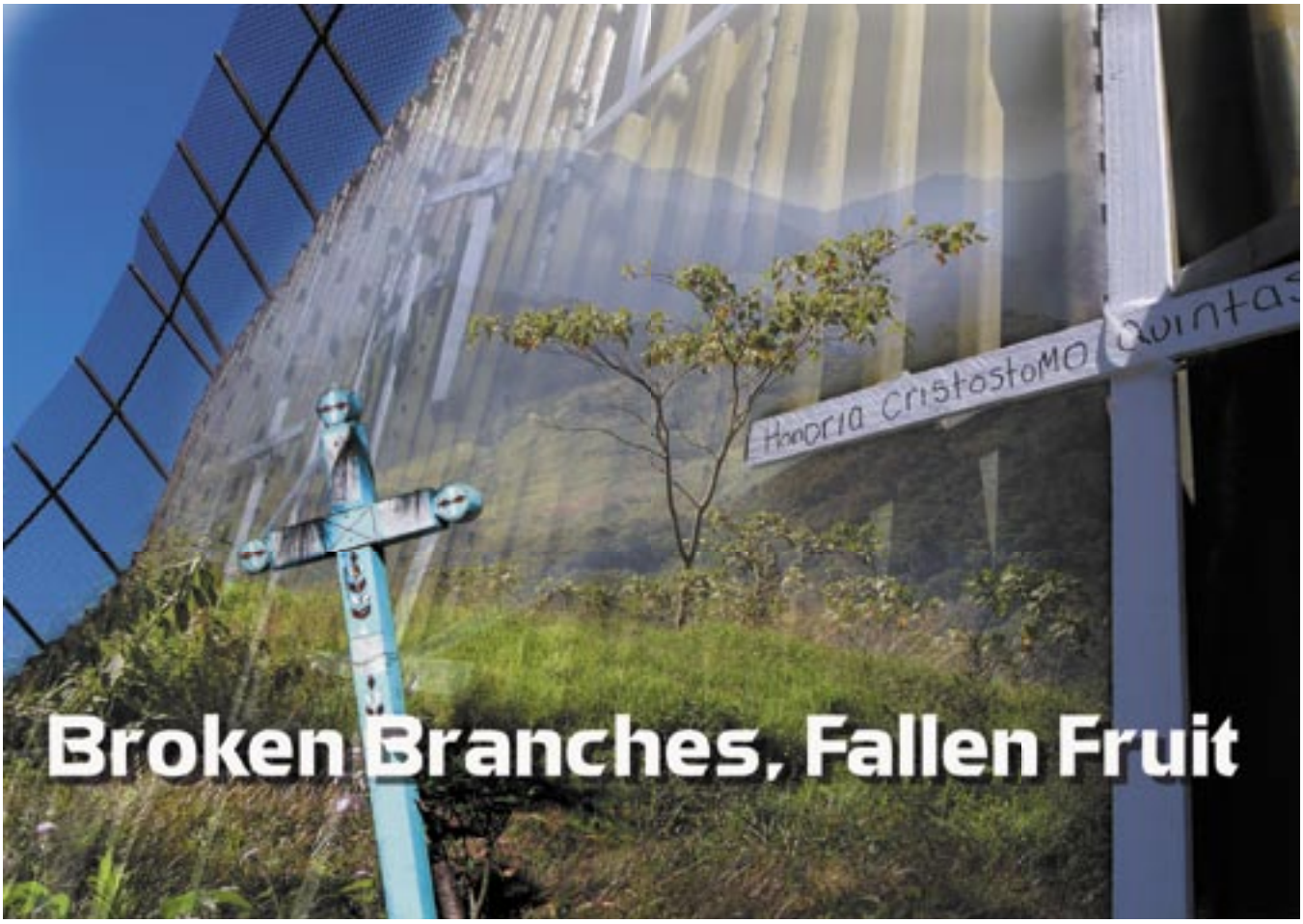


Study Guide

NOTE: *This guide is a work in progress, so be sure to check the site from time to time for updates.*

Have suggestions for things that would be useful in the study guide? Send them to me at bj@laslineas.com
Put “study guide” as the subject so you don’t wind up filtered into (and out with) my junk mail.

contents:

Group Activities

Activity A: generational discussion: living the tradition or migrating.

