

**La Lucha Sigue!**  
**Teacher Activism and the Continuum of Social Unrest**  
**in Guerrero, Mexico**

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*Prepared for delivery at the 2004 Meeting of the Latin American Studies Association  
Las Vegas, Nevada, October 7-9, 2004*

This work is dedicated to the people of Guerrero  
who so generously shared their stories with me.  
*Mil gracias.*

*Introduction*

Félix Hoyo left Mexico City in 1972. Disillusioned with the ongoing political repression in the nation's capital, he secured a faculty position at the Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero. He was determined to rekindle the dormant opposition movement in the southwestern state of Guerrero. For him, the government massacres of 1968 and 1971 had indeed been a watershed.

After several hours of interview with Guerrerense Fausto Ávila about his political engagement during the decades of the 1960s and 1970s, I asked him, "But what of '68?" His response: "It merely confirmed what we already knew." It had hardly been worth mentioning in the long narrative of his years of political activity in his native state – years in which he had been a close colleague of teacher-popular leader-turned-guerrilla fighter Genaro Vázquez Rojas. Ávila himself had been a guerrilla fighter and political prisoner. And on faculty at the Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero.

Two men, from distinctly different backgrounds: one raised and educated in the metropolitan capital; the other, from a rural pueblo on the Costa Grande of Guerrero. But they shared more in common than their radical politics and vision for a more just Mexico. They were both teachers.

I suggest that an explicit link exists between the ongoing popular effort to achieve democracy in Guerrero, geographically and psychologically far from the political center of the nation, and the better-known student movement and government massacre in Mexico City in 1968. Teachers, politicized by conditions in their home state and through participation in contentious union activities in the nation's capital, served as important

conduits of oppositional ideology and strategy between the city and ongoing struggles for democracy elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> Study of these teacher-activists reveals a continuum of popular resistance driven by an ideology rooted in promises as old as the Mexican Revolution of 1910 and as recent as the inspiration of the Cuban Revolution of 1959. This continuum extended from the nation's capital to the southwestern state of Guerrero and back again. It was by no means a one-directional flow.

*Two Generations: The First, 1959-1967*<sup>2</sup>

I suggest something of a two-generational cycle between Guerrerense and Mexico City politics: the first, beginning in the capital, can be located in the militant labor organizing of the decade of the 1950s, particularly the union struggles of the railroad workers and teachers.<sup>3</sup> Beneath the surface of union-based organizing was the grassroots political initiation of the education community – particularly the teachers-in-training at the nation's *escuelas normales*.<sup>4</sup> Among those Guerrerenses who attended the *escuela normal* in the capital during the mid- and late-1950s and went on to political leadership in Guerrero, the most renowned is Genaro Vázquez Rojas, teacher, popular leader and guerrilla fighter. But he was not alone. Shortly after the contentious teachers' union strike of 1958-59, many of its most active participants returned to their home state of Guerrero, where they would lead a popular movement which culminated in the successful removal of the state's dictatorial governor but which was ultimately devastated by Mexico's *guerra sucia*.

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<sup>1</sup> Félix Hoyo, Interview with this author, Mexico City, 5 May 2002. Fausto Ávila, Interview with this author, Chilpancingo, Guerrero, 21 February 2003. Teachers in Mexico have a long history of political engagement. See Mary Kay Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution: Teachers, Peasants, and Schools in Mexico, 1930-1940* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997), Olac Fuentes Molinar, *Educación y política en México* (México: Editorial Nueva Imagen, 1983), Beatriz Calvo Pontón, *Educación normal y control político* (México: Ediciones de la Casa Chata, CIESAS, 1989), and the work of Elsie Rockwell, among others.

<sup>2</sup> This generation, of course, built not only on the legacy of teacher activism, but on long-standing intellectual and political relations between the capital and Guerrero. I am herein addressing only mid-twentieth century developments.

<sup>3</sup> On the teachers' strike of 1958-59, see Aurora Loyo Brambila, *El movimiento magisterial de 1958 en México* (México: Colección Problemas de México: Ediciones Era, 1980). On later teacher union organizing see Maria Lorena Cook, *Organizing Dissent: Unions, the State, and the Democratic Teachers' Movement in Mexico* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996); Luis Hernández Navarro, "The SNTE and the Teachers' Movement, 1982-1984" in *The Mexican Left, the Popular Movements, and the Politics of Austerity*, ed. Barry Carr and Ricardo Anzaldúa Montoya (San Diego: University of California, 1986); Susan Street, *Maestros en movimiento: Transformaciones en la burocracia estatal (1978-1982)* (México: CIESAS, Colección Miguel Othón de Mendizábal, 1992); María Eulalia Benavides y Guillermo Velasco, ed., *Sindicato magisterial en México* (México: Instituto de Proposiciones Estratégicas, 1992); and Joe Foweraker, *Popular Mobilization in Mexico: The Teachers' Movement, 1977-87* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

<sup>4</sup> *Escuelas normales* are teacher-training schools.

Throughout the 1950s, Mexico experienced a surge of organized labor and academic actions independent of government authority and direct challenges to it. Ground-breaking strikes included those of workers in the railway, electrical, telegraph and oil industries, and the ongoing struggles of the teachers union.<sup>5</sup> Students from the *escuela normal nacional*, the Instituto Politécnico Nacional (IPN), and the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) provided ongoing support to the labor struggles which erupted throughout the decade and beyond. In addition to supporting union organizers' efforts, the students initiated actions at their academic institutions. In 1953, the students at the *Escuela Nacional de Maestros* maintained a 42-day strike organized around demands regarding their professional teacher-training. A second strike lasting 175 days was called in 1955. In 1956, the IPN was occupied by government troops in response to student protests regarding institutional autonomy.<sup>6</sup> Countless historians and other writers suggest the subsequent influence of these strikes, most notably that of the teachers' union, on the protest movements which erupted in the following decade. However, their focus has been almost exclusively on urban or labor movements.<sup>7</sup> But the teachers' union struggles gave birth to the Movimiento Revolucionario Magisterial (MRM), led by charismatic Guerrerense Othón Salazar.<sup>8</sup> Many of those who would leave

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<sup>5</sup> The Mexican teachers' union is the largest in the nation, with membership estimates ranging as high as 800,000-1,000,000 (not all of whom are teachers).

<sup>6</sup> Loyo Brambila, *El movimiento magisterial*, 35-36. Students and faculty from each of these institutions would be active participants in the 1968 strike.

<sup>7</sup> See, among many, Sergio Aguayo Quezada, *La Charola: Una historia de los servicios de inteligencia en México* (México: Grijalbo, 2001), 120, particularly on Guadalajara; Gilberto Guevara Niebla, "Lo que quedó: Secuelas en la izquierda," *Nexos* 121 (enero de 1988): 71-72, on Mexico City; Ángel Peréz Palacios, "Los cambios políticos y de gobierno en Guerrero durante el periodo 1960-1990," in *La transición democrática en Guerrero, Tomo 1* (México: Editorial Diana, 1992), 70; Maria Lorena Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 67-70, 112; Alba Teresa Estrada Castañón, *Guerrero: Sociedad, economía, política y cultura* (México: UNAM, Biblioteca de las Entidades Federativas, 1994), 47; and Barry Carr, "The Many Meanings of 1968 in Mexico: The Student-Popular Movement Thirty Years After," *The Digital Bookshelf*, 1998, <http://www.his.latrebe.edu.au/histres/digbook/movement1968.html>. The obvious exception, of course, has been work on the teachers union in Chiapas and its effects on community activism there. Most of this work, however, has examined the influence of indigenous decision-making processes on the union structure, with little attention to the long-term impact of radicalized teachers in the community, beyond their presence in the EZLN.

