

Ethnic minorities in Mexico, United States and Canada: a comparative study of coexistence

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"From the hill I arrived to the City, to the gas and cruel faces
that measured my light and high
[and] suddenly it appeared in my face, a foreign visage
[and] we changed, and we never new any more whom we were
and some times we remembered the one who lived inside us
and we begged him for something, probably to remember us
[but] from the consumed hours
he looked at us and did not recognize us"
Pablo Neruda, Lost kid (fragments)

Introduction

In North America, ethnic composition settled from three common components: natives (first nations), possibly arriving to the Continent through the Bering Strait, establishing, by several centuries, the exclusive American inhabitants; colonizers (second nations) Europeans with different motivations, culture and economic development alternatives; and immigrants (third nations), which generate diverse cultural, economic and political conditions in the present times.

The French, British and Spaniards generated a new socioeconomic geography and, still more, strong differences in social organization between the native population and the European. The natives were subjected to certain degree of acceptance or inclusion depending on European establishments. As a result of the structural differences marked by their particular conditions, three models can be identified among the diverse ethnic groups in the American continent.

The first is in the North, where French colonizers required local labor force (indigenous labor) in order to develop commerce (mainly leather since no precious metals were found). Coexistence was reinforced with the arrival of the British. These diverse groups cohabited with certain equilibrium.

In the second, British colonizers willing to recreate religious experiments (i.e. pilgrims and quakers), and without the idea of evangelization, did not need an indigenous labor force (which by the way was not expert in fishing, harvesting or building nomads). African slaves

were brought and lived closer to Europeans, but separately, while natives were almost exterminated.

In the third model, in Central and South America, the Spaniards and Portuguese conquerors found gold and silver (“El Dorado”) and used natives as slaves (with experience in construction, mining and agriculture). Catholic missions were “including” not only “converting” natives (occidentalizing), integrating them to a new society. As a result of this relationship, Latin-America currently has a racially mixed population.

In the three models, the economic expansive necessities of immigrants eliminated a great part of the native population, caused its gradual reduction, and/or were pushed away from the economic centers and natural resources.

With time, colonization subjected native interests to the colonizing economy, its language, culture and religion, relegating them to an inferior status their local traditions, erasing cultural and religious differences opposed to European civilization. Currently this also happens with immigrants.

In Canada, natives are assimilated or preserved on reservations with a relative vitality. They practice their traditions, but they barely communicate among them in their own languages, affecting cultural promotion among them. The existence of a considerable French-speaking minority, and its activism, has allowed them indirectly to preserve a certain identity. Current immigrant fluxes are characterized more by the way they get integrated into the French or English speaking community and not by creating new cultural communities.

In the United States of America, surviving native groups are bilingual. Reservations are often abandoned and there they are in danger of cultural extinction. Except for the Afro-Americans and Cubans, new immigrants do not obtain the required political, cultural and economic cohesion. As result, third nations barely have an important economic, social or political role.

In Mexico, indigenous populations survive nevertheless, race-mixing has become the main characteristic and represents the epicenter of an integrative national consciousness (Frigolé 1990: 602). This phenomena discriminates against indigenous inhabitants.

There is no doubt that the situation with minorities in Mexico, United States and Canada is weak compared to the majority. The present proposal of comparative analysis intends to determine minority conditions in the three countries as well as their model of coexistence.

Ethnic minorities in Canada

With a diverse European ethnic composition, natives live different realities¹. Although in 1850 the Indian Land Commission and in 1876 the Indian Act were established, the given provincial autonomy (1812) allows each one to develop their own relationship with the natives. Some very conservative governments did not recognize native “right to the difference” until many years later, like British Columbia, in 1987.

The genesis of cultural and political consciousness and the demands of minorities for independence or self-determination are directly related with Quebecois activism. The French-speaking “revolution tranquille” created awareness about the demands of natives self-identity.

The singular history of the Quebecois French-speaking population acquired different modalities with the time. Before the 60s, Quebecois identity was based in small local communities; it was rural, little politicized, conservative and unified around the catholic church. In that decade, a period of accelerated changes began (modernization), marked by the urbanization, secularization, the emergence of an economic elite, and liberal elite. A new national consciousness of “Quebecoise”, demanding provincial and federal political participation, emerged. It was the period known as the "Calm Revolution". With the idea of independence arose demands for political autonomy, self-determination and cultural sovereignty (Dion 1995: 113).

Critics of an unequal confederation, where the Anglo-Saxon majority plays a dominant role and is the main beneficiary of federal policies (Cf. Commission Nationale, 1991: 55-59), provoked different provincial identity demands over the federal government (Provincial-Nation). In this context, the support of General Charles de Gaulle to the French-speaking population of Quebec (24.6.1967), the formation of the Quebecois Party and the Quebecois Block, contributed to reinforce separatist idea.²

As a result, a series of reforms took place with the purpose of adapting the superstructure to some necessities of the Quebecois society, like a new Constitution (1982), recognizing the “right to the difference” from minorities and giving them a special position within federal and provincial political institutions. With these measures, French identity was accepted as an official language, autonomy was given in some aspects of foreign trade, migration, and referenda were held in Quebec since 1980, in order to allow the local population to decide about the separation of Quebec.

Although in 1980 the “oui”, favorable to separatism was minimum, in 1992 obtained 40% and in 1996 a 49.1%. Independent of the pro and contra concerning separatism³, probably the main impact of the Quebecois

movement is the fact that other minority groups became aware of their "right to the difference".

The situation of the 18% of non French-speaking 7.3 million inhabitants in Quebec (El Reforma, 1.11.1995). Other minorities in Canada started to be questioned as well as the meaning of Canadian Confederation.