Preparation
First view the tile documentary, *Broken Branches, Fallen Fruit* (31 minutes)
Divide the group into smaller groups of from 3 to 7, (5 is ideal) always with an uneven number.
These groups should then count off “One.. two…one…two” with the final uneven member being “three”. The “ones” will play the older generation: the “twos” will play the younger generation; the “three” will play the observer/reporter.

In the groups
• Quickly define familial relations among the “generations”: who is whose father, mother, son , daughter, wife, husband, brother, sister.
• Chose which son or daughter has decided to immigrate to the U.S. (Or, to really shake things up, which mother or father.)
• Carry on a discussion of the pros and cons, sticking to the point of view that you think would be held by the person you are role playing.*
• The observer/reporter should take notes, and can ask interview questions, point out inconsistencies, etc, but should not take charge. At the end, or in the next class he/she should give a brief report to the whole class.

* If time allows, read the background and the description of generational and gender roles starting on page 5. These can be assigned ahead of time.

Group Activities

Activity B: gender discussion: perspectives on immigration.

Preparation
First view the tile documentary, *Broken Branches, Fallen Fruit* (31 minutes)
Divide the group into smaller groups of from 3 to 7, (5 is ideal) always with an uneven number.
These groups should then count off “One.. two…one…two” with the final uneven member being “three”. The “ones” will play the females: the “twos” will play the males; the “three” will play the observer/reporter. It may be a good stretch if some males play females and vice-versa.

In the groups
• Quickly define familial relations among the participants
• Chose which male and/or female has decided to immigrate to the U.S. How experienced is he or she with cultures outside the immediate community?
• Carry on a discussion of the pros and cons, sticking to the point of view that you think would be held by the person you are role playing.*
• What if any traditional gender definitions will come into the discussion?
• The observer/reporter should take notes, and can ask interview questions, point out inconsistencies, etc, but should not take charge. At the end, or in the next class he/she should give a brief report to the whole class.

* If time allows, read the background and the description of generational and gender roles starting on page 3. These can be assigned ahead of time.

Group Activities

Activity C: economic justice and immigration discussion.

Preparation*

First view the Mini-documentaries, *Mexican Coffee* (12 minutes) *Corn and Free Trade* (8 mins.) and *Remittances and the New Indigenous Elite* (12 mins.)
Divide the group into smaller groups of from 3 to 7, (5 or 7 will work best) always with an uneven number.
These groups should then count off “One.. two…one…two” with the final uneven member being “three”. The “ones” will play young people from “communities in resistance”* who have never migrated the “twos” will play the young people who have profited from the immigrants; the “three” will play the observer/reporter.

In the groups

• Quickly explain who is who among the participants
• The persons who have profited from the immigrants should try to persuade the others that they should immigrate
• Those who live in communities of resistance should argue why it is better to remain, live a communal life and construct a just economic system.*
• Part of the discussion should focus on what you think are the causes of the poverty that most indigenous people find themselves in.
• The observer/reporter should take notes, and can ask interview questions, point out inconsistencies, etc, but should not take charge. At the end, or in the next class he/she should give a brief report to the whole class.

* This exercise requires preparation by reading the background beginning on page

Instructions for “ones”, the older generation

You have lived in Na’lhó”, an imaginary highland Chiapas Tzotzil Mayan village all your life.

If you are male, you may have gone to harvest coffee or corn in the valleys to the west and south and you have gone to San Cristóbal to earn a few pesos as a laborer or to deal with legal matters involving your land titles. When you were young this was a half day walk on foot: now it is a one hour taxi ride for a dollar –a considerable sum to you. When you were young few Mayan people lived there and you stepped off the sidewalk when mestizos approached and got out of town before dusk. Now tens of thousands live there in the new colonias on the outskirts and there are even a few Mayan elected officials.

