

THE INVISIBLE SIGHT

Salvador Carrasco

*“Sightless, unless
The eyes reappear”*

T.S. Eliot, The Hollow Men

In Mexico we are force-fed many of the mythical episodes from our history. Throughout childhood, we are told certain stories over and over until they lose all meaning. We are told, for example, that the Spaniards put a torch to the soles of the feet of the last Aztec emperor, Cuauhtemoc, so that he'd reveal where Moctezuma's treasure was hidden. His stoicism and refusal to speak became legendary. We hear about it at home and in school and see pictures of it in books and on giant murals until at last it becomes like a song we've heard a thousand times without ever stopping to consider its meaning.

Film gives us a wonderful opportunity to add new dimensions to such stagnant historical models. A good historical film can make people feel as if they're experiencing those events for the first time, perhaps even understanding them in a new way.

It was my hope in making "The Other Conquest" to do just that: To shed new light on old events, which have come to seem so familiar that we are deceived into mistaking familiarity for clarity.

In many ways, "The Other Conquest" is a film that should not have been. Many a face I'd rather forget in the government-sponsored film institute in Mexico tried to stop it from being made--and once made, from being recognized. The very fact that over one million people went to see it anyway, making it the largest-grossing dramatic film in Mexican history, was a cultural breakthrough. Perhaps they felt uneasy about it because it threatened to change the way people viewed Mexican films and Mexican history. In the United States, it has helped to encourage the acceptance of so-called Latino films. But perhaps its worst sin was to question the very roots of Mexican culture, which grew out of the clash between the Aztecs and Spanish into the tangle that it is today. And as with those stagnant myths that we are meant to accept without thinking, the official history of the Conquest was not meant to be questioned because of the embarrassing things that it

might say about the situation of Mexican Indians today. The truth is: The conquest is not over. And it's not perfectly clear who is doing the conquering.

The story of "The Other Conquest" follows the attempts of a Franciscan priest, Friar Diego of La Coruña, to convert a young Aztec scribe to Christianity in the aftermath of the Spanish Conquest. Topiltzin, the fictitious son of Emperor Moctezuma, survived the 1520 massacre at the Great Temple only to find his people dead, their culture shattered.

The opening scene, in which Topiltzin crawls out from under a corpse to find his own mother brutally murdered by the Spanish, sets the tone for the whole film; for as a result of the Conquest, the surviving Aztecs found themselves in a state of cultural orphanage, having lost their families, homes, language, temples, and Gods--a situation that hasn't changed much in the intervening five centuries.

When Topiltzin is captured, he is brought by Friar Diego to face the Conqueror of Mexico, Hernando Cortés. There he discovers that his sister, Tecuichpo (the historical Doña Isabel), has become Cortés's mistress and interpreter. At her insistence, the Conqueror spares Topiltzin's life and orders Tecuichpo to help Friar Diego convert him to Spanish Christian ways--but only after being punished for his crimes. He is renamed Tomás and then placed before a life-sized statue of the Virgin, where he is brutally whipped and the soles of his feet burned with a torch. His brother attempts to rescue him, only to be beheaded by a soldier. When the ordeal is over, Topiltzin is kept under house arrest at the Franciscan Monastery of Our Lady of Light to undergo the battle for his soul.

There, subjected to an escalating series of catastrophes and tortures--physical, mental, and spiritual--Topiltzin experiences hell on earth, as he fights to retain his own identity and religion against the onslaughts of Christian mythology, which is doubly confusing because of its similarity to his native Aztec beliefs. Both religions are given to phantasmagoric representations, which gradually blend in his mind to form one distorted--a new, other--reality. Topiltzin's war cry becomes: "You can conquer my body, but my spirit... Never!" As his mind descends into hallucination, the Christian and Aztec images merge until the Virgin Mary and Tonantzin, the Aztec Mother Goddess, become indistinguishable.

Fearing for his sanity, Friar Diego locks him in his cell, but Topiltzin manages to escape on a personal crusade to conquer Her in whose name inconceivable things have been done. If he absorbs the Virgin's powers, if he fuses with her, redemption will follow. For Topiltzin, to conquer is not to destroy, but to appropriate the main symbol of his oppressors in order to regain what he had lost. So who is in fact conquering whom? After all, historically speaking, the patron saint of Mexico (and of all the Americas, as of Pope John Paul II) is the dark-skinned, indigenous Virgin of Guadalupe.

