

## **An Echo That Reechoes: Transnational Activism and the Resonance of Zapatismo**

by Alex Khasnabish

*The apparent infallibility of globalization comes up hard against the stubborn disobedience of reality. While neoliberalism is pursuing its war, groups of protesters, kernels of rebels, are forming throughout the planet. The empire of financiers with full pockets confronts the rebellion of pockets of resistance. Yes, pockets. Of all sizes, of different colors, of varying shapes. Their sole common point is a desire to resist the “New World Order” and the crime against humanity that is represented by this Fourth World War.*

*Neoliberalism attempts to subjugate millions of beings, and seeks to rid itself of all those who have no place in its new ordering of the world. But these “disposable” people are in revolt: women, children, old people, young people, indigenous peoples, ecological militants, homosexuals, lesbians, HIV activists, workers, and all those who upset the ordered progress of the new world system and who organize and are in struggle. Resistance is being woven by those who are excluded from “modernity.”*

From *The Fourth World War Has Begun* by Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos (2002, 282).

How we situate ourselves in time and space is a matter of no small consequence. The way we conceive of our sense of temporality, the ways in which we choose to narrate our histories, the manner in which we articulate our relations to others, all have profound implications for the shaping of our realities and the possibilities that exist therein. So if this is true, what would it mean to conceive of this time and space not as a “New World Order”, or somewhere in the midst of a global “War on Terror”, or even as some place along the way to a neoliberal capitalist utopia, but rather as the time and space of the “Fourth World War”?<sup>2</sup> What if this periodization were to posit that the so-called “Cold War” was in fact the “Third World War” and that the collapse of state-sponsored socialism and the ascendancy of global neoliberal capitalism marked the beginning of the Fourth World War, a war waged against humanity by the agents and forces of global neoliberal capitalism in its search for new territories and new markets to conquer. What would it mean not simply theoretically to entertain such a revised sense of temporality but to take it seriously, to see oneself implicated and enmeshed in the fabric of a world at war? What kinds of political challenges, possibilities, and imaginations inhabit such a terrain and what kinds of political subjectivities might they give rise to? Before proceeding to an answer for any of these questions, I need first to excavate the terrain of the “Fourth World War” and to illuminate the connections between this concept and those who have named it as well as those for whom this naming has resonated so powerfully.

The notion of the “Fourth World War” has its own history and its own relationship to those who named it and to the events that it describes. The notion of the “Fourth World War” was developed by the Zapatista movement in Chiapas, Mexico and articulated most eloquently by the Zapatistas’ spokesperson Subcomandante Marcos. On January 1, 1994, the same day that the North American Free Trade Agreement came into force, the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional - EZLN) rose up in arms against this new world war, a war that the Indigenous insurgents and civilian bases of the Zapatista movement said was little more

---

<sup>1</sup> By “neoliberalism” I am referring to the set of political-economic philosophical propositions that have become increasingly prevalent since the 1970s and which currently serve as the hallmarks of global capitalism. The core principles of neoliberalism contend development is achievable through policies of privatization, deregulation, and trade liberalization and represent the apogee of classical liberalism’s emphasis upon the “invisible hand” of the market serving as the best and ultimate arbiter of social, political, and economic issues.

<sup>2</sup> See Bernard Nietschmann, “The Third World War,” *Cultural Survival Quarterly*, Vol. 11, No. 3, 1987, pp. 1-16.

than a continuation of 500 years of genocide, slavery, racism, and exploitation. This concept thus not only names an experience or a particular phenomenon, it names a history, a continuum, and it seeks to reconfigure our understanding not only of what we have passed through to arrive at this time and place, but of what this time and place is and where it leads. The Zapatistas have articulated a very clear and powerful understanding of the Fourth World War with respect to their own struggle, and yet they have also explicitly sought to express the expansiveness of this concept and its connection to other people and other struggles far removed from the jungles and highlands of Chiapas. In fact, this concept has found its way from the Zapatista discourse to inhabit other languages of struggle far outside the borders of Chiapas and even of Mexico. Most significantly, the resonance of this concept speaks to a much more expansive resonance, namely, the transnational resonance of Zapatismo amongst activists around the world.

In this paper, I consider the reasons for and consequences of what I have termed the “transnational resonance” of Zapatismo and the political imaginations to which this resonance has given rise. Specifically, I consider the resonance of Zapatismo amongst political activists in Canada and the United States since 1994. The types of activism to which I refer here include individuals and organizations focusing upon human rights issues and range to those deeply involved in what has become known as the global anti-capitalist movement. Yet all these individuals and organizations are outside of “mainstream” channels of political participation. This issue of positioning is important both because the Zapatistas locate their own struggle outside the competition for state power and because the phenomenon of transnational resonance itself is deeply implicated in the search for new political spaces and practices outside of “mainstream” or “authorized” channels of political participation.

My purpose here is to consider how political struggles may be transmitted, translated, and received transnationally, far beyond the bounds of the context within which they originated. Furthermore, I also seek to illuminate the terrain upon which it is possible to begin to construct a radical political struggle occupying not a national or international space, but a transnational one. My focus here is upon issues of consciousness, imagination, and inspiration as they relate to political openings and political possibilities, only peripherally do issues of infrastructure enter into this analysis. While there is indeed value in examining the concrete ways in which Zapatismo’s resonance has reshaped political tactics and strategies in places outside of Chiapas, this work is concerned with people’s capacity to imagine, envision, and articulate new socio-political possibilities. In order to build struggles and develop new tactics and strategies, one must first be able to conceptualize the terrain upon which contentious action can occur as well as the challenges, possibilities, and openings that inhabit it. As such, this paper is an exploration of how and why Zapatismo has proven to be so resonant transnationally and what political possibilities and openings this resonance points us toward. One final point bears mentioning here: throughout this work, I return frequently to the words and insights offered by the political activists with whom I have worked. I present their voices directly in this paper in order to explore the impact of Zapatismo through the words and insights of some of the people for whom it has been so deeply resonant as well as to give voice to the experience of hope, possibility, and political opening – as well as the failures and dangers - implicated in the phenomenon of resonance. The voices of my research partners exist alongside my own analysis in an attempt to convey the character and possibilities of the resonance of Zapatismo’s political imagination amongst activists in the north of the Americas.

### **The “Intuition” of Zapatismo**

A brief reflection on the character of Zapatismo is in order. It is vital to recognize that “Zapatismo” is not an ideology, that it is not a doctrine; it is not even a loosely codified set of principles. Nor is Zapatismo identical with the EZLN or even the Zapatista base communities in the highlands and jungles of Chiapas. Rather, as Subcomandante Marcos has said, Zapatismo is perhaps best described as an “intuition”, a position elaborated upon by Manuel Callahan in the following way: “Zapatismo is a political strategy, an ethos, a set of commitments claimed by those who claim a political identity” (2004, 218-219). Emerging originally out of the encounter between urban and

Marxist-inspired guerrillas and the Indigenous communities in the Lacandón Jungle and highlands of Chiapas in the early 1980s, an encounter that by all accounts led to the “defeat” of Marxist doctrine at the hands of these Indigenous realities<sup>3</sup>, contemporary Zapatismo’s socio-political spirit is both novel and simultaneously a creative reformulation of various Mexican revolutionary trajectories. Deeply and directly democratic, radically inclusive, and non-hierarchical, Zapatismo has been expressed best since 1994 not only through the communiqués and public demonstrations of the EZLN and the Zapatista communities but through the day-to-day practices of Indigenous Mayan communities in the highlands and jungle of Chiapas struggling to build relationships among themselves and with others marked by “justice, democracy, and liberty”. This is not to say that the realization of these principles has been achieved perfectly by the Zapatistas; lived realities are always more complex and complicated. Rather these are the central commitments that guide the Zapatista struggle. Along with a rejection of neoliberal capitalism, the pillars of Zapatismo are a renouncing of a teleology of revolution, a vision of struggle directed toward building a “world where many worlds fit, where all worlds fit”, and a sincere belief in the importance of hope, dignity, and creativity. None of this should be taken to imply that the rhetoric or symbols of Zapatismo are identical to the lived realities of its practice on the ground in Zapatista territory in Chiapas or even its manifestation amongst communities of activists in other parts of the world. What I wish to point to here, however, is the significance of Zapatismo as a political imagination and a political horizon. In this sense, the rhetoric and symbols of Zapatismo are irreducibly important as they serve as the raw materials fueling its resonance transnationally.

