# Sorry, No Hablo Mixteco:

# Transnational Migration, Indigenous Language, and the Promotion of Ethnic Consciousness via Hybrid Discourse


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**Abstract**

*For the Mixtecos from Oaxaca, Mexico, their native language has functioned as an indicator of "inferiority" and "backwardness" due to prevalent stigmatization and stereotypes associated with indigeneity throughout Latin America. As the fastest growing indigenous population within the U.S., the Mixtecos are challenged with the recent proliferation of the Mixteco/Spanish/English language divide that has emerged within Mexican-American communities throughout the U.S. west coast. In the face of the more dominant Spanish and English languages, the Mixteco language has seemingly been relegated to a "useless" language in the eyes of some Mixtecos. However, this view is not shared by all, and therefore the question arises as to how discourse regarding language is shaped for the transborder Mixteco communities of the United States? By using language as an indicator of the dynamics of power and cultural embracement within Mixteco satellite communities, I address the paradox regarding the simultaneous decrease of Mixteco speakers and the growing presence of discourse via subaltern public spheres in an attempt to revitalize the use and esteem of the Mixteco language. By employing a comparative discourse analysis of the dialogue within their grassroots organizations and personal narratives, I examine the agency of the Mixtecos in forming their own suitable discourse to tackle the issues they face as transnational migrants. I suggest that via their grassroots organizations, the Mixtecos are creating a new hybrid language by incorporating Mixteco with other forms of discourse in order to advocate their indigenous consciousness and cultural celebration against constant discrimination and stigmatization of their language, culture, and voice. By addressing the agency of the Mixtecos, this research will contribute to the study of indigenous migration and social movements from Latin America.*

## Introduction

Efforts to make English the official language of the United States have been opposed by Latino communities who often view these efforts as not only attempts to marginalize the Spanish language but also the Latino sense of identity. Consequently, it is ironic how many of these same communities are responsible for the marginalization of other non-Spanish languages within their own enclaves. Throughout Mexican and Mexican-American communities in the U.S. west coast, the Mixteco people from the states of Oaxaca, whose native language is Mixteco, have faced the same discrimination and oppression that mestizo Mexican immigrants, Mexican-Americans, and Chicanos often complain about and fight to overcome due to their Spanish language. For Mixteco speakers their native language acts as a social border limiting upward mobility due to negative stereotypes, discrimination, and oppression associated with being indigenous. Furthermore, Mixtecos are also subject to the accompanying derogatory terms such as "indio," "Oaxaquito," and "naturalito" that are associated with anybody speaking this indigenous language. This continuous blatant racism and discrimination is a form of symbolic violence that is largely due to omnipresent social hierarchies. These hierarchies are relics of Mexico's colonial past but are strongly jeopardizing the future of the Mixteco language by decreasing the number of Mixteco speakers. Therefore, in the face of constant discrimination and stigmatization of their language by multiple states and societies through their transnational lives, how have the Mixtecos utilized their own agency to develop new methods of communication, or languages, in order to escape prejudices, discrimination, and racism, and what role has Mixteco occupied within this context of transborder hybrid languages? I argue that regardless of state and society imposed racial/ethnic hierarchies of power, the Mixtecos have been effective in creating a mixed method of discourse, or hybrid language, by incorporating Mixteco, Spanish and other Oaxacan

indigenous languages, with English, technology and a renewed ethnic consciousness, in order to provide a political and cultural tool enabling the reinforcement of their status as participants of both the U.S. and Mexican public spheres and help ameliorate the status of their ethnic identity.

## Framework/Methodology: How can I speak for the Mixtecos?

Throughout my research, a continuously reinforced notion was that nobody except for the Mixtecos themselves can properly and justly speak on behalf of their community. Therefore, as a non-Mixteco speaker, I was limited to the Spanish and English texts regarding this community, as well as only the personal narratives of the Mixtecos that were in Spanish. Well aware of my own language borders impeding my access to copious amounts of discourse available through the Mixteco language, I attempt to the best of my ability to define the borders between varying representations of the Mixtecos by the state, social institutions, academic works, and the Mixteco community's own personal self-representation. Newspaper articles, personal narratives, and works by leading scholars were all examined in order to obtain different ideologies regarding the importance of Mixteco.

Although I attempt to the best of my ability to accurately portray their discourse, the fact still remains that much of the discourse regarding the Mixtecos was provided via mediums composed by external actors. Therefore, in order to determine how Mixtecos are creating their own discourse, and what role Mixteco plays within this discourse, I will first examine the external actors shaping the discourse regarding the Mixtecos and their language. These external forces stimulating Mixteco's status as an "inferior" or "useless" language will be used to explore the notion of the existing legacies of colonialism that the Mixtecos continuously face within the United States. Perceptions of the association between the Mixteco language and inferiority will

be directly contrasted with the discourse of state-led and grassroots organizations, such as the Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indigenas and the Frente Indigena de Organizaciones Binacionales, that advocate for cultural revitalization and the preservation of indigenous languages. By using discourse analysis to compare the works of leading scholars of Mixteco transnationalism, Mixteco ethnographies, the Indigenous Farmworker Study, grassroots organizations and their respective indigenous intellectuals, personal narratives of Mixteco migrant workers, and various newspaper articles on Mixteco communities, my goal is to contrast the differences in how language and Mixteco is utilized through these different mediums of discourses. Furthermore, I specifically observed the literal and precise methods in which the Mixteco language itself is incorporated throughout different mediums of discourses in order to quell, or in a paradoxical manner, facilitates the stigmatization and relegation of the Mixteco language.

The purpose of this paper is to shine light on the emerging discourse and mobilization efforts of the Mixtecos, and I do mean emerging. For the Mixtecos, much of their personal discourse still remains within rather particular subaltern counterpublics (Fraser, 1990). By examining the opposing nature of varied discourse regarding the Mixtecos and notions of indigeneity, I will address the persistent widespread hierarchies of power that indigenous people face throughout the Americas due to, among other things, the lack of appropriate and accurate methods of communication. Therefore, taking into account the dominant discourses of state, social institutions, and academic works, I will specifically focus on how the Mixtecos have used their own agency as transnational indigenous migrants in crossing the communication borders implemented by dominant language and discourse within the United States.

