

A Tribute to the Other Voices

A gigantic treasure trove bursting with choruses and polyphonies, voices circulate throughout Mexico, as diverse as they are profound and original. Outstanding among them are the heirs to the ancient indigenous American civilizations that give the country a singular, incomparable linguistic, literary, and cultural wealth. Popular wisdom expresses it very well: “Like Mexico, there is no other.”

The issue of *Voices of Mexico* that you are holding in your hands seeks to allow you to at least monitor some of those socio-linguistic, ethno-cultural, and, at the same time, socio-economic expressions that continue to modulate through more than 60 languages and hundreds of dialects. These are voices that 500 years ago cleaved all the horizons of what is today Mexico and beyond, and some of whose expressions, such as the sacred, part of the medical, and even the playful, had to enter into the sphere of hidden languages, clandestine invocations, and buried prayers after the Spanish conquest.

These are narratives that remained around the hearths of rural homes and today are spoken in the peripheries of the great cities; not only Mexican cities, but those further North, while their speakers grow vegetables and harvest fruit in the two Californias, Texas, and Oregon, or offer their labor in the service sector of the economy, in hotels in the Mayan Riviera and even New York. Their efforts will translate into remittances that will later become disruptive in musical, gastronomical, and textile languages in the fiestas of their communities of origin, fighting to avoid the disintegration that comes with growing indigenous migration.

This phenomenon is certainly by no means alien to the double discourse of Mexico’s political class, which at the same time that it anchors national identity in a glorious pre-Hispanic past, the roots and sustenance of a multi-ethnic, pluri-cultural nation, does little to prevent its heirs from suffering from socio-cultural discrimination and economic exploitation. In recent years, as though racist and classist attitudes were not enough, these have been joined by the different forms of violence prompted by a misguided globalization and the very widespread presence of drug traffickers in their communities.

Cadences of the *milpa*, maps, textiles, and therapies, among various others, are sprinkled throughout this issue of *Voices*, which includes sounds that originated with Seri corporeal movements, interpretations of nature by the Maya, the sayings of Ch’ol ritual specialists, and the words of saints like the *yubin* San Miguelito speaking from his little niche to help his worshipers find a cure for the witchcraft, shame, and madness that come from those “foul spirits” that so often accompany what purports to be civilizing processes, which do not hesitate to attack sacred expressions and places (such as the Anishinaabe petroglyphs and pictographs of Ontario, also present in this issue, showing the fragility of ancient cultural references, even in countries considered more developed).

It also includes references to outstanding members of the university community and successful indigenous entrepreneurs, together with the testimony of social activists, engravers, poets, and singers in American indigenous languages. An entire panoply of resistances, strategies, and possibilities that the heirs of the first peoples’ civilizations design, create, and cultivate to continue brandishing the undoubted modernity of their traditional expressions, thus testifying to the continued contributions to universal culture of these peoples, who “continue to be” and put forward their voices to remind us of their irreplaceable presence.

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