Native demands are centered around the fact that reservations and indigenous establishments are regulated by the Indian Act of 1876, which controls land, the use of some natural resources and even their access to credit. They are economically concentrated as producers of selective goods, some services with low wage jobs, and a lower rate of educational achievement.⁴

Natives have succeeded in setting political associations like "Six Nations of the Grand River" in Ontario, and "Paddle Prairie" in Alberta. They have also created economic cooperatives, like the Saskatoon Tribal Councils Economic Development Corporation, Winnipeg Inner City Initiative, or Kitsaki Development Corporation. Among its actions, they denounced the idea that from 1981 to 1995. The percentage of natives with social security is only around 37-45%, and even demanded to be given back the land sold at the beginning of the XIX century. As a consequence, Canadian Anglo-Saxons have protested the overprotection of natives, the unequal treatment among them and corruption in their communities⁵.

Natives demands had little success. In October of 1992, the federal, provincial and territorial governments, as well as representatives of four indigenous organizations voted for a new constitutional amendment that gave special prerogatives to minorities; but 55% Canadians rejected this (57% in Quebec. Dion 1995: 113).

In 1995, the Parliament approved an initiative that recognized Quebec as "different society" within Canada, and granted to Quebec, British Columbia and two territories the right of veto (Mendoza 1995). Also, in 1996, the Federal Government recognized national unity as a problem that deserved high-priority attention, establishing new strategies of reconciliation (promotion of union benefits), and the rules for a possible separation (conditions to recognize a separatist victory), removing the initiative of 1995 (SHCP, 1996: 4).

No matter how the hardening of federal government in determining to not allow any separation without the approval of the rest of the country, movements in favor of the autonomy of minorities have become stronger. The most recent appears in 1999, with the creation of a new province; Nunavut, where 85% of the population are Inuit.

In other areas, immigrants in Canada are divided into two main groups: the ones that arrived after Canada's independence and preserved

themselves as communities (like Germans, Italians, Chinese, Ukrainians, Netherlands and other Europeans), and the XX Century (and XXI), generated as a consequence of political crisis in other countries, asylum demands or simply migratory permission. In the case of political crisis, we can mention Vietnamese and Chileans in the 70s, Afghans, Lebanese, Central-Americans, Indonesians and Indians in the 80s, as well as Polish, Armenians and other Eastern Europe refugees; from the Balkans and Asia Pacific (Hong-Kong and Macao) in the 90s.

Isolated cases must be also mentioned but they correspond to refugees demanding political asylum or different nationalities that decide to request official permission to live and work in Canada searching for a better future.

Paradoxically, Canada recognizes nationalities, not races. Probably this is the reason why afro-Canadians are not registered in the census. Their specific and recent demands have generated a new cultural cohesion, mainly in literature and music.

Canada integrates a collage in economic, cultural, religious and political terms that still relegates natives, Afro-Americans, new immigrants and to certain degree French-speaking inhabitants, to an inferior status. The structural domination in the relationship between the Anglo-Saxon majority and the various minority groups is not violent but evident.

Ethnic minorities in the United States of America

Settled by the first protestant colonizers that arrived in order to develop their religious experiments such as Pilgrims and Quakers, the destiny of native minorities was marginalized from the American society and the Constitution.

The Civil War (1861-1865), more than defending slave's rights, formed an economic integration in the country, a society which pushed Afro-Americans and natives to the West and exterminated resistance movements.

Continental expansion to the West finished in 1867 with Alaska purchase, increasing the task of the Bureau of Indian Affairs founded in 1824, which was in charge of native lands.

With western economic development, the demand for greater labor increased as well as the number of immigrants, especially Asian men under the idea of working temporarily in America. Since they were never really culturally integrated into American society (mainly because of language and religion), they remained marginalized and were associated with drug trafficking and prostitution. The 1882 prohibition of Chinese immigration (Chinese Exclusion Act) and in 1889 the Asian Act, increased the isolation

of existing communities. Working in the fields were they did not need the use of English, they concentrated their *modus vivendi* in restaurants and cleaning. It is not an accident that Chop Suey was invented in San Francisco.

With the doors closed for Asian immigrants, Mexicans started to fill labor force demands, specially during the periods of the First and Second World Wars. After this economic bonanza, a social crisis emerged in the 60s with economic stagnation and the events of Vietnam.

During this époque, Red Power emerged. A native pacifist movement headed by Clarence Tallbull, crystallized in the National Congress of American People (Seattle), initiated native demands for land, fishing and hunting rights (De la Garza 1973: 95). In 1961, more than 400 members of 67 native tribes united in Chicago, settled the Declaration of Indian Purposes, which ratified their right to choose their own way of life and assume responsibilities in preserving their cultural heritage. Nevertheless, divisions between new and old native generations took place. The youth demanded special rights while the old ones wanted to be included economically in the "American Dream". Elders, living under poor conditions in their reservations, were integrated into American society under the John F. Kennedy Administration, which developed special inclusion programs. In another way, young natives who even utilized violence, created in 1968 the National Council for Young Natives (Brinkley 1997: 691), from which they continued their fight to further decades.

In other ways, the cases of Rosa Parks (demonstrations against her imprisonment for not giving a "white seat" to a white man in a bus) and Brown Topeka (who refused to make a long walk to a "black school" while there was a "white school" right in front of her house) among others, permitted the Afro-Americans to develop not only their pride (Black Power) but to create a series of advances in political, social and jurisdictional fields. Organized civil society succeeded in invalidating, in 1961, through the Supreme Tribunal, segregation in restaurants after sit-ins (sitting in restaurants was prohibited to them in North Carolina, Tennessee, Ohio, Illinois and Nevada. Fohler 1973: 149). This "strategy" was also practiced at beaches, pools, churches and human settlements in general.