If you are female you may have gone to San Cristóbal to sell weaving or chickens in the markets; possibly you have never been there. If you are female there is a good chance you don’t speak Spanish; males are more likely to have picked it up in their dealings with mestizos.

When you were young almost everyone practiced the traditional religion, a mixture of catholicism and traditional Mayan beliefs and practices based on the powers of nature and the idea that illness has to do with harm to the soul or to the animal companion (nagual).

You have a small piece of land or “milpa” where you raise some corn and beans for auto consumption; if you are lucky you may grow a little coffee. This is one of the two sources of your family’s small cash income, Your house is made of loose fitting wood slats with a tin roof and a dirt floor. The second source of cash income comes from the women’s weavings made on a backstrap loom. You cook over a chimeny-less fire, using firewood. Your religion may be the traditional religion or evangelical Christianity or liberation theology catholicism.

You will have reacted strongly to the Zapatista uprising in 1994 with either hope or fear: As a result you may have struggled to live a life where you share in your community and resist being co-opted by the things offered by the state and federal government: cement floors, fresh water, small cash benefits. Or you may be accepting these things and either actively or begrudgingly be cooperating with the political powers that have controlled your communities for decades and decades.

Instructions for “twos”, the younger generation.

You were born a few years before a major seismic shift in your culture – the Zapatista uprising of 1994. You may want to participate in the communal ideals of the Zapatista or Abeja autonomous communities or you may want to participate in the consumer society you see on television or on your frequent trips to San Cristóbal – or perhaps when you went for a time to work in the resorts at Cancun or in mushrooming Mexico City.

You have probably gone to school where you studied in Spanish and Tzotzil. More likely, and for longer, if you are male. Many have 6 years, some 8, and a few go to prep and to university.

You have few options for a livelihood. Your parents are not ready to turn over what little land they have, and they have too many children to divide it among. Little land is available and you can't afford it anyway. If you are married (from 15 on) you probably have a little dirt floor house built on the land of the male partners parents. You can get some seasonal work at the various harvest times and earn a few dollars a day. If you are female you can work a month weaving a blouse that you will sell for from fifteen to thirty dollars. If you are male you can drive a truck or a taxi six days a week, 10-12 hours a day for around $40 a week. You can look for some low paying job in construction in San Cristóbal, or as a maid if you are female. Or you can immigrate, either within Mexico or to the United States or Canada.

Instructions for "threes" the Reporter

Journalism in Mexico is more frankly partisan than in the United States, so you are free to express opinions but should also try to fairly reflect what people have said.

Your role is neither passive nor "take charge". Imagine yourself at a family or community meeting that you are attending in order to gather material for a story on immigration and generational differences. You want to watch the interaction of persons in the "family", but if you see that they are not addressing something you think will be important for your readers to know about, you will try to steer the conversation in that direction, either with a direct question or with a "Pedro, what do you think about….?"

Background for excercise B: gender and Immigration

In the understanding of what it means to be a full man or a full woman in Chenalhó, one only gradually grows into this state and not all necessarily achieve it. An outward sign of the achievement may be the carrying of an important religious or civic “cargo’. This could mean becoming one of the sponsors of a traditional celebration and ritual, such as carnival or the towns saint’s day (San Pedro); or it could mean becoming one of the officials who presides over administration of the municipality in some way.
In the Zapatista communities it might mean supervising some important project, such as a health initiative .

On the way to this achievement there are clear reciprocal responsibilities for males and females within the family. In Chenalhó the women rise very early to make the tortillas; they tend to the chickens and other small domestic animals, (if there are any) weave (sometimes late into the night), clean, tend to the children. They may have to walk long distances up and down mountainous terrain with children in tow to a cistern to wash clothing. The men tend to the milpa where they raise corn and beans for domestic consumption; they tend to the cafetal or coffee growing land, if they have any; they make the long trek to bring firewood. All planting and harvesting is done by hand with the simplest of tools: a stick, a machete. And it is usually done on land that is steeply graded. If they have no land, they hire out to help others, drive a cab or a truck or migrate for work.

