# Zapatistas

### Who are the Zapatistas?

A group of Mexicans who support improved rights & living conditions for Mexico's indigenous people

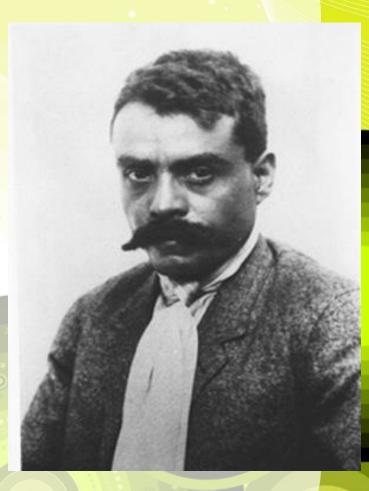
 Zapatistas are known for harassment and sabotage against the government

Named after...

# Emiliano Zapata

- The Zapatistas get their name from one of the leaders of the Mexican Revolution, Emiliano Zapata.
- Zapata is a Mexican symbol for rising up against a gov't that oppresses the people
- Zapata DID NOT CREATE the Zapatistas

his lifetime achievements inspired the name of the group



#### What are the Zapatistas known for?

#### **Guerilla Warfare**

- guerra = "war" in Spanish
- guerrilla = "small war" in Spanish

# What is Guerrilla Warfare?

 Sudden, unexpected acts carried about by groups that fight using "hit and run" tactics

Small groups attack the formal army



# Chiapas

- Uprisings are mainly in the Mexican state of Chiapas
- Chiapas is a resource-rich state in southern Mexico:
  - Produces over half of Mexico's hydroelectric power
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> largest petroleum producing state
  - Largest coffee exporting state
- So what's the big deal there?...



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# What's the Big Deal? What are they fighting for? Chiapas has the worst rates of poverty in Mexico:

 - 3/4 of its people are malnourished, half live in dwellings with dirt floors

19% of the population has no income

- 39% earn less \$3 a day

# What's the Big Deal?

 Chiapas is a huge contributor to the global economy (water and oil) BUT it's getting little in return

Huge division between rich & poor in the state

### NAFTA & the Zapatistas...

- 1994—North American Free Trade Agreement came into effect & allowed free trade between US, Canada, and Mexico
- Some people in Mexico did not like this plan:
  - Thought that NAFTA would allow cheap farm goods to come into Mexico from the US
  - Thought NAFTA benefited the wealthy and hurt the poor Native American farmers by lowering prices of crops like coffee and corn
  - Farmers in Mexico would not be able to compete with the cheaper food

# NAFTA & the Zapatistas...

- On the day NAFTA took effect, the Zapatistas took over 7 towns in their part of Mexico (state of Chiapas)
- Mexican army was sent to remove the Zapatistas
- Fighting lasted for several weeks, & cease-fire eventually ended the fighting
- Zapatistas did not go away...

# Armed Takeover in Chiapas 01/01/94



## Zapatistas' Concerns

 Agreements between the Zapatistas & the government have not solved the peoples' problems

 They argue that the indigenous people of Mexico need more help to improve healthcare, housing education, & jobs

#### Latest Developments

 March 2001: Zapatistas marched to Mexico City and addressed Congress

 Encouraged the passage of an Indigenous Rights Bill

 Unfortunately, the bill was unsuccessful due to Congress radically changing it and denying indigenous people certain rights

#### Latest Developments

- January 2003: Rose up armed with machetes denouncing neoliberalism (free trade policies), ecotourism, foreign investment, and plans for war with Iraq
- Have aggressively detained several foreigners in an effort to deter foreign investment

#### Latest Developments

 Zapatistas now use the Internet and cell phones to maintain a sophisticated communications network. The Zapatista Web site attracts thousands of visitors **Zapatistas Writing Prompt** There are different opinions on exactly what the Zapatistas fight for. I want you to take a stand and write either in **FAVOR** of the Zapatistas or **AGAINST** them. So, do you think of the Zapatistas more as:

 A freedom fighting group that fights for the rights of poor farmers and indigenous people

#### OR

• A terrorist group who is attempting to overthrow the Mexican government through violence and other illegal activities.