Leaders such as Martin Luther King (assassinated in 1968) and organizations like National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) headed by Robert Williams; the Freedom Riders, travelers organized under the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), headed by Floyd McKissick; the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee

(SNCC), with Stoke Carmichel; went around the country crating awareness among Americans.

Probably the most extreme case of action came from the Black Panthers with Malcom X⁶, promoting pride and independence. With time, it became an intolerant and fundamentalist Muslim movement in Oakland. Blaming the whites as the source of all evils, they promoted conversion to Islam and total racial separation (Brinkley 1997: 672).

In 1963, the "Liberty Summer" an Afro-American unity demonstration at Washington was created in order to press for the approval of the constantly postponed civil right law, with the support of different unions and churches, and was finally accepted (Civil Rights Act, 1964 or Affirmative Action). In 1965, a new law prohibited, mainly in the South, tests against Afro-American and upheld the suffrage of other minorities.⁷

Civil organizations succeeded in having support to open new business in California, and in 1966 the first Afro-American was nominated senator (Massachusetts); a triumph that marked the beginning of possible careers from other political leaders (Jesse Jackson, Colin Powel, Condoleza Rice).

The impact of the Afro-American movement reached other minorities, such as the Hispanics. Since the 50s, groups here emerged, such as the Political Association Mexican-American (MAPA, California) and the Political Association of Spanish-speaking Organizations (PASSO, Texas), with the idea of involving more Mexicans in the presidential elections of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson, became an influential political group and started to gain political posts (Abrush 1982: 20-21).

Nevertheless, this did not eradicate neither discrimination nor the marginalization of the different Hispanic groups. Activism continued at the civil level in movements such as "Chicano" or the Union of Farm Workers headed by Cesar Chavez.

The leader of the Community Service Organization at Los Angeles, since the 50s, Chavez promoted suffrage and organized regional representations against discrimination (Diaz 1997: 56). In 1964, he founded in the San Joaquin Valley, the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA), linked with the American Federation of Labor with the idea that unions will permit Mexicans to have better working conditions, which also created a specific agricultural workers union, the Union of Farm Workers (UFW). With time, it became one of the main organizations for defending the rights of Mexican-Americans and Mexicans in the USA.

The boycott organized in 1966 against grape producers (the main agricultural product from San Joaquin Valley), was supported by students,

intellectuals, artists, churches, the CORE, SNCC and part of the consuming civil society, obtaining in 1970 the signing of a deal between producers and the UFW which defend workers better conditions. This fight was extended to garlic, olives, citrics, lettuce, tomato, mushrooms and carrots workers, permitting the creation in California of collective farming agreements.

Also, in 1962 Reyes Lopez Tijerina created the Federal Alliance of Free People which demanded land devolution to the legitimize owners in accordance with the Guadalupe-Hidalgo Treaty. Imprisoned because of the violence reached, nevertheless the fracas of the movement, a social consciousness was created concerning Mexicans land rights. Possibly the highest (and only) success was the compensation for the "lost lands" of 1848, by the 100 descendents of the Bali family (from Mexicali) in the year 2000.

At the political level, in 1970 Angel Gutierrez in Texas created the Raza Unida Party. Based on demands such as education, local government participation and a rural development economic program for the Chicanos (de la Garza 1973: 116), the candidacy of Ramsey Muniz for governor (1972) was supported only by 6.5% of the votes. In 1974 the party participated in local elections but still does not create the necessary cohesion and have the necessary support of the Texas Mexican-Americans.

Associations such as the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO), the United Farm Workers Organization (UFWO), the League of United Latin-American Citizens (LULAC), and the American G. I. Forum, the Mexican-American Solidarity Foundation, or movements like "Crusade for Justice" (in defense of the barrios) cannot get the needed power to integrate the demands of Mexicans in the USA. Some of the surviving factions only function on the local or state level.

Other Hispanic groups, such as the Puerto Rican Forum (parallel association to the G. I. Forum), promote suffrage as the best option for political inclusion⁸. Apathy and the "Close the door behind me syndrome"⁹, as well as the division between Mexicans, Puerto-Rican pro democrats, and Cubans pro republicans, creates a complex political position for Hispanics which also affects the ideological coherence of presidential campaigns.

Since the year 2000, Hispanics have been the mayor minority (35.3 millions, vs. 33.5 of Afro-Americans) and George W. Bush, pro Hispanic, included 5% in his Administration. Among the groups of power we should add the religious ones, like Jewish and Muslims.

Least present in political field are Asian-Americans (Japanese, Chinese, Vietnamese, Philippines, Indians and Koreans). The best organized association is located in a LA suburb, the Monterrey Park, which develops local and migration policies (especially with the advice of Anglo-

Saxons and non Asians). Apathetic and divided, they are still the major political campaign contributors (Ong 1993: 158), but their interests are: increase in public spending, amnesty for illegal immigrants, support of capital punishment condemn and bilingual education, and are divided equally between democrats and republicans (Ong 1993: 160).

Immigration has also divided American Anglo-Saxons. Fundamentalist movements such as the Ku Kux Klan (KKK), or the League Pro Immigration Restriction, initiatives such as Save our State or 187 (1994, finally rejected at the federal level, which prohibited health and education services to illegal immigrants), English Only or 227 (in force in California since 1998, against bilingual education), or Minorities Law (209, from 1997, against the Affirmative Action that established an inclusion formula for minorities), are some of the extreme movements.