Many women are forced to marry by their families. If a girl of 15 is seen too much talking to boys or flirting she may be made to marry in order to avoid anything that would bring scandal.

All of this is in a certain amount of flux now. The Zapatista Revolutionary Law for Women (see appen-

dix) has had an effect, as has had the increasing economic importance of women's work. The Law for instance states that women can hold office, cannot be forced to marry and can chose how many children to bear and raise. All this has a certain effect throughout the indigenous society, but at the same time one sees even among committed members of Zapatista base communities girls forced to marry, etc., as one also sees women carrying heavy loads of firewood and participating in the heavy work of the coffee harvest, etc.

In general, men tend to attend school for more years, have more dealings with the non-indigenous community and, as a consequence, speak more Spanish.

They also immigrate more, though this too is changing and now one sees even single women immigrating. Migration may be for seasonal agricultural work within Chiapas, though this is now scarce. It might be a case of a young woman working as a maid in San Cristóbal. It might mean out of state seasonal agricultural work in the northwest of the country. It might mean a stint serving the tourist trade in Cancun or finding some menial job in a city like Mexico City or Guadalajara. In all of these cases one would earn perhaps double or even triple what one could earn at home, but also living expenses would be higher. In all cases living conditions would be basic at best.

Migration to the United States often brings higher salaries if work can be found. If a migrant receives the minimum wage in the U.S. he/she earns more in a day than would be possible in a week driving a cab in Chenalhó. Once again, living expenses are significantly higher and you will need 4 months to a year or more to pay off your debts to coyotes before you can send money home or put some away.

There are some factors of immigration which a young couple may or may not be aware of as one of them contemplates going: increased border enforcement in recent decades has meant that those who make it through don't go back and forth visiting their families between periods of work. They tend to stay for long periods or permanently. This is one of the ironies of border enforcement. And it means that children may grow up without knowing one, or even both, of their parents (Some are left with grandparents as both parents migrate.) It can also result in a migrant starting a new family in the United States, losing touch with those left behind.

On the whole though migrants tend to act with a good deal of responsibility towards those back home, sending regular installments of significant sums of money for living expenses, for building a better home, starting a little store, buying land to grow coffee, etc.

Background for Exercise C: Economic Justice and Immigration

As crossing the border has become increasingly difficult and hazardous and as Mexicans from regions further from the U.S. border have increasingly immigrated, middlemen have played a more and more imporatant part in the process and demanded a higher and higher price for their services. These include the money lenders and the guides. Guides are referred to as “coyotes” or, in Chiapas, as “polleros”, (those who care for “chickens”)

In recent years immigrants have been paying $1500 to someone to guide them across Mexico, across the desert and to Tucson, Arizona. Then they pay another $1,000 to $1200 dollars to someone to take them to Florida or somewhere else where they will find work. This of course represents a tremendous expenditure of more money than they have ever seen and so they have to loan the money. First they try relatives, but they may have to go to someone who specializes in lending money for these types of activities and charges what we would consider outrageous interest rates. Then when they get to the U.S. they need to pay this off out of each week’s pay until the debt is cleared. Thus they are unable to send support money (remittances) home where it is sorely needed until they have paid off this debt in months or years, according to their luck.

Most tragic for an immigrant is to not succeed in crossing and to have to work back home or in northern Mexico to pay back this debt on meagre earnings. This is why many attempt the life threatening desert crossing two or three or even more times.

Meanwhile, the middlemen often become wealthy by Chiapan standards. The mini-documentary about reittances spells out the details on this.