Is Topiltzin's conversion (or madness) real? Is he simply trying to retain his own beliefs under the guise of the new creed? Those questions torment Friar Diego, and despite the Franciscan's attempts to keep Tomás (Topiltzin) from consummating his obsession with the Virgin, he finally allows Providence to decide whether Tomás's mission is legitimate or not. For better or worse, Providence, God, fate, historical necessity or life's mutability--whatever one calls that mysterious force that holds the strings of our existence-- chooses mestizaje, the fusion of indigenous and European bloods. And thus, from unhealed wounds, a new nation is born, leaving Indians bleeding on the fringes, trapped in a state of cultural orphanage. Indians have been transformed from creators of pyramids to the base of the social pyramid.

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"The Other Conquest" attempts to explore the remarkable process of the Spanish Conquest on several levels, along with its relevance to modern Mexico, which seems all the more poignant today, as the Zapatistas have peacefully marched into the capital.

In other parts of the world, encounters between European and native peoples have traditionally been resolved through genocide. The indigenous peoples of Mexico, however, managed to survive their violent incorporation into the life of New Spain. The process of conquest, conversion, colonization was not complete, and in some cases, it was reversed. The mestizo fusion of races that resulted certainly was not the consummation of an idealized process of harmonious interaction. And yet, it is not useful to adopt a facile Manichean point of view that sees history as a Hollywood story with good guys and bad guys.

On one hand, there exists an imperialist version that bestows a positive sign, an unconditional justification, upon everything Spanish, as if the historical mission of Spain had been fulfilled with the Conquest of America. We might call this vision of history the

White Legend. On the other hand we have the Black Legend, which overlooks historical complexities, portraying the Spaniards as a gang of faceless barbarians, and the Indians as pure victims.

It doesn't take much knowledge of Mexican or Latin American history to see the obvious parallels between Topiltzin's story and the contemporary plight of Indians. And that may be the main reason why three different administrations of the Mexican Institute of Cinema (Imcine) refused to finance or support "The Other Conquest," despite the appalling shortage of films about the fall of the Aztec empire.

Then as now, our main intention was to make a modest contribution by heightening interest in a topic so vast that it deserves to be treated with a multiplicity of voices, stories, and points of view. I simply wanted people to talk about the Conquest. Historically, Mexico has always been a land of repressed voices. Now, between the Zapatistas and the Popocatepetl volcano, it seems that Mexico can't wait to erupt. It is fitting that in one of his press releases, Subcommander Marcos wrote: "We are worried, as is everyone, about Popocatepetl and the anxious sky hovering above so many people..."

As is often the case in Mexico, we might never know the real reasons for the official opposition to our film. Throughout the seven years it took to make "The Other Conquest", we heard a litany of excuses: that the subject matter was "too delicate" (precisely the reason to make it); that people just wanted to be entertained and did not want to confront those issues (as if a film needed to be thoughtless to be entertaining); that they should not help to finance a director who had studied film at NYU rather than in Mexico (despite the fact that I was born and raised in Mexico, and that the subject of the movie could not be more Mexican); that a film with an Indian protagonist, partly spoken in Nahuatl, and with such "artistic pretenses" wasn't commercial, and therefore nobody (and they meant nobody) would bother to see it.

When "The Other Conquest" was released in April 1999 by 20th Century Fox, it broke box-office records in Mexico, consolidating itself as the Number One movie, even against big Hollywood productions such as Mel Gibson's "Payback." "Topiltzin beats Mel", read a newspaper headline after opening weekend.

Though many Mexican industry people have chosen to ignore it, the fact remains that "The Other Conquest" has opened the doors for the stream of acclaimed Mexican

films that has followed. A noteworthy exception is Matthias Ehrenberg, the producer of the highly successful comedy "Sexo, pudor y lágrimas", who has repeatedly voiced this opinion.

The point here is not to blow my own horn, but rather to highlight that, by having flocked to theaters and video stores despite every institutional effort to suppress it, the Mexican people have expressed precisely what the film itself meant to express: The indefatigability of the culture. Whether they're aware of it or not, the Imcine sought to prevent the film from being made--and once made, distributed—partly because it was a mirror of the culture. And the people went to see it for the very same reason. And that, despite some rather Orwellian efforts to all but ban the film (which presumably would have made it too tempting to resist, as was the case with "Herod's Law", a recent Mexican film boycotted by its own producer, Imcine).

