DISCRIMINATION AGAINST THE NAHUATL LANGUAGE

My name is Delfina de la Cruz. I am from a small indigenous town named Tepexcxtitlán belonging to the county of Chicotepec in the Mexican state of Veracruz. Today I will speak to you about a problem in my community, “Discrimination against the Nahua language.”

I began to hear Nahua at the time I was born, because my father, my mother, my grandfather and my grandmother only spoke this language. When I was five years old they put me in a school and a boarding house where children from other communities stayed.

I was frightened the first day of school because none of the teachers spoke Nahua, just Spanish. Everything they taught us was in their language, and that was wrong because we only spoke Nahua. We didn’t understand a thing in that other language.

The teachers weren’t happy with our test scores. This made them angry, and from then on at school they would hit us with a switch, a blackboard eraser, or anything they could get their hands on.

Later they imposed a rule stating that when students came through the gate and entered the school grounds, they had to begin speaking Spanish. Those who infringed the rule would have to sweep the corridors, carry water from the well or clean the classroom. Sometime they would even kick us out of class.

This happened everyday, and soon we no longer wanted to attend school. What was happening to us was very difficult, and as a result many never finished their education.

We could never discuss any of these problems with our parents because they believed that children have not yet developed the capacity to speak intelligently about what happens to them in their daily lives.

They never believed what we told them about the teachers. The few times they did listen to their children, they would respond, “Child, that’s what you have to put up with if you want to go to school. If you don’t want to be there anymore then let’s go work in the fields so you won’t waste any more time at school.

At the time I could not grasp how it was that a student could consistently do poorly in their schoolwork and exams. But now I understand quite well what was happening: those teachers were forcing a language into our heads that we had never heard before and didn’t comprehend.

TLAIYOCAHUILIZTLI TLAHTOLLII TLEN NAHUATL.

Na notocah Delfina de la Cruz. Nihuialauh ce pilaltepetzin itocah Tepeexcxtlan, tlaltiantoc Chicotepec, huan tlatzquitoc Veracruz, Mexico. Naman nimechpuohuiiz con cuantilten iitztoc pan nopoltepeuh huan itocah "Tlaiyoahuiliiztli tlahtollii tlen nahuahtl".

Na quemman nitlacatqui peuhqui nicaquii zanilli zan tlen Nahuahtl pampa notata, nonana, nototata huan notonana zan yainon zaniloyahay. Teipan quemman nicaquii macuulli xihuitl nechкаlaquiqhqueh pan caltlamachitiqhquetl huan pan calli campa mocahuah cozemeh tlen huolohuii cehecyoc.

Pan achtohlui tonatiuh quemman nicaquii nopayo tlahucl nimahmahuiliyayapa pampa nopa lamaqchiighay aca xacah zaniloyahay nahuahtl, zan puro castellano. Nochi tlen techneqitiyayah quichihiyayay aca iniznanih, huan nopa aca uallli pampa tohuquantin tlen zaniloyay iha Nahuatl huan iha nopa ce zanilli, tohuquantin axtlel tecuamachitiyayay.

Tlamachitianihi aqquimichti quen tiqiquyayayah pan tocalificacionayeh. Ica inon peuhqui cuantilieni, huan quemman zampa ticlaquiqhqueh pan caltlamachitiqhquetl ininhuatn tecachehuiyay aca cuapittiztl, ica tlen tlaxipohpuohuah pan huapaltlachuitollii huan zan tlen quimaqhiyayay.

Teipan quiquoqteguh tlamachitianihi quemman alamprepahnyay huac achiyia pan tlalli campa pehua caltlamachitiqhquetl, nochi momachtianhi pehuazche zaniloyay ica castellano. Huan tlax aqxiquihiayaxeh, huacaxc, tlahpanazche tlanepeho, azacaxeh zo quiqhacaxceh salon, huan quemmantzin zan techacauyayay caltenno.

Ni tlamantli panoyaya mohozolli, huan ayoctiineqiyayay tiaxchhe pan caltlamachitiqhquetl. Yeca miyac momachtianhi axcanah quitalamityayay tlen momachtianihi pampa tlahucl ohuih tlen techpanityay.

Nochi nopa cuantlili axhuieleyay ayquiniliial tlahuy huan tonanay pampa inihiuantin nochipa quiqitoqteeh pan iniinzonteen, que cihuapilimeh huan quichipilimeh aycanah quiqiyay miyac tolaimiquiliztl for quiquoqteeh nochi tlamantli tlen quipanoyaya pan enimiliz.

Axequeman techteqitiyayayeh tlen tiquihoitoyay huan nopa tlamachitianihi. Quemmantzin inihiuantin quenai quincaqiyayay inihonehuan huan quinaqniyayay, "Oqichipli, ta ica yaihainon tiyuah pan caltlamachitiqhquetl huan tlax aqcyotihiy tayax, huacaxc, anozi millhua tixeititi for axcanah zan tipolohiyay tonatiuh campa tiyuah".