<sup>8</sup> Othón Salazar not only served as political mentor to future popular leaders of his natal state, but has continued his own personal activism there. A scholarly biography of Salazar is long overdue. He began his political activism as a student at the *normal* in Ayotzinapa in 1952. Teacher-activist Antonio Sotelo Pérez notes that Salazar was very supportive of the Guerrerense struggles, an assertion borne out by his frequent presence at rallies throughout the ensuing decades. Antonio Sotelo Pérez, *Breve historia de la Asociación Cívica Guerrerense, Jefaturada por Genaro Vázquez Rojas* con prologo por Pablo Sandoval Cruz (Chilpancingo: Instituto de Investigación Científica, Area Humanístico Social de la UAG, "Testimonios," Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero, 1991), 129. For examples of his continued activism in Guerrero, see, among many, Informe #93 June 20, 1980, Secretaría de Gobernación, Informe de Chilpancingo, Archivo General de la Nación (hereafter AGN), DGIPS, Caja 1488, 1968-1982; Informe de Acapulco, July 8, 1977, AGN, DGIPS, Caja 1766, Folder 2, Files #2701, 1976-1981, AGN DGIPS Caja 1900, 1973-1981, August 27 and October 2, 1978 rallies and marches in Acapulco regarding political prisoners. *La Jornada* (2 de mayo de 2004):33 notes a meeting in Salazar's home town of Alcozauca to discuss formation of a radical political party. For a recent tribute to him see Enrique Semo, "Othón Salazar," *Proceso*: 23 Mayo 2004. (Míl gracias a Carmen Nava for these last two citations.). For some background on Salazar and his

their imprint on the political landscape of Guerrero honed their political philosophies and organizing skills in struggles alongside Salazar. Among those who joined the MRM were not only future militants Genaro Vázquez Rojas (in Mexico City) and Lucio Cabañas (in Guerrero) but, according to Guerrerense teacher-militant Arturo Miranda Ramírez, “most” of the primary school teachers of the Costa Grande and Sierra de Atoyac.<sup>9</sup> The MRM also provided a social and organizational network among the teachers and students at the *escuela normal* in Ayotzinapa, Guerrero.<sup>10</sup> It served, notes labor historian Maria Lorena Cook, as “an important precursor to the nationwide dissident movement that emerged in the late 1970s and 1980s . . . serving as a bridge between one generation of dissidents and the next.”<sup>11</sup>

Carlos Monsiváis has written that Othón Salazar and Demetrio Vallejo, long-imprisoned leader of the railroad workers, share much in common: intransigence, fidelity to their principles, and the spirit of sacrifice.<sup>12</sup> These qualities were soon to be associated with Guerrerense leaders Genaro Vázquez Rojas and Lucio Cabañas.

As a student and political activist in the capital, Vázquez Rojas was surrounded by other young activists at the *escuela normal*, many of whom had come to the capital from Guerrero for their professional training. It was also as a student at the *escuela normal* that he met his future wife, Consuelo Solís Morales, herself a political activist and student at the *Escuela Nacional de Maestras*.<sup>13</sup> And it was here that he and a small contingent of Guerrerense students created la Federación de Estudiantes Guerrerenses

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Movimiento Revolucionario Magisterial, see Barry Carr, *Marxism and Communism in Twentieth-Century Mexico* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992); Barry Carr, “The Face of the Vanguard under a Revolutionary State: Marxism’s Contribution to the Construction of the Great Arch,” in *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico*, ed. Gilbert M. Joseph, Daniel Nugent, and Forward by James C. Scott (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994) and Loyo Brambila, *El movimiento magisterial*. It is important to note that among the strike leaders in Mexico City in 1968, Roberta Avendaño had also gained her political baptism as a member of the MRM. Roberta Avendaño, “Los Protagonistas: La patria que no cambió,” *Nexos* 121, enero de 1988.

<sup>9</sup> Arturo Miranda Ramírez, *El otro rostro de la guerrilla* (México: El Machete, 1994), 54 and 71. The MRM itself remained actively engaged in Guerrero. See among several, *Actualidades*, July 25, 1973, for MRM members’ participation in a prison hunger strike with other teacher-activists, including Jorge Mota and Miranda Ramírez.

<sup>10</sup> Teacher-activist Serafín Nuñez attributes the teachers’ efforts to democratize their union, which took hold in Acapulco and the Costa Grande by the early 1960s, with spreading Salazar’s “theory and practice” of movement organizing among those engaged in popular mobilization. Serafín Nuñez Ramos, “Raíces históricas de la transición democrática en Guerrero,” in *La transición democrática en Guerrero*, 182.

<sup>11</sup> Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 67. As with many of the scholars who have studied the labor movement, Cook’s reference is really directed more towards its effect on union dissidents. My argument herein is that its influence went beyond union organizing.

<sup>12</sup> Carlos Monsiváis, “El 68: Las ceremonias del agravio y la memoria,” in Julio Scherer García and Carlos Monsiváis, *Parte de Guerra: Tlatelolco 1968, Documentos del General Marcelino García Barragan. Los hechos y la historia* (México: Nuevo Siglo Aguilar, 1999), 132

<sup>13</sup> She attended 1950-1955. Student records, Consuelo Solís Morales, *Escuela Nacional de Maestras*. Consuelo Solís Morales, interview with A. Andrade, *Excelsior* (2 de febrero de 1972), in Orlando Ortíz, *Genaro Vázquez, con prologo y selección de Orlando Ortíz* (México: Editorial Diógenes, 1974), 30.

Radicados, the seed of what would become the state-wide coalition of popular forces known as the Asociación Cívica Guerrerense (ACG).<sup>14</sup>

Returning to Guerrero in 1959, Vázquez Rojas chose “to fully dedicate myself to the solution to the agrarian problems, [thus] I abandoned my position as a teacher and assumed responsibility for the *campesino* organizations of my state.”<sup>15</sup> In truth, Vázquez Rojas never worked as a teacher in his home-state, although he taught briefly in a poor barrio of Mexico City.<sup>16</sup> In a 1971 interview with *¿PorQue?*, Vázquez Rojas, born in the small community of San Luis Acatlán, identified his father as a *campesino* leader who had taken the young Genaro to *ejido* meetings.<sup>17</sup> Thus, his commitment to radical democratic change was not formed by the traditional experiences of teachers immersed in the contemporary concerns of the community; rather, it was shaped both by the realities of Guerrerense exploitation which he had witnessed as a child and the political education he acquired in the capital.

Along with Fausto Ávila, Vázquez Rojas’ cohorts from his days in the capital included well over a dozen other teachers, all of whom would make crucial contributions to unfolding events in their native state.<sup>18</sup> They returned to Guerrero at a fortuitous time: the popular classes were wracked by a history of neglect from the federal government and brutal repression by local elites, expanding commercial agriculture and

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<sup>14</sup> Interestingly, a similar origin can be identified for the popular resistance movement in Juchitán, center of the Isthmus de Tehuantepec, in Oaxaca. Howard Campell notes, “A Juchiteco intellectual group emerged in the early to mid-twentieth century as a result of new educational opportunities in the Mexican capital [and I]n the 1960s a younger, more radical group of Juchiteco writers and artists began a new phase of Isthmus Zapotec intellectual production. For this group, it was important to return to their native community and directly confront local political problems. The younger generation of Zapotec intellectuals played a key role in the founding of COCEI.” Howard Campbell, *Zapotec Renaissance: Ethnic Politics and Cultural Revivalism in Southern Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994), 136-137. Like Guerrero, the politics of that region are also closely linked to indigenous identities organized in opposition to work- and environment-related challenges. Campell also notes that at least some of the radicals there attended the Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero. Campbell, *Zapotec Renaissance*, 138. He traces important links between the Juchiteco activists and events in Mexico City, actions at the university in Oaxaca City, and a popular movement to remove a governor there. The parallels are obviously intriguing.

<sup>15</sup> Genaro Vázquez Rojas, “De Jaramillo a Genaro Vázquez,” *¿PorQue?* 181 (16 de diciembre 1971)

<sup>16</sup> Francisco Gomezjara, *Bonapartismo y la lucha campesina en la Costa Grande de Guerrero* (México: Colección Ideas, Editorial Posada, 1979), 264

<sup>17</sup> Vázquez Rojas, *¿PorQue?* San Luis Acatlán is slightly inland in the region of the Costa Chica, about two-and-a-half hours’ drive from Acapulco. Vázquez Rojas was at school on a state scholarship, as were most of the future militants who attended either the *escuela nacional* or the *normal* in Ayotzinapa.