As the Zapatistas have continually and explicitly stated, Zapatismo is not limited to the Mayan peoples of Chiapas. It is instead a practice and a commitment, a way of building relationships in the world that are not invested in any singular subject or identity. From this perspective, and as the Zapatistas have so often reiterated, there is no single historical subject imbued with revolutionary potential; rather, we are all capable of building a dreaming, living revolution. We become revolutionary when we engage in any struggle against violence, racism, homophobia, sexism, exploitation, and marginalization in our own spaces and when we embark on paths that build bridges of accompaniment and solidarity with the struggles of others in their own places. This is not a unitary vision of struggle. Instead, it is a vision that encompasses a multitude of struggles, struggles that are dignified, necessary, and revolutionary because they are carried out, in the spirit of the Zapatista Intercontinental Encuentros, “for humanity and against neoliberalism”. Zapatismo’s transnational resonance is deeply inflected with this commitment to mutual, dignified, and democratic struggle. Zapatismo, in this sense, is an invitation just as it is an assertion of radical inclusivity and a promise of a better, more hopeful future. This invitation is offered and the promise is taken up, as the Zapatistas have said, “In any place in the world, anytime, any man or any woman rebels to the point of tearing off the clothes resignation has woven for them and cynicism has dyed grey. [When] any man or woman, of whatever color, in whatever tongue, speaks and says to himself or herself: Enough is Enough! - ¡Ya Basta!” (Subcomandante Marcos 2001b, 119). While much more could be said about the nature of Zapatismo, I will leave it to the reflections provided by my research partners<sup>4</sup> to speak eloquently and effectively to the transnational character of Zapatismo as well as to the powerful bases and consequences of its resonance.

## Echoes

The Zapatista movement has exerted an imaginative and inspirational force far beyond its

---

<sup>3</sup> see Collier and Quaratiello 1999; Gilly 1998; Harvey 1998; Womack, Jr. 1999.

<sup>4</sup> This paper is a product of a year of research conducted between September 2003 and September 2004 with US and Canadian-based political activists who had engaged Zapatismo through their activism in a variety of ways. My research partners are the activists with whom I worked during the course of my research and I quote some of them here in support of my argument. They are “partners” because this work would not have been possible without their dedicated political work and their willingness to speak with me regarding their struggles and their experiences with Zapatismo.

material capacity and its “concrete” victories since 1994, a force rooted in and animated by a distinctive political imagination that has resonated far beyond the Indigenous communities of the Lacandón Jungle from which Zapatismo initially emerged. I will not dwell upon the Zapatistas’ concrete victories and material capacities here, not only has such analysis been extensively conducted elsewhere<sup>5</sup> but my argument concerns the resonance of Zapatismo’s political imagination within a transnational space largely divorced from the particularities of the dynamics of Zapatismo’s practice on the ground in Chiapas. This is not to say that the material realities of life in Zapatista communities in Chiapas has nothing to do with Zapatismo, rather, it is simply to affirm that the powerful transnational resonance of Zapatismo speaks to an emergent understanding among people all over the world that the “enemy” being confronted in a multitude of disparate struggles for social, economic, and political justice is a common one and that the terrain of struggle, while always bearing the marks of particular contexts, is an increasingly shared one. In fact, I argue that it is only through the engagement of a multiplicity of “others” with the political imagination of Zapatismo that resonance and its consequences are produced. In this way, resonance is not merely a matter of passive receivers and active senders, it is rather a dialogic process whose outcomes cannot be predetermined and are not reducible to the “material” base of any of the actors involved.

The Zapatistas have accomplished a number of impressive achievements since their 1994 uprising, particularly when one considers them in relation to the fact that the Zapatista communities remain resource poor, often without any access to electricity, running water, or any form of state support and are often subject to harassment, threats, and violence at the hands of military, police, and paramilitary forces. Some of the most notable successes of the Zapatista movement include effectively consolidating control over their territory in rebellion, particularly with the “birth” of the Zapatista good government juntas in 2003; establishing international and national networks for the fair trade marketing and sale of their cooperative-produced goods such as coffee and textiles; setting up health clinics and schools in communities previously lacking them; and ushering in a reinvigorated Indigenous rights movement in Mexico as well as assisting in ending the seven-decade dictatorship of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) in 2000. Nevertheless, the resonance of Zapatismo beyond the borders of Chiapas often finds its impetus outside of these developments. In fact, the resonance of Zapatismo’s political imagination transnationally does not speak to the desire on the part of activists to replicate the Zapatistas’ strategies, tactics, goals, or successes in their own spaces and places. Indeed, such initiatives are relatively rare and, in some cases, almost unthinkable outside of the socio-cultural and even geographical space of the Zapatista communities. Rather, this resonance attests to the profound and powerful desires that reside in the search for new political spaces and practices capable not only of confronting neoliberal capitalism and its attendant empire of fear, coercion, violence, and exploitation, but of finding ways beyond it.

I use the term “political imagination” here in a double sense: first, as a reference to imagination as an integral part of radical political practice; and secondly, as a term referring to both the impetus and processes involved in envisioning and articulating political projects that have emerged, directly and indirectly, due to the influence of Zapatismo. Thus political imagination is both an act and a constellation of political projects. As I seek to demonstrate in this paper, imagination in this sense is a powerful constitutive force rather than an escape valve, although it is of course by no means inherently or essentially liberatory. The capacity for imagination allows people far removed from the southeast of Mexico to connect with the Zapatista struggle often through a variety of media from Zapatista communiqués distributed via e-mail lists to activist-run websites, to DVDs, CDs, and the plethora of published materials on the Zapatista movement and the EZLN. But imagination is also a central tool for activists who have spent time on the ground in Chiapas working in solidarity with the Zapatista struggle to materialize their commitments in other places as well. As a creative force and a means through which to connect with realities different from one’s own, imagination is politically significant precisely because it opens horizons of

---

<sup>5</sup> see for example Cal y Mayor 2003; Collier and Quaratiello 1999; Esteva 2003; Leyva Solano 2003; Monsiváis 2002; Nash 2001; Ross 2000; Rus et al. 2003; Womack, Jr. 1999.

possibility. Resonance would not be possible without imagination and it is through the dynamic interplay of these forces that radical political alternatives come into being.