A month before our premiere in Mexico City, "The Other Conquest" played at a film festival in Guadalajara. The audience screening was packed. It was so quiet during the film that we could hear people breathing. At the end of the film, there was thunderous applause. When Damián Delgado, the actor who plays Topiltzin, was asked to step to the front of the auditorium, the audience gave him a standing ovation that lasted over three minutes.

Notwithstanding, the morning newspaper reported that the screening had been an utter disappointment, and that the film had left the audience cold. (It turns out that the writer hadn't even attended the screening.) During the rest of that week, all those connected with the festival did their best to pretend that "The Other Conquest" didn't exist. Media and industry people blatantly ignored our presence there. I am not an Indian. Like many Mexicans, I'm of Spanish descent. But for the first time, I had a taste of what Indians in Mexico are exposed to, day in day out--the ontological paradox of being there without being there.

I had a public confrontation with one of the Heads of Imcine because they had published a book called Mexican Cinema, which was being sent to film festivals worldwide. "The Other Conquest" wasn't even mentioned in the book. Making a film in Mexico not only outside, but also in spite of the establishment can be a draining experience. People often ask me why "The Other Conquest" wasn't the official Mexican entry for the Oscars. We learned that the small jury in charge of choosing what to send to

the Academy was comprised of our competing directors, producers, and actors. When I complained, the only thing that the Head of the Imcine could think of to say in his defense was, "They won't vote for themselves." This is not so much an issue of corruption but of culture.

When "The Other Conquest" was selected for the American Film Institute International Film Festival in Los Angeles, our friend Neil Cohen picked up on the fact that it was the first Spanish-language film ever entered in the AFI competition. That led to a cover story in the Calendar section of the Los Angeles Times. When we arrived at the Chinese Theater in Hollywood for the screening, there was a huge line. I thought it was for the new "Star Wars" installment, but the people were there, in fact, to see Topiltzin's story. It was a diverse crowd, both Latino and non-Latino, wealthy and working class, young and old. A group of youngsters had even come from San Diego wearing the official uniform of the Mexican soccer-team. Ambassador Jesús Reyes Heróles had flown in from Washington, D.C. Mexican pop stars were there, limos and all, expecting to see God-knows-what kind of film.

The second screening at AFI was just as packed, even though it took place on a Monday at 4:30 p.m. Hundreds of people had to be turned away, and they complained bitterly that they had a right to see "their film." Mexican Consul José Angel Pescador later told us that he had received many similar calls at the Consulate in subsequent weeks. Witnessing that, I knew that the film was no longer mine. It had a life of its own.

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The official premiere in Mexico on April 1, 1999 was attended by Mexico's President, Ernesto Zedillo, along with the Ministers of Culture and Education, among others, and the General Director of the Imcine. By a fateful coincidence, it took place on the eve of the National Indigenous Referendum. When Topiltzin's feet were burned by the Spaniards, the President sank down in his seat, while the First Lady let out an involuntary shriek of horror. When the film was over, Zedillo shook my hand and said, "Congratulations. Very powerful. I'm glad I saw it; it gives one a lot to think about." He started to walk away, then turned and added: "Did González Torres really let you do all this?"

A Jesuit and Dean of the Ibero-American University in Mexico, Enrique González Torres was one of our main co-producers. He once received death threats for

being “the man behind Marcos”. It wasn’t a matter of his letting me do those things: González Torres’s faith in the movie was and still is a great source of inspiration for me. He was absolutely respectful of the content of the film, and the reason that he supported us (through a non-profit organization called Faprode) was, in his own words, because “this film sends out a clear message about the Indians’ humanity and their often neglected role in the history and constitution of modern Mexico”.

20th Century Fox placed a huge billboard on the Periférico, one of Mexico City’s main arteries, where an average of 650,000 people would see it every day. Our key art is the face of Topiltzin in profile, bathed in a ray of light—based on a striking photograph taken by my wife, Andrea. One day I drove the most commercial and densely populated stretch of the Periférico, about 20 miles long. Among the hundreds of billboards, there were only two indigenous faces: one was Topiltzin; the other one appeared in an ad from the National Crime Prevention Organization, warning women not to go out alone at night because they could be raped (presumably by Topiltzin’s evil twin).