Pan nopa tlatoctzin na axnimocuamayay cuenta quenai nochipa ce momachtitiqhquetl tlahucl axcualli quiqiyay pan iteihiuh zo pan iexamen tlen quiqihuiliyay tlamachitiqhquetl. Pero naman quena nicuamachitiqiyay tlen panoyaya. Nopa tlamachitianihi techcaquiyayay pan totzontecvon ica fuerzah ce tlahtollii tlen tohuquantin axtiuteqmiyayay huan axequeman tieqetoqay.
They didn’t want to take the time to learn our language and its structure. It was easier for them to teach us Spanish because that’s how the instruction was presented in the textbooks. They just read the lessons and that’s what they taught. Obviously this situation wasn’t our fault, and it certainly didn’t give the teachers the right to hit us and put us through the suffering we experienced.

Perhaps the Secretary of Public Education and the President of Mexico at that time wanted to get rid of us, because this problem was occurring in all of the indigenous communities in the vicinity of Tepecexitla.

Things were no different in Junior High: those of us who spoke Nahuahtl were discriminated against. And when I entered the State University in Zacatecas along with other indigenous students it was the same story. Some of the professors would make fun of our racial features and how we spoke Spanish. They wanted to strip us of our language, but their efforts failed.

When I began my education, something beautiful happened, perhaps saving me from losing my language. And this was the case for all of us, not just me.

Whenever a teacher would use a word or concept we didn’t understand, the first thing we would do is reflect on its meaning in our own language, and then we would do the same in Spanish. We always reasoned concurrently in Nahuahtl and in Spanish, and we continue to do so to this day.

As a result of these experiences I firmly believe that indigenous people should receive education in their native language. This is the only way that understanding can be achieved between a teacher and a student.

I am pleased to say that the story doesn’t end here. Some of my friends and I have forged a network to aid indigenous students who come from the Huastecan Region of Mexico to pursue careers at the State University in Zacatecas.

In addition, we have created a non-profit institute where these young people can continue speaking their language daily. We study the older and modern aspects of our language and culture. We engage in the discussion and preparation of word entries for a monolingual Nahuahtl dictionary, and a monolingual Nahuahtl grammar. And all students who participate in our institute are provided with scholarships to aid them in completing their education.

We also host a yearly summer program for professors and students of US universities who wish to learn older and modern Nahuahtl. Those interested in this program may consult our webpage, www.idiez.org.mx, and may write me at yehyetzin@mac.com. Thank you very much for listening today, and I hope to see you again.

Axquinequiyah mocuatonizceh para quimatizceh quenihuyi moteqihuiyiyah tozanil. Para inhuuantin elqui mas axohui techxintzilizceh castellano pampa nopa tlamachtzlitliz nochi eltoyayah pan amoxtli ica espanol huan inhuuantin zan quionpohuayyah huan yayaion techxintzilizyah. Huan yeqa niqihuitoa axcanah totlahtlacol eliyahya tien techpanoyayah, huan zan ica inon axquipiyah quequete techxetuhuixtoquiah tlamachtzianih, pampa tiltaiyohuyihueq miyac.

Hueyzi la Secretaria de Educacion Publica huan hueyi tequitiquetl tien itzotya Mexico quinequiyah techxipohliztilizceh nochi tien timacnehuatltzin, pampa ni cualanti nouhuquiyi panoyayah pana ceyoc pilatelteptitzin tien eltoquey inechca Tepecexitla.


Quemman na pehuqui nimomachitia panoyayah ce tlamanhit ica na, huan tlahuex yehyetzint pampa melahuah ica inon na axquemman huelqui niqihuita nozanil. Huan ni techpanoyayah ica tinohimih, axcanah zan na.

Quemman axtiicuamachiliziyah ce tlahoitive tlen techmacayyah tlamachtzihquetl, tinohimih achtouih tiennehuhiyiyah tlen quitoquey ica tozanil huan teiapan ticchihuayyah ica espanol. Nochipa tiennehuhiyayah zanampa ica nahualt huan ica espanol, huan ni cenyahocht pano pampa nocca ticchihuah ihuquion.

Na nipancoca nochie nocha cualanti huan ninehnehuilia para tlahuex monequi ce macehuallih quimachtzizceh ica tlen achtouih itlahitl. Ihuquionin mocuamachiliz nochi tlen tlamachtzihquetl quinextilia ce mocamachtzihquetl.

Tlahuel niyorlpaocpoc, pampa ni, axcanah tlami nican. Yeca ica na huan ceyoquieh momachtzianih onca ce pilcuamecatzin para huelizex achiq maz macehualem tlen huallahuhi de nope Regio Huasteca tlen quinequih momachtzizceh pan Universidad Autonoma de Zacatecas.

Huan nopoayi ticchiuhtoqqueh ce catlamachtzihquetl campa achiq momachtzianih huan pehuaq tizaniloh zan ica nahualt. Teiapan tictlachiliah tozanil huan tonemizil, tlen nanan huan tlen huahcapatl. Nouhuquiyi tiennehuhiuliah huan tiquihcuiloah ce dicencion huan ce grammatica zan ica nahualt. Nochi momachtzianih tlen achiq pan catlamachtzihquetl tlen nahualt tiquihcuiloah ce beca para ica inon mopenoizceh quemman momachtziah.