Currently in America the following coexist: WASP¹⁰ or whites (73.6%), Hispanics (12.5%), Afro-Americans (12%), Asians (4%), natives (0.7%), 6 million Muslims, and 15 million Jews (Boston Globe, 8.3.01). Asians are concentrated in California, natives in the South and West, Jews in the East coast, Cubans in the South-East, Mexicans in South and West, and Puerto-Ricans in the North-East. There are 330 different spoken languages, 180 natives among them (500 total). After English, Spanish dominates in the South. Other, are: Korean, Persian, Hindi, Mandarin, Farce, Czech, Wolof (from Senegal), Tswana (Botswana) and Quechua (Guatemalan Maya). Only in LA are 120 languages spoken (Washington Times, 30.5.00).

Most of the minorities belong to the lowest rate of the population in education, wages and employment¹¹. The majority are young; the age average of Hispanics is 25.5 years and Mexicans and Puerto-Ricans register 20 and 21 years respectively. Cubans average 35.

Even though Mexicans are the biggest Hispanic minority, Cubans register the highest income level. In third place are Puerto-Ricans and lastly, Central-Americans. Possibly this phenomena has to do with the almost 5 million illegal immigrants (25% of the total) living in the USA.

Latin-America starts now in California, Texas and Florida, and Asia at San Francisco, but we can also find "cultural islands" in New York and Chicago, as well as in the new attracting poles: Las Vegas, Detroit, Iowa, North Carolina and Arkansas, giving the labor force demand. This picture is colored also by one thousand illegal Mexicans who cross the border daily, and some other nations arriving from the coasts, Mexico and Canada, despite the rivers, border patrols, migration officers and so on. Because of the increasing population rate and the immigration flux, Hispanic populations will increase¹². By the year 2004, Mexicans will be 50% of

Californian inhabitants, while Asian and Afro-American populations will increase at a lower rate and Anglo-Saxons as well as natives will decrease (El Financiero, 17.5.00; Boston Globe, 8.2.01).

The myth of a "Nation of Nations" or the "Melting Pot" which integrates the American culture is under controversy. Segregation, division in barrios, and interracial violence are some of the regular American "news", exhibiting the reality: a "Salad Bowl".

Ethnic minorities in Mexico

With 90% of the population being racially mixed, the rest corresponds to 56 indigenous groups¹³ who, in spite of the inequality, discrimination, domination, exploitation and cultural submission, preserve and recreate a linguistic, cultural and social patrimony. Although some natives were economically assimilated into the "encomienda" (economic and social protectorate), the "hacienda" (agriculture slavery), or mining (low payments), they have become indebted, trapped in permanent debt through expensive stores (tiendas de raya).

Culturally, the Catholic Church was not only responsible for catechizing but alphabetizing through their schools, integrating the western system of values into most of the indigenous communities. In unfair conditions under the new structures, diverse indigenous groups rejected the situation by uprisings, like the Zacatecos and Guachiles (1561), Chichimecas (1582) and Taramaras (1602); representative samples of a series of rebellions that in the long term were controlled by Spain.

With the independence of Mexico (1810), natives were not in better conditions, as it is often demonstrated in new rebellions. The War of the Castes (1847-1850), for example, shows the Mayan efforts to recover their cultural rights and lands without successes¹⁴.

The Mexican Revolution (1910) and its diverse agrarian reforms allowed some indigenous groups to have common land. Nevertheless, the economic and political interests of the elites did not permit an equal agrarian distribution. Commons lands were not good for agriculture, because they depended on the government's financial support, seeds, equipment, and commercialization, again with unfair conditions and based on political interests. As an example, between 1920 and 1940, 70% of territories of the henequen (cactus yard fiber) cultivated mainly in Yucatan (Mayan zone) were expropriated and the labor force integrated under the supervision of the state (1938); a measure that benefited politicians, not the natives. The National Bank of Ejidal Credit financed machines for the ex-landowners. In 1963 the state enterprise CORDEMEX centralizing henequen production and only generated economic and political benefits to

a small number their employees. This is why in 1992, after several protests, CORDEMEX closed their doors and the natives were unemployed. More recently, the development of the Mayan Route (1996), supported by the European Union and the Inter-American Development Bank, was destined to not help the Mayans, but the government, private investors and tourism since it does not integrate them in this economic project.

The problem of poverty, unemployment and exploitation of the natives is still there. With the idea of not working for somebody under unfair conditions, but to work their own land, a big number of communities are now settled in the mountains.

The uprising of Chiapas (1994) opened the door to the hopes of natives settled in the south of the country. With violence only in the first moments, both federal authority and zapatistas commissioned representatives who concluded the Agreements of San Andres (1996)¹⁵, which were ultimately not recognized by the government. As a consequence, stages of tensions and confrontations were held, like the slaughters of Acteal (1997), which demonstrate that the solution to the marginal conditions of the natives is far from the solution.

Foreigners' interest in native conditions have been stopped since 1995, when the government denounced the intervention of NGOs and common persons at Chiapas, and started an official expulsion based on an interventionist attitude (so called "revolutionary tourism")¹⁶.

In June of 1999, the former president Ernesto Zedillo proposed the Indigenous Rights and Culture Law, but more than a genuine intention to help them, this was a measure used only to clean the image of the government concerning Chiapas. This law was a legal trap against different community and individual rights and traditions which were already respected, such as the election of their authorities (elders people counsel), and would attending a court with official defenders or translators. It also canceled protection programs for women and children, and would not foment the indigenous culture, promote access to health services or protect their labor rights, which were already regulated (La Jornada, 12,8,1999).

More recently, the zapatistas were able to speak in the congress of Mexico in March 2001: "we are here to tell you our reasons and to listen to yours" was the memorable phrase of the Comandanta Esther. Despite the later government's approval or the Indigenous Law (Ley Indígena), regretted by the EZLN, other native communities and some states, there is still unconformity and a big discussion concerning the definition of autonomy, cultural pluralism and sustainability. The awareness of their conditions was the highest success among the Mexican population in general.