<sup>18</sup> Guerrerense teacher-activists who were trained professionally in the capital included Genaro Vázquez Rojas, Fausto Ávila, Ismael and Jose Bracho Campos, Consuelo Solís Morales, Antonio Sotelo Pérez, Jesús Mota y Hernández, Jorge Mota González, Roque Salgado Ochoa, Pedro Contreras, Donato Contreras, Vicente Estrada Vegas and Demostenes Onofre Valdovines. All, student records, Archivos de la Escuela Nacional.

international lumber interests, and increasing urbanization and tourism.<sup>19</sup> Local *caciques* responded to federal intrusions by actively encouraging the continued economic and political isolation of “immense regions” they controlled through near-*caudillo*-like militarism.<sup>20</sup> A national military and economic presence generated conflicts which historian Andres Rubio Záldivar suggests “were important for the creation of an area of support for the guerrilla.”<sup>21</sup> In their efforts to contain and control that encroachment, *campesinos* found allies among the teachers, “many [of whom] became community leaders in struggles over land and in disputes with regional *caciques*. . . .”<sup>22</sup>

The expansion of commercial agriculture, particularly copra, coffee, sesame and forestry production,<sup>23</sup> in turn generated unionizing efforts which resulted in the deaths and suppression of organizers and participants. Teacher-activists became deeply immersed in these labor struggles, establishing important, mutually-beneficial relations, which later secured a supportive base when many of these teachers joined the guerrilla

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<sup>19</sup> For an overview of economic and social conditions in Guerrero and its place in the nation after World War II, see among others James M. Cypher, *State and Capital in Mexico: Development Policy since 1940* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990); Carlos Illades, *Breve historia de Guerrero* (México: El Colegio de México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, Sección de Obras de Historia: Serie Breves Historias de los Estados de la República Mexicana, 2000), Manuel Rios Morales, *Regimen capitalista e indigenas en la Montaña de Guerrero, Historia de Guerrero* (Chilpancingo: Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero, 1983); Tomás Bustamante Álvarez, *Las transformaciones de la agricultura o las paradojas del desarrollo regional: Tierra Caliente, Guerrero* (México: Juan Pablos Editor Procuraduría Agraria, 1996); Dina Michele Berger, “Pyramids by Day, Martinis by Night: The Development and Promotion of Mexico’s Tourism Industry, 1928-1946” (dissertation, University of Arizona, 2002); Florencio Encarnación Ursua con Prologo por Francisco A. Gomezjara, *Las luchas de los copreros Guerrerenses* (México: Editora y Distribudora Nacional de Publicaciones, 1977); Estrada Castañón, *Guerrero: Sociedad, economía, política y cultura*; Gomezjara, *Bonapartismo*. Mario O. Martínez Rescalvo and Jorge R. Obregón Tellez, *La Montaña de Guerrero: Economía, historia y sociedad* (Chilpancingo: Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero, 1991). Aaron E. Zazueta, “Agricultural Policy in Mexico: The Limits of a Growth Model,” in *State, Capital, and Rural Society: Anthropological Perspectives on Political Economy in Mexico and the Andes*, ed. Michael W. Foley and Thomas F. Love Benjamin S. Orlove (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989). Félix Arana Hoyo and Olga Cárdenas Trueba, “Desarrollo del capitalismo agrario y lucha de clases en la Costa y Sierra de Guerrero” (paper presented at the Wissenschaftliche Jahrestagung 1980 Sektion-Pflanzenproduktion, Humboldt Universität, R.D.A. Berlin, undated 1980 (Noviembre de 1980). On the long history of political repression and exclusion in Guerrero, see Armando Bartra, *Guerrero bronco: Campesinos, ciudadanos y guerrilleros en la Costa Grande* (México: Ediciones Era, Colección Problemas de México, 2000).

<sup>20</sup> The expression is used by Alba Teresa Estrada Castañón, *El movimiento anticaballerista: Guerrero 1960, Crónica de un conflicto* (Chilpancingo: Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero, Colección Textos de Investigación 2001), 18

<sup>21</sup> Andres Rubio Záldivar, *El movimiento social Guerrerense y la lucha armada de Genaro Vázquez Rojas* (Chilpancingo: EPMAT, Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero, Periódico Pueblo, 1994), 15

<sup>22</sup> Cook, *Organizing Dissent*, 110. For a discussion of several such cases, see David L. Raby, “Los maestros rurales y los conflictos sociales en México (1931-1940),” *Historia Mexicana*, Vol. XVIII, Nú 2, 190-226, in which he argues that teacher-activism in securing land title, leadership in demands for a minimum wage for hacienda workers, and other challenges to the status quo resulted in at least 139 documented incidents of violence or threats of violence against rural teachers from 1931-1940, although many appear directly attributable to the Cristero Revolt.

<sup>23</sup> *Copra* is the processed product (importantly, oil) of coconut. These are the key export products from Guerrero.

movement in the wake of government repressions.<sup>24</sup> Vázquez Rojas describes the base of his Asociación Cívica Guerrerense (ACG) as exploited “*coprereros, cafeticultores, ajonjolineros y [tejedores] de la palma.*”<sup>25</sup> Teacher-activist Antonio Sotelo suggests “the deterioration of the economic and political situation . . . [together with] the great national and international politics decidedly influenced the conscience of many Guerrerenses. The year 1959 served as a ‘parting of the waters’ . . . .”<sup>26</sup>

While state-wide conditions in Guerrero were conducive to a broad-based coalition of the popular sectors, the lessons learned in political struggles in Mexico City in the 1950s helped shape the nature of that coalition. In October 1959, Guerrerense students at the recently re-structured university were raising demands which – like so much of Guerrero’s oppositional history – would be mirrored in the student demands in Mexico City in 1968.<sup>27</sup> At heart was a vision of a “democratic and popular university” in service to the populace, with a socially-progressive academic orientation and a student

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<sup>24</sup> At a congress in 1964, the newly-formed Unión Libre de Asociaciones Copreras (ULAC) selected *maestro* Ismael Bracho Campos, graduate of the *Escuela Nacional de Maestros* in Mexico City, as its Secretary General. Bracho Campos and his brother José, also of the *Escuela Nacional de Maestros*, remained active labor organizers. Among other teachers actively engaged in the *coprereros*’ efforts were the signatories of a “seven point challenge” in support of the *coprereros*’ right to organize against the undemocratic practices of the local *cacique*. Those signing, many with links to the *escuelas normales*, also had close ties to the grassroots coalition of the Asociación Cívica Guerrerense (ACG). Among the signatories were Fausto Ávila and Antonio Sotelo Pérez, the later representing the Liga Agraria Revolucionaria del Sur “Emiliano Zapata.” Sotelo Pérez, recently deceased, attended the *Escuela Nacional de Maestros* in the capital from 1952-58. *Maestro* Pedro Contreras signed for the Asociación de Cafecultores Independientes.

On the labor activities of these teachers, see Alfonso Quevado Castro, *La industrialización de la copra en la Costa del Estado de Guerrero* (México: Editorial Logos, 1963). Encarnación Ursua, *Las luchas de los coprereros Guerrerenses*. Hoyo and Trueba, “Desarrollo Del Capitalismo Agrario,” Andres Rubio Zaldivar, *El movimiento social Guerrerense*, Antonio Sotelo Pérez, *Breve historia de la Asociación Cívica Guerrerense, jefaturada por Genaro Vázquez Rojas with Prologue by Pablo Sandoval Cruz*, ed. Area Humanístico Social de la Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero, Instituto de Investigación Científica, *Testimonios* (Chilpancingo: Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero, 1991), *Informe de Iguala*, Consejo de Autodefensa del Pueblo de Guerrero, signed by Fausto Ávila (ACG), Antonio Sotelo (Liga Agraria Revolucionario ‘Emiliano Zapata’), Ismael Bracho (Unión Libre de Asociación Copreras), Pedro Contreras (Asociación de Caficultores Independientes), Elpidio Ocampo (Consejo de Autodefensa, Iguala), José Martínez, (Asociación de Productores Independientes de Ajonjolí). AGN Caja/1488, File 1967-1969, 8 de enero de 1967; Andrea Radilla Martínez, *Poderes, saberes y sabores: una historia de resistencia de los cafeticultores, Atoyac, 1940-1974* (Chilpancingo: self-published, 1998); Bustamante Álvarez, *Las Transformaciones de la agricultura*, and Gomezjara, *Bonapartism*. On grassroots support of the clandestine movements, Hoyo, Interview.

<sup>25</sup> Vázquez Rojas, in *¿PorQue?* in Encarnación Ursua, *Las luchas de los coprereros*, 312.