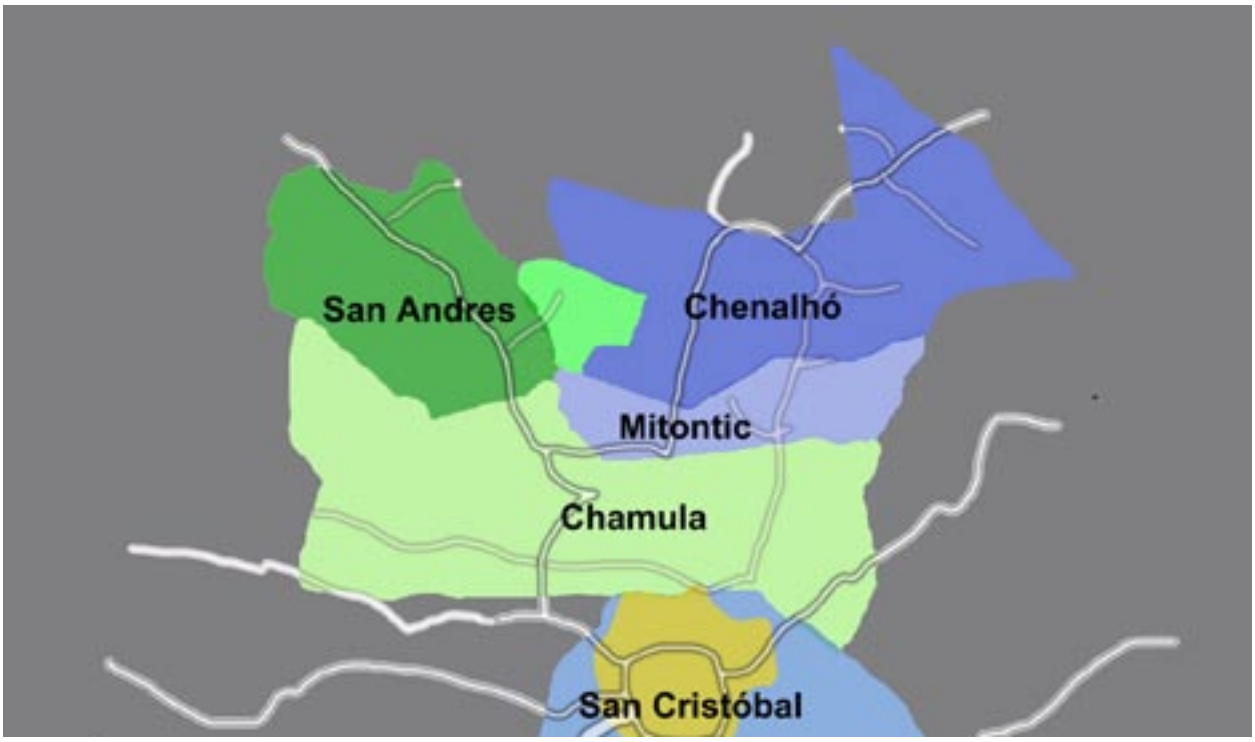
In searching for explanations for the poverty that drives immigration, many explanations are advanced: large famililies, insufficient or unproductive land, natural disasters like the hurricanes that devastated the rich coastal lowland of Chiapas not too long ago. the dislocation of the Zapatista

uprising. But at least equally important are government policies, trade agreements and corporate practices. In this sense immigration is often caused not by the poorer sending countries but by pressures from the richer countries of destination. (cf. Massey, Durand and Malone, *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors*). The example most often cited is the opening of Mexico to the untaxed influx of highly subsidized U.S. corn which had a devastating effect on commercial (as opposed to subsistence) corn growing in Mexico and wiped away a major source of paying agricultural jobs for poor indigenous and campesinos. This and other policies that were devastating to poor agricultural workers came about through the preparations for and implementing of the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between the U.S., Canada and Mexico. Other NAFTA related policies that hurt campesinos would be the changing of the Mexican constitution to end land reform in preparation for NAFTA and the destruction by Mexico of the coffee cartel, again as a tactic to show readiness for free trade and NAFTA. (details in the mini-documentaries on corn and coffee.) All of this explains why the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas initiated on January 1, 1994, the day that NAFTA went into effect.