Native's great millenarian culture contrasts with their hunger, misery and marginalized situation. Numerous indigenous groups have been displaced by the economic dynamic. Although Oaxaca is the state that has the highest indigenous population (52.72% of their total¹⁷) and secondly Yucatan (52,48%), numerous Mayans live in Tabasco and Chiapas, constituting minorities of lacandons, tzelzales and tzotziles (Bastarrachea 1994: 20).

On the other hand, they emigrate to the cities in search of better economic conditions. As a result, the contact among minorities is minimal, reduced to some cultural expressions, and some of them are in danger of extinction.

Inside the communities, they have faced different problems to preserve their traditions. In communities with the Elders People Counsel, disputes are regularly presented with representatives of political parties, like in Chichima, to the south of Yucatan, in 1994. Their political structures are not only blocked by the contemporary political organization, but by the lack of resources that may allow them to develop own electoral campaigns. Here it is worth asking if the Law of 1999 has implicit aims to integrate the native communities with the existing political parties, especially the PRI (with 71 years in power, from 1929 up to 2000).

Natives have also suffered certain social negative changes like familiar disintegration since fathers emigrate looking for a better income. A progressive insertion in the labor market obligates them to adopt other traditions (like language and clothes). Also increasing alcoholism, sometimes the only "leisure" activity they have, is leading to a stronger Protestant "conversion", shocking them with communitarian traditions like the celebration of the holy "saints" (patrons) of the villages.

They are also related to delinquency and drug trafficking. In 1991, for example, 53 natives were accused of crimes against health, since they thought cultivating marijuana was a better option, and when they were "captured" they were surprised because they did not know the legal prohibition (INI 1991:6). This happens also with hallucinogenic fungi, plants that they are used to seeing grow in their lands and which they use in special celebrations. Two natives in Michoacan were tortured and have spent more than two years in prison because of defending their trees from a wood transnational company (liberated in November 2001).

The aggressions of which they are victims are frequent and daily stories. The murder of the leader of the Movement of Unification and Lucha Triqui in Oaxaca (La Jornada, 2,8,1999), after obtaining the dialogue between the authorities of different Triqui communities, was due to the political and economic interests that surround the natives' situation.

In this sense, they do not exert their rights as minorities, but also as citizens.

Prospects for the indigenous communities are not very encouraging. No matter how strong their traditions are and their own defense, nowadays 50 native languages are in danger of disappearing, given the little attention and value to their cultural heritage not only by the government but the Mexicans in general.

Immigrant composition has no longer generated a social or political impact. The 23,000 Guatemalan refugees at Quintana Roo, Chiapas and Campeche, are culturally identified with Mexican Mayan natives in the south of the country and do not want to go back to their country (more than 60,000 entered the country and received international support). Another immigrant group are Americans living illegally in Mexico. These "Dry Backs" some 500,000, are concentrated in tourist resorts and they practically live eternal vacations with temporary jobs. A numerically similar group are Asians concentrated in the northwest, well known by their restaurants. These two cultural groups are closed and maintain their original traditions (like language and festivities).

Main differences among ethnic minorities

In all North America, different native ethnic groups coexist with old and new immigrants, conforming to a wide range of races and languages and causing in some places nationalistic conflicts like the Mohawks and French-speakers in the province of Quebec, Canada; racism, discrimination and xenophobia in California, United States of America; or indigenous pride movements in Chiapas, Mexico.

In the development of such conflicts, economic forces play an important role. Although the exploitation of native manual labor has generated certain wealth to the elites, the higher living standard in Canada benefits the native communities. In USA, no matter how the government benefits, minorities are discriminated socially, politically and economically for different reasons and in different fields. In Mexico, not only is there a lower standard, but the exploitation and displacement has produced a double phenomenon the segmentation and marginalización¹⁸.

With a difference of nearly 15,000 dollars in per capita annual income, among Canada (23,592 USD), USA (29,605 USD) and Mexico (7,704 USD), minorities in Mexico are the most affected not only in their salaries but in living standards like health services (40% of the children die by parasitism), education and opportunities to increase their standard of living.¹⁹ On the other hand, Mexico's situation gets worse with the external debt, which affects social services and education offered by the State.

One of the great debates still alive in North-America is the impact of including or excluding the indigenous groups from education in their own language or urban development. If they are educated in their own language, respecting their traditions, they will be integrated into the economic process; if they are educated in the majority language and integrated into majorities, they will lose their traditions and cultural heritage. The exclusion created by reservations, to a certain extent preserves their traditions but maintains the economic gap. The inclusion, although it is with great benefits and directed by the government, does not offer them an equal living standard compared with majorities.

The political nationalistic demands in Canada, USA and Mexico have followed different courses. In Canada, English and French-speaking communities and their cultural and political movements in the 60s affected minority groups, generating a certain "ethnic nationalism".²⁰ The socio-cultural characteristics presented can be determined as rejection of assimilation, rejection of separatist desires, enforcement of the own cultural differences, ethnic pride and political demands and nationalistic exaltation (as opposed to assimilation). In parallel, economic demands and sub-political representation also emerge (segregation).

The ethnic conflict in Canada is to date relatively pacific, directed by a clerical elite and liberally educated people, who are convinced they will be better without the federal relationship. Among their successes are making French the official language, the Quebec referenda and Nunavut.

The force of native claim has also succeeded in creating the Coordinator Commission of Native Nations and Organizations²¹, which has organized frequent continental meetings since 1990. Their goal is to obtain "liberation and self-determination" in order to preserve their spiritual values, traditions and knowledge, affected by the colonization and land devastation, demanding also the acceptance of cultural diversity. Nevertheless, the scope of their work is useless in the face of the diverse political, social and economic structures and realities.

