

CULTURE OF REBELLION: ZAPATISTAS AND THE PEOPLE OF COLOR STRUGGLE



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As people of color in the U.S. we can identify the culture of resistance and its natural progression. This does not include the 500 years of resistance by indigenous peoples of Americas as people of color have gained strength and motivation by it. I'm suggesting the 20th and 21st century struggles of people of color in relation to U.S racist history and imperialism. Considering that moral values would triumph over a system, we demanded rights as citizens. Malcolm X and the nation of Islam introduced yet another aspect of this reaction to racism. Close to the teachings of Marcus Garvey, Malcolm X and the nation of Islam considered a separation from whites in the U.S. and investment in black communities by blacks. Malcolm then went on to move away from this vision by including whites in the struggle for black liberation.

The Black Panther Party revolutionized the revolution. Where we once concentrated on the racial inequalities, the Black Panther Party and people like, Benjamin Pratt, Assatta Shakur, Fred Hampton, proposed that, the problem with Black America was due to capitalism. The words "Racism is a bi product of capitalism" helped set the tone by regarding other people of color groups as vital comrades in the struggle.

What can become a commodity can be accepted; Black, Brown, Yellow, culture... the Leftist discourse... Rebellious Music... Rage Against the Machine. While some are content with this (coconuts: brown on the outside, white on the inside), most of us are convinced that this is a poor assessment of the prior social revolts and movements. Commodity as opposed to respect and acknowledgement of culture, traditions, customs, etc... is temporary. Thus, it does not consider or evaluate whether or not the U.S. in its entirety, has progressed. We can see that its moral principles, if ever any, continue to decay.

The Zapatistas have proposed yet another form of resisting. It is one that gives us a global perspective, but that not only celebrates but urges us to look at our differences. This is not a melting pot belief, but rather one that urges that we need to rebel and walk together while acknowledging and celebrating our differences. We are the same because we are different.

Our culture, roots and traditions, sexual orientation, women and men, young and old are identities, communities that we should not loose, but instead recognize as vital realities that can help us better define our reality. We do not ask the political or corporate class. Instead we, as groups of resistance, collectively define the necessities of our communities and create them. No one else can provide this for us.

The Zapatistas celebrated these differences in the 1980s and in 1994 we came to know the Zapatistas as an indigenous movement fighting for Humanity and against neoliberalism. As Indigenous peoples of Mexico, the Zapatistas can, not only relate, but provide guidance to people of color in the U.S. and the rest of the world. As opposed to comodification, our various identities are vehicles to find the relationships amongst one another. This notion contributes to determining why we struggle, who we struggle against and more importantly what we want to create.

In the U.S. practicing our traditions and customs as native peoples, and or people of color become a rebellious act that undermines U.S. imperialism. Thus, celebrating our identities and participation in different communities becomes a rebellious act that contribute to the creating of a world where many worlds fit. Cultura as a form of resistance becomes a culture of resistance; it is a beautiful resistance. We don't ask permission to be free ... we don't ask permission to be.

So what do we do from here? How do we relate this work? If we agree that this notion of celebrating our differences can create a collective analysis not only from the people of color perspective, but from white America and the rest of the world, then what is next?

While figuring this out as an individual and as part of a community, look into the Zapatista's 6th Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle.

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