly in 1990, Hale came to Guatemala. Once again he positioned himself as a mediator, this time between the leadership of the guerrilla organizations (mostly ladinos) and Mayan intellectuals who accused the comandantes of using indigenous peasants as cannon fodder. Hale became known for his authoritative but gloomy assessments of the limits of Mayan cultural projects and of state multiculturalism, but without a clear alternative given that the insurgency, which might once have ushered in a Marxist social revolution, no longer had much popular support.

None of the projects that Hale knew how to parse—not that of the few remaining insurgents, of Mayan organizations, of the Guatemalan state, or of international donors—seem to have solutions for peasants in their daily struggle for sustenance, a dog-eat-dog competition for resources in which, too often, their most obvious antagonists are each other. In one of his more echoed findings, Hale concludes that receptivity to indigenous rights claims, including the willingness to allow more room for indigenous culture, is a ploy by neoliberal capitalism and leads only to the “*indio permitido*” or “authorized Indian,” an Indian permitted a certain cultural latitude but denied the right to confront his oppressors.

At this point, to demonstrate how governments are using cultural rights to domesticate indigenous movements, I would expect Hale to plunge into the study of NGOs as handmaidens of neoliberalism. But Hale’s model of “collaborative activist research” required him to choose a side from the very start. The side he chose was Mayan intellectuals who were on the NGO dole, if not already working for the Guatemalan state. And so he instead decided to study ladino racism—an excellent topic but not necessarily crucial to the decline of the Maya movement. *Más que un Indio* [“more than an Indian”], reports his 1990s fieldwork in Chimaltenango, a department capital with a fading ladino elite and a Kaqchikel Maya population raising children in Spanish, but geographically convenient to the anti-racism workshops in which Hale was a key player in Guatemala City, and Antigua, Guatemala.

One of Hale’s most interesting findings is that, in the hope of transcending the ladino/indígena divide, Chimaltecos from both sides are increasingly identifying themselves as *mestizos*. But he also encounters “racial ambivalence” among ladinos. Such persons downplay their racial privilege and worry about the possibility of indigenous uprisings (p. 28). But they also repudiate classic racism and seek to explain indígena/ladino differences in cultural terms. To me, this sounds like progress. Yet when ladinos renounce racism and endorse equality, while expressing reservations about some aspect of the Maya movement, such as reverse racism, they are guilty of a new cultural racism according to Hale. He spends an entire chapter puzzling out how ladino fear of insurrectionary Indians is due to ladino racism—when a more obvious explanation is that, for generations, the left

has harped on the insurrectionary potential of Indians as has Hale (1997) himself and that there actually was an indigenous-based insurgency in this very department.²

Judging from Hale's portrayal of Chimaltenango, the largest challenge that the Maya movement faces is indifference from presumed Mayas. Chimaltenango's Mayan NGOs have raised collective demands but these have yet to be taken up by much of the indigenous population. Instead, what attracts them is universal citizenship, i.e., equal rights (pp. 72, 80, 130). As for how indigeneity operates on the streets of Chimaltenango, we learn that many youth have abandoned it as a meaningful category; indigenous culture has "thinned out" (p. 182); and there is relatively little indigenous language, clothing, or ritual. Given the proliferation of Mayanist NGOs and official multiculturalism, Hale acknowledges, it is striking how unimportant ethnicity seems to be in daily life (p. 194). What really attracts the children and grandchildren of indigenous peasants in these parts is an evangelical operation called the Alpha & Omega Church. Like its competitors in the Catholic Church, Alpha & Omega is dedicated to religious transcendence of ethnic prejudice (p. 196).

Racial hierarchy still exists in Chimaltenango—of this Hale has convinced me. He also deserves credit for illustrating a remark that Stener Ekern made to me that Mayas are easier to see from on high than from a local perspective. The K'iche' Mayas of San Cristobal Totonicapán, whom Ekern describes in his book *Making Government*, are famously given to artisan production, commerce, and political conservatism. Thanks to their foresight in rejecting guerrilla organizers, they escaped most of the army repression heaped on indigenous *municipios* to the north. Totonicapán leaders sometimes use the Maya movement's rhetoric of multiculturalism, but they tend to dismiss Mayan activists as opportunists in the capital, hogging the limelight for personal gain. Even Totonicapán's well-known Cooperation for the Development of the West (CDRO), one of the most famous Mayan-run NGOs, they perceive as an intrusion. While accepted internationally as a representative organization, CDRO is a private association owned by the founders and their families (p. 198).

The K'iche's of San Cristóbal Totonicapán are not given to Mayanism, according to Ekern, but they continue to raise their children in the K'iche language and are firm defenders of local sovereignty. So this is one place where indigeneity is alive and kicking. At the local level indigeneity resides in 48 petty sovereignties—the municipio's cantons which, however quarrelsome internally, are also jealous guardians of their sovereignty and which Ekern compares to tiny republics. If the cantons are where indigeneity resides, Ekern concludes, strengthening indigeneity in this context will produce further fragmentation, rife as it is with disputes between family networks over the boundaries of property and the spoils of office (p. 233). Mayanism, in contrast, operates at a level of abstraction which is meaningful only for urban-based intellectuals, whether they are Guatemala, American, or European.