## Background: Who Are These People? The Mixtecs, Mixtecos, and Ñuu Savi

A recurring piece of evidence of how external discourse affects the Mixteco people lies in the actual name used to refer to this indigenous group from the southern state of Oaxaca, Mexico. As is common in the naming of numerous indigenous nations from the United States, the name given to certain "tribes" can be regarded as example of state-imposed identity. If one is to study the origins of the Mixteco title itself, one will discover that this name was given to the Ñuu Savi, or Mixtecos, by the Nahuatl speaking people contemporarily known as the Aztecs. However, by comparing the texts of leading scholars of Mixteco transnationalism, the English term "Mixtec" becomes interchangeable with the Spanish Mixteco, with pronunciations varying from Mees-tek-oh to Meeks-teco depending on who what source is examined (Archibold 2009; Mines, Nichols and Runsten 2010). Furthermore, albeit there are still Mixtecos who prefer and use the term Ñuu Savi, the Spanish Mixteco has overshadowed the Ñuu Savi name and is the title predominantly incorporated in the dialogue of the largest grassroots organizations (fiob.org, cocio.org). Therefore, throughout this paper I will adopt the term Mixteco due to its predominance throughout the internal discourse of these transnational communities, instead of the Ñuu Savi, or the English Mixtec prevalent throughout Mixteco studies (Kearney 1995; Stephen 2007; Velasco-Ortiz 2005).

Originally from the southern region of Mexico known as La Mixteca or Ñuu Savi, the Mixtecos were contemporaries to the Azteca Empire and although they paid tribute to the hegemonic pre-colonial power, they were neither fully conquered nor assimilated into it. Interestingly this retention of their identity amidst a dominant power can be a regarded as a foreshadowing of their future struggle. Due to their isolated terrain and remote villages, much of their traditions and indigenous culture were also conserved and avoided much of the *mestizaje*

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that characterized a substantial portion of Mexico after Spanish colonization. This retention of their indigenous culture, and lack of Spanish speaking abilities, was directly associated with the severe discrimination an stigmatization they faced as migrant workers throughout northern Mexico during the latter half of the 20th century (Kearney 1995). Therefore, for the Mixtecos the Spanish/Mixteco language border is far from new and has merely crossed the Mexican/U.S. border and embedded itself into satellite Mixteco communities. Furthermore, the fight to retain their identity is also not new, but a mere extension of their pre-colonial struggle.

## Oaxacalifornia: Mixtecos in the United States

While the Spanish/English divide continuous to be prevalent in most debates regarding immigration, within Mexican and Mexican-American communities throughout the U.S. west coast another language border is proliferating via the Mixteco/Spanish divide. In fact, according to the Indigenous Farmworkers Study, the fastest growing farmworker population in California is the indigenous farmworker population from the state of Oaxaca (Mines, Nichols and Runsten 2010). Therefore, according to Tom Davies, a Professor and director of the Center of Latin American Studies at San Diego State University, the third most commonly spoken language in California is Mixteco (Manson, 1999). Although Chinese is in fact the third most spoken language in California according to the U.S. Census, one cannot dismiss Davies' statement as a mere hyperbole due to its implication of a population of substantial size that should no longer continue to be overlooked (U.S. Census, 2010). Still, due to the illegal status of a large portion of

the Mixteco population, and the fact that many are undercounted by all the official census takers, the IFS is only capable of making a rough estimate placing the Mixtecos in California at around 165,000 and growing (Mines, Nichols and Runsten 2010, 9). This influx of Mixtecos has been attributed to various push and pull factors due to the ecological destruction of their homeland, Mexican-sponsored state irrigation projects throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, and more recently, detrimental free trade policies between Mexico and the U.S. (Martinez-Novo, 2006). This has resulted in the popular term Oaxacalifornia when referring to the transnational space occupied by the Mixtecos (Kearney 1995, Martinez-Novo 2006, Sanchez-Lopez 2010).

The migrant patterns of the Mixtecos throughout the later 20th century and beginning of the 21st have resulted in a substantial transnational space occupied by this indigenous group and its culture. Velasco-Ortiz defines transnationalism as, "international migration and the construction of a social space that preserves the existence of a collectivity in more than one national territory" (Velasco-Ortiz 2005, 14). Additionally, the ability of transnationalism to span these national frontiers is a central element that distinguishes this phenomena form others such as diaspora, and helps to clarify the type of practical and symbolic links established with the original territories (Velasco-Ortiz 2005, 14). Therefore, what Velasco-Ortiz is referring to as transnationalism, can also be considered as what Juan Flores describes as the "new" or "transnational" diasporas (Flores 2009). Additionally, this diaspora can also be regarded as what Juan Flores refers to as a "diaspora of a diaspora" since the Mixtecos are among, but different than, the larger so-called Mexican diaspora in the U.S. This particular situation of the Mixtecos as an enclave within an enclave often results in tension between mestizo Mexicans and indigenous Mixtecos. Additionally, in order to more accurately refer to the daily borders they face besides mere nationality, Stephen prefers the term transborder, which does not exclude nor

contrast the term transnational, but merely incorporates it into other borders that Mixtecos face daily (Stephen 2007, 23). This alludes to the point that although they have occupied a new transnational space, the Mixtecos have partaken in a larger transnational community that includes mestizo Mexicans, and therefore have not escaped the stigmatization of their language, culture, and identity by both mestizo Mexicans and Anglo Americans.

Within their transnational space, the Mixtecos have created interlinked networks which Stephen refers to as "meshworks" (Stephen, 19). Based on the concept of Arturo Escobar, Stephen claims that unlike networks that merely focus from one person outward, "the idea of meshworks is about understanding interlinked networks and the total effect they can produce as a system" (Stephen, 19). Meshworks can be regarded as self-organizing networks that grow in unplanned directions existing in hybridized forms with other hierarchies and meshworks. Furthermore, they can be seen as apparatuses for the production of discourse and practices that create discursive fields of action throughout numerous sites. However, a common notion of indigenous populations is their physical association with their ancestral land and culture, and since the Mixteco satellite communities are regarded as transnational migrants occupying a transnational space, what does this imply regarding their indigeneity? According to Puri cultural hybridity, which seems to be implied by the term "indigenous transnational," critiques epistemology and institutions such as the nation-state and modern conceptions of a stable unitary subject (Puri 2004). Therefore, if we impose the label of hybrid culture to the Mixtecos, then terms such as transnational indigeneity would seem to make more sense. However, in order to truly understand the hybrid nature of their culture, and more specifically their language, it is imperative to examine how the Mixtecos have used their own agency in developing their own discourse to provide their own identity for themselves.