<sup>26</sup> Sotelo Pérez, *Breve historia*, 53

<sup>27</sup> Like those in Guerrero, teachers and students in Mexico City were initially engaged over issues directly related to educational access, such as tuition, or concepts of education autonomy, such as the selection of a university rector or the dispatch of military troops on campus. Historian Sergio Aguayo, citing a US Embassy memorandum, states that 23 of the 53 “student disruptions” recorded between 1963 and 1968 were inspired by school-related issues. Aguayo, *La Charola*, 119.

body reflective of the poorest communities of the state.<sup>28</sup> “In other words, [they] visualized the university as an agent of change.”<sup>29</sup> Teachers quickly assumed a leadership role alongside the students, expanding the university-related demands to include removal of the notoriously abusive governor, and making outreach efforts to the broader community their strategic priority. Their experiences in the labor struggles throughout the state proved crucial in building alliances between these workers and the striking students. The struggle they initiated has been called “one of the first popular student movements against the antidemocratic system [in power] . . . Chilpancingo [capital city of Guerrero and site of the university] demonstrated the grand possibilities to raise . . . practices of unity into a systematic form.”<sup>30</sup>

Teachers returning from the capital were joined in their efforts by an equally dedicated contingent of teachers and teachers-in-training: those from the *escuela normal* in Ayotzinapa, a fifteen-minute *combi* ride from the state capital. By the 1950s, rural normal schools dotted the national landscape. Although their primarily *campesino* students often entered the schools on scholarship as a route to improved economic status, many retained their community allegiances, reflecting “the youthful concerns and problems which troubled the Mexican countryside.”<sup>31</sup> The schools had secured a national reputation for radical political orientation, none more so than the *escuela normal rural* in Ayotzinapa.<sup>32</sup> In the words of graduate and militant Arturo Miranda Ramírez, “Throughout its history, the *normal* of Ayotzinapa has been distinguished as a seedbed of social fighters. . . . There is a long list of martyrs and heroes emerging from this *normal*.”<sup>33</sup> It already counted MRM activist Othón Salazar among its alumni. This generation of teachers-in-training produced the popular leader whose reputation would stand alongside that of Vázquez Rojas: Lucio Cabañas.

Although Lucio Cabañas completed his professional education locally, like Vázquez Rojas, he was a member of Othón Salazar’s Movimiento Revolucionario de

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<sup>28</sup> Their demands included removal of the current governor-appointed rector; reforms to the Ley Organica; increased budget; and restitution of scholarships for poor students who had lost them. These represented two key axes of concern: the quality of the University (administration, budget) and accessibility for students who represented the majority of the populace. Mario García Cerros, “Testimonio,” in Jesús Salieron, et al, eds., *1960: historia gráfica de un movimiento social* (Chilpancingo: Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero, 1991), 30. For a general overview on issues of university autonomy in Latin America, see Timothy P. Wickham-Crowley, *Guerrillas & Revolution in Latin America: A Comparative Study of Insurgents and Regimes Since 1956* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 35-37

<sup>29</sup> García Cerros, “Testimonio,” 32

<sup>30</sup> Gomezjara, *Bonapartismo*, 266

<sup>31</sup> Baloy Mayo, *La guerrilla de Genaro y Lucio: análisis y resultados* (México: Editorial Diógenes, 1980, 4th ed. Grupo Jaguar Impresiones, 2001), 44. Cabañas himself came from a modest, although not destitute, *campesino* family. His education, like that of Vázquez Rojas, was all managed through scholarship support.

<sup>32</sup> See the description of the politicization of these schools in Mayo, *La guerrilla de Genaro y Lucio*, 44-45, Gomezjara, “El proceso político de jenaro [sic] vázquez hacia la guerrilla campesina,” *Revista Mexicana de Ciencias políticas y sociales*, Año XXIII, Nueva Epoca: 88 (abril a junio 1977): 87-127, Miranda Ramírez, *El otro rostro*, and elsewhere.

<sup>33</sup> Miranda Ramírez, *El otro rostro*, 27

Magisterio. He organized support among his fellow-students at the *escuela normal* during the state-wide movement to remove Governor Raúl Caballero Aburto, serving as president of the student strike committee. In Ayotzinapa, notes colleague Arturo Miranda Ramírez, Cabañas “established political relations with *compañeros*, the majority at the *normales rurales*; many of them later became direct combatants or collaborators in different parts of the country . . . . He made frequent visits to the poor *campesinos* of the region,”<sup>34</sup> extending his political profile to surrounding communities. It was here that he developed, in the words of historian Baloy Mayo, into “a man of action.”<sup>35</sup>

Cabañas’ colleague from the *escuela* in Ayotzinapa, Serafín Nuñez, came from a family of teachers educated at that same *normal*, including both parents and an aunt, all of whom had attended in the heyday of socialist education. His earliest recollections of radical philosophical influence date to study at the *normal*, whose walls displayed portraits of Stalin and Marx alongside a hammer-and-sickle. Despite the prominence given to Marxist thought, Nuñez describes his teachers inspiring theoretical inquisitiveness rather than an ideological inculcation. After completing his studies at Ayotzinapa in 1958, Nuñez began his teaching career along the Costa Grande, “to serve the people.” He was eighteen years old. Like Vázquez Rojas, his political convictions reflected his childhood memories: he recalled with nostalgia the “abundance” and “prosperity” of his childhood, and poignantly recounted the 1947 arrival of US capitalists “to exploit the forests.”<sup>36</sup>

The strategy coordinated by these teacher-activists in their efforts to secure democratic processes in the state – that of building a broad-based coalition – proved effective. The state-wide closure of businesses and the resultant impasse were too great a challenge: on December 30, 1960 the stand-off came to abrupt end when the 24<sup>th</sup> Battalion, aided by additional forces, unleashed their violence against the people maintaining a strike presence in the central plaza of Chilpancingo. Men, women and children were among the fifteen dead and even more injured victims.<sup>37</sup> Testimonies gathered by Pablo Sandoval Cruz suggest that the assault that day was premeditated: several citizens of Chilpancingo reported seeing significant troop movement that morning. Others in the nearby town of Tixtla testified that numerous military jeeps full of soldiers had passed through town the previous night.<sup>38</sup> The astute analysis of Sergio Aguayo comparing government behaviors in the plazas of Chilpancingo and Mexico City supports these suspicions.<sup>39</sup> Historian Marcial Rodríguez Saldaña is not alone in defining

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<sup>34</sup> Miranda Ramírez, *El otro rostro*, 53.

<sup>35</sup> Mayo, *La guerrilla de Genaro y Lucio*, 45

<sup>36</sup> The Nuñez family was from Xixijualco, in Ixtla, quite near Atoyac. Nuñez described the family as moderately prosperous, benefiting modestly from land redistribution during the Cárdenas presidency. All personal details, Serafín Nuñez, Interview, Chilpancingo, March 2003.

<sup>37</sup> Figures, Armando Bartra, *Guerrero Bronco*, 91

<sup>38</sup> Pablo Sandoval Cruz, *El movimiento social de 1960 en Guerrero* (Chilpancingo: Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero, 1999), 69

<sup>39</sup> Sergio Aguayo, *La Charola*, 135-136

the military intervention as a crucial rupture between the government and civil society.<sup>40</sup> The same rupture would occur with the military assault on citizens in Tlatelolco Plaza in 1968.

Immediately thereafter, President Adolfo López Mateos seized the state's political reins, and on the morning of the 31<sup>st</sup> dispatched the 50<sup>th</sup> Battalion, housed in Mexico City's infamous Campo Militar Número Uno, to Chilpancingo. The remaining strikers soon joined their compatriots in the Chilpancingo jail (whose facade continues today to display political graffiti, such as demands to free political prisoners). In an emergency session of the Senate of the Republic, an interim governor was appointed to replace the disgraced Caballero Aburto.<sup>41</sup>

But despite their apparent success – after all, the popular classes played a key role in the fall of a widely-detested governor<sup>42</sup> – conditions at the University did not improve, leading to a long list of expulsions in the ensuing years.<sup>43</sup> Nor did political democracy arrive in Guerrero. When fraudulent elections were challenged in 1962, the popular classes were subjected to yet further government repression. On December 30, 1962, a military attack on protesters gathered in Iguala resulted in seven deaths, 23 people injured, and 280 arrests.<sup>44</sup> Twenty thousand soldiers imposed order. In the next several years, the populace was subjected to military incursions, the destruction of the market

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<sup>40</sup> Marcial Rodríguez Saldaña, “Las relaciones UAG-Gobierno, Balance y perspectivas,” in *La transición democrática*, 45. Noted public figures, including Vicente Lombardo Toledano, Carlos Fuentes and Victor Flores Olea, published editorials supportive of the struggle and condemned of the government assault after the massacre in December. Rodríguez Saldaña, *La desaparición de poderes en el Estado de Guerrero* (Chilpancingo: Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero, 1992), 158

<sup>41</sup> On concurrent events in Atoyac, including seizure of the Palacio Municipal on January 8 and of municipal authority on January 14 by *cívicos*, students and members of the Frente Zapatista, see Wilfred Fierro Armenta, *Monografía de Atoyac* (Chilpancingo: self-published, nd), 198-201. Many of the leaders noted in those efforts are identified as *profesor* and *profesora*. Fierro Armenta identifies himself as president of the local Sociedad de Padres de Familia.

