

## EDUCA's STORY IN FOUR VIGNIETTES

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### **First Postcard: Lessons of democracy**

The year is 1994. We are in a community in the region of Juquila. The place is very humid. Every moment it rains. We have come this far, after 6 hours of driving and 3 hours on foot to talk about democracy. We are under a grove of trees (tent?) talking to a group of farmers about the meaning of democracy. We tell the farmers that “the country needs to transition to democracy, that democracy is the power of the people to decide their form of government, that democracy is the only way to guarantee that this moves forward.” We are convinced that the farmers now understand the lessons of democracy. At the end of the workshop, Tio Pedro interrupts the evaluation to ask, “Can you explain once again what is this about democracy and whether it is, in fact, the only way?” Some time later, we find out that the same community is visited by certain clandestine organizations that give them workshops about armed resistance. The moral: we realize that when talking about democracy it is necessary to also talk about concrete steps.

### **Second Postcard: The indians are not under-age**

In the room that adjoins the governor's office there is a very large painting of the famous painter Rodolfo Morales. The wise- men (Tatamandonos) of Ixtayutla watch the flags and the flying women in Morales' painting with surprise. They also stand surprised by the Governor's Palace. They've never been here before. We are here to provide guidance for the resolution of the political conflict of Santiago Ixtayutla. The Governor comes in, waves to us and sits down. The Wiseman Manuel gets up and speaks energetically in Mixteco. The governor asks Eleuterio to translate. “The Wiseman Manuel says that the Governor has not intervened in the political conflict of the pueblo and he asks him if once and for all he will intervene to resolve the problems of the Pueblo.”

The Governor begins speaking to them as though he were addressing under-aged youth and he puts forth to them the example of a pregnancy. He says, “Look, this is like a pregnancy, if someone interferes before the ninth month, trying to take out the baby, obviously the baby will die.”

Immediately an indigenous voice comes from the back of the room, “but if the baby stays for longer than nine months it will also die.” Everyone applauds and laughs about what has occurred. The Governor, ashamed, doesn't know where to hide.

From the back someone says in a low voice, “Well, why not?, if the Indians are not fools.”

### **Third Postcard: The women and the hurt pride of the men**

In Asunción Tlacolulita the women are more hardened than the men. The women are fighters. But, it takes work to transcend the patriarchal culture. In politics, the women cannot be elected for municipal posts, nor can they participate in the election of their authorities in the community assemblies. But, they create the proper climate so that the men can be elected, so that the men are not overrun by political tyrants. The women scold their husbands when they don't speak up in the community assemblies, when they back down, when they give up. In our work as electoral observers we were there to see how Tarco's wife reprimanded him for his apathy and his passivity in the assembly. We also had a chance to see how the municipal administrator trembled from head to toe when he had to turn in the municipal profits. He was heard saying that those that he was really afraid of were the Tlacolutan women. He was asked why. The answer was, "because here, the women really do take away our pants (trans. *they are the ones in charge*)"

### **Fourth Postcard: The sun is organization**

In the previous meetings of the formation of the Red of Economías Comunitarias Guesa, we did an exercise with the participating organizations in which we asked them to draw what for them represented community organization. After every person had finished his or her drawing, they were asked to go before the larger group to explain their creation. There was a group that was left at the end and who didn't go up. They were very ashamed. It was a group from the (Oaxacan) Coast who didn't speak Spanish. They only spoke their mother tongue, Mixteco. After a while they went up to present, and when they hung their drawing, they had drawn their community in dark brown and in the picture there appeared a sun colored red which illuminated their pueblo. The sun illuminated their pueblo! They were then asked for a translation of the drawing, and the only thing they said was that for them "community organization was like a sun, because when the sun comes out in their pueblo, people can go out to work."

In truth, community organization is a sun.