**Not *Mestizos*, Nor Chicanos: The New Identity of the Mixtecos within the U.S.**

The development of the Mixtecos from a peasant indigenous group within Mexico, into a transnational migrant community throughout the United States has simultaneously opened and closed borders that have shaped the perception of their Mixteco language and strongly influenced the discourse of their community regarding their own identity. The first border that is reinforced is regarding language due to the introduction of English into the Mixteco/Spanish dived. Although the Mixtecos have traditionally faced the Mixteco/Spanish divide, within their new context as migrants in the U.S., the Mixteco language now faces the new hegemonic English

**Mixteco man in the California © Antonio Nava**

language throughout its daily social interactions within its new society. However, due to many of the larger Mixteco communities found in Californian cities such as Fresno, Oxnard, Madera, San Diego, and Los Angles being enclaves within predominantly *mestizo* Mexican or Chicano communities, the Spanish/Mixteco divide is still continuously reinforced. Therefore this lack of ability to communicate through Mixteco in predominantly Spanish and English areas is according to the IFS a large factor in the unfair labor policies within Mixteco farmworkers (Mines, Nichols and Runsten 2010). Furthermore, more than merely having their language act as a border of communication; their own identity is shaped by the state and new society which again reinforce borders largely limiting their opportunities for socio-economic progress.

According to Derby, unlike the notion of race of the Anglophone world where race is passed genealogically, race can also fundamentally be a cultural construct based on how racial traits can be passed through socialization, such as in the Haitian-Dominican borderland (Derby 1994, 525). Therefore, within the U.S., the Mixtecos face the implemented race identity of the state by adopting the role of "illegal aliens," undocumented Mexicans, or Latino migrant farmworkers, but not until recently has their identity as an indigenous people become more appropriately apparent via academic works, newspaper articles, and even the U.S. census. Although they largely remain lumped with the unspecific Latino, or even Mexican, umbrella term by the state, through their socialization with mestizo Mexicans and/or Chicanos, depending on who's defining who, it is clear that Derby's notion of race as a cultural construct is applicable towards the Mixtecos. Since Mixtecos may pass as *mestizos* Mexicans if they have good Spanish speaking abilities, improve their "mexicaness" by somehow adopting more Mexican tendencies and traditions, and are not caught speaking Mixteco, it is probable that rather than their race, it is their culture and the ensuing problematic socializing with other cultures such as the *mestizo* Mexicans and Chicanos that is responsible for their stigmatization. Furthermore, if one examines the roots of this culturally constructed racism, similarities to Derby's analysis arise again due to the role that the Mexican state has played in creating and enforcing racist and discriminatory practices. Although the Mexican state celebrated *mestizaje*, and even called for revitalization of Mexican roots through the celebration of their ancestral Aztec culture, the term *mestizaje* itself may be regarded as a product of colonialism and along with Mexico's hypocritical actions towards contemporary indigenous populations, it is clear that the legacy of colonialism still negatively affects the Mixtecos.

Although the Mixtecos have been and continue to be displaced from their ancestral lands, the Mixtecos continue to adapt to a modern neo-liberal economic system by establishing transnational satellite communities throughout agricultural hubs across the U.S. west coast. As a fairly new, and noticeably different, growing sector within the long established "traditional" mestizo Mexican and Mexican-American communities, it is not surprising that tension between the two groups have arisen due to competition for labor, xenophobia due to cultural differences, and an old system of social hierarchy prevalent throughout Mexico which has been a cultural remittance of sorts within Mexican-American communities. Therefore, throughout their diaspora, a focal point in the Mixtecos' struggle to transcend discrimination and borders stagnating socio-economic upwards mobility has been and continues to be their ancestral language since it is a clear indicator of their indigeneity. For this, among other reasons, it has been argued that increased globalization and multiculturalism poses a severe threat to indigeneity, since it enables the identification, separation, and relegation of indigenous practices (Perry 2009). Therefore, this study provides a look at a vibrant culture of Mesoamerica that is fighting to retain many of their traditional customs and sense of identity in the aftermath of colonialism, multiculturalism, and expanding globalization which, through their discourse regarding *mestizaje*, have all posed a great threat to indigenous societies throughout the Americas.

## Latinos Unidos Jamás Serán Vencidos: The Borders Arising Among Mexicans in Oaxacalifornia

A recent newspaper article seems put another nail in the coffin for the façade portrayed by the popular motto *Latinos Unidos Jamas Seran Vencidos* (United Latinos will never be defeated) still believed by some within and outside of Latino communities. Tensions among different nationalities, such as Mexicans vs Puerto Ricans in East Harlem, seem natural if one

considers that besides the Spanish language, the two cultures do not have much in common and often compete for similar jobs and housing. However, this particular article titled "Latino-indigenous Mexican divide stirs Calif. Town" reveals exactly to what extent the cultural borders within the Latino umbrella term exist. Before addressing the article, it is important to again mention how all Mexicans are not homogeneous since "Mexican" is a nationality, not a race, and by claiming *raza* or *mestizo* as the Mexican race, one is doing a great injustice by overlooking the numerous and varied indigenous groups of Mexico. In the U.S. context, within the "Mexican" classification, there exist subsections such as the Mexican-American, Chicano, Mestizo-Mexican, the new Mestizo, and the "indio." In the case of this particular article, the indigenous Mexican are the Mixtecos and Triquis of Oaxaca, where the Latinos are the "mostly Mexican-American" who are "longer-time residents" (Wozniaka 2007).

Although conflict among successive waves of immigrants is not new within the U.S., this particular article focused on one nationality that until recently had been considered predominantly homogenous by the media. Throughout the article multiple references are made to the role of language such as the fact that the Mixtecos "face a double language barrier," since "the established immigrants spoke English," and Mixtecos "speak their own languages, not Spanish" (Wozniacka 2007). The article provides a clear depiction of Greenfield, a typical town in the Salinas Valley of California that is according to the community group, Beautify Greenfield, being overrun by "invaders from the south." This statement does not seem especially surprising considering the copious

**Indigenous Women © David Bacon**

amounts of xenophobia and stigmatization of immigrants by the media and the press, as well as organizations such as the minutemen etc. However, what is surprising is that nearly all of Greenfield's 16,300 people are Latino, and furthermore the majority of the members of Beautify Greenfield are Mexican. The tension has led to an audit of the police department, which ironically has provided social support for the Oaxacans, and has caused many residents to move out due to the idea that their town was becoming "destroyed" (Wozniacka 2007). Therefore, this article shines light on a population proving that although Latinos may rally together and utilize language that advocates for unity in order to achieve certain political agendas, as far as a truly unified and egalitarian identity is concerned, at least within Mexican-American communities with a substantial Mixteco enclave, the phrase *Latinos Unidos Jamas Seran Vencidos* proves to be nothing more than a highly oxymoronic and hypocritical term.