In Canada and the United States, the resonance of Zapatismo has inspired not only direct solidarity with the Zapatistas but also forms of political activism that overflow the bounds of traditional solidarity activism and have yielded new and unanticipated results. In the course of my own research, begun during the fall of 2003, I have engaged activists involved in a diversity of organizations including: Building Bridges; the Mexico Solidarity Network (MSN); Global Exchange; Food for Chiapas; the smartMeme Strategy and Training Project; Chiapas Media Project; Big Noise Tactical; “hacktivists” from the University of Toronto; the organizing committee of the Third Intercontinental Encuentro for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism; People’s Global Action (PGA); the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP); as well as a variety of people involved in a range of political action from community capacity-building projects to Latin American solidarity work. In this paper, I draw upon the interviews I conducted with these activists in order to reflect upon the reasons for and consequences of the transnational resonance of Zapatismo in spaces and places across Canada and the United States. These open-ended, in-depth interviews were conducted over the course of a year between fall 2003 and fall 2004 in various locations in Ottawa, Ontario; Hamilton, Ontario; Toronto, Ontario; Vancouver, British Columbia; San Francisco, California; and Chiapas, Mexico. Before proceeding, however, a brief overview of the dimensions of activism engaged in by these various organizations, networks, and collectives is necessary.

The activists with whom I worked represent organizations, networks, and collectives that could be broadly differentiated according to two general categories: those working in a more “traditional” vein and those embodying and taking part in less “traditional” political practices. This differentiation is loose and I offer it more as a general descriptive tool than as an analytical category. Nevertheless, this description provides preliminary insight into the diverse repercussions of the transnational resonance of Zapatismo. In a more “traditional” vein, organizations such as Building Bridges based in Vancouver, British Columbia and Global Exchange, based in San Francisco, California have responded to the Zapatistas in more familiar solidaristic capacities. Building Bridges has responded through the training and accreditation of human rights observers who then travel to Chiapas and live in Zapatista communities. Global Exchange has responded by building “people to people ties” through facilitating reality tours to places like Chiapas. Not dissimilarly, Zapatismo inspired the work of three “hacktivists” from the University of Toronto to travel to Guatemala and Chiapas in the summer of 2003 in order to provide their technical expertise to organizations working to support indigenous struggles, a journey that was documented in the 2003 film *Hacktivista*. In a more explicitly political manner, the Mexico Solidarity Network (MSN) in the United States groups over 90 organizations together and initially emerged in response to the massacre of 45 Indigenous women, men, and children who sympathized with the goals but not the armed path of the Zapatistas at the hands of government trained paramilitaries in the town of Acteal, Chiapas in December of 1997. While MSN’s original mandate focused upon Zapatista solidarity it has since expanded its focus considerably to include an emphasis on trade agreements and US militarism. In Canada, Food for Chiapas emerged in Toronto in April of 1994 in order to respond to the needs of the Zapatista communities in Chiapas.

Yet if these organizations could be said to represent a more “traditional” political response to Zapatismo, there are most certainly individuals and organizations in Canada and the US who have felt the impact of Zapatismo and translated its meanings in other ways as well. Radical filmmakers such as Big Noise Tactical, who produced such films as *This is What Democracy Looks Like*, *Zapatista*, and, most recently, *The Fourth World* locate a large part of the inspiration for their work in the resonance of Zapatismo. Filmmakers and activists working with the Chiapas Media Project, a bi-national project between the US and Mexico, provide the resources and training to indigenous communities in Chiapas, Oaxaca, and Guerrero so that they can tell their own stories about their own struggles. Initiatives such as the Third Intercontinental Encuentro for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism, inspired by and modeled on the original Zapatista Intergalactic Encuentro

held in the jungles of Chiapas in 1996, was to be held in the summer of 2003 in Ontario and would have brought together indigenous peoples, academics, labour activists, people involved in Latin American solidarity movements, and others in an effort to see it realized. Although the Encuentro did not materialize, the vision that inspired it nevertheless stands as a testament to the resonance of Zapatismo. Also related to the Zapatista Encuentros, the transnational network of anti-capitalist coordination and communication known as Peoples' Global Action, which has been at the heart of the majority of anti-capitalist spectacles and mass demonstrations since its formation in 1998, emerged as a direct response to the Zapatistas' call for a transnational network of communication "for humanity and against neoliberalism". PGA has been an effective coordinating and communication tool for a multiplicity of distinct struggles globally without having become an "organization" itself. The smartMeme Strategy and Training Project is aimed at grassroots movement building and the injection of new ideas into culture, to intervene in capitalism "at the point of assumption", and while the project itself is not directly related to Zapatismo, its lessons and examples have resonated strongly with its founding members. Finally, while the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty is by no means a Zapatista-inspired organization, their commitment to grassroots community organizing and their explicitly revolutionary and anti-capitalist stance demonstrate their affinity with groups such as the Zapatistas, a resemblance that OCAP's own organizers and members assert.

### **Resonance: Remaking the World**

Perhaps the most obvious materialization of the resonance of Zapatismo amongst North American activists is in the adoption of the rhetoric of Zapatismo, most frequently expressed through the communiqués of the Zapatista spokesperson Subcomandante Marcos. These communiqués have been disseminated not only via the Internet but also through CDs, DVDs, audio and video tapes, as well as through an abundance of published material about the Zapatista movement. But the Zapatista uprising has also taken on a special significance within the contemporary global justice/anti-capitalist movement. As Paul Kingsnorth writes in *One No, Many Yeses: A Journey to the Heart of the Global Resistance Movement*, "The Zapatistas would become the unwitting, but not unwilling, forgers of a truly global insurgency against history's first truly global system" (2003, 7). The significance of Zapatismo with respect to the global anti-capitalist movement is perhaps most powerfully captured by the editorial collective "Notes From Nowhere" in *We Are Everywhere: The Irresistible Rise of Global Anticapitalism*. In the first entry of their timeline of global anti-capitalism entitled "The Restless Margins: Moments of Resistance and Rebellion" the editorial collective writes of January 1, 1994, "The EZLN...declares war against Mexico, bringing its inspirational struggle for life and humanity to the forefront of political imaginations across the planet" (2003, 31). In her article "Rebellion in Chiapas", Naomi Klein considers what she labels "the Zapatista effect" by asking, "what are the ideas that proved so powerful that thousands have taken it on themselves to disseminate them around the world?" and answers "They have to do with power – and new ways of imagining it" (2002, 219). In concluding her article, Klein notes, "This is the essence of Zapatismo, and explains much of its appeal: a global call to revolution that tells you not to wait for the revolution, only to start where you stand, to fight with your own weapon" (2002, 220-221).

I have quoted these passages here not as a perfect description of the essence of Zapatismo but rather to offer them as particularly eloquent statements of Zapatismo's significance in the eyes of many - but by no means all - US and Canadian activists. Foregrounded in these passages are notions of hope, creativity, human dignity, communication, democracy, and what could be termed an intellectual and political cosmopolitanism. These elements, I would argue, are most certainly present in Zapatismo, all the more so with respect to the communiqués and communicative actions directed toward supporters transnationally, but they also speak to dynamics of struggle familiar to people within "First World" or "post-industrial" societies like Canada and the United States. Less apparent, but by no means always absent, from this perspective on Zapatismo are the complexities of the Zapatista struggle on the ground in Chiapas, the mundane work of building relations of "good

government” amongst the communities and municipalities in rebellion, and the unavoidable contradictions that occupy the sphere of human action.