In USA, movements in the 60s coincided (safe in isolated cases such as Malcom X and some Chicano groups) with the desire to integrate with the majorities under the idea that assimilation will permit them to reach the same "white" benefits. The results have to be differently evaluated since some groups, such as the Afro-Americans and Cubans, have reached political integration, and Mexican cultural penetration is each day stronger.²²

Jewish influence is clear in foreign policy while Asians, more discreet, are concerned with the market. There is no doubt that generalizing is dangerous, especially if we analyze the USA: It is important to mention

regional and conjectural circumstances. Ethnic desegregation or organization impacts in ethnic development in America. Little separatist movements (Texas 1999 and Puerto Rico during the 70s) are isolated movements more than an ethnic group. In general, ethnic minorities want to be integrated into society and native reserves are completely bilingual and do not think in separation.

Government posture in front of minorities differs widely between Mexico, USA and Canada. Canada registers a tendency to multiculturalism, Mexico to pluriculturalism and the USA combines both. Let's explain this a little more.

Under a pluricultural scheme, community identity is integrated with different cultures, especially the ones with affinity. The uses and traditions that are not compatible to the majority (like the anthropophagi) disappear and the construction a general culture, based of course in the culture of the majority. Some traditions that have nothing to do with minorities (like the dances of Chineros, bearded men fighting against the Arabs) are part of constructed affinities in an artificial way.

Under this scheme, Mexico reinforces a racial melting pot (pluriculturalism) and its "raison d'être" relegating or eradicates certain local cultural expressions. In the process, some relegation and classism (economic segregation), is generated with no legal support but evident in practice (segregation). The myth of social mobilization (Benito Juárez, a native that become president and a national hero) is accepted in a confusing pluricultural nucleus that in reality marginalizes or ignores native communities (discrimination), not only because they have a different culture (including esthetic connotation), but also because they represent the poor.

In the USA, pluriculturalism is expressed by the political inclusion of diverse ethnic groups. Some leaders are closer to the majority culture, like Colin Powell or Arnold Schwarzenegger (who wants to be governor of California defining himself as a regular "citizen". This represents perfectly the social mobilization comedy. Also, culinary syncretism, such as the celebrations of May 5 and Latino English rhythms are some cultural expressions that reflect the inclusion of minorities, as well as the 227 Initiative against bilingual education which intends to accelerate the assimilation process. But natives and other minority groups are absolutely isolated as well as margined.

Pluriculturalism in the USA is mainly focused on the inclusion of folk traditions and the elite of certain minorities (domesticated). The complexity of this model is very complex. Simply to teach English to illiterate people who speak another language diminishes clearly their

understanding and at school they are not well qualified, affecting their probable professional development. If this is not the case, they are also affected in practice (discrimination). The Puerto-Ricans are a clear example of a rejected group despite the fact that they are "Americanized". From another point of view, segregation occurs because legal differences are presented not only with the natives, but also with Affirmative Action.

The multicultural model is more developed in Canada. As a result, coexistence of closed societies (some rural and in a vast territory) occurs under these conditions, the cultural characteristics of minorities reminded in spite of their contradictions, inheriting diverse conflicts (Catholics and Christians).

It is difficult to appreciate classism or segregation in Canada, where the marginalization of the natives has more to do with their hermetism and the legal discrimination which gives them their autonomy. Up to date, many Canadian analysts criticize the Canadian scheme. Afro-Canadians denounce multiculturalism as: "a fancy piece of window dressing" (Nourbese 1992:186), because in fact it creates the tragedy of racism. This Canadian discrimination is related to colonialism and their necessity coexistence and to the current struggle held by each community, which looks forward to their autonomy in a separated way. For native and Afro-Canadians, marginality comes from the British and the French. This "own battle" generates simultaneously a high index of politicization.

In Canada, where traditions and communities are separated and in conflict, they try to reach their own recognition and autonomy (separatism), generating at the same time a higher politicization index (democratic individualism).

Contrary to this, Mexican communities marginalized but without cultural contradictions, wish to be integrated. They look for civic spaces (recognition) and political participation (representation). The frustration created by attempts they have made (EZLN 1994) has registered an alarming level of despolitización (abstention from a 75% in Ocotzingo elections held in 1997) among the indigenous population. Probably the non-definition of self-determination under the Indigenous Law of 2001 (both guilty) comes from this pluricultural structural idea and an undetermined desire for inclusion.

In this sense, Canadian communities are very nationalistic and politicized in the traditional sense (hermetism, self-determination in a communal ethnic vision), whereas in Mexico and USA they want to be included (with the exception of American natives) and recognized (a kind of neo-nationalism).

Finally, multiculturalism and pluriculturalism extend the practice of certain discrimination or segregation, cultural imperialism of majorities and certain maniquean dynamic distinguishing “good” from “bad” citizens, which is an eurocentric vision. This western vision possibly verifies, with its poor results, the impossibility implanting it as conductual model for certain local native groups. The governmental proposal of “citizen” under both schemes, ignores the differences and cultural contradictions among communities, assuming the creation of a static citizen, just as Guilles Bourque describes it (1980).

Conclusions

Which are the most important rights: individual or communal? Will it be more convenient to construct a static citizen? Does Rousseau’s Social Contract include everybody? Is the State-Nation still valid under ethno-cultural differences?

One of the fundamental problems is that democracy represents a government formula for the good of majorities²³. Thus the exercise of American democracy excludes minority groups, foments segregation of micro-societies, individualism, and goes the wrong way in the construction of a unified nation with active participation of all its members.