Guadalupe Loaeza published a wonderful essay about "The Other Conquest" in the Revista Cultural El Angel in April 1999. She wrote, “Doesn’t the type of Mexican that we use in our ad campaigns about crime look just like Topiltzin? Why do we have to show these dark-skinned Mexicans as if they were violent, the violators, the perpetual aggressors? Why the hell are we still so racist, so much like the Spaniards who came to conquer us so many years ago?”

That emblematic image of Topiltzin has played a crucial role in the life of the film. We were consciously trying to create an icon, a powerful symbol, so that when people mentioned the title of the film, something tangible would come to mind. On how many other occasions have indigenous people seen themselves represented with a positive connotation--as Topiltzin was--on a movie poster, a billboard, in bus shelters, on flyers, and even on place mats at the popular VIPS restaurants? For Indians who are all but invisible in Mexico, it was a real breakthrough. And for all who tried to make "The Other Conquest" just as invisible, it was an infuriating defeat.

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One day, Damián (Topiltzin) and I arrived for a television interview at Televisa, which held a virtual monopoly on entertainment in Mexico at the time. Without so much as glancing at Damián, the guard at the entrance told me, “You can go in, but your

chauffeur has to wait for you outside.” When I explained that I was actually accompanying him, that he was the star of the movie "The Other Conquest," the guard chuckled as if I'd told a joke. Then he must have seen something in my eyes that suggested that I wasn't joking. He let us in. The surreal part of that exchange was that the guard was an Indian, too. He could have been Damián's brother.

I was ashamed that Damián had to endure such humiliation to promote our movie. As we walked down the corridor toward our interview, he said, “Don't worry, there's hardly a day that doesn't happen to me. I'm immune now.” To become immune or to become Marcos, that is the question facing Mexicans now more than ever.

When we finally arrived on the set, the girl who was going to interview us asked me if the star was delayed. “No,” I said, pointing at the allegedly invisible man standing next to me. “This is Damián.”

“Of course,” she said, obviously flustered. “I'm so scatty sometimes...” No, I thought: You're a racist. We're all racists. We just don't know it.

Which proves that in Mexico, not even showing an Indian's face forty feet across to millions of people, or playing in 100 movie theaters, or being one of the top-video rentals at Blockbuster, or appearing ubiquitously on all media... can make him any less invisible.

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"The Other Conquest" opened in 75 theaters in Los Angeles in April 2000. In many ways, Los Angeles is the city where the whole world has collided, so an LA-release is extremely challenging and indicative of a film's worldwide potential. Despite all the resistance we encountered, yet again, to theatrical distribution, the results exceeded everyone's expectations. The film quickly became the top foreign-language film in the U.S., grossing \$1 million, even though it was playing in only one city. It performed as well in Latino as in non-Latino areas, in commercial as in art-house theaters. Damián and I went to the Laemmle's Theater in Santa Monica to gauge people's reactions. We were used to seeing people come out of the theater in a bit of a trance. But nothing had prepared us for a man in his 70s who, emerging from the show, spotted Damián. He seemed frozen in the doorway. People had to walk around him. Leaning on his cane, he stared at Damián for about a minute and then began trembling uncontrollably. Then he embraced Damián and burst out crying like a baby. Sobbing, the man thanked him for

telling his story, because this was the story of his people, too. He was Jewish. Moments like that justify everything.

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In Mexico the star of the film was the film itself. In the U.S. the star was Damián. That speaks volumes about our cultural differences. At festivals in the U.S., people approached Damián to get his autograph, to touch him or chat with him. They wanted to have their picture taken with him. They invited him to colleges, introduced him to the gay scene, offered to buy him an exotic meal, asked him to join parades. He was mobbed at the Cinco de Mayo parade on Broadway in downtown Los Angeles. Those sorts of responses seem unmistakably American to a Mexican.

There's a scene in "The Other Conquest" in which Topiltzin has a confrontation with his older brother, Alanpoyatzin, who is trying to convince him to give in to the Spaniards and go to work with him at the new, hybrid market. The dialog is in Nahuatl with subtitles.

Brother: "I want you to join us. Tell them you've changed. You can still be with our gods secretly."

Topiltzin: "So this is what you've come for? Go back to them!"

Brother: "We must adapt to survive."