<sup>42</sup> On the movement to oust Governor Raúl Caballero Aburto, see Alba Teresa Estrada Castañón, *El movimiento Anticaballerista: Guerrero 1960, crónica de un conflicto* (Chilpancingo: Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero, Colección: Textos de Investigación, 2001), Sandoval Cruz, *El movimiento social de 1960 en Guerrero*, María de la Luz Gama Santillán, “Guerrero durante los últimos 30 años,” in *La transición democrática*, Nuñez Ramos, “Raíces históricas, Rodríguez Saldaña, *La desaparición*, Sotelo Pérez, *Breve historia*, and José C. Gutiérrez Galindo, *Y el pueblo se puso de pie: La verdad sobre el caso Guerrero* (México: Editorial Logos, 1961), among many.

<sup>43</sup> Miranda Ramírez, *El otro rostro*, Jaime López, *10 Años de guerrillas en México, 1964-1974* (México: Colección Duda Semanal de Editorial Posada, SA, Editorial Posada, 1974), Antonio Aranda Flores, *Los Cívicos Guerrerenses* (México: privately published (Luysil de Mexico), 1979), Hoyo interview, Alejandra Cárdenas, interview with this author, Chilpancingo, August 19, 2002 and other dates.

<sup>44</sup> *Política* reported additional confrontations in Ometepc and detentions in San Luis, and a “state of siege” throughout the Costa Chica and Costa Grande. As described in López, *10 años*, 49. See also Armando Bartra, *Los herederos de Zapata: movimientos campesinos posrevolucionarios de México, 1920-1980* (México: Colección Problemas de México: Ediciones Era, 1985), 84. For an interesting US government description and analysis, see Robert W. Adams, Counselor of Embassy, Department of State Airgram, 712.00/1-363, No. A-876, “Communist Inspired Armed Attack on Local Authority in Iguala, Guerrero,” January 3, 1963, available at National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 124.

booths of those who had supported the *cívicos* (as members of the ACG were known) and the practice known as “*tierra arrasada*” (razed earth policy).<sup>45</sup> Arrests continued and the jails throughout the state filled; other *campesinos* fled to the mountains. Francisco Gomezjara reports over four-hundred homes in the Costa Grande were razed by military vehicles and burned by troops, leaving over 2,000 families homeless, as a lesson to not challenge the government.<sup>46</sup> The popular movement, while suppressed, was not entirely crushed: two campus strikes occurred, one in opposition to the newly-appointed rector at the Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero, and another at the *normal* in Ayotzinapa in support of those at the UAG.<sup>47</sup> Vázquez Rojas abandoned his public persona and established his guerrilla front.

A devastating massacre in Atoyac – home town of Lucio Cabañas, Serafín Núñez and Fausto Ávila – in 1967 – would drive Cabañas to clandestine opposition as well.<sup>48</sup> The geographic focus of the democratic struggles in Guerrero had shifted from the state capital of Chilpancingo to the town of Atoyac in the Costa Grande, and the leadership had passed from *los cívicos* to Lucio Cabañas and Serafín Nuñez, whose social consciences had been roused at the *escuela normal* in Ayotzinapa. Of the impending conflicts, Armando Bartra notes, “as always, the *maestros normalistas* were the principals behind the struggle.”<sup>49</sup>

Both Cabañas and Nuñez became immersed in local issues in Atoyac, challenging the impact of economic development and raising issues democracy and local autonomy. Specifically, concerns focused on the denuding of the forests under a contract issued to a forestry company in 1963, closure of a textile cooperative and, eventually, the harassment by education officials of Cabañas and Nuñez as “enemies of the state,” introducing “exotic [i.e., foreign] ideas,” and attempting to build a “swarm of communist apprentices.”<sup>50</sup> Surprisingly, the charges against the teachers became the most volatile

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<sup>45</sup> This latter term, Hoyo, Interview.

<sup>46</sup> Gomezjara, *Bonapartismo*, 292-293. Gomezjara also cites *Política*, September 15, 1963, which reported an attack on July 31, in El Pacífico on the Costa Chica. It reported ten hours of “barbarous action” by police and military against the populace, including the execution of seven *campesinos*, the wounding of others, the rape of women, and burning of the community.

<sup>47</sup> López, *10 años*, 51. The people of Guerrero were also cognizant of continued labor and student conflicts nation-wide, including that of the doctors in Mexico City in 1965, the repression at the Cuartel de Ciudad Madera in Chihuahua, led by urban guerrilla leader-*profesor* Arturo Gámiz, also in 1965; and student actions in Yucatán, Tabasco, Puebla, San Luis Potosí, Michoacán, Durango and Sonora in the next few years, as well as sporadic labor strikes by bus drivers, primary teachers, and workers in various agricultural fields. See, among many, Aranda Flores, *Los cívicos Guerrerenses*, 20-21.

<sup>48</sup> Hoyo, interview; Ávila, interview, Nuñez, interview. On the Atoyac massacre, see also Luis Suárez, *Lucio Cabañas: El guerrillero sin esperanza* (México: Editorial Grijalbo, *Política Mexicana*, 1984). For a literary depiction of these events, see Carlos Montemayor, *Guerra en El Paraíso* (México: Editorial Diana, 1991).

<sup>49</sup> Bartra, *Guerrero bronco*, 105

<sup>50</sup> Fierro Armenta, *Monografía de Atoyac*, 316-317

issue, and Cabañas and Nuñez were suspended and removed to alternative posts in Durango in November 1965.<sup>51</sup> Tensions built.

With the return of Cabañas and Nuñez to Atoyac shortly thereafter, the community resumed its struggles. Although there were rumors of a government plan to remove the protesters from in front of the Palacio de Gobierno, no one was prepared for what occurred. It was, Nuñez says with understatement, “a disproportional response.”<sup>52</sup> The main plaza was filled with demonstrators when the police opened fire; seven deaths resulted, many others were injured.

It was May 18, 1967, a date still cited by activists in Guerrero as a key turning point – a ‘watershed’ – in their struggle for democracy. Lucio Cabañas had been present; Serafín Nuñez, by chance, had not. It was the last time they saw each other.<sup>53</sup>

Like his Zapatista uncle before him, Lucio Cabañas abandoned public discourse and went to the Sierras to wage clandestine armed opposition to the Mexican state.<sup>54</sup> Cabañas said, “We were tired of the peaceful struggle without any success. This is why we said: we will go to the Sierras. . . .”<sup>55</sup>

His colleague, Serafín Nuñez, made his way to Moscow to attend the Patrice Lumumba University.<sup>56</sup> After his return to Mexico in 1973, he resumed an active role in

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<sup>51</sup> Nuñez, Interview

<sup>52</sup> Nuñez, Interview

<sup>53</sup> Nuñez, Interview. Fausto Ávila, Interview. Nuñez was told of the assault as he returned to Atoyac by bus from Acapulco. He fled first to Coyuca de Benítez and then to San Geronimo, where he was met by teacher colleagues. He made his way to Tixtla, where he hid out with his grandparents for a week.

<sup>54</sup> According Félix Hoyo and former guerrilla and current Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero professor Arturo Miranda Ramírez, following the 1967 massacre in Atoyac, state-wide repression was so pervasive no *campesino* organizations could remain active. Hoyo, interview; Miranda Ramírez, *El otro rostro*. Lucio Cabañas’ surviving half-brother David, (his *nom de guerre*) reports over 126 members of the Cabañas Barrientos family disappeared in the years after 1967. “David,” interview with this author, Mexico City, March 2003 and *Los Angeles Times*, December 11, 2001. That number increased by one after the assassination of yet another relative in January 2004. Teacher-activists Félix Hoyo and Alejandra Cárdenas were instrumental in smuggling “David” and other Cabañas relatives out of the state. Both recall with delight that “David” was dressed as a woman to evade the watchful eye of the state police. Hoyo, Cárdenas and “David” Cabañas, Interviews.