The emphasis upon the production of new subjectivities, new ways of life, new ways of being in the world, is in fact one of the central points of resonance for activists working in North America with respect to Zapatismo. Patrick Reinsborough, a grassroots activist working with the smartMeme Strategy and Training Project in the United States, a collective dedicated to grassroots movement building and injecting new ideas into culture, reflected upon precisely these points in considering what he termed the model and inspiration of Zapatismo:

[The Zapatistas] created [a powerful phenomenon] in terms of the importance of networks, the importance of contesting idea space and that the system really is most vulnerable...at its intellectual underpinnings, that we're fighting a pathological system...If we can frame the debate and if we can...decolonize people's imaginations and give them an experience of the potential of what democracy really means, of what really having control over your own life and your community, having actual freedom and autonomy and sustainability what that can mean...it attacks the system at some of its deepest levels, that has opened up a whole new range of possibilities and really without the leadership of the Zapatistas there would be...no people's globalization movement in the way that there is today. (interview, March 9 2004)

Patrick's comment speaks to a very different conceptualization of the nature, direction, and means of struggle than those that inspired more traditional notions of revolution or social change. Central to this shift are new understandings of power and the production and reproduction of the social as well as the subjectivities who inhabit it.

The issue of the nature of power with respect to contemporary struggles for radical social change lies at the heart of John Holloway's work *Change the World Without Taking Power: The Meaning of Revolution Today*. Initiating his analysis, Holloway asks: "How, in spite of everything, can we understand our force, our own capacity to create a different world?...[H]ow do we overcome the feeling of helplessness that seems now to pervade everything? How do we understand that, in relation to the crisis as in relation to the war, we are not victims but subjects, the only subjects?" (2002, viii). Holloway traces the "failure" of previous revolutionary struggles to the historical failure of identifying revolution with control of the state, a mistake that must be moved beyond if "a world based on the mutual recognition of human dignity, on the formation of social relations which are not power relations" is to be realized (2002, 14-18). In light of this, Holloway makes the following assertion: "This, then, is the revolutionary challenge at the beginning of the twenty-first century: to change the world without taking power. This is the challenge that has been formulated most clearly by the Zapatista uprising in the south-east of Mexico" (2002, 20). Holloway argues that the "remarkable resonance" of Zapatismo can be traced to the growth of what might be termed "anti-power". Put differently, Holloway reminds us that "Our capacity to do is always an interlacing of our activity with the previous or present activity of others" and that it is only when "the social flow of doing is fractured that power-to is transformed into its opposite, power-over" thus reducing the vast majority of people "into the done-to, their activity transformed into passivity, their subjectivity into objectivity" (2002, 28-29). This is the understanding of power and of the capacity to create, the power-to, that the Zapatistas invoke when they assert: "We are not a safety valve for the rebellion that could destabilize neoliberalism. It is false that our rebel existence legitimizes Power. Power fears us. That is why it pursues us and fences us in. That is why it jails and kills us. In reality, we are the possibility that can defeat it and make it disappear" (EZLN 2001, 126). This is not so much a denial or rejection of "power" as it is a radical reconceptualization of it and it is in part what has proved to be so powerfully resonant for activists outside of Chiapas with respect to Zapatismo's political imagination.

The terrain of power, subjectivity, and the reproduction of the social implicated in Patrick's comment and engaged by Holloway is central to understanding the transnational resonance of Zapatismo. This is particularly true because recent years have borne witness to a reconfiguration not

only of capitalist relations of production but of the construction of the social itself. As Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri argue in *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*, recent years have borne witness to a shift in the most powerful – or hegemonic – sectors of the global capitalist economy. In fact, Hardt and Negri argue that “immaterial labor, that is, labor that produces immaterial products, such as information, knowledges, ideas, images, relationships, and affects” is exercising a hegemonic influence not only over the contemporary scene of labour and production but over society as a whole (2004, 65). One need look no further than the most advanced and lucrative sectors of the economies of the G8 countries to establish the veracity of this assertion. The significance of this shift has multiple implications. On the one hand, the centrality of immaterial labour to capitalist accumulation has introduced “new and intense forms of violation and alienation” such as the erasure of the distinction between “work” and “non-work” time and the increasing enclosure of every aspect of social life (2004, 66). On the other hand, it also means that “Immaterial labor...tends no longer to be limited to the economic but also becomes immediately a social, cultural, and political force” (2004, 66). Labour thus becomes “biopolitical”, oriented toward the production and reproduction of forms of social life, the “production of subjectivity” itself, “the creation and reproduction of new subjectivities in society” (2004, 66). This is precisely the terrain upon which the transnational resonance of Zapatismo operates. The creative capacity of people themselves is what brings the world into being and it is also what capital appropriates as its driving force. Zapatismo resonates powerfully within this space precisely because it engages and reclaims the generative capacity of humanity, not as a means to an end but as a political project in itself. The production of the social and of new subjectivities is precisely what is at issue when the Zapatistas assert, “We did not come together today to change the world. We are here today with the most modest of purposes: to make a new world. We. Here. Today. In America” (Subcomandante Marcos 2001a, 100).

As a biopolitical force, the impact of immaterial labour has consequences far beyond the realm of the economic. As immaterial labour has become constitutive of the social, it has also impacted forms of socio-political struggle. As Hardt and Negri note, not only is contemporary networked struggle increasingly “biopolitical” in its aims and consequences (evidenced in part by the emphasis upon “democracy” as both a central characteristic and demand of so many networked popular movements), it also “does not rely on discipline the same way [as does the military, the factory, even the guerrilla band]: creativity, communication, and self-organized cooperation are its primary values” (2004, 83). In fact, Hardt and Negri assert that the Zapatista movement represents “in the clearest possible terms the nature and direction of the postmodern transition of organizational forms” while globalization movements represent the latest stage in the development of movement forms (ibid., 85-87). The biopolitical force animating this transition and inspiring the transnational resonance of Zapatismo is not a force that transcends society, it is not a force that orders from outside or above. Rather, this biopolitical force is immanent to society. It is constituted by the inherent creative capacity of humanity and recognizing it as such allows for the reclamation of revolutionary possibilities lying far beyond the narrow boundaries and trajectories imposed by more traditional visions of social struggle and social change. On the plane of transnational political action, Zapatismo operates as one of the central contemporary forces animating this reclamation of a politics of anti-power and radical possibility.