Democracy and centralization cannot defend specific ethnic characteristics and gets contradict with its claims to defend of the human rights of all and every individual. Common law or Roman law do not seem to guarantee the demands of the minorities. What, then, are the best legal, political, social and cultural proposals considering, inclusively, minorities within minorities?

Colonization ideology and the eurocentric vision maintains the superiority of European thought over the native one. In North America, natives, French-speakers, Afros and new immigrants fight against the “ancient regime” which is longer “ancient”. Positioned as superiors and predominant, the white population generally underestimates not only the intelligence (“inferiority”), but the minorities traditions and cultural expressions of natives and immigrants.

A pluricultural and multicultural society does not solve the principle of peaceful coexistence nor the paradox of cultural rescue and tolerance. Nor the creation of native reservations in Canada, mitigate the marginalized situation of natives. Inclusion into the dynamic of the majorities has verified the persistence of its discrimination.

The problem is more complex and the question of autonomy, independence or inclusion does not even help to increase their standard of living. What is needed is the creation of some other coexistence

alternatives. Perhaps to develop a kind of minimalist or arbitrary democracy (in words of Alain Touraine) that solves the problem of minority representation and preserves its forms of social, economical, political and cultural traditions. It is also necessary to increase the living standards of minorities because democracy is not possible with hunger, to foment its cultural pride and political activism.²⁴

It is necessary to stimulate research in this field, but mainly it is imminent to rescue these communities allowing them to practice their own values with pride. We can not collaborate in the destruction of our invaluable cultural patrimony.

Notes

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¹ Canada registers 43% of minorities. The ethnic composition is: French (22.8%), Anglo-Saxon's (20.8%), Germans (3.4%), Italian (2.8%), Chinese (2.2%), Ukrainians (1.5%), Netherlands (1.3%), native groups (43.5%). Among them: Abnakis, Acadian, Algonquin, Atapasc, Attawapiskats, Baffin, Beavers, Bella-balla, Bella-coolas, Canadian Europid, Caribou, Cobr, Cree, Chipewyan, Dokota, Dogrib, Inuit, Hares, Huron, Iglulik, Iroquois, Kaska, Kitamat, Kutchins, Kutenai, Kwakiuls, Labradors, Mackenzie, Menomini, Micmac, Mohawk, Montagnai, Nadine, Naskapi, Ojibwa, Okanagan, Penutia, Black feet, Potawatomi, Quebeque, Salishe, Sekani, Southampton, Netsilik, Nez perce, Nootka, Stoney, Tahlitan, Takamiut, Tsimshian, Vakkashes, and Wakash. Languages more spoken include: Algonquin, Atapasc, Salish, Hoka, Oux, Wakash and Penutia (6.4% of the population). *Canada Facts*. 2000.

² The Quebec Party (QP) was created in 1968, by René Levèsque. The objective was to obtain sovereignty in association, this is, the political independence of Quebec with economic association with Canada. (Beaurdin 1995: 7). The QP reunited in a little time independent monuments in Quebec. In November 1976 it won provincial elections, and worked in the referendum. In 1985 it start losing credibility (mainly because of federal obstacles and the changing position of Pierre Eliot Trudeau), the Liberal Party was empowered and in 1994 wins again.

Lucien Bouchard, former Environment Minister, renounces in order to create the Quebec Block (QB) which emerged from the crisis of Meech Lake Agreements (1990). Reinforced when they denied the Charlottetown Agreements (1992), they demanded specially bilingualism and multicultural functionaries (Microberts 1975: 78-79). In 1993, the QB gained 72% of the first time seats offered to Quebec at the Common House, and demanded to have representatives at the Parliament (Dion 1995: 115).

³ The Liberal Party Leader John Ciacia, enlisted as separatist risk: renegotiation of the NAFTA and other international agreements like 7G, UN and NATO, resting force to Canadian representation as a whole. Favourable consequences are: the benefit of a superavit in foreign trade with USA, benefits from non federal distribution of their taxes, increasing Quebecois standard of living, and better finances management. He also mentions the linguistic, racial, religious and cultural benefits.

In other words, the "non" has win mainly because separatist costs are evaluated higher than the benefits.

⁴ In Saskatchewan, for example, in 1991 natives without graded education are 60.4%, and Anglo-Saxons 44.5%. Some 41.7% has some higher education above High School, and Anglo-Saxons 55.3%. (Newhouse 1999)

⁵ Protests appoint that they do not only do not pay taxes, but sale hunting licenses –that allow them to hunt even in not permitted seasons–, unemployed have a higher living standard than unemployed Anglo-Saxons –tree televisions in average, two cars, etc.

⁶ The X had the meaning of an African lost lastname (Brinkley 1967: 672).

⁷ The 1965 Voting Rights Act, protects the votes of minorities and was amended in 1970, 1975 and 1982, including now the bilingual assistance and illiterate support, no matter the country registers "0" illiteracy.

⁸ As an example, only 12% of Puerto-Ricans vote and in California, 15% of the votes are Hispanic, the 60% of the population (Moncada 1988: 100-101).

⁹ Lester Langley develops the idea of immigrants becoming more intolerant than Anglo-Saxons with migration.

¹⁰ White, Anglo-Saxon and Protestant.

¹¹ 60% of Hispanics are among the most margined groups of America. 8% of Latinos have superior studies, 43% of Asians, one of each three anglosaxons and 24% of Afro-Americans (*Boston Globe*, 8.3.01).

¹² States with the higher population increasing rate are: Arizona with 40%, Florida 23%, Georgia 26%, Texas 23%, all of them with a considerable Hispanic population. In New Mexico, Anglo-Saxons were minority since the beginning of the XX Century, given the Hispanic and native population. Meanwhile Dallas has 10% of Mexican popilation, San Antonio has 80%.