In order to truly understand the divisions among the communities of Mexican origin throughout the U.S., it is important to examine the actual personal narratives of the people living in these communities. According to the account of Mestiza women from Woodburn Oregon, "we feel different than the Chicanos… they don't speak Spanish… they don't get along with the Mexicanos" (Stephen, 213). Therefore it is clear that automatically there are differences between Chicanos who do not speak Spanish and the mestizo Mexicans who are more "traditional" in the sense that they embrace their heritage. However, this women who criticizes the Chicanos for forgetting their heritage, also admits to strong prejudices among Mexicans, especially regarding "the Oaxaquitos" (Stephen, 213). While distinctions among other Mexicans from different states are made regarding character and personality, according to Stephen, the term "Oaxaquitos" is the only one which makes a racial reference (Stephen, 214).

According to Appelbaum and her colleagues, since the eighteenth and 19th centuries, "tensions between sameness and difference and between equality and hierarchy have shaped Latin American nation building" (Appelbaum, MacPherson and Rosemblatt 2003). The experiences of Mixtecos only reaffirm this notion of existing social hierarchies as legacies of colonialism even when multiculturalism is advocated. Therefore how has this omnipresent discrimination and stigmatization influenced the Mixteco's own perception of culture, and more specifically their language use? By examining personal narratives, as well as the study by Elizabeth Perry and the IFS regarding the decline of Mixteco language speakers, I will propose that an ambivalent perception of public Mixteco use is inevitable, but this public ambivalence alone does not accurately represent the complicated notions regarding Mixteco that are more apparent at the subaltern public level.

## ***Mixtespañol*** **and** ***Spanglish*****: Effects of Migration on the Mixteco Language and the Ensuing Ambivalence Regarding its Retention**

According to Elizabeth Perry, language was one of the principle tools in unifying Mexico, and language has represented an essential tool for the creation and maintenance of social hierarchies where indigenous peoples and their language have been devalued and oppressed forcefully or through social campaigns (Perry 2009). This continuous stigmatization of their language in particular, since it is one of the biggest identifiers of their indigeneity, has reinforced the borders that the Mixtecos have continuously faced in retaining their language, and has jeopardized the overall usage of Mixteco among their new context. According to Elizabeth Perry's master thesis, Mixteco language use "is declining rapidly due to the historical and contemporary experiences of both overt and symbolic violence exerted against Mixteco language speakers" (2009, 103). These practices have existed since colonial times resulting in many

Mixtecos throughout Mexico to forego their use of Mixteco and in doing so adopt, or at least attempt to, a mestizo identity. Furthermore, there are also different levels of "indianism," Some Mixtecos living in the largest population centers of Oaxaca do not recognize themselves as indigenous or Mixtecos since they speak Spanish instead of Mixteco, and instead they apply the term to people who live in small distant, or isolated villages (Velasco-Ortiz, 31). Although becoming mestizo can enable a Mixteco to escape certain stigmas and prejudices, or even have better access to resources and opportunities of improving their social class, the foregoing of Mixteco is not a shared ideology by all Mixtecos. In fact by examining this particular ambivalence regarding their language, one can see just how society, state, and the Mixtecos themselves are shaping the discourse regarding the retention of Mixteco, and in a broader sense their new culture and identity among multicultural, globalized, existing hierarchies of race and power.

Due to their isolation in remote areas, in addition to the systematic discrimination of both the Mexican governments and the mestizo population, the average indigenous person from Mexico is poorer and less educated than the average mestizo. Therefore, according to the Indigenous Farmworker Study, the indigenous farmworkers are the most recent of many groups that have occupied "the bottom rung of the farm labor market in California" (Mines, Nichols and Runsten 2010). Furthermore, due to the inability to gather information about indigenous populations such as the Mixtecos, there is widespread unawareness of this community's needs and therefore service providers may not even be aware of their existence. This only reaffirms their position within a realm that Coutin refers to as "spaces of nonexistence" (Coutin 2000). Because of their status of subjects within this domain of nonexistence, and because of their language barrier which makes it exponentially more difficult to negotiate or protest their horrible

working conditions and maltreatment, the Mixtecos have faced great injustices at the hands of their employers who view them as “hardworking,” “docile,” and “ignorant”. Ironically these labels have also been known to produce more employment opportunities due to the fact that being identified as an Oaxacaño can function as a recommendation for a hard worker and employers who are familiar with their work ethic prefer to hire them (Stephen, 218). Still, this may just be a consequence of the fact that many Mixtecos are willing to work for lower wages and are more vulnerable to exploitation without protest.

Without a voice, without an education, and barely “existing,” it is not surprising to imagine the difficulty of many of these migrants in crossing borders preventing them from respectably positioning themselves in the public sphere. Through the personal narratives provided in Lynn Stephen’s book *Transborder Lives*, it becomes clear that among the communities of Mexican descent, regardless of whether they be Chicano or mestizo-Mexican, the Mixtecos are treated as if they are “not worth as much as everyone else” (Stephen, 214). However, although the employers or society at large may not pay too much attention to this indigenous group and may overlook its basic human rights at times, it is becoming more apparent that this group is well aware of its unfair treatment and have started mobilizing not only for improved working conditions, but also to stop the stigmatization of their language, culture and their own selves as equal humans. They have a huge task to undertake and the methods of discourse they will use will play a critical role in how effective their mobilization is.

**Mixteco women working in the fields © Antonio Nava**


According to Perry, in addition to the repositioning of Mixtecos in the new social hierarchy of the power of the U.S. on the basis of their "Mexicanness" and assumed "illegality," the Mixtecos are also subject to old social hierarchies of power in which Spanish-speakers continue to use language as a tool for oppressing indigenous Mexican migrants (Perry, 104). Due to the notions of "uselessness" and "backwardness" associated with Mixteco, Elizabeth Perry questions the "potential loss of the Mixteco language" (2009, 112). Additionally, according to the Indigenous Farmworkers Study, although the overall population of speakers of indigenous languages from Mexico increased steadily from a total of about 3 million in 1970, to 6 million by 2000, in 2005 a small decline was registered in the number of indigenous language speakers in Mexico. Along with the loss of interest and a falling birth rate, the IFS attributes the decrease to emigration of the indigenous to the U.S. Therefore, this "loss" of Mixteco does not seem to be a result of transnationalism, but only enhanced by it. According to a research study survey of indigenous community of 319 households by the IFS, "the practice of speaking in the native tongue to children declines as soon as the family gets established in the United States… once established here for three or more years the rate drops to about 40%" (Mines, Nichols and Runsten 2010). Therefore a combination of stigmatization, a loss of interest and/or sense of importance, birth rates, and the mass migration patterns have all seemed to negatively affect the levels of Mixteco speakers.