As Patrick Reinsborough notes, the notion that Zapatismo is both an inspiration and a model for political action is essential to the appreciation of its resonance beyond Chiapas. Yet neither of these terms denotes a straightforward or singular phenomenon. All too often, these phenomena are considered in simplistic ways, particularly by those who would cynically dismiss the resonance of Zapatismo as the product of a facile romanticization of Latin American or Indigenous struggles. In these analyses, North American and European supporters of the Zapatista movement have been criticized for a number of unfortunate and even dangerous tendencies including a facile romanticization of Indigenous peoples and armed insurgency; an overreliance on “virtual” as opposed to “real” images of the struggle in Chiapas; a desire to look for revolution “somewhere else” rather than facing issues of concern “at home”; and an obsession on the part of foreign



supporters of the Zapatista movement with the “trope” of Chiapas.<sup>6</sup> Significantly, many of these concerns and criticisms were raised by the activists with whom I spoke, particularly those working from an Indigenous or Latin American solidarity perspective. Manuel Rozental, Colombian political exile, member of the Canada-Colombian Solidarity Campaign, and physician, spoke about the particularly dangerous tendencies of some elements of international solidarity as he had seen it operate from the north to the south:

Capital takes away your land, your food, your resources, your income, your house, your employment...through different forms of exploitation, because it takes away nature and labour...and then when you're left without nature and when you as labour are owned by capital then it gives you a blanket, 'cause you must be cold, that blanket is international solidarity, it comes out and says you're a victim...when you say, particularly to the human rights groups or the churches, I don't want to be a fucking victim that's not the deal, what I want to do is run my own solidarity, don't help me, I've been helping you for years by struggling against the same creature that is destroying us...then immediately the door is shut and that's institutional solidarity. Then you have the other one which I call innocent solidarity which is people [from within the global north] who are honestly interested in finding some meaning and in understanding what's going on with their world and the world of others...[often they feel that] it's boring here and to struggle here when you're being fed and you're being protected and you're being looked after, more or less, 'cause there are also abuses of course, but when you're fairly comfortable you feel there's a guilt-trip, you feel you don't really have a cause...so you go and find a real cause...(interview, December 10, 2003)

Indigenous activist and independent media-maker Rebeka Tabobondung also reflected upon the problematic nature of some dimensions of international solidarity as it has manifested itself towards movements like the Zapatistas:

I think that people are increasingly becoming more and more...unsatisfied by Western society...and...looking towards Indigenous people...for fulfillment...this is something that the Third Encounter talked about...to non-Native people...don't come here to help Native people...but when we understand what capitalism is doing to people and to the planet...then in fact our struggles are your struggles...I think that the Zapatistas were trying to appeal to that as well...this has been happening forever, now it's just happening to everybody...the Zapatistas actively invited [people] to...come be here [to document and participate in a larger struggle]...But at the end of the day, [most of these people who visited the Zapatistas] didn't go and look at their own backyards...and at the end of the day where are the Zapatistas today? (interview, January 15, 2004)

Rebeka's comment points toward the dangers of seeking fulfillment in the exoticized and distanced struggles of “others”, particularly when that desire for fulfilment on the part of some northern activists is mingled with attitudes that blur the line between solidarity and charity. Stephan Dobson, a member of the Canadian Union of Public Employees and an activist involved with the planning of the Third Intercontinental Encuentro for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism, also reflected upon the problems inherent in finding points of inspiration or political engagement in spaces far removed from the daily realities within which activists live and work:

...but it's always the revolution's elsewhere...you have to be a part of it, you have to mobilize because it's the leading edge, it's something new and it takes on all of...the hopes and dreams and the aspirations and ambitions...but perhaps what I'm trying to get at...[is]


---

<sup>6</sup> see Hellman 2000; Meyer 2002.

that those struggles...they're directly here, so while you have...all this wonderful solidarity going on with Zapatistas...you've got a thousand Patricia Pats moving in on Oka....No justice on stolen land. (interview, October 31, 2003)

This comment compellingly expresses one of the darkest contradictions of the resonance of Zapatismo: as the Zapatistas have sought to remind us, struggles for humanity, for a world in which many worlds fit, are occurring everywhere. Yet it would be difficult to contend that solidarity has been manifested toward the struggles of Indigenous peoples in Canada to anything approaching the same degree to which solidarity has been expressed for the Zapatistas. If the Fourth World War is also here, why are our own terrains of struggle apparently so barren?

Justin Podur, a *Znet*<sup>7</sup> commentator and developer responsible for *ZNet's* South Asia, Africa, and Race Watch pages as well as the Colombia and Chiapas Crisis pages, member of the Canada Colombia Solidarity Campaign, and a self-described "camp follower" of the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty, articulated precisely this dimension of the transnational resonance of Zapatismo during our conversation in the winter of 2004. Describing the impact of Zapatismo upon activist circles in Canada and the United States, Justin noted that in fetishizing Zapatismo, all too often activists had drawn the wrong lessons from the Zapatistas and in so doing had done greater damage to the very struggle of which the Zapatistas are themselves a part:

...I think [the Zapatistas have resonated amongst northern activists] sometimes for the wrong reasons....I think a lot of people who could have helped...a movement in a place like Venezuela [haven't] because they...can't handle the idea that Chavez tried to take power in a coup in 1992...[but]  didn't have a problem with the Zapatistas doing the same in '94....[They believe that] the Zapatistas...don't want to take power, they're Indigenous, they want to transform the way that power's exercised, but Chavez is after power...we can't support something like that....[This reasoning is] crazy, and it's crazy because the target...of the US foreign policies...of the economic policies, of the militarism is the populations of these countries...and I think in that sense...[the] fad about Zapatismo has been really destructive because...there are other groups, there are other processes, and nobody cares about them..because they don't understand why the Zapatistas are important and why the Zapatistas are not important....Long before 9/11...in the anti-globalization work people were doing...there were a lot of debates about violence...and the debates were really superficial...the non-violence people...would say..."we want to be non-violent like Gandhi" and the violence people said "we want to be violent like the Zapatistas" and it was just the stupidest thing in the world because nobody knew anything, the non-violence people didn't know a damn thing about Gandhi and the violence people didn't know a thing about the Zapatistas and...I really...wish...that people would see...it in that context as one...piece...of a struggle that's going on...all over the world but...all over the continent especially....(interview, March 19, 2004)

The failure on the part of some activists to see the Zapatistas not as the "highest point" of a revolutionary trajectory but rather as a movement among many others engaged in a struggle against global neoliberal capitalism is perhaps one of the problematic dimensions of the transnational resonance of Zapatismo. As Justin points out here, the valorization of their "revolutionary model" or, even worse, a facile romanticization of their tactics and structure in fact works directly against what the Zapatistas have worked so hard to do since their public emergence on January 1, 1994: connect themselves and others to a larger fabric of struggle in which no one stands above anyone else and to explicitly reject the notion that there is only one path to revolutionary change.

These criticisms related by Manuel, Rebeka, Stephan, and Justin are indeed valid and undeniably important and should be taken not as isolated commentaries but as representative of a

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.zmag.org/weluser.htm>

much broader sentiment on the part of people working with and within oppressed communities<sup>8</sup>. At the same time, such commentaries do not describe the entirety of Zapatismo's resonance or its consequences. Reflecting upon these criticisms should in no way be taken as a legitimization of cynical or dismissive attitudes toward the transnational resonance of Zapatismo or the emergent transnational links and movements of which it is a part. Rather, these comments and criticisms are most appropriately situated in light of what the Zapatistas call a spirit of "walking questioning". As we walk – that is, as we struggle – we must constantly and explicitly be reflective and constructively critical. Struggles built in this spirit not only have the capacity for adaptation and flexibility; they also embody the possibility of creating a truly open and democratic process insulated from the threats of claiming to know the "true path" of revolution (and seeking to impose it on others) or of sacrificing the very principles of struggle in the name of defending the struggle itself. It is important indeed to acknowledge and address the failures of certain responses to struggles such as that of the Zapatistas but these failures are by no means representative of the character of Zapatismo's transnational resonance, nor do they delegitimize the political imagination to which this resonance is so deeply connected. In order to understand these phenomena and their implications, it is necessary to return to the perceptions of northern activists for whom Zapatismo has proven to be so resonant.