Topiltzin: "I don't adapt. I know who I am!"

While audiences in the U.S. usually applaud at that point in the film, the only place I saw it happen in Mexico was at a screening in Milpa Alta, where there are still over a million people who speak Nahuatl. That audience also laughed with great pride whenever the Indians deliberately mistranslated what the Spaniards said. Language is a powerful way of getting back at the enemy, as many Señoras in Mexico have experienced when their maids talk back to them in Nahuatl.

In general people in Mexico, while respectful of Damián, treated him with the same formality with which they'd approach an Aztec codex in a museum. It's all about context: In a glass case you may be beautiful, but court my daughter, and you're a dead man. Serve me and I'm gracious to you; raise your voice and I'll put you behind bars.

After experiencing so much visibility and notoriety, Damián was expected to land a substantial acting job in Mexico, if not in the United States. What he got instead was a

casting call for a Televisa soap opera. He was dismissed before even having a chance to read because he was “too short”.

Damián’s acting professor at the UNAM, Héctor Mendoza, one of Mexico’s most revered theater directors, had warned Damián that he was too “short, thin, and dark” (chaparro, flaco y moreno) to make it as an actor, that he’d better quit while he could. Thank the Virgin of Guadalupe he didn’t listen to him. The talented actors who played Indian roles in our film would all eventually complain that, nine out of ten times, the parts they were offered were those of maids, wetbacks, pimps, drug dealers, prostitutes, gang members, or Indian “props”--as in "The Mask of Zorro," to provide atmosphere. Not that there’s anything intrinsically wrong with these roles (laden as they are with negative connotations), but it gets to be frustrating if those are the only choices. It seems that in film and television, both in the U.S. and Mexico, the dark cloud of five centuries of oppression lingers on. I don’t think the solution is so much to fulfill ethnic quotas, but to create more interesting roles for minorities.

I’m often asked how I went about the research to write the screenplay of “The Other Conquest”... I read a lot, and I grew up in Mexico. Take the case of a longtime family friend, Laura. She is an insanely jealous middle-class woman with a masters degree, of all things, in psychology. When her husband began to receive anonymous love letters, Laura spent her day sitting on a stool, half-hidden behind a kitchen curtain, waiting for the culprit to show herself. Her husband, Víctor, thought the whole thing was amusing, even flattering. He had a clear conscience. But Laura, nevertheless, worked herself up to the verge of a full-blown depression. Then the truth came out: The letters were from the maid at the house across the street. Like all maids in Mexico, she was Indian. When Laura found out, the whole thing became a big joke. In fact, Laura loved to tell the story at parties: “Can you imagine that poor little Indian (esa pobre indita), as if Víctor would ever go for that?” For all practical purposes, her rival wasn’t a woman, perhaps not even a human being, and was therefore no threat.

If you think that unusual, consider the case of a 4-year old boy who, playing a war game with his older brother and a friend, had the housemaid kneel at his feet, sentenced her to death, and proceeded to execute her with a .22 caliber rifle. The bullet entered her cheekbone and lodged in her brain, killing her instantly. She was the enemy. She was also 12 and an Indian. (Playing at War Three Little Boys Execute a Servant, Excélsior;

December 18, 1951). The boy, Carlos Salinas, went on to become President of Mexico. Needless to say, the whole incident was swept under the rug, as if a stray dog had been accidentally run over by a car. The story had no effect whatsoever on his political career. The boy's mother declared it was the maid's fault, though she conceded that "she was a very hard worker and very clean". And we ask what the fuss is all about in Chiapas...

When the Spaniards arrived in Mexico in the first half of the 16th century, several of their apologists (particularly Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda) supplied them with the proper excuses for taking the land away from the Indians and for treating them in ways that ought to defy our imagination. In his tremendously popular Democrates II ("Concerning the Just Cause of the War Against the Indians"), Ginés wrote that in accordance with Aristotelian principles, "Indians are inferior to the Spaniards just as children are to adults, women to men, and, indeed, one might even say, as apes are to men." If "The Other Conquest", the Zapatistas, and being Mexican are about anything at all, it is about that very issue.