Due to the experiences of blatant racism and the ensuing humiliation, social exclusion, and socio-economic inequality and marginalization based on their ethnicity, Mixtecos have

turned to various social strategies in their attempts to fight their marginalization, including what Perry refers to as a "strategy of silence." This is directly attributed to their foregoing of Mixteco and its transferring to Mixteco children in an attempt to escape the prejudices associated with the language, are according to Perry, suggestive of the Mixtecos employing silence as a strategy for shaping their own social realities in contemporary contexts. This is supportive of the idea the Kearney has regarding how the Mixtecos can attempt to escape the state imposed identities by either escaping the state or the definitions of the identity (Kearney 1995). This "strategy of silence" can especially be true for school children since, "the pressures on children to assimilate and specifically to leave behind their indigenous language and identity can be very strong" (Stephen, 215). According to Stephen, while adults working in agricultural jobs may continue to speak Mixteco while working in the cannery, "the pressures on children to assimilate and specifically to leave behind their indigenous language and identity can be very strong" (Stephen, 215). According to Stephen, speaking Mixteco at school ensures the continuing of name calling.

The transnational diaspora of the Mixtecos has simultaneously opened and reinforced borders for a group that exists in a borderland and seems to ignore the rigidity of imposed borders. Through their agency they have proven that borders can in fact be fluid, and in doing so they have pushed the limits of what it means to be indigenous in the face of increasing globalization and continuous advocacy for multiculturalism that have both been more detrimental than beneficial for indigeneity. They have crossed multiple borders, only to have more persistently imposed on to them by states and societies whether they are in their native Mexico or the United States. Stigmatized by the "gringos" due to their "mexicaness," and even by their own countrymen due to their "indianess," it would seems that the best option to escape these prejudices against them would be to continuously assimilate and forego their language,

culture, and traditions. However, instead of denying their identity, a growing number of Mixtecos who are stigmatized for their ignorance, lack of education, and overall lack of voice have started to cross the discourse border that has continuously subjugated them and in doing so have obtained a voice. In order to have a better understanding of the role of Mixteco within the new methods of discourse of the Mixtecos, the actual discourse of Mixtecos must be isolated and understood.

## Mixed Mixteco: Creating a Hybrid Language through Mobilization Efforts via Discourse within Subaltern Spaces

In Gloria E. Anzaldúa's, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* she refers to Chicano Spanish as an infant language that is not approved by any society, but no longer seeks the approval (Anzaldúa 1987). Instead, she extends an invitation halfway. If Chicano Spanish is an infant language, then Mixteco, being an indigenous language, is the polar opposite. Furthermore, unlike Chicano Spanish, Mixteco has not merely been disapproved by societies, but has strongly been stigmatized, suppressed and relegated as a sign of "backwardness" and "inferiority." These detrimental notions have only been augmented in the face of the dominant Spanish and English languages the Mixtecos constantly face in the United States. Therefore, how have Mixtecos used their language to fight these prejudices? Again taking from Anzaldúa's work, she advocates for a tolerance for ambiguity since, "rigidity means death" (Anzaldúa, 79). Therefore by examining the discourse of the Mixtecos, it seems they too have remained flexible regarding their language and tolerances for contradictions and in doing so have enabled the emergence of a hybrid discourse.

If one considers the 500 plus years of interaction between Mixteco and Spanish speakers, it should not be any surprise that contemporary Mixteco has been a hybrid language sprinkled with Spanish terminology. However, due to the remote isolation of many villages, there have still been a large number of Mixtecos speakers who remain monolingual, and differences among different variants of the Mixteco language still limit communication between some Mixteco speakers. However, in recent years, due to the proliferation of Mixtecos throughout the United States west coast and their respective networks, or "meshworks," the methods by which they communicate have drastically improved and further contributed to the hybridization of their Mixteco language. According to Laura R. Graham who studied Amazonian indigenous leaders, this mixing of language and other discursive form is essential because failure to incorporate new words, ideas, and formulations would "condemn Indians to discursive isolation" (Graham 2001, 18) What I propose is that more so than the literal Mixteco tongue, due to their hybrid methods of discourse, the Mixtecos are embracing a new Mixteco language in their attempts to provide better social-political support systems, advocate for Mixteco language retention, and raise ethnic consciousness and cultural celebration.

The derogatory epithets used against the Mixtecos throughout the agricultural fields of Northern Mexico and California represent the sharpened process of racist discrimination and exclusion (Fox and Rivera-Salgado 2004). This process was meant to invoke a sense of inferiority and resulted in the establishment of a new ethnic identity for many migrants. However, this process of racism did not only intensify their sense of racial difference, but simultaneously generated a new and broader ethnic identity that brought together migrants and enabled them to appropriate labels such as "Mixteco" and "indigena" which formerly where "only used by linguists, anthropologists, and government officials, and to put them to work

organizing along ethnic lines" (Fox and Rivera-Salgado 2004, 11). Therefore, by adopting these terms such as *Mixteco* and *indigena* to identify themselves, the Mixtecos have incorporated external terminology in order to reinforce their own notions of their indigeneity. Therefore, they have revealed their willingness to adopt a hybrid language, while concurrently emphasizing their indigeneity and proving that the Mixtecos are seemingly borderless among the most rigid of borders.

A critical force in forming this new hybrid language have been the various Mixteco grassroots organizations that have themselves gone through constant reorganizations of their identities and methods of discourse. However, a common characteristic of these organizations is their low levels of formal structuring, and one of the predominant organizations the *Frente Indigena de Organizaciones Binacional*, formerly the *Frente Indigena Oaxaqueno Binacional*, is one of the only to possess an informational bulletin and a web site and offices on both sides of the border (Velasco Ortiz 2005, 123). Initially an organization catering to the Mixtecos and Zapotecos, the FIOB is a good indicator of dominant discourse within Mixteco communities regarding indigeneity and solidarity. After accepting other indigenous groups from Oaxaca such as the Triqui and Mixe into their organizations, the FIOB would undergo another name change in 2005 and incorporate all bi-national indigenous organizations regardless of their association with the state of Oaxaca. Since tensions are common between villages throughout Oaxaca, this pan-Indigenous, pan-Oaxacan, and pan-Mixteco

**Members of the FIOB © David Bacon**

collective identity is an indicator of how indignity acts as a source of solidarity in the face of racial discrimination, even if their languages persist as a source of division.

