

found in segregated schools and denied equal access to special education programs, all of which can be documented by the failure of the state of Texas to meet compliance with its own civil rights mandate.

One important factor in the limited success of the campaign for educational equality had to do with the “political impotence” of the Mexican American community in Texas and the Southwest in general. And this is the lesson to be learned: political power in the halls of policymaking as well as organized grassroots organizations will be necessary for successful social change. This struggle will be part of our lives for years to come.

—Carlos F. Ortega
Sonoma State University

James L. Sexton. *Campesino: The Diary of a Guatemalan Indian*. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1985) 448 pp., \$29.95.

Often political violence in Guatemala is analyzed as if it were identical to political violence in other Central American countries. On account of the desire to simplify this political and economical reality in the public debate, there is a tendency to see the conflict as the result of the international rivalries between East and West. The literature of this conflict deals primarily with the view from government officials and the opinion of the representatives of the transnationals economically involved in the area.

In most accounts, a great emphasis is placed on the role that Cuba and Nicaragua have in the internal affairs of Guatemala and the need for U.S. direct or indirect intervention to bring about political and economic stability in the region, even when the highest church authorities have spoken loudly and clearly about the irreparable harm that military intervention is having on the Guatemalan Indian cultures.

What risks are there for the largest concentrated population of indigenous people in Central America, the 3.5 million Guatemalan Indians? How are their communities threatened and destroyed? These are some of the concerns of James L. Sexton and other ethnic studies scholars who appreciate the irreplaceable value of these indigenous cultures.

One of the most interesting books written about the Maya Indians of Guatemala, this fascinating work is unique in the sense that it is written in the form of a biography and presents the views of how all these conflicts affects those at the bottom. The book is narrated from an Indian perspective.

Campesino is the continuation of *Son of Tecun Uman* (1981) where the history of the protagonist, Ignacio Bizarro Upjan, and his people, a Mayan Tzutuhil tribe on the shores of lake Atitlan in Guatemala, is told. The book begins with an introduction where the political and economical situation of Guatemala, at the time the book is being written, is analyzed. Sexton emphasizes the importance of Guatemala in Central America and in the Western Hemisphere, the political and economical situation, the inequality among social classes and the human and cultural losses that these societies are encountering as a direct result of the guerilla warfare.

In the 215 sections in which the book is divided, each one with its own title and date, we become enthralled with the minute details of everyday happenings in the villages of San Jose, Solola and Panajachel. Ignacio and his family, friends and associates become unknowing actors in this vivid and clear reenactment of what life really is like for these people. The time span of the narration is six years. All the information in the book was taken from a diary kept in Spanish by the protagonist.

Ignacio is not the typical Mayan Indian. Not only does he speak Spanish very well, but he was able to attend Rafael Landivar University. We are dealing with a very intelligent, astute, dynamic and beautiful human being with a deep sense of moral, social and religious responsibility. He has very good leadership qualities and is falsely accused by the ladinos of political aspirations and is therefore persecuted. He is directly and indirectly involved in all social and political situations that affect his village. His fellow Indians look to him for advice and direction. He is active in church, organizes working cooperatives, and directs the educational program. There is not a single aspect of the life of these communities, no matter how insignificant, that is left untouched by this beautifully narrated story.

Sexton has taken an x-ray of urban and rural life in Guatemala. We are able to see from the outside and from the inside everything that has been left out in other accounts of the present situation in that country. The most important value of this work is that the whole narration is presented from the perspective of the protagonist, Ignacio, who has the most profound knowledge of all that is important about his people. There is no attempt by Sexton, in the body of the narration, to judge what has been presented to him in the diary. This is a book that anyone interested in ethnic studies and in humanity in general should read.

—Luis L. Pinto
Bronx Community College of the
City University of New York