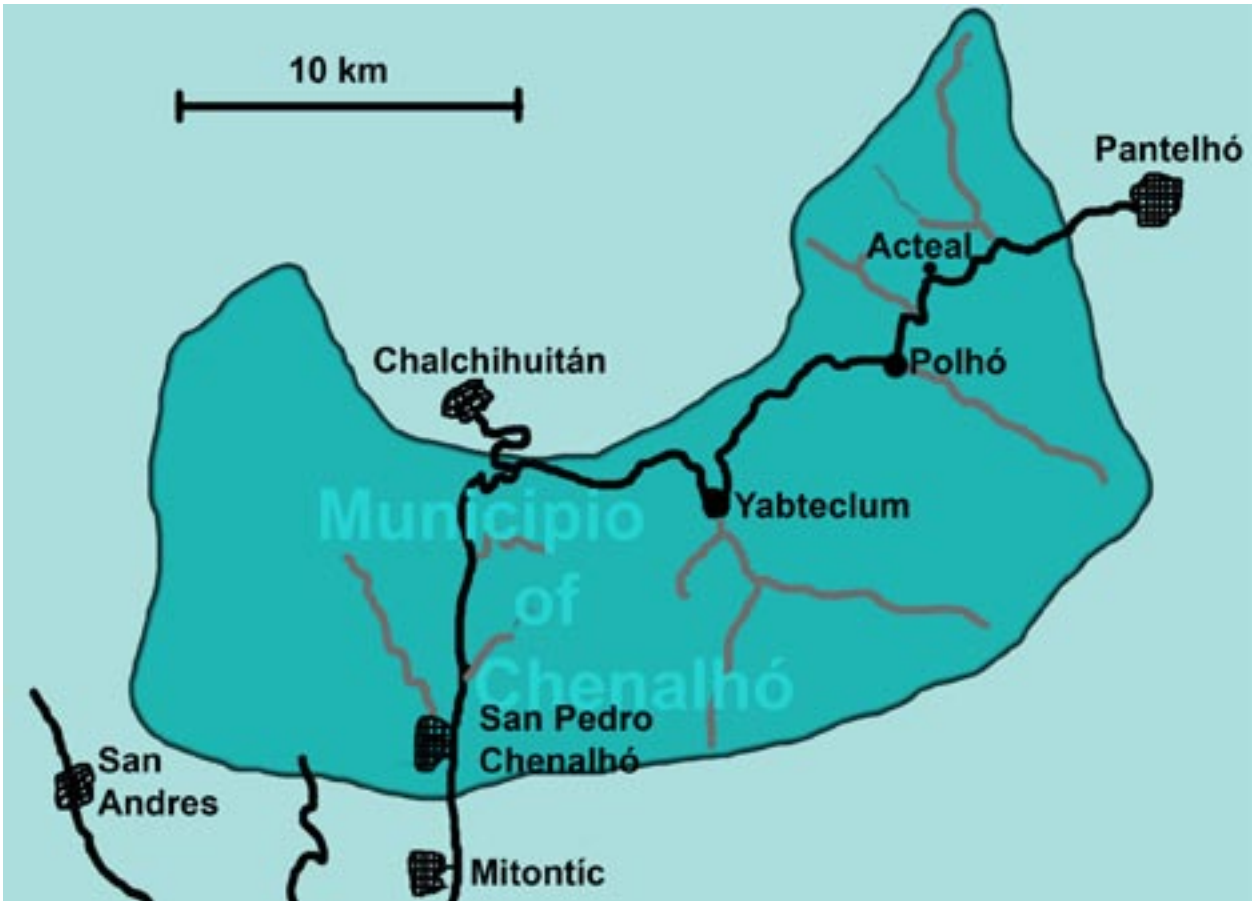
The governments are the apparent actors in these moves, but these policies in turn are driven by the large corpoations and investors that stand to profit by the opening up of barrier free markets. Under the agreement these corporations, claiming financial harm, can sue to knock down local laws that have been inacted to protect the environment, etc.

Appendices

Shows the position of Chiapas in the southeast of Mexico next to Guatemala. The red star indicates the position of the highlands where the documentary was made.