Referring to the Mexican state promoted *indigenismo*, Perry claims that although it was supposed to incorporate indigenous people into the social fabric, it also entailed the oppression of indigenous practices such as language (Perry, 55). Therefore it is interesting to see the roles that both indigenous languages and Spanish play throughout the discourse of these indigenous multicultural organizations, since not every indigenous group speaks the same language. Interestingly enough it seems that often times Spanish is the preferred language since it acts as a common medium due to different indigenous languages and indigenous peoples who only speak Spanish. Still this use of Spanish does not result in the replacement of indigenous languages, but rather is used in conjunction with other languages in order to facilitate the process of communication among the various ethnic groups.

Organizations such as the FIOB can be regarded as prime examples of alternative public spheres, or as Nancy Fraser refers to them *subaltern counterpublics*. According to Fraser, subaltern counterpublics have a dual character due to their function as "spaces of withdrawal and regroup" and "bases and training grounds for additional activities directed toward wider publics" (Fraser 1990, 67). Furthermore, it is this duality that enables subaltern counter publics to partially offset, but not completely eradicate, the unfair participatory privileges enjoyed by members of dominant social groups in stratified societies (Fraser, 67). Therefore, since indigenous organizations and their discourse form a collective identity in order to promote the revitalization of cultural celebration and ethnic consciousness within their migrant communities as well as the larger Mexican-American community, and American society in general, they could be regarded as transborder indigenous subaltern counterpublics. According to Fraser, the

proliferation of such subaltern counterpublics means a "widening of discursive contestation" (Fraser 68). Amidst the rampant stigmatization and relegation of the Mixteco language and culture, it seems that this proliferation of Mixteco subaltern counterpublics is not only necessary, but has actually been increasing for the last couple of decades.

Filemon Lopez, host of Radio Bilingue © Monica

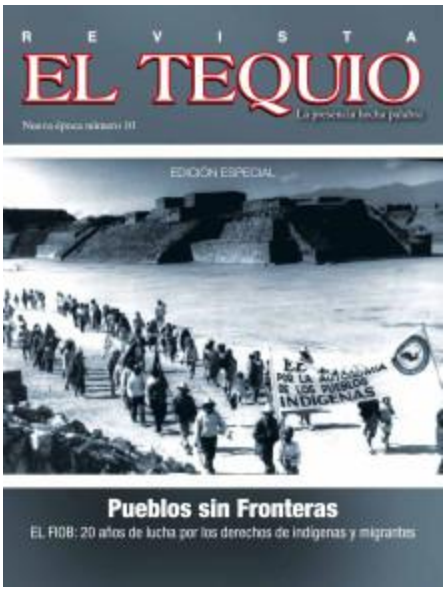
According to Fraser, unlike separatism, a counterpublic assumes an orientation that is publicist and its members understand themselves as a part of a potentially wider public no matter how limited a public may be in its empirical manifestation (Fraser 68). Due to its efforts in directing activities towards the wider Mexican-American, and thus American public, the FIOB may be regarded as the quintessential actor within this emerging transborder indigenous subaltern counterpublic, but it is far from the only one. In fact, if the arenas of public discourse are regarded as a substantial portion of the public sphere, then the Mixtecos can be regarded as creators of multiple subaltern counterpublics by using mediums of discourse that seem unconventional for an indigenous group, and thus creating a hybrid language within their own spaces.

Since subaltern public spaces are not merely spaces of exclusion, but function as spaces facilitating the development of activities directed towards a wider audience, the public radio seems like a natural arena for the transition from counterpublic to public space. As the Spanish-language public radio network in the U.S., Radio Bilingüe itself can be considered subaltern counterpublic. However, within Radio Bilingüe lies another subaltern counterpublic via *La Hora Mixteca*, a 90 minute program billed as a bilingual program presenting folklore music, information, greetings, dedications, and public service announcements for migrant Mixteco

workers from both sides of the border. Whereas bilingual refers to Spanish/English throughout most of the programming on Radio Bilingüe, this specific program is conducted in Spanish and Mixteco. More than mere entertainment, this show incorporates education into its programming and enables the Mixtecos to feel like they are part of a clos-knit community (Archibold 2009). According to Filemon Lopez, the conductor of La Hora Mixteca, "the immigrants look for their roots, their music and their culture in order to not feel far from home" (radiobilingüe.org).

This association between roots, music, culture, and language is in complete opposition to the usage of silence as a technique that Perry refers to in her research. Therefore, it is interesting to see just how comfortable the Mixtecos are embracing their language and culture in their own subaltern counterpublic. Furthermore, although the program is bilingual and Spanish is incorporated, the term bilingual may be misleading since along with Mixteco, other languages such as Zapoteco and Triqui also have a presence throughout the program. This sense of solidarity among the Indigenous groups is in stark contrast to the relationship between indigenous and mestizo Mexicans, since Lopez himself states that the discrimination comes equally from "mexicanos" as from "estadounidenses" (radiobilingüe.org).

In addition to utilizing the radio, Mixtecos have also been utilizing printed media in a very effective manner in order to provide their own discourse regarding their identity and peculiar issues they face as indigenous migrants. In addition to being one of the oldest and largest grassroots organizations, the FIOB also has their own informational bulletin magazine that may be accessed via their website fiob.org. El Tequio (Nahuatl word



for community service or collective work), is a publication by indigenous Oaxacans for indigenous Oaxacans with articles and information ranging from announcements of social events, issues concerning the Mixteco community both abroad and in Oaxaca, cultural revitalization, and the different perceptions of indigeneity within the United States. Although originating from the Nahuatl language, the term tequio was used throughout Mexico for the imposed tribute to colonial authorities by indigenous groups, and its usage is still common within communities with strong indigenous customs of communal work such as those in Oaxaca.

A particular article titled "Oaxacalifornia en Califaztlan: descolonizando la idea de lo indigena," specifically tackles the prevalent perception of indigeneity as a legacy of colonialism. The title alone is full of interesting terminology that alludes to the Mixteco's emerging awareness of their state-imposed identity. First they use the widely popularized Oaxacalifornia, referring to the Oaxacanization of California. Then they situate their community among Califaztlan, which combines the notion of the U.S. defined California and the Chicano promoted Aztlan. Through the title alone, it seems that the Mixtecos recognize their position as within but separated from the larger Chicano, Mexican American, and United States society. Furthermore, the author Luis Sanchez-Lopez, addressed the fact that Chicanos advocate for a mestizaje that itself is a creation of the Mexican government "*para destruir nuestra memoria historica como pueblos indigenas*" (Sanchez-Lopez 2010). The author advocates for the recognition of real indigeneity and condemns Chicanos for merely recreating the romanticized notions of indigeneity.