<sup>55</sup> Lucio Cabañas, “Así me fui a la Sierra, Habla Lucio Cabañas,” in Luis Suárez, *Lucio Cabañas*, 57. For a first-hand account of his guerrilla days, see the memoir by Cabañas’ colleagues, José Luis Orbe Diego et al, *Lucio Cabañas y el PDLP: Una experiencia guerrillera en México* (México: Colección Testimonios, Nuestra America, 1987).

<sup>56</sup> Nuñez, Interview. Emblematic of Mexico’s efforts to achieve leadership of the “non-aligned Third World” nations, it permitted relatively unrestricted academic exchanges. The Patrice Lumumba University was founded in 1960 to provide education and training to a cadre of activists from throughout the Post-Colonial World, ironically including those seeking to replicate the “Cuban experience” of 1959 throughout Latin America. For a brief but highly partisan report on the Patrice Lumumba University, see Alexander Fradkin, *The Patrice Lumumba Friendship University in Moscow* (Moscow: Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, 1973); and interview

the political opposition in town, becoming a vocal advocate for democracy, university autonomy, and the release of political prisoners. He continues on faculty at the Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero.<sup>57</sup>

In the aftermath of the massacre in Tlatelolco, eloquently impassioned commentaries abounded on the death of the democratic option, and the realization by hundreds of participants and witnesses that a “peaceful road to democracy” was closed. It must be apparent, however, that years earlier the people of Guerrero had learned this same lesson: having successfully maneuvered the removal of the governor, two years later they participated in elections widely-perceived as fraudulently nullified and which spawned a bloodbath of increased repression. It was under these conditions that Genaro Vázquez Rojas, Lucio Cabañas and a cadre of teacher-militants turned to armed opposition. It was a choice students, teachers and other workers in Mexico City would make in the days and months following October 2, 1968. Among those who joined Vázquez Rojas and Cabañas in the armed struggle were Consuelo Solís Morales, Filiberto Solís Morales, Roque Salgado Ochoa, António Sotelo Pérez, Vicente and Pedro Estrada Vega, Demostenes Onofre Valdovinos, Fausto Ávila, Felipe and Jorge Mota, Pedro and Donato Contreras, and Ismael and José Bracho Campos—all of whom had attended the *escuela normal* in Mexico City.<sup>58</sup>

I suggest that this first stage of the movement for social justice in Guerrero embodied a widespread disillusionment with the government’s commitment to the ideals of the Mexican Revolution, represented by the absence of democratic political channels (particularly acute on the state level) and the unmediated abuses of capitalist economic exploitation. The demands promulgated reflect an essentially democratic orientation, including commitment to political processes and Constitutional guarantees. They were self-consciously advanced in the democratic language of the Mexican Revolution: “absolute respect for the Constitution,” recognition of the autonomy of “*municipios libres*,” and distribution of *latifundia* lands. Particular demands, such as an end to forest exploitation, recognition of the right to unionize, attention to the educational needs of the community and confirmation of a “social orientation” of the program of study at the University and “all the state’s education,” also reflect the grassroots expectations nurtured in the Revolution of 1910. In an undated manifesto (likely August 1967), the Consejo de Auto-Defensa del Pueblo called on the populace to join them in sending telegrams and letters to the President and Secretaría de Gobernación; such tactics indicate a continued presumption of receptivity at the national level.<sup>59</sup> They also embraced an appreciation of broadly-constructed alliances in their struggle for electoral legitimacy and community decision-making. Government response to their demands for democratic

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with Alejandra Cárdenas. Both she and Carmelo Cortés (Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero student activist-turned-guerrilla) also attended.

<sup>57</sup> Nuñez, Interview. As one of several, see AGN/ DGIPS, Caja 1900, 1973-1981, Informe de Zona Militar, April 16, 1976, Zona Militar 35/a 800 hours.

<sup>58</sup> Student records, Benemerita Escuela Nacional, Mexico City. Composition of armed group, Miranda Ramírez, *El otro rostro*, 60, and elsewhere.

<sup>59</sup> Consejo de Auto-Defensa de Iguala, undated, in Aranda Flores, *Los cívicos Guerrerenses*, 49-50.

opportunities would radicalize this generation of combatants and encourage their receptivity to socialist thought.

Both Vázquez Rojas and Lucio Cabañas continued their political education throughout their short lives.<sup>60</sup> Vázquez Rojas conducted study sessions in which the *cívicos* discussed revolutionary theory with the aid of a “copious collection” of books. The teacher-turned-guerrilla leader expostulated on “seizing power for the people, armed insurrection, class warfare, and other concepts that derived from the triumphant revolutions in Africa, Asia and Latin America.” But alongside these readings and discussions, continues colleague Antonio Sotelo Pérez, he retained a strong nationalist commitment: the history of Mexico and Guerrero, and national leaders including Hidalgo, Morelos, Villa, Zapata, and the more recent Rubén Jaramillo and Arturo Gámiz, “were indispensable elements on the menu.”<sup>61</sup> Fellow teacher-activist Arturo Miranda Ramírez recalls that while Vázquez Rojas was waging guerrilla warfare in the mountains, he often shared his political thoughts with the local *campesinos*, expressing opinions on a range of issues, from “the Sino-Soviet split, the Tupamaros in Uruguay, Allende’s regime in Chile,” and theoreticians “Trotsky, Lenin and Stalin, [as well as] the works of Che and the Cuban Revolution.”<sup>62</sup>

Lucio Cabañas avidly read diverse theoreticians, including not only Marx and Lenin, but Mexican anarchist Ricardo Flores Magón and later, the writings of Che Guevara and Herbert Marcuse.<sup>63</sup> The breadth of Cabañas’ intellectual pursuits was evident in his efforts to adapt lessons applied internationally to local conditions. Most notably, he rejected a strict Leninist construction of the role of a vanguard party, perhaps reflecting the post-Revolutionary Mexican experience with a single political party; and he often eschewed Leninist democratic centralism for a more fluid responsiveness to community input. Luis Suárez describes his style as one “to learn from the people, not to teach them.” This approach was augmented by a personal distaste for “authoritarianism and abuse.”<sup>64</sup>

Both the Guerrerenses educated in Mexico City who had honed their political activism on the streets of the nation’s capital and their colleagues concurrently experiencing the radicalizing influence of the *escuelas normales rurales*, particularly that in Ayotzinapa, provided the popular movements in Guerrero with a national and international perspective on their democratic struggles. They articulated a synthesis of the unfulfilled promises of their nation’s own Revolution of 1910 and the aspirations of

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<sup>60</sup> Vázquez Rojas was killed in an auto accident on the highway between Mexico City and Morelos on February 2, 1972. Many supporters, including his widow, continue to question the “accident.” Lucio Cabañas was killed in a military ambush in the Sierras on December 2, 1974.

<sup>61</sup> All quotes, Sotelo Pérez, *Breve historia*, 128. He also notes Vázquez Rojas’ respect for radical Yucatecan revolutionary Felipe Carrillo Puerto.

<sup>62</sup> Miranda Ramírez, *El otro rostro*, 75

<sup>63</sup> Alejandra Cárdenas, Interview.

<sup>64</sup> Luis Suárez, *Lucio Cabañas*, 17-18. This same personal quality of melding with his cohorts is described by Félix Hoyo. Hoyo, Interview.

the world-wide movements of national liberation emerging in the wake of World War II.<sup>65</sup> Many had found their life experiences reflected in the rhetoric of class struggle. This affinity, particularly under the conditions of Mexico's *guerra sucia*, encouraged them to idealize extant examples of revolutionary movements, most notably that of the Cubans of 1959, and the Marxist rhetoric with which they were portrayed.