Shows some of the “municipios” in the highlands. San Cristóbal is a city of over 120,000, The total population of Chenalhó, where the documentary was made, is about 32,000, of which about 2,700 live in the “cabacera” or main town which is the administrative center. The majority live in small villages or widely dispersed plots. Almost all speak Tzotzil.



Municipio of Chenalhó in 1998 before a chunk was taken off in the southwestern part to form the new municipio of Aldama. San Pedro Chenalhó is the official administrative center. Polhó is the Zapatista autonomous center, and Acteal is the administrative center for one division of the Abejas and the site of the 1997 massacre. A large percentage of the population lives in small villages or ejidos or dipersed plots of land.

The lushness of this landscape belies the poverty of the people who live here

The Zapatista Revolutionary Law of Women

1. Women, regardless of their race, creed, colour 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 bear 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."

Print and Online Resources, Selected & Partially Annotated

Eber, Christine ***Women and Alcohol in a Highland Maya Town***

Revised edition, 2,000 University of Texas Press Austin, TX

Eber is aware of the reciprocal relationship between herself and those she writes about as she looks at the role of women through specific persons: campesinas, bearers of religious cargos, curanderas and unmarried mothers - traditionals, Protestants and members of the Catholic Palabra de Dios movement. All are shaped by their own and their families' experiences of, avoidances of or dependencies on alcohol, sacred or profane. This book gives a personal, profound and accurate depiction and analysis of what it means to live in a Mayan (Tzotzil) culture in our times, in Chenalhó.

For the Spanish version: ***Mujeres y alcohol en un municipio maya de los altos de Chiapas***

2008 Plumstock Mesoamerican Studies South Woodstock, VT

Guiteras-Holmes, C. ***Perils of the Soul***

1961 The Free Press of Glencoe New York, NY

Out of print but can be found in libraries or on line. This classic study describes the culture, world view and practices of people in mid 20th century Chenalhó.

Los Peligros del alma

1996 reissue of 1965 Spanish version Fondo de Cultura Económica, México, D.F.

Arias, Jacinto ***The Numinous World of the Maya***

1973 masters dissertation, Catholic University, Washington, D.C.

This work by a Tzotzil Mayan scholar from Chenalhó gives a view of the of the Tzotzil person from a member of the community who is a trained anthropologist. It also gives a sense of what it means to straddle two worlds.

Paige Liego, Jaime Tomás ***El mandato de los dioses***

2005 Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México México, D.F.

A study of ethnomedicine among the Tzotzils of Chamula and Chenalhó. Systematically situates the Tzotzil view of illness and traditional "curing" within the cosmovision and image of the person and the interaction with "scientific" medicine and contemporary health statistics.

Ayudando a sanar

2006 Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México México, D.F.

A study of the practices of one well regarded j'ilol or curandero of Chenalhó, Antonio Vázquez Jiménez. Much of the book is made up of transcribed, translated and edited interviews with Don Antonio.

Wilson, Carter ***Crazy February***

1965, 1974 University of California Berkeley, CA

A Green Tree & a Dry Tree

1995 reissue of 1974 work University of New Mexico Press

In many ways these two anthropological novels, primarily based in Chamula, give the best entryway into Tzotzil culture. Wilson is both an anthropologist and a gifted imaginative writer. *Crazy February* is based in the 1960s when Wilson did his first field work and portrays the tensions and interchanges between the monolingual traditional Tzotzils, the ladinos and the bi-lingual and partially mestizized men then in political ascendancy.

A Green Tree and a Dry Tree is an imaginative reconstruction of the so-called Cuscat Rebellion of the late 1860s, where, according to the historical narrative laid down by the victors, Tzotzils of Chamula led other Tzotzils in the region into an uprising against the rancheros and the Spanish and mestizos of San Cristóbal. The impulse for the struggle grew from a new indigenous religious movement which was suppressed. In the introduction to the 1995 edition, Wilson says that he would have written a somewhat different book if he had been privy to historical research that debunked some of the until then accepted historical narrative; especially the story that the leaders crucified one of their own in order to have a Tzotzil Christ. Nevertheless, Wilson is able to get inside the culture as no one else within the context of a thoroughly modern novel that constructs layers of distance and brackets narrative within narrative.