Further evidence of how Mixteco discourse regarding definitions of indigenous identity challenges discourse of external forces such as the state, or Chicano movement, can be illuminated via the INALI. The *Instituto Nacional de Lenguas Indigenas*, or INALI, has

advocated for the revitalization of indigenous languages and has established terms to distinguish and define different variations of the Mixteco language. However, native Mixteco speakers have disputed some of these terms used by the INALI. A prime example of this difference in identification is how the INALI refers to a particular variant of Mixteco, as sa'an ntavi, or Mixteco of the central east, but the actual speaker interviewed by the IFS defines his Mixteco as tu'un savi, or language of the rain. Furthermore, the ntavi used by INALI translate as poor, and according to the IFS website, "contemporary Mixtecs reject any notion of inferiority and are seeking to restore a sense of dignity and pride regarding their heritage and language (Mines 20120). Therefore, according to the IFS, the conflict regarding terms used by INALI have raised important issues and point to a deeper unresolved conflict between linguists who study these languages and the peoples themselves (Mines 2010). This lack of appropriate communication and representation at the state level reflects how the rhetoric of multiculturalism and revitalization of indigenous languages is compromised by inaccuracy of such institutions who implement more boundaries through their definitions.

In order to understand the agency of the Mixtecos in utilizing their own discourse to establish their identity, it is again important to look at the FIOB. Initially "indigenous transnationals" itself seems to be an oxymoron à la Latinos Unidos, or at least it seems so if one is to contrast varying notions of indigeneity and transnationalism. However, due to borders of identity simultaneously opening and closing for Mixteco migrants, the discourse regarding the identity of Mixtecos within the U.S. and hybrid cultures has become abundant (Stephen 2007; Velasco-Ortiz 2005; Kearney 1995; Puri 2004). However, as is clearly stated in the Indigenous Farmworkers Study website, "One soon discovers that it is not for outsiders but for the indigenous community members themselves to identify who is indigenous" (IFS). Therefore, if

one ignores the external forces and their continuously imposed definitions of indigeneity and *mestizaje*, then one can focus on the actual discourse of the Mixtecos in order to determine how the Mixtecos identify their own selves and their particular form of indigeneity.

According to Laura Graham's essay, "How Should an Indian Speak?" it is within western linguistic ideologies that "language becomes the principle sign of identity based on the assumption that monolingualism is the norm" (Graham 2002, 3). Thus she argues that the language used by indigenous groups not only has the potential to reinforce or delegitimize their "indianess," but this external perception of their "indianess" is critical to them obtaining an appropriate and effective voice within their public spaces, and they know it. Therefore the roles that both the symbolic value of an Indians' "authentic" voice and the effectiveness of the dominant language play are very intertwined and according to Graham, the mixing of languages is a "manifestation of what is traditional among native Amazonians" (Graham, 211). If one applies this logic to the Mixtecos of the FIOB, then just by looking at the name, the *Frente Indigena de Organizaciones Binacionales*, it becomes obvious that Grahams argument is also applicable to them. By utilizing *indigena* (indigenous) and *binacional* (binational), it seems that the Mixtecos themselves have solved the paradox that is transnational indigeneity by balancing the symbolic value of their identity with an effective method of communication. By personally embracing this title, it seems that the Mixtecos are accepting their binational space while still defining themselves as indigenous regardless of their "non-traditionally" customs. This has led to the popular phrase among the Mixtecos, "*No necesitamos vestirnos como indígenas para ser indígenas*" (We do not have to dress like Indians to be indigenous) (Sanchez-Lopez 2010). It seems that they do not have to speak a certain way either.

Although the role of the radio and press are able to circulate to greater publics and reveal the fluctuating role of the Mixteco language, mobilization by Mixtecos can also be seen as the public school district level. An article recently shined light on the prevalent issue of bullying of Mixtec students throughout Californian school systems via racist name-calling, as well as revealed the agency of youth in utilizing their own discourse in order to fight the name-calling. Led by a youth group name Tequio (term used by Mixtecos for communal work), the "No me llames Oaxaquita" campaign created by Tequio and supported by the Mixteco/Indigena Community Organizing project in Oxnard, is targeting the derogatory terms used to belittle Mixtec students (Leung 2012). Although name calling by itself among children is no cause for alarm, according to Gaspar Rivera-Salgado, a project director at the UCLA Center for Labor Research and Education, this is not merely a bullying practice but actually has very racist connotations and is a legacy of colonial Mexico (Rivera-Salgado 2012).

The fact that the transnational nature of Mixteco communities is continuously resulting in children being born, or assimilated into not only bilingual, but trilingual social spaces, is indeed an important factor in establishing how Mixteco is regarded within Mixteco communities. A common notion by many academic works is that although older Mixtecos may be able, or willing, to retain their indigenous language due to their interactions with their paisanos in the fields or other job locations, their children have a much harder time retaining their language, and even identity, due to bullying and greater exposure to English and Spanish (Perry 2009; Kovats 2010). Therefore this article may be a bit surprising since it reveals the critical role that language plays within the younger generations of Mixtecos. The name of the group itself is a lucid example of how contradictory to popular belief that Mixteco youth are ashamed of their cultural identity, this particular group has chosen to fully embrace the indicator and source of their

discrimination, their indigeneity. Regardless of the fact that the term is Nuhuatl in origin, the fact that the contemporary meaning of the word has more significance within Mixteco communities where the actual practice of tequio still exists, reveals the direct ties to their indigeneity that these students are trying to reinforce. However, they simultaneously have rejected the inferiority and stigmatization that is associated with their indigenous culture. That is to say that they are willing to accept, embrace, and incorporate their culture in their discourse, but by incorporating Nahuatl and addressing the community via Spanish and English languages, they are attempting to disassociate the Mixteco language and culture with its inferior and belittled status. Furthermore, the fact that this student movement, not external forces such as the school system or even the community, initiated the campaign reveals that at least the younger generation of Mixtecos from this community are not willing to be subject to the constant stigma their parents faced. Therefore, the question arises whether this ideology regarding Mixteco will replace Perry's so called "strategy of silence" among the Mixteco youth. Perhaps overwhelmingly optimistic, this campaign may be a sign of potential future mobilizations among youth due to ethnic consciousness and acceptance.