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There is no doubt that artistic works such as "The Other Conquest" touch a profound nerve; and for that reason, many more should be made. A movie creates a self-contained world that can bring complex situations to life in a very accessible way; more so than the hollow retelling of them that we get as part of the official discourse. Movies--and the self-contained realities they create--imprint themselves indelibly on the mind. And it's not even necessary to understand all the nuances. We are captivated by unforgettable moments, images and events that won't ever leave us. People sit in the dark and pay unconditional attention for two hours. You can't skim a movie. You have to watch every frame. Not only are people immersed in that world, but they do so collectively, creating a new intimacy, a new community of sharing and belonging--in effect, a new culture unique to that film.

Ideally, every filmmaker should feel a tremendous sense of moral responsibility before, during, and after undertaking an effort to, in effect, play God and create a new world.

Instead, time and time again, Indians are portrayed as bloodthirsty barbarians, which helps explain why a high-school student once told me that what shocked her most about "The Other Conquest" was to realize that the Aztecs did not live in caves. Sometimes the well-intended attempts to depict them as pure, flawless, mystical creatures

does them an even greater disservice, showing them as noble but passive savages, devoid of any signs of cultural resistance, unquestioningly accepting whatever is imposed on them by their oppressors.

"The Mission," for instance, has many virtues but regrettably falls into that trap. Its colonialist viewpoint is so completely assimilated in its makers' minds that the words the Indians speak in the film are not even given subtitles, presumably because what they have to say could not be of interest.

In "The Other Conquest" we tried to portray more complex characters, ones who were taking an active role in shaping their own destiny within the context of their indigenous culture. The characters in the film show us that, even under the worst circumstances, people will struggle to achieve their own conquests.

So what is the other conquest? In one sense, it is the conquest carried out by the indigenous people, who appropriated European religious forms and made them their own. Catholicism in Mexico today bears little resemblance to that brought over by the Spaniards in 1519. In that sense, the Aztecs (unlike, for example, the Plains Indians, who along with their culture were wiped out) were as much Conquerors as the Spanish. That reverse conquest is embodied in Topiltzin's melding of the Aztec Mother Goddess with the Catholic Virgin Mary and in his Christ-like self-sacrifice, which makes him transcend his enemies and become a symbolic figure.

Topiltzin is by no means a flawless hero. In fact, like many rebels, he finds it easier to sacrifice himself to an abstraction (the redemption of his people, paradoxically a Christian notion) than to sacrifice himself for another person, as his half-sister or his older brother do in order to save Topiltzin's own life. When they're captured by the Spaniards, his brother reassures Topiltzin: "I'll make sure that you live, not die for us. You shall become the voice of eternal fire."

It never ceases to surprise me the way many of us refuse to acknowledge events such as those in the Conquest and those of Chiapas. People treat them as if they were taking place in some obscure, remote land. Like the massacre at Acteal, despite the fact that videotape of the slaughtered men, women and children was aired on national television. We deny that it happened, but deep inside we know it happened in our country, in our backyard, in our bedrooms, and inside our heads. And the denial, as much

as the events themselves, is tearing us apart as a nation, even as it forces us to confront who we really are.

The more we delve into our own culture, the more we discover universal values. We all have a bit of Topiltzin in us. We look within and around us and cannot figure out what it means to be Mexican. Then we look in the mirror and realize that we're the product of a tragic, bloody birth. If you think the Spanish exterminated the Aztecs, look around you. They're still here. Look at Damián. He's not a myth, he's a modern, educated man, and yet so Aztec that a time machine or a film could have plucked him out from under a corpse during the massacre at the Great Temple in 1520 and set down here among us. Damián's reality is the very reason that we feel compelled to make him invisible. The profound implications of his existence are otherwise too painful to contemplate.

But, thank Marcos, the events in Chiapas have made the Damiáns of our world come out of the woodwork--and the woods. We try, consciously or unconsciously, but we can no longer make them disappear, and attempting to do so only makes them that much more visible. Mexico is entering a new political era. One of the main challenges, the true measure of success, will be whether Indians, who have moved invisibly among us these 500 years, at last become not only a part of our country's renovated psyche and conscience, but also a key force in its everyday decision-making process. And then, only then, will there be no need to wear those ski masks whose underlying purpose is to emphasize the eyes we dared not meet, perhaps not because they were invisible after all, but because we were too afraid they'd stare us down. Now we have the unique opportunity to look into those eyes again, regain our sight as a nation, and at long last, restore a fundamental part of our identity.

Santa Monica, California

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