These are, then, what I call the "first generation" of teacher-activists of the mid-twentieth century: cutting their political teeth in the popular struggles from 1959-1967. Their earliest goals – including adherence to democratic processes encoded in the Constitution and recognition of the university's autonomy – would reappear as key issues in Mexico City in 1968. Their strategies of broad-based community alliances, learned by some on the streets of the nation's capital, would likewise re-emerge there in 1968. And the rhetoric of democracy, nationalism and justice which marked the earlier union protests in Mexico City had been emblazoned on banners and posters and chanted through the streets of Guerrero. They, too, would be re-enacted in the capital less than a decade later.<sup>66</sup>

### *The Second Generation: In the Aftermath of 1968*

Following the massacre in Atoyac in May of 1967, the popular movement in Guerrero lay in tatters: the only active opposition fought sporadic battles with the federal army from the hills of the Sierra Madre del Sur, sustained by a strong yet discreetly supportive rural population.<sup>67</sup> In communities throughout the state and on the campuses of the University and *escuelas normales*, the public face of opposition was, indeed, silenced by the overwhelming military presence as the state became the major battleground of Mexico's *guerra sucia*.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> For some examples of this rhetorical and ideological synthesis in primary documents, see Orlando Ortíz, ed., *Genaro Vázquez*, Pablo Sandoval Cruz, *El movimiento social de 1960*, Luis Suárez, *Lucio Cabañas*, and Antonio Aranda Flores, *Los Cívicos Guerrerenses*.

<sup>66</sup> Historian Sergio Aguayo has noted that it was not only the popular sectors which honed their skills in Guerrero. Government tactics which raised international censure when exercised in the capital, including a recognizable identification system for operatives, an assault on a large concentration of people in an enclosed plaza, and initiation of indiscriminate shootings, had their antecedents in the infamous assault on the people of Chilpancingo, Guerrero in 1960. Aguayo, *La Charola*, 136

<sup>67</sup> Hoyo, interview; Ávila, interview; Cárdenas, interview. Numerous sources, including government reports, support the assertion that both Vázquez Rojas and Cabañas sustained significant rural support. Armando Bartra argues that the massive military response, including the assignment of over 24,000 soldiers in the Sierras, is evidence of the deep popular roots of Cabañas' guerrillas. Bartra, *Los herederos de Zapata*, 90.

<sup>68</sup> Echoing the balance of press coverage given the massacre in the capital to those in Guerrero, the current press and popular organizations continue to favor recognition of that tragedy in efforts to seek truth and justice today. Recent charges against then-President Echeverría allege his involvement in the June 1971 assault in Mexico City. Charges against Miguel Nazar Haro, head of the notorious Dirección Federal de Seguridad, involve disappearances of activists in the capital. But the attention has "renewed hope" that the whereabouts of over 400 *desaparecidos* from Guerrero may be learned. *La Jornada* (20 de febrero de 2004): Política. Antonio Hernández announced that the government had plans to begin the exhumation of

It was these conditions that the “second generation” of teacher-activists found upon their arrival in Guerrero. In the aftermath of the repressions of 1968 and 1971 in Mexico City, disillusioned activists in the capital faced choices similar to those faced in Guerrero. Some quit political activity altogether in response to the violent repression; others entered “mainstream” political life, including taking up government posts through the ruling party; others later became instrumental in founding the Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD) in 1989, and in the interim, some were active in the birth of other leftist political parties. Several have held public office in Mexico City and elsewhere.<sup>69</sup> As in Guerrero, a number of urban militants committed themselves to clandestine, armed rebellion.<sup>70</sup> And some sought to keep their challenges to the Mexican state alive under very different conditions in the state of Guerrero. They would contribute to rejuvenating that opposition movement through a diversity of strategies: some would attempt to rekindle the public face of protest, some would align with the guerrillas, many would do both. Most did so through their positions on faculty at the Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero.

Scholars still debate the ideological trajectory of both Vázquez Rojas and Cabañas, but there is no question that the educators who joined their struggle in the post-’68 era were committed to a vision of revolutionary socialism. Among them were Félix Hoyo, Antonio Hernández and Alejandra Cárdenas.<sup>71</sup> They were joined in their efforts by Serafín Núñez, Alfonso Aguayo, Octaviano Santiago Dionisio, Eloy Cisneros, and other Guerrerense teacher-militants.

Alejandra Cárdenas, whom I interviewed in Guerrero, was originally from Baja California. She joined the Juventud Comunista Mexicana (the youth wing of the Communist Party) while enrolled at the *escuela normal* in Mexico City. She then attended the Patrice Lumumba University in Moscow, which Núñez and other student- and teacher-activists from Guerrero also attended. She joined the faculty at the Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero in 1972. She sought to strengthen University-community political networks; was a liaison between the public and Lucio Cabañas; and, with colleagues Alfonso Aguayo and Antonio Hernández, co-founded a preparatory school (“Prepa Comité Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara”) which was the source of many student-

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bodies of those executed by the military and “interred in clandestine cemeteries” in the state. *La Jornada* (21 de febrero de 2004): Política. Encouragingly, *La Jornada* also reported that the effort in the Sierras of Atoyac would be led by forensic anthropologists from Argentina. *La Jornada* (5 de febrero de 2004): Política. For more on Guerrero as the key site of Mexico’s *guerra sucia*, see fn 79.

<sup>69</sup> Journals such as *Nexos* and *Revista de la Universidad (UNAM)* have traced the post-’68 careers of many of the leaders of the movement, interviewed in anniversary issues of 1988 and 1998, among others.

<sup>70</sup> An excellent historiographical overview of this period is *Revisión teórica sobre la historiografía de la guerrilla mexicana (1965-1978)*, by Arturo Luis Alonzo Padilla (Working Paper, Conference on Twentieth Century Guerrilla Movements in Mexico, Colegio de Michoacán, Zamora, Michoacán, July 2002). His work is strictly a critique of the historiography on guerrilla movements only. He makes no attempt to relate the urban and rural movements to each other, nor does he examine the public manifestations of opposition.

<sup>71</sup> Hoyo, interview; Cárdenas, interview. Eloy Cisneros, interview with this author, Chilpancingo, July 2, 2003.

activists throughout the 1970s. In addition to the standard works of Marx and Lenin, she was – like Cabañas – heavily influenced by anarchist Ricardo Flores Magón and the writings of Che Guevara and Herbert Marcuse. She portrays her efforts in that period as fraught with difficulties under the pall of severe government repression.<sup>72</sup>

Her colleague, Félix Hoyo, was a student of physics at UNAM in 1968. Active with a Jesuit group, he was speaking to a gathering of Acción Católica about the ongoing public protests in the capital when government forces were loosed on Tlatelolco Plaza. The events radicalized him and many of the Jesuits, who began to study socialism.<sup>73</sup> He thought of himself as a “Christian for socialism.” The events on June 10, 1971 convinced him that real change would not come through legal channels. Like many students, he abandoned his science studies in favor of a career in the social sciences (transferring from physics to sociology). After completing his program at UNAM, he left for a faculty position at the Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero. Upon his arrival in 1972, he sought to fill the “leadership vacuum” he found by conducting seminars, lectures and readings on Marxism and socialism. Although hired in the Department of Philosophy, he “taught anywhere he could,” including the departments of Engineering and Law, to increase his exposure to students. His other self-imposed assignment was uniting the union workers, students and faculty on the UAG campus.<sup>74</sup>

Hoyo spent only one year in Guerrero before harassment and armed threats convinced his colleagues that he should leave the state.<sup>75</sup> But in his short time there, Hoyo had assumed leadership in organizing a group of teacher-activists which included Cárdenas, Hernández and Pablo Sandoval, all of whom would continue their radical proselytizing in the state.

Rural leaders Vázquez Rojas and Cabañas, already familiar with the discourse of leftist thought and international issues inspired by the Cuban Revolution,<sup>76</sup> facilitated the alliance of rural communities with academics, actively seeking teachers to lead theoretical discussions among their young followers. The political proselytizing of these “second generation” teacher-activists included educational sessions in the hills initiated

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<sup>72</sup> Alejandra Cárdenas, Interview. Cárdenas was herself a political prisoner. Regarding Cárdenas’ charges of torture and imprisonment, including the interview with Cárdenas on her allegations against General Mario Arturo Acosta Chaparro’s involvement in her imprisonment and torture, *La Jornada*, 7 de diciembre 2002. The case of Professor Jacobo Nájera, assassinated in 1974, remains open. *La Jornada* (24 de enero de 2004): Política.

<sup>73</sup> Hoyo knew a number of former Jesuits who later joined the radical Liga Comunista de 23 de septiembre, including its leader, Ignacio Salas Obregón. Hoyo, Interview.