### **Spaces of Possibility**

The phenomenon of resonance involves not only a "sender" and a "receiver" but directly concerns the space within which resonance can occur. Echoes are not merely products of someone (or something) producing a sound and another hearing it; their existence depends upon a space conducive to facilitating their reverberation. Similarly, issues relating to the transmission, translation, and resonance of political struggle and its attendant political imagination transnationally can never be considered outside of the context within which they occur. In this respect, the resonance of Zapatismo for North American activists says at least as much about the contexts within which these activists live and work as it does about the Zapatista struggle itself. Fiona Jeffries, grassroots activist, academic, and independent journalist, offered an assessment of the reasons for the resonance of Zapatismo by reflecting upon the content and spirit of Zapatista discourse outside of the Mexican context:

...that amazing quote "Marcos is gay in San Francisco and a student without books and a Jew in Poland and a Palestinian in Israel"....That was such a powerful, pluralistic call that was like everybody's got something...there's a very few people that are actually benefiting from this situation, we're all being convinced that this is as much as we can expect to benefit and we shouldn't ask for anything more, or we shouldn't fight for anything more... 'cause it could be a lot worse....[T]hat is [the Zapatistas'] strength, their historical subject is...not in any singular being, their historical subject is people's desire for freedom and justice and dignity....(interview, March 13, 2004)

Zapatismo is thus not a discourse that has simply been appropriated from its "authentic" location, rather, through the Zapatistas' sophisticated and deliberate efforts to dialogue with people around the world they have facilitated the articulation of a shared struggle against global neoliberal capitalism and the exclusions and enclosures it generates while insisting upon the irreducible

---

<sup>8</sup> There are numerous, long-standing, and well-documented examples of communities in resistance both suffering from and speaking out against ill-conceived and all too often self-gratifying demonstrations of "solidarity" particularly as it has operated from north to south (see for example Bandy and Smith 2004; Nugent 2002; Subcomandante Marcos 2004). Of course, these comments could also apply to academic, non-governmental, and governmental experts whose analyses produced from power-filled discourses and positions have often been employed to deny the agency, knowledge, and dignity of the people they speak for. More specifically, these comments are also representative of a general sentiment voiced by my research partners during my interviews with them.

uniqueness of each struggle in every place. As Rick Rowley of the media collective Big Noise Tactical stated, the “Zapatistas were a tear in the fabric of the present”, particularly considering that prior to the 1994 uprising the hope for a meaningful alternative to neoliberal capitalism was almost entirely absent. Explaining the roots of his encounter with Zapatismo and the direction his political activism took as a result of it, Rick offered a compelling articulation of Zapatismo’s resonance:

When we marched in the centre of Mexico City, in the Zócalo in ‘95 we didn’t march the way that people like us had marched in the ‘70s and the ‘80s saying we’re against the war in the south, we support these people down there, we marched and said we are Zapatistas and the war is right here under our feet, that the Zapatistas have survived and won victories against this First World military armed with sticks and their word is because they’ve managed to tell a story about struggle that’s an invitation to people to read themselves in as participants and not as observers on the outside....(interview, September 20, 2004)

For people separated by geographical, cultural, and political space the assertion of a shared struggle would have little impact if there did not exist some basis upon which to ground it in their own lived realities. Global neoliberal capitalism has clearly provided a powerful unifying impulse in this area, creating links of dependency, exploitation, and mutual if differential experiences of insecurity, alienation, and misery. In a similar vein, serious questions about the democratic nature of liberal democratic practice, its institutions, and the professional politicians who dominate them have become increasingly frequent since the prematurely-declared “End of History” and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Even – and, at times, perhaps especially – within so-called “First World” countries such as Canada and the United States the decline of legitimacy with respect to the institutions and practices of liberal democracy has become an issue of increasing concern.<sup>9</sup> While this crisis of legitimacy certainly provokes an apolitical cynicism amongst large sectors of the population for others it has served to stimulate a search for alternative political spaces and practices. Of course, militarization and the constant expansion of a temporally and spatially unlimited “War on Terror” also provide powerful dynamics through which it becomes ever more possible for activists to envision and articulate a truly tangible basis for the realization of a transnationally shared struggle. During our conversation in the spring of 2004, John Clarke, organizer and founding member of the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP), offered a compelling perspective on the changing nature of the political terrain of struggle and the possibilities and opportunities therein:

...I think that...the ability that [powerholders] have to proceed with the neoliberal agenda with...tactical shifts is...enormous and their ability to deceive people is also enormous...but I think it would be wrong to underestimate the degree to which that process is falling short of really deceiving people....[Not] everybody that fails to turnout in an election does so through some thought-out position of rejecting electoral politics but at the same time the growth of that constituency of non-voters shows that more and more people are just believing whoever you vote in gives you more of the same and who can really argue with that position it’s so palpably true....[I also think] that Chiapas in ‘94 was a bit of a watershed...[and] what’s continued to emerge with set backs, with ebbs and flows...[is] a conscious opposition that really names the enemy, sees itself increasingly as part of a global movement and...rejects...the antics of futile protest and looks for ways to actually fight against this capitalist neoliberal agenda and turn it back and...you see everywhere that people...are continuing to work on building an opposition that can’t be bought, that isn’t bureaucratized and doesn’t come to the table and have discussions...it’s there, and it’s time is coming...in the sense that neoliberalism...isn’t a fad or isn’t a phase for the corporations and the governments, it’s about the kind of future that they’re trying to build...and the model is more and more economic and social austerity but also physical repression...and

---

<sup>9</sup> see Crotty 1991; Nevitte 1996.

that's going to get masses of people enormously angr....(interview, May 12, 2004)

As John notes here, the accelerating crisis of neoliberal capitalism combined with increasing violence and repression mobilized by even supposedly democratic countries against dissenting sectors of their own populations offers not simply a challenge but a possibility. While the total abandonment of the post-war model of "class compromise" and the hollowness of capitalism's "Third Way" have become ever more apparent, the possibility for the realization of real and radical alternatives to regimes of elite-driven liberal democratic and corporatized governance has expanded.

Many of the most inspiring examples of these expanded political horizons exist in the global south, from the Landless Peasants Movement in Brazil to the autonomous movement and piqueteros in Argentina to the Zapatistas in Mexico (to name only a few) but recent years have amply demonstrated that the terrain for the emergence of such possibilities is by no means barren in the north. As Kevin McKay of the SkyDragon Community Development Cooperative commented during our conversation in the spring of 2004:

...I think that...if you look at the...structures of power as they exist they're really fucked up and they're getting worse but people's capacity for change I think is increasing...and I think it's increasing worldwide and I think the kind of thing that the Zapatistas are doing is amazing...[as well as what's happening in places like] Cochabamba [and] in Porto Alegre, in all these places where the communities themselves have taken...their situation into their own hands, like the factory reclamations in Argentina....[T]ime and time again the thing that strikes the most terror in the hearts of the establishment...[is] that total realization on the part of people that we just don't need you at all, like not at all, holy shit! What've we been doing...you're totally superfluous....[I]t's like the environment thing...the crunch is going to happen...and it's a horrible thing to have to fall back on but you at least know...some of these decisions that right now North Americans can feel...we're safely distant [from]...they're going to be right there...and so...those changes will have to occur, what I think that progressives today need to do is to work hard enough such that that hitting the wall isn't a splat...you're able to turn 'cause you've got enough of that alternative infrastructure....(interview, April 27, 2004)

The reshaping of the socio-political terrain and its attendant subjectivities is a process marked by crisis just as it is one marked by opportunity. In Canada and the United States, the fortification of "Fortress North America" and the simultaneous forcible withdrawal of state support for public well-being in the face of the onslaught of neoliberal capitalism has actually served to create a space marked both by increasing insecurity and possibility as people begin collectively to imagine and enact alternative initiatives.