The successful passing of the anti-discrimination resolution by the school board of Oxnard may only function as an aesthetic solution rather than truly eliminating the deeply rooted stigmatization of the Mixteco language and culture, but this event and the reaction by the youth group may prove to have greater implications. Resulting in media coverage from large news outlets such as Fox Latino and Univison, this mobilization by the Mixtoc youth proved to be successful in raising awareness of the racial discrimination against Mixtecos due to its crossover from a subaltern counterpublic into the general public sphere. Furthermore, this may also provide proof of the opportunities that the Mixtecos have within the U.S. to openly engage in discourse

via multiple mediums that may not be as accessible or as respected in Mexico. Therefore, regardless of the additional borders imposed on the Mixtecos due to the English/Spanish/Mixteco divide and their illegality in the U.S., it seems that the amount of social services and opportunity for subaltern counterpublics are greater within the U.S.

Perry asks what will need to be done in order to ensure preservation and revitalization efforts have effect, and what conclusions can be drawn from the declining use of Mixteco language (Perry 105). By merely depending on statistics of Mixteco speakers, one cannot appropriately paint a picture of their perception of their own language. Furthermore, if one only considers the works by groups advocating for the revitalization of Mixteco, a misleading image will also be obtained. Due to the amount of ambivalence regarding Mixteco use, and the dichotomy between older Mixtecos and youth being born into transnational and transborder homes, the only sensible prediction regarding the Mixteco language and the language that Mixtecos will use, is that both will become more hybrid. According to Perry her study serves as an "ethnographic disruption" that aims to interrupt the "general story-line" and to infuse the structures that perpetuate discrimination and inequality through the experiences and perceptions of Mixtecos themselves (Perry104). Similarly, it seems that this group that is continuously disrupting established notions and borders of nationality, language, and identity is perfect for supporting an ethnographic disruption that interrupts the general story-line.

Perry states that "cultural practices associated with an ethnic group can decline or change, without diminishing the sense of ethnic distinctiveness" (Perry 108). According to Sanchez-Lopez there have been instances where Chicanos have questioned the indigenous migrants for foregoing their traditional dress, which they reply by saying that they do not need to dress as indigenous people to be indigenous. Therefore, it seems that some discourse of

Chicanos, or works by authors such as Anzaldua regarding the new mestizaje, are not regarded by the largest Mexican indigenous community in the United States as appropriately speaking nor representing a significant portion of Mexico's indigenous voice. So what is the Mixteco voice? Is there a proper way he or she should speak, such as broken Spanish, or purely Mixteco? Furthermore, is there any way for us to determine whether he is speaking rightly or wrongly? By studying the discourse of various Mixteco organizations, it seems that even if organizations such as the FIOB are providing a collective voice, there is no one correct way for the Mixteco to speak. Furthermore, external actors are in no position to determine whether a particular voice is authentic to the Mixteco's indigeneity, for the content of their own discourse should provide us with the answer.

**Mixteco woman and her son © Francisco Gomez y Leopoldo Peña**

If we consider Grahams argument stating that all indigenous representatives make choices about language use and message content when addressing both western audiences and indigenous publics, due to the fact that they gauge expectations and attempt to package their messages using forms and ideas that they anticipate will be most effective, it becomes clear that the Mixtecos are doing this through their diverse methods of communication (Graham, 214). The Mixteco voices through the radio, through organizations such as FIOB, through the publications such as Tequio, and through the student groups such as Tequio were able to use a variety of languages and mediums in order to advocate for the respect and dignity of their Mixteco and their culture. By using the term hybrid language, I propose that similar to how they do not have

to dress a certain way, they also do not have to speak a certain way to be considered indigenous, if they so wish to be identified as such.

## Conclusion: The implications of a new hybrid language

Graham shines light on the discursive hybrids and linguistic inventiveness of indigenous Amazonian leaders and claims that mixing languages illustrates indigenous creative use of language as a symbolic medium with which to assert identity (Graham, 213). According to Graham, these strategies of hybrid discourse are "authentic," for "authenticity is a concept that must be seen within the global context as a reiteration or defense of boundaries of identity" (Graham, 215). She also states that for a full analysis of the creative and unique ways Indians are blending languages and discourse forms, "further documentation of these hybrid performances is needed" (Graham, 211). Further documentation can be found via the Mixtecos' approach to fighting discrimination through their hybrid discourse while reaffirming their indigeneity and thus providing the answer to how and indian should speak. Although the effectiveness of communication and reaffirmation of their indigeneity is critical, similar to the Amazonian leaders in Graham's study, the Mixtecos throughout California are providing us with the answer that there is no single correct manner for an Indian to speak.

The Mixtecos have proven that they are embracing a role as social actors, and are no longer the ignorant victims unable to speak up against their oppressor due to language borders. Therefore, equipped with their own effective means of communication and revitalized sense of identity, what role will the Mixtecos occupy within the fastest growing Latino minority in the

United States? As many have and continue to leave the migrant lifestyle in favor of permanent residency in the U.S., will they continue to be relegated to "*inditos*" due to their culture, or will their current efforts enable them be accepted as indigenous and transborder equals? Furthermore, Kearney has made it clear that the racism they face has intensified the Mixteco's sense of ethnic difference. Therefore, if the Mixtecos are successfully able to overcome their racism, what will be the consequences regarding their sense of indigeneity if it is no longer stigmatized? Will they retain their strong sense of indigeneity, or will they undergo their own version of what Anzaldua refers to as the *new mestizaje*?

According to Anzaldúa, in order to survive the borderlands, you must live *sin fronteras* (Anzaldúa 1997). More than just physical borders, she argues that these borders sociologically and psychologically affect those who live within them. Due to colonial legacies and language, it seems that the Mixtecos not only live within these borderlands, but have their own set of particular borders that follow them everywhere. Although Anzaldúa claims that living in the borderlands means you are neither *hispana* nor *india*, but a mixture of various identities which should all be embraced, it seems that the Mixtecos are taking a somewhat different approach. While Anzaldua strives for the legitimization of a new identity, the *new mestiza*, it seems that the Mixtecos are using the language of this new *mestizaje* but are doing so strategically in order to reaffirm their own indigenous identity and fight its stigmatization. That is to say, they may be using a hybrid language and their traditions and daily interactions may be constantly undergoing *mestizaje*, but their goal is cultural revitalization of their indigenous roots not the legitimization of a new identity. Furthermore, terminology such as *mestizaje* and chicano are not used nor regarded too favorably within their discourse. Even if they agree with Anzaldua's tactics of survival, it seems that Mixteco representatives do not want to embrace what they consider a

colonial legacy, which is the mestizo identity. Ultimately it is up to the Mixtecos themselves to obtain their own voice and define themselves, and at least for now they can be regarded as binational indigenous people with a hybrid language. While indigeneity is a part of *mestizaje*, *mestizaje* does not need to be a part of indigeneity, and if it is, *mestizaje* does not necessarily result in the decline of the authenticity of indigeneity.

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