<sup>74</sup> All personal details, and quotes, Hoyo interview.

<sup>75</sup> Hoyo left Guerrero and took up a faculty position at the Universidad Autónoma de Chapingo near Mexico City. The Chapingo campus also has a history of radical activism. Hoyo retains his position there today.

<sup>76</sup> Colleague Miranda Ramírez says that Cabañas listened to radio reports of the unfolding revolution in Cuba. He also recalls their teacher at the *escuela normal* in Ayotzinapa telling them, “. . . that within ten years, here in Mexico we, too, will be living a revolutionary movement like that in Cuba.” Miranda Ramírez, *El otro rostro*, 33.

by Cabañas for the educational benefit of himself and his young guerrilla fighters.<sup>77</sup> Community outreach efforts included establishment of a *preparatoria* affiliated with the Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero as they sought to keep the democratic struggle alive with another generation of students. And they were at the forefront of public protests on the campus and in the streets of Chilpancingo.<sup>78</sup>

Like their predecessors, this generation of teacher-activists suffered harassment, repression, arrest, torture and disappearances.<sup>79</sup>

### Conclusions

The Mexican state had long used teachers as missionaries in the task of enfolding remote rural communities into the nation-state. But as Mary Kay Vaughan and others have noted, these teachers found themselves ambivalent emissaries of a state system whose expansion provided questionable benefits to the communities.<sup>80</sup> Teachers' experiences among the neglected and exploited rural populace often belied the suitability of the national agenda to further integrate rural workers into an advancing capitalist economy. Some, such as the parents of Serafín Nuñez, brought with them or acquired on-sight a radical ideology with which they hoped to shape Mexico's future and the role of workers and *campesinos* in it.<sup>81</sup> Historian Barry Carr points out that socialist education attracted a more radical population to the profession, many of whom joined the Partido Comunista Mexicana. He has also noted that rural teachers in particular "had a

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<sup>77</sup> Hoyo, Interview. Cárdenas, Interview. Suárez, *Lucio Cabañas*.

<sup>78</sup> Hoyo, Cárdenas, Ávila, Nuñez, Cisneros Interviews. See also AGN/1900, Oct 2, 1978; AGN/2689, General Informe, 28-iii-1974 11-12, Chilpancingo; *El Correo de Iguala*, May 15, 1973; Octaviano Santiago Dionicio, "Testimonio," in *Cuadernos de la Federación Estudiantil Universitaria Guerrerense*, ed. unidentified (Chilpancingo: Coordinación de Publicaciones Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero, 1979); Miranda Ramírez, *El otro rostro; Avance de Iguala*, May 4, 1973; "David" Cabañas, Interview; Alfonso Aguario, interview with this author, Chilpancingo, February 21, 2003 and other occasions.

<sup>79</sup> Cárdenas, interview; "David," interview; Aguario, interview. See also extensive coverage in *La Jornada*, including 29 de agosto de 2002, 28 y 29 de septiembre 2002, 7 de octubre 2002.

Of this period, Armando Bartra notes, "In the years of Figueroa's governorship [1975-1981], hundreds of those suspected of sympathizing with the guerrillas were kidnapped, tortured, assassinated, and thrown into the sea." Armando Bartra, "Sur Profundo," in Armando Bartra, Rosario Cobo, Gisela Espinosa, et al, eds., *Crónicas del Sur: Utopías campesinas de Guerrero* (México: Ediciones Era, 2000), 31.

The United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances (WGEID) estimates that of its 319 reported disappearances in Mexico, "the majority . . . occurred between 1974 and 1981," and that 98 of these were "in the context of the rural guerrilla warfare [in] the state of Guerrero." United Nations document, E/CN.4/1997/34, page 43. It also notes that four recent reportings "of disappearance occurred in the state of Guerrero . . . ."

See also: Amnesty International Report, AI-index: AMR 41/005/1998, 07/05/1998. See also *Amnesty International's concerns in Mexico*, AI Index: AMR 41/13/86, July 1986.

<sup>80</sup> Mary Kay Vaughan, *The State, Education, and Social Class in Mexico, 1880-1928* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1982), Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Education*, Christopher R. Boyer, *Becoming Campesinos: Politics, Identity, and Agrarian Struggle in Postrevolutionary Michoacán, 1920-1935* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), and Marjorie K. Becker, *Setting the Virgin on Fire: Lázaro Cárdenas, Michoacán Peasants and the Redemption of the Mexican Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995)

<sup>81</sup> Nuñez, Interview

long-standing reputation for dedication and commitment to the moral and political transformation of Mexican society.”<sup>82</sup>

By the 1950s, the confluence of urban- and rural-based labor organizing and an excessively repressive state apparatus rebounded on the government: teachers were in the vanguard of popular opposition rather than serving as representatives of state doctrine. Building on the legacy of teacher activism in the decades following the Mexican Revolution of 1910, these educators returned to their natal state or arrived in communities where their reception benefited from the traditional respect for education, providing them leverage and a platform from which to reach students and parents.

After the massacres of 1968 and 1971, the capital – and other urban centers, notably Guadalajara – were subjected to the volatile conflict between state forces and the urban guerrillas who exploded (quite literally) – and fizzled – in isolation, never quite gaining a popular base. Their story has been explored by some scholars but much remains to be studied.<sup>83</sup> Among the most notorious was Arturo Gámiz, famed for leading the failed assault on the Ciudad de Madera barracks in Chihuahua on September 23, 1965. Gámiz, like so many of the popular leaders of Guerrero, was a product of his state’s *escuela normal*. Unlike these urban counterparts, however, the rural guerrillas of Guerrero had engaged in a protracted public effort to democratize their state. They represented a long tradition of grassroots opposition and retained a strong ideological grounding to it. Their goals, strategies and rhetoric remained firmly linked to those of their Mexican revolutionary predecessors. These qualities helped assure continued support during their lives and bestowed their status as martyrs in death.

In the Cold War era, when revolutionary movements and authoritarian governments were emerging throughout Latin America, discreet silencing of opposition was an important component of Mexican governmental strategy to distinguish itself as a beacon of democracy in the region. That silence has been mirrored in the absence of scholarly investigation of efforts to achieve democracy and social justice in heavily rural, peripheral states such as Guerrero. Issues of class, ethnicity, education and public access also contribute to the paucity of scholarly attention. Government resistance to releasing documents and participants’ continued concerns for personal safety have also discouraged research.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Barry Carr, *Marxism and Communism*, 57

<sup>83</sup> First-hand accounts from the Liga Comunista de 23 de septiembre include Gustavo A. Hiraes Morán, *La Liga Comunista 23 de septiembre: Orígenes y naufragio* (México: Ediciones de Cultura Popular, 1977), and Hiraes Morán, "La guerra secreta, 1970-1978," *Nexos*, junio de 1982. Other overviews include Carr, *Marxism and Communism in Twentieth-Century Mexico*, Elena Poniatowska, *Fuerte es el silencio* (México: Ediciones Era, 1987), and Sergio Aguayo, *La Charola*.

<sup>84</sup> This year, after providing testimony regarding his involvement in paramilitary activities as a member of the army during the *guerra sucia*, including the site of a clandestine cemetery near Atoyac, Horacio Zacarías Barrientos Peralta was himself assassinated. Allegations suggest that several relatives had been arrested and tortured as well. *La Jornada* (16 de enero de 2004): Política. Although the government has ostensibly made files available in the Archivo General de la Nación and of the Dirección Federal de Seguridad, obstacles discourage their use.

But despite these obstacles, Guerrero serves as an important chapter in the story of popular challenges to the Mexican state. Its teacher-led struggles were influenced by and in turn influenced the progressive movement in the nation's capital. Such a continuum suggests a more nuanced positioning of that 'watershed moment' in 1968 when the nation and world witnessed the repressive arm of the Mexican state. It also confirms that events in Mexico City reverberated beyond the capital, not just through the power of the government, but through the engagement of the popular sectors.

Thus, the contribution of teachers as ideological conduits—between urban and rural; union, campus and community; indigenous and socialist — served to link the popular struggles for democracy in Mexico. *La lucha sigue!*<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> The walls of the *escuela normal* in Ayotzinapa are today covered with freshly-painted murals depicting Lucio Cabañas and Genaro Vázquez Rojas, as well as Che Guevara, Subcomandante Marcos and other symbols of its radical heritage.

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