¹³ Among the ethnic groups: Maya, Nahuatl, Quiché, Otomi, Zapoteca, Mixteca, Totonaca, Mazahua, Tzotzil, Mazateco, Tzeltal, Chinteco, Chol, Huasteco, Tajobal, Huave, Cora, Tepehua, Trique, Tepehuán, Teco, Pame, Zoque, Papaloca, Chontal, Chatíño, Mayo, Cuitlateco, Tarasco, Mixe, Tarahumara, Tlapanecó, Pima, Yaqui, Popoluca, Amuzgo, Cuicateco, Huichol, Opata, Matlatzinca, Ichateco, Chichimeco, Chuchón, Pápago, Tepecano, Seri, Lacandón, Quiliwa, Cocopa, Paipai, and Tipai. Among the more spoken languages is the Maya (more than one million), Nahuatl (one million), Zapoteco, Mixteca, Chol, Mazahia, Chinanpeco (more than 500 thousands), Maya (Tzeltal), Popoloca, Mixe-Zoque, Yuma, Otomangue, Zoque, Hoka, Totonaca, Pima and Mixe-Zoque. In the north of the country, less native languages are spoken, Lacandón and Mototleco are spoken by less than de 500 thousand persons (Embriz 1993: 38; INI, 1996).

¹⁴ No matter they took cities in the states of Merida and Campeche, indigenous troops went back, and the mestizos (racially mixed) recovered the power. In 1850, Mayas try again to recover their lands and from the southwest (now Quintana Roo) by the guerrilla, reaching in 1890, to restructure their social life, traditions, religion and agriculture but in 1901, federal troops took their “sanctuary” *Chan Santa Cruz* (now Carrillo Puerto), and Mayas were forced to emigrate to the jungle (now Chiapas).

¹⁵ They rules native’s rights and are directly related with the Convene 169 of the International Labour Organisation on the indigenous and tribal people in independent countries, signed by Mexico in September 5, 1990.

¹⁶ From 1996 up to 1996, 80,000 foreigners were established at Chiapas, 20,000 were expelled because they entered as tourist and were involve in political or observation activities. Among the NGOs, are: *National Enforcement of Democracy*, accused of having links with the CIA no matter they demonstrated this was not true, and *Global Exchange*, with 10,000 pro zapatista members. In 1997, 3 foreigners were deported because of "intervention in political activities". One was an American academic, who went shopping to Oaxaca. In 1998, Tom Hansen, former director of Pastors for Peace, was expelled while donating video cameras and offering courses to use them at Altamirano. Professor Peter Brown, leader of the group Team for Building Schools at Chiapas was also expelled. Only in 1998, 9,942 foreigners were expelled (*La Jornada*, 26.7.1998: 3; *El Financiero*, 26.7.1998: 33; *El Reforma*, 23.3.1998: 15a; *Washington Post*, 26.2.1998).

¹⁷ Numbers from the XI National Census of 1990 and National Indigenous Institute (INI) 1991: 7.

¹⁸ For Ugo Pipitone, inequality in the distribution generated productive and social structures highly segmented (1989: 11).

¹⁹ Mexico registers 11% of illiteracy, USA 0% and Canada 1%; population with three education years is 16.1%, 80.6 and 90.1% respectively; infant mortality is 31, 7 and 6 respectively; life expectancy 72.2, 76.7 and 78.9; doctors by each thousand inhabitants are 1.3, 2.7 and 2., in Chiapas 0.6 (Rates of 1999. *L'état du monde* 2001, Paris, La Découverte).

²⁰ Quebecois movement is related with the "ethnic group" concept, understanding it as a collectivity of race, religion and common origin, which creates a "cultural identity" based in their feeling of belonging to (social and psychological reference). Identification among members is historical but also future oriented (Soriano 1980, Gonzalez 2001).

²¹ Continental commission integrated among other organizations by: Mexico: Frente Independiente de pueblos Indios (FIPI), Unión de Mujeres Yalaltecas; Central America: Kunas Unidos por Nabguana (Panama), Consejo de Organizaciones Mayas Guatemala (COMG); Andean Region: Organizacipon nacional Indígena de Colombia (ONIC), Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas de Ecuador (CONAIE), and other association from Brazil, South Cone, and Canada, working mainly through a network named Indigenous Peoples alliance, settled at Albuquerque.

²² Public festivals such as "5 de Mayo" and September 16, as well as the burrito which is more sale than the hotcakes as auto-service breakfast at McDonalds. Places to dance "salsa" are geometrically multiplied and "Dora the Explorer" (a Latino 7 years girl) is the most demanded figure among head start girls. New marketing strategies include bilingual commercials and several Spanish television and radio stations, as La Mega at New York, have frequently the highest rating. Simply, George W, Bush demonstrates publicly he speaks Spanish and some times in his campaign he was surrounded by "mariachis", Rick Martin and Gloria Stephan. His first trip to a foreign country was Mexico

²³ Gonzalez, Monica (1997): *Democracia: un triunfo incierto*. Mexico, ITESM, CCM.

²⁴ Among the economic proposal that may increase their living standards, is the development of special enterprises (familiar and the government support) with local impact, small business that do not need high investment. It will also be desirable to promote inside the communities sociological, anthropological, archeological, agricultural or acuaculture research, the development of local technology (contest), training and the integration of big productive or commercialising corporations. In the social field, it is recommended to create cultural and political communities, and to promote their language, music, food, clothe and rituals among other traditions.

There is no doubt that any proposal must have a holistic vision (social development, health, education) in the long term, to foment a tolerance and acceptance environment, creativity, to listen to natives and immigrants in order to know and understand their demands and NOT to design outside solutions, the ones that the majority elite believes are more convenient for *them*.

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