² For another ethnography of ladinos under siege, see Aaron Bobrow-Strain's (2007) portrayal of the cattle ranchers locked in contention with the Zapatista movement in Chiapas, Mexico. Perhaps because Bobrow-Strain is focused on a specific agrarian struggle, between groups whose conflicting agendas are easy to visualize, I would choose this book rather than Hale's to introduce students to the interactions between class, ethnicity and the state.

For Mayan autonomy to operate as the Maya movement conceives it, Ekern predicts, it will have to be located in the state and require further integration with ladinos (pp. 261–263).

What does the Maya movement offer to peasants who, after several generations of declining infant mortality and rapid population growth, have no viable agricultural base to bequeath to their children? From an ecological and economic point of view, ethnonationalist sovereignty makes about as much sense in highland Guatemala as it does in Lesotho (see Ferguson 1990 for details). Autonomy? Peasant families increasingly perceive their lifeline to be sending their youth to the United States. As for political participation, Mayas continue to be grievously under-represented in the national congress, the president's office and the national elite but—if just above 40% of the population—control a corresponding percentage of municipal governments. As for cultural recognition, the Maya movement has had some successes but not the kind that feeds hungry mouths. However many cultural demands are won by Mayan organizations, these usually fail to generate economic rewards—except for donor projects that build clientele, cannot include everyone, and then come to an end, leaving behind defunded leaders desperate for another international contract.

What seems to attract many more indigenous Guatemalans are capitalist markets with their uncanny ability to multiply credit, production, and wealth—for some people, anyway. From Guatemala City, anyone taking the Pan-American Highway into the western highlands will cruise past maquiladoras, greenhouses, and miles of vegetables being grown for export. How many subsistence maize farmers have lost their land to neighbors who have turned into agro-capitalists? Thus far, perhaps not very many. In *Broccoli and Desire*, an ethnography of the Kaqchikel Maya town of Tecpán, Edward Fischer and Peter Benson confirm that producing non-traditional export crops is riskier than subsistence agriculture. But the “inverse relationship between plot size and productivity...favors smallholders.” Tecpanecos also value the independence of controlling their own means of production and their own work day. Putting the entire family to work on broccoli soaks up what is otherwise surplus labor. It is more compatible with paternal authority than working in maquiladoras or migrating to coastal plantations (pp. 40–45, 60–61).

At the Aj Ticonel Cooperative, Fischer and Benson interview two young ladino managers in an office decorated with insignia of the Zapatista National Liberation Army. The two explain how their members need lots of training and discipline to navigate the many challenges of exporting to North American markets. Fischer and Benson could easily reduce this sort of operation to the cruel mandates of neoliberal hegemony, turning coop members into victims of deception, but not without slighting the energetic hopes of Tecpanecos to profit and consume. A commodity chain exporting sixty million pounds of broccoli a year to the United States seems like their only viable path to obtaining a better life—but through the traditional virtue of hard work on their own land.

Another indigenous Guatemalan profiting from the current dispensation is a retail shoe king named Don Napo. According to Thomas Offit (2011), Napo employs only relatives and neighbors from his village because these are the only people he feels that he can trust. Yet his exploitation of family labor is compatible with the wishes

of the Mayas for urban experience and the demands of a ruthless capitalist marketplace. While working for Don Napo, small town boys like Chistoso and Ramon become urbanites who are building social and cultural capital for their struggle to *superar* or get ahead, the seemingly universal aspiration of indigenous Guatemalan youth. Don Napo's work ethic, entrepreneurship, and strong connections to his home village are nothing new for indigenous peasants. Yet he is also a self-reliant capitalist entrepreneur who maintains tight discipline over his workers and limits his labor costs, enabling him to offer low prices and gain market share. He is a modern day cacique, a noble driving a 2005 Toyota Microbus, who represents his culture, village, and lineage while operating as an entrepreneur who uses every possible economic advantage to extend his domain.³

At one point Hale mentions a delegation of children who are instructed to don traditional Mayan costume in order to meet the expectations of an Italian NGO. Most of the children in question are ladinos, but the Italians believe that nearly everyone in Chimaltenango is Maya whether they admit it or not (p. 114). This is not a faux pas that anthropologists would commit, but I wonder if we are doing the same thing, albeit at a higher theoretical level. No one in my profession expects me to be proud of my German ancestry. No one in anthropology expects Hale to make much of his antecedents as a White Anglo-Saxon Protestant. Yet after decades of critical theory, many of us continue to expect people of indigenous descent to prioritize this as their most significant identity. If they do not, we make our disappointment known in ways both subtle and blatant.

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³ Liliana Goldin's *Global Maya* (2009) provides further case studies of how Mayas are faring under neoliberal capitalism including the largely female factory workers of Chimaltenango, the tailors of San Francisco El Alto, and the small-scale agricultural exporters of San Pedro Almolonga. Almolonga has become famous for its prodigious output of export vegetables and born-again Protestantism—more than half the town professes to be *evangélico*. Unlike most other Mayan export agriculturalists, the Almolongueros do not depend on intermediaries to market their crops to the U.S.; instead, they do their own commercialization in the neighboring countries of Mexico and Central America.

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