CHAPTER SIX

DAVIDA Y GOLIATH:
ROSALINDA CHALLENGES THE WORLD BANK

In the university you might debate what globalization is but we do not—We feel it on our bodies every day. Lucía Méndez Guzmán—K’inal Antzetik 2004 Women Confronting Globalization Tour in Oneonta NY

All domestic issues have been drawn into the global economy bringing women into direct collision with global patriarchal institutions. (Vandana Shiva 1995)

I begin this chapter with the story of Rosalinda, former president of Jolom Mayaetik, meeting with World Bank officials in March, 2000, in North Carolina. Next, I provide a brief overview of the impact of the World Bank development policies on Mexico and Chiapas and resistance to it by the Zapatistas and Civil Society in Mexico and North American allied organizations. I focus on the response of Civil Society by examining the philosophy, analysis, and work of the grassroots women’s organizations, K’inal Antzetik and Jolom Mayaetik, in Chiapas, Mexico. Finally, I review other resistance strategies to neoliberalism that are developing globally and which link to the solidarity marketing strategy of Jolom Mayaetik. Rosalinda’s analysis, millenial practice, and contemporary economic apartheid connect the economic justice movement’s and Jolom Mayaetik’s call for a “life with dignity.”

Economía Muy Gringa en Chiapas (Very Gringo Economy in Chiapas)

Following the 1982 debt crisis and the ensuing implementation of IMF structural adjustment policies, Mexico restructured its economy via privatization, reductions in social services and wages, and export intensification (McMichael 2004). In 1994, the Clinton Administration pushed the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with the promise of trade relations that would open up North American markets for the benefit of commerce and consumers. NAFTA has produced widespread approval from corporate and political elites in the US,
Canada, and Mexico at the same time that it has engendered radical mobilization against its oppressive structures.

Critics point to NAFTA’s deleterious effect on national governments’ capacities to regulate transnational corporations, enforce environmental standards, protect labor rights, ensure living standards for their populations, and develop their own economies (Kamel and Hoffman 1999). EZLN Subcomandante (subcommander) Marcos sees NAFTA as the gringo project of making Mexico into a giant mall where one can buy Indians and women. He argues that neo-liberalism is a crime against humanity as it increases the divide between rich and poor and values peoples’ worth in terms of work, blood, and sweat—or by how much they can consume (1998 Zapatista Encuentro: Documents from the 1996 Encounter for Humanity and Against Neo-liberalism and The Seventh Sun).

NAFTA—inspired trade policies which favor large agribusiness over small producers, have flooded the Mexican market with US government—subsidized crops like corn, undercutting the campesinos. The plummeting price of coffee on the world market in combination with the importation of corn has devastated the indigenous subsistence farmer. Currently, the price of imported corn has skyrocketed due to ethanol and corn sweetener production thus raising the cost of the Mexican staple food—corn tortillas (Ochoa 2007).

Rosalinda Encounters the World Bank

In spring, 2000, representatives from K’inal and Jolom were asked to meet with representatives of the World Bank (WB) to discuss artisan production. At the time, members of Jolom, K’inal and I were on a speaking tour in North Carolina in conjunction with an exhibit of Mayan textiles at Wake Forest Museum of Anthropology. The video conference with the World Bank was arranged by Jeanne Simonelli, Department of Anthropology at Wake Forest, in conjunction with a local woman who had World Bank ties. Before meeting with The World Bank, Rosalinda, president of Jolom Mayaetik, Barbara, member of K’inal Antzetik and advisor to Jolom, and I had heated discussions with Jeanne and her contact regarding World Bank policy in Chiapas and K’inal and Jolom’s stated position of political and economic autonomy.

This meeting was done via teleconference; Barbara, Rosalinda, and I responded to questions from the panel of World Bank representa-