Rus, Hernández Castillo and Mattiace, *Myan Lives, Mayan Utopias*

2003 Rowan and Littlefield Lanham, Maryland

Important essays by 10 scholars on the historical conditions within Mayan societies in Chiapas leading up to and following the Zapatista rebellion . The opening essay, "A Generation of Crisis in the Central Highlands of Chiapas" may be the best brief introduction to the events in the highlands during this period.

Antonio García de León ***Fronteras interiores***

2002 Oceano Mexico, D.F.

With the same detailed historical research, this book takes up more or less where the author's history of Chiapas, *Resistencia y Utopia*, left off and traces the political, economic and social blundering that left the central and north eastern regions of Chiapas primed to take up arms. (in Spanish)

Books on Mexican Immigration not centering on Chiapas:

Beyond Smoke and Mirrors, Massey, Durand and Malone, Russell Sage Foundation, 2002
Based on data gathered by the Mexican Migration Project (MMP). The authors discuss the history of Mex-US migration in the context of migration theories, critique the post 1986 politicization of US policy and make recommendations. The MMP yields data that fills in gaps not covered by census data. Probably the best single source, with the main drawback being that the data base goes only to 1998.

Mexican New York, Robert Courtney Smith, California U., 2006
In-depth study of transnational relationship between Mixtecs in Brooklyn and their town of origin in Puebla, Mexico. Very good for understanding immigration process in context of family and community

Crossing Over, Ruben Martinez, Henry Holt, 2001
Traces the personal histories and family community backgrounds of men killed in a horrible accident in 1996 when a pickup truck literally stacked with Mexican immigrants rolled over during a chase by the border patrol.

Enrique's Journey, Sonia Nozario,
Vividly reconstructs the harrowing journey of a boy left behind in Honduras to reunite with his immigrant mother in the United States.

On-line resources:

http://mmp.opr.princeton.edu// is the site of the Mexican Immigration Project

http://pewhispanic.org/ is the site of the Pew Hispanic Center, a good site for up to date non-partisan analysis based on government census data.

http://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/ is the site for documents, news, videos, calls for action from the Zapatistas (Spanish)

http://www.struggle.ws/mexico/ezlnco.html English versions

http://www.ciepac.org/index.php is the site of a San Cristóbal based ngo, CIEPAC, which accompanies social movements, notably the autonomous communities, and publishes research based on field studies. In Spanish, but many documents are translated into English.

Search google for

Maize under Threat Greenpeace
Fourteen Years of NAFTA and the Tortilla Crisis Ana de Ita
Policy Space for Mexican Maize Timothy Wise, Global Development and Environment Institute
Revaluing Peasant Coffee Production: Organic and fair trade markets in Mexico

Muriel Calo and Timothy Wise

Other books and essays of interest on Chiapas in English and Spanish:

Mayan Voices for Human Rights Christine Kovic
La Tierra en Chiapas Daniel Villafuerte Solís
Women of Chiapas Christine Eber and Christine Kovic
The Other Word: Women and Violence in Chiapas
Rosalvia Aida Hernández Castillo
"Crisis Rural y Migraciones en Chiapas" in Migración y Desarrollo #6
Daniel Villfuerte Solís y María del Camen García Aguilar
Una Tierra Para Sembrar Sueños Jan De Vos
Chiapas, el razón ardiente Adolpho Gilly
a short version of this in English is included in *Rural Revolt in Mexico* ed. Daniel Nugent Duke University Press
Basta! Land and the Zapatista Rebellion George Collier and
Elizabeth Lowery Quaratiello
Mujeres de tierra fría Diane Rus
Género, interlegalidad y conflicto en San Pedro Chenalhó
Anna Maria Garza Caligaris
Ch'olel: una etnografía da las almas Tzetzales
Pedro Pitarch Ramón