The transnational resonance of Zapatismo is intimately connected to the sense of crisis and possibility described by John and Kevin but more than just marking a point of rupture this resonance has also served to fuel the generation of new forms of struggle. Jacquie Soohen of Big Noise Tactical articulated the shift in the dimensions and nature of political action over the past several decades and in relation to the impact of Zapatismo upon it when she noted:

We're entering a whole different time and the Zapatistas made it clear too that it wasn't just about this media blockade, it wasn't just about the information not getting out there, it was about this ideological encirclement and how do you break that, and so in the same way the films...are not about speaking truth to power in that way...especially *The Fourth World War* it's about...creating myths...inside this movement and connecting connections and connectivities, like a connection-making machine...between these different movements....If there's anything we've learned and we learn more everyday...it's not just about the information, especially now, it's about...how it's interpreted and used and how people are

made to feel connected or disconnected from it. (interview, September 20, 2004)

Many of the activists with whom I spoke made similar comments about the need for connection with respect to democratic grassroots movements. As Dave Bleakney, a member of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers and an activist involved with People's Global Action noted, while much of the organized or institutionalized left in the north has responded to the challenges of neoliberal capitalism by entrenching alienating models of action resembling "bureaucratic fiefdoms" (interview, March 25, 2004) such an approach has succeeded only in driving a wedge between those being represented and the bureaucratic elites who manage these organizations. In contrast, Zapatismo and movements like that of global anti-capitalism and global justice have sought to operate almost exclusively from a grassroots approach emphasising the need to reinvigorate a truly radical and popular struggle.

In the face of a hegemonic neoliberal discourse, Zapatismo has offered a way of thinking beyond the ideological enclosures of global capitalism. As Rick Rowley and Jacquie Soohen of Big Noise Tactical remarked, movements like that of the Zapatistas reinforce the importance of transgression and imagination to struggle, particularly in the face of a capitalist system that embraces irony and cynicism and has achieved a profound degree of "ideological encirclement" particularly in North America. Eric Doherty, a coordinator for Building Bridges, an organization that trains people to conduct human rights observation in Zapatista communities in Chiapas, also commented on the vital importance of the ability to imagine and struggle towards alternatives and the relationship of Zapatismo to a reinvigoration of this capacity following the "end of history" of the early 1990s:

...we went from a situation where there was only two alternatives being presented to people, you had capitalism and authoritarian socialism, and post-1990, well actually Margaret Thatcher said it in the '80s, "there is no alternative", there is nothing to be imagined and to me it's essential that it doesn't matter how bad things are...if there's nothing imagined out there for the future that's better the only logical thing to do is to...enjoy whatever pleasures there are in this society....[I also think that] in the past a lot of the alternatives were spelled out in very concrete terms, extremely concrete terms...whereas now...that kind of thinking...has faded, that's now the discourse...only of the neoliberal powers that there is no alternative...whereas what's being talked about by the Zapatistas and by a large number of other people is that we can do better than this and we have to but we're going to work it out as we go along, we're going to...form the future as we struggle for it....(interview, March 12, 2004)

This renewed affirmation of possibility in addition to the fundamental specificity of struggle precludes any pre-fabricated revolutionary solution and necessitates a network of radically democratic communication and collaboration if a people's globalization as opposed to a capitalist globalization is to be realized. This is certainly an essential element to the resonance of Zapatismo, that another world *is* possible and that it does not require a blueprint before struggling toward it.

People's Global Action is a global network of anti-capitalist coordination and communication that emerged in 1998 out of the Second Intercontinental Encuentro for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism held in Spain in August 1997. PGA as a network was inspired by the Zapatista call to articulate just such a network, what the Zapatistas called an "International order of hope". One of the key individuals involved in helping PGA manifest itself in North America is Dave Bleakney, an activist and organizer with the Canadian Union of Postal Workers. During our conversation in the winter of 2004, Dave reflected upon the first time he had heard about the Zapatista uprising and the connections and lessons it gave him the opportunity to articulate:

...the first time I heard about it was actually when it happened it was on the news that night and I'd been feeling pretty down because I thought that the movement in Canada capitulated

against FTA, here people were saying everything is on the line, everything that you have as a people is on the line and yet there was no...meaningful fight other than a few letters and petitions and politicians have come to learn that they can live through demonstrations, that it's not a big price to pay anymore...so I was pretty distressed by that and when people in Chiapas rose up it gave me real hope, real hope and also an understanding that there was still dignity...that people [who] had very little in the way of money or capital or standard of living had incredible dignity...so that was incredible inspiration to know that struggle...I think that struggle and others have taught me a lot, that we have more to learn from movements like that than they have from us. (interview, March 25, 2004)

Concretely, the Zapatistas and their focus upon dialogue and inclusivity, what might be called a politics of accompaniment, have led to a new dynamic of organizing that is explicitly anti-capitalist and radically democratic without fitting neatly into existing political categories or revolutionary teleologies. Simultaneously, the transnationalized discourse of Zapatismo, communicated most often via the communiqués of Subcomandante Marcos but also through the Zapatista Encuentros, international activist delegations travelling to Chiapas, and the plethora of writings, images, artefacts, and accounts of the Zapatista struggle disseminated globally, has reinvigorated a revolutionary subjectivity based on hope, dignity, and inclusivity.

### **Beginnings**

During our conversation in the summer of 2004, Jacquie Soohen of Big Noise remarked, it's not a factual thing to say the movement started in Chiapas...January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1994, it's a position to take...when we locate our history there, when we locate our beginnings and our roots there, we're locating this movement in a space that is...functioning as...a guerrilla in a space of imagination, in a space of possibility" (interview, September 20, 2004). As I have sought to demonstrate in this paper, the space of the imagination and of the possible is what Zapatismo has reinvigorated and the resonance it has achieved amongst activists in Canada and the United States is something that carries with it responsibility as much as it does a promise. Choices and decisions, much as hope and possibility, carry with them obligations. The transnational resonance of Zapatismo is not simply the result of a cunningly projected struggle, nor is it merely the product of a facile romanticization of an "Other" struggle on the part of northern activists. Instead, this resonance and its unpredictable consequences have emerged out of a matrix cultivated by the multiplying crises (political, environmental, economic, cultural) of global neoliberal capitalism, its decaying political structures, and the growth of a powerful and contagious collective desire for meaningful alternatives to this suicidal status quo. January 1, 1994 marked the abrupt end to the prematurely and absurdly declared "End of History" but rather than ushering in a newly polarized political formulation the shape of many radical political struggles in the years since the Zapatista uprising have instead borne a very different set of commitments and hopes. Events such as the massive carnivals of dissent that took place in Seattle, Washington DC, Quebec City, Genoa, Miami, and Cancun are only the most obvious symptom of this new political spirit. Rather than focusing on narrowly structural issues or calling for the seizure of state power this new "movement of movements" has instead chosen to speak a language of hope, dignity, and possibility. Such a language would be almost inconceivable without the transnational resonance of Zapatismo.

At the same time, the resonance of this political imagination should by no means be taken as a sign of the unqualified success of Zapatismo or the activists with whom it has resonated. As several of my research partners asserted links of solidarity from north to south have often operated in a fashion far from perfect and northern activists and their struggles too often continue to resist rather than to actually build meaningful socio-political alternatives. For movements like that of the Zapatistas to succeed popular movements with systemic critiques – not just narrow or single issue concerns - must begin to emerge in the north. A world made of many worlds will not be built out of the valiant struggles in the south and passivity in the north. As for the Zapatistas, while their struggle for autonomy continues in the southeast of Mexico and the summer of 2003 witnessed the

creation of the Good Government Juntas and the Caracoles as well as the further consolidation of Zapatista Territory in Rebellion, in June 2005 the EZLN announced a Red Alert as a precautionary measure as the Zapatistas consulted regarding the next stage of their struggle. On January 1, 2006, Subcomandante Marcos, re-named “Delegate Zero”, and several other Zapatista comandantes began their six month tour of Mexico kicking off the “Other Campaign” - as opposed to the official presidential race occurring in Mexico - that aims to build a broadly-based non-electoral, anti-capitalist social struggle of the left and “from below”. “The Other Campaign” also has an international dimension that will include another Intercontinental Encuentro and aim to consolidate a new kind of social movement from below and of the left on a global scale. This will be a telling moment not only for the Zapatista struggle but for the significance and impact of its resonance amongst activists in the north. Hope and possibility are not ever given, they must be fought for and defended and if this transnational resonance is to have any long-term meaning it will only be through the recognition of this moment as one of promise, possibility, and obligation. As Rick Rowley of Big Noise affirmed with regard to the meaning of January 1, 1994 and the Zapatista struggle, “Beginnings and endings are always tactical decisions...they’re dates you choose and they’re not justified by what happened before they’re justified by the actions you take later so...it’s not enough just to say, you have to fight to make it true that a new world began 1<sup>st</sup> of January ‘94” (interview, September 20, 2004).

### Works Cited

- Bandy, Joe and Jackie Smith, editors. 2004. *Coalitions Across Borders: Transnational Protest and the Neoliberal Order*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers.
- Cal y Mayor, Araceli Burguete. 2003. The de Facto Autonomous Process: New Jurisdictions and Parallel Governments in Rebellion. Chapter 7 in *Mayan Lives, Mayan Utopias: The Indigenous Peoples of Chiapas and the Zapatista Rebellion*, edited by Jan Rus, Rosalva Aída Hernández Castillo, and Shannan L. Mattiace. Translated by Carlos Pérez. Toronto: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Callahan, Manuel. 2004. Zapatismo Beyond Chiapas. Chapter 16 in *Globalize Liberation: How to Uproot the System and Build a Better World*, edited by David Solnit. San Francisco: City Lights Books.
- Collier, George A., and Elizabeth Lowery Quaratiello. 1999. *Basta! Land & The Zapatista Rebellion in Chiapas*. Oakland: Food First Books.
- Crotty, William. 1991. *Political Participation and American Democracy*. New York: Greenwood Press.
- EZLN. 2001. Second Declaration of La Realidad for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism. In *Our Word is Our Weapon*, edited by Juana Ponce de León. Toronto: Seven Stories Press. Communiqué originally issued August 1996.
- Gilly, Adolfo. 1998. Chiapas and the Rebellion of the Enchanted World. In *Rural Revolt in Mexico: US Intervention and the Domain of Subaltern Politics*, edited by Daniel Nugent. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Hardt, Michael and Antonio Negri. 2004. *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*. New York: The Penguin Press.
- Harvey, Neil. 1998. *The Chiapas Rebellion: The Struggle for Land and Democracy*. Durham: Duke



University Press.

Hellman, Judith A.. 2000. Real and Virtual Chiapas: Magic Realism and the Left. *Necessary and Unnecessary Utopias: Socialist Register 2000*: 161-186.

Holloway, John. 2002. *Change the World Without Taking Power: The Meaning of Revolution Today*. London: Pluto Press.

Kingsnorth, Paul. 2003. *One No, Many Yeses: A Journey to the Heart of the Global Resistance Movement*. London: The Free Press.

Klein, Naomi. 2002. Rebellion in Chiapas. In *Fences and Windows: Dispatches from the Front Lines of the Globalization Debate*, edited by Debra Ann Levy. Toronto: Vintage Canada. Originally published in *The Guardian* (March 3, 2001).

Leyva Solano, Xóchitl. 2003. Regional, Communal, and Organizational Transformations in Las Cañadas. Chapter 6 in *Mayan Lives, Mayan Utopias: The Indigenous Peoples of Chiapas and the Zapatista Rebellion*, edited by Jan Rus, Rosalva Aída Hernández Castillo, and Shannan L. Mattiace. Toronto: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc. Originally published in *Latin American Perspectives* 28 (2): 20-44.

Meyer, Jean. 2002. Once Again, the Noble Savage. In *The Zapatista Reader*, edited by Tom Hayden. New York: Thunder's Mouth Press. Originally published in *Letras Libras* 1998.

Monsiváis, Carlos. 2002. From the Subsoil to the Mask That Reveals: the Visible Indian. In *The Zapatista Reader*, edited by Tom Hayden. New York: Thunder's Mouth Press. Originally published in *Proceso* March 3, 2001.

Nash, June. 2001. *Mayan Visions: The Quest for Autonomy in an Age of Globalization*. New York: Routledge.

Nevitte, Neil. 1996. *The Decline of Deference: Canadian Value Change in Cross-National Perspective*. Peterborough: Broadview Press.

Notes From Nowhere, editors. 2003. *We Are Everywhere: The Irresistible Rise of Global Anti-Capitalism*. New York: Verso. [www.weareeverywhere.org](http://www.weareeverywhere.org).

Nugent, Daniel. 2002. Northern Intellectuals and the EZLN. In *The Zapatista Reader*, edited by Tom Hayden. New York: Thunder's Mouth Press. Originally published in *Monthly Review* (July 1995).

Ross, John. 2000. *The War Against Oblivion: The Zapatista Chronicles*. Monroe: Common Courage Press.

Rus, Jan, Rosalva Aída Hernández Castillo, and Shannan L. Mattiace, editors. 2003. *Mayan Lives, Mayan Utopias: The Indigenous Peoples of Chiapas and the Zapatista Rebellion*. Toronto: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Subcomandante Marcos. 2004. A Death Has Been Decided. In *¡Ya Basta!: Ten Years of the Zapatista Uprising*, edited by Žiga Vodovnik. Oakland: AK Press. Communiqué originally issued July 2003.

———. 2002. The Fourth World War Has Begun. In *The Zapatista Reader*, edited by Tom Hayden. New York: Thunder's Mouth Press. Communiqué originally appeared in *Le Monde Diplomatique* September 1997.

———. 2001a. Today, Eighty-Five Years Later, History Repeats Itself. In *Our Word is Our Weapon*, edited by Juana Ponce de León. Toronto: Seven Stories Press. Communiqué originally issued April 6, 1996.

———. 2001b. Tomorrow Begins Today: Closing Remarks at the First Intercontinental Encuentro for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism. In *Our Word is Our Weapon*, edited by Juana Ponce de León. Toronto: Seven Stories Press. Remarks originally given on August 3, 1996.

Womack, Jr., John. 1999. *Rebellion in Chiapas*. New York: The New Press.