

# ETHNOPOLITICS IN ECUADOR: EXPANDING DEMOCRACY THROUGH THE POLITICIZATION OF IDENTITY

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## Introduction

In the early manifestations of democracy, only a portion of the population being governed was granted participatory rights. In the United States, for example, only white, land-owning, males were permitted to vote or hold office. As time progressed, rights to governmental participation expanded to groups outside of the exclusive white male sector to include historically marginalized groups (i.e. women and African-Americans). Similar to the US, Ecuador excluded minority groups (e.g. indigenous peoples) from participation in the government at the onset of democracy. But in Ecuador, social divisions ran even deeper than in the US. Debt-peonage persisted until 1964, which kept indigenous peoples in slavery-like conditions and shutout from the realm of citizenship. Only twenty-two years later, in 1986, Ecuador saw the rise of the most powerful indigenous organization in Latin America, *La Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador* (CONAIE) or the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador. In 1996, the first indigenous political party was formed, *Pachakutik*. Four years after the party's formation, indigenous peoples aligned with the military to overthrow Ecuador's president in their ultimate demonstration of power. How did the indigenous peoples of Ecuador overcome the vestiges of slavery and ascend to governmental power and participation in less than a generation? I argue that the emergence of a collective indigenous identity in the late twentieth century and the subsequent incorporation of an indigenous agenda in politics provided the mechanism for Indians to approach full equal citizenship.

In this thesis, I employ the theoretical "circle of inclusion" to refer to an imaginary boundary that surrounds those with political power and keeps others from participating in

democracy. In order for one to enter into the “circle,” one must gain full access to citizenship which must not be limited to an official declaration of universal equality or merely the right to vote. Instead, citizenship must be understood as having real access to legal and social opportunities that are free from socially-constructed obstacles such as ethnic discrimination.

Yashar points to a number of authors<sup>1</sup> who, despite ideological differences in other areas, overwhelmingly agree that citizenship may be hindered by previously-existing social inequalities (2005: 51). As I demonstrate in this thesis, indigenous Ecuadorians have been legally “equal citizens” of the state for nearly a century, yet remained barred from participation in institutions in practice. The state hoped to achieve equality through the integration of indigenous peoples into the mainstream European culture. Policies of assimilation neglected to address deep social divisions that had placed indigenous peoples at the bottom of Ecuador’s social hierarchy for centuries, resulting in a legacy of discrimination and continued inequalities. Instead of unifying the nation, assimilation policies effectively marginalized and excluded ethnic groups from the realm of citizenship. I argue that indigenous participation in politics was possible through a constructed cohesive identity which gave visibility to indigenous peoples and ultimately widened Ecuador’s circle of inclusion.

This thesis examines the underlying catalyst for expanding citizenship and democracy in Ecuador which I have identified as “ethnopolitics” or politics with an ethnic-based agenda. In order to assess how ethnopolitics has influenced Ecuador’s democracy, I must clarify how I will address the subjective term “democracy.” I have adopted the liberal form of democracy as it was employed at the United Nations’ 2005 World Summit. Member states at the summit determined democracy to be a “universal value based on the freely expressed will of people to determine their political, economic, social and cultural systems and their full participation in all aspects of

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<sup>1</sup> Yashar cites T.H. Marshall (1968), Michael Walzer (1983 and 1993), and Iris Marion Young (1995) among others.

their lives” ([www.unis.unvienna.org](http://www.unis.unvienna.org)). In this definition, democracy is not limited to the right of the people to select their leaders, but to *fully participate* in the determination of their political, economic, social and cultural systems. Employing the World Summit’s definition of democracy, my analysis is based on the extension of cultural, social and economic rights to all Ecuadorians as specified in Ecuador’s 2008 constitution. I also examine changes in the percentage of indigenous people in governmental positions, effects of indigenous uprisings on the social perception of indigenous people, and the undeniable political leverage that indigenous people have gained in Ecuador.

Chapter 1 lays out the historical context from which indigenous uprisings emerged. It begins in the colonial period, with Spain’s oppression of indigenous identity and reordering of society and land ownership. Indigenous repression began in the institutions that tied Indians to *haciendas* through debt-peonage, a system that was later known as *huasipungo*. Ecuador’s history of paternalism and denial of indigeneity has been deeply imprinted on the Ecuadorian psyche, and continues to affect politics and society today. Chapter 1 traces the formation of the first indigenous rebellions, the impact of land reform laws in changing ethnic demographics that bring indigenous and whites/mestizos into conflict, and the initial consolidation of indigenous identity.

The majority of this thesis focuses on the last three decades, highlighting three critical years in the indigenous movement. Chapter 2 analyzes social and historical changes leading up to the 1990 *Levantamiento Indigena* (Indigenous Uprising), which was the first massive indigenous protest that resulted in state negotiations. Chapter 2 discusses a number of conditions that culminated into the uprising, including Ecuador’s transition to democracy, increased education among indigenous peoples and the formation of Ecuador’s indigenous organizations,

namely CONAIE. I will detail reasons for the uprising, how it played out, and its achievements for expanding citizenship.

Chapter 3 deals with the 1992 march from Pastaza province to Quito in protest of environmental degradation in the Amazon. With the year marking the 500 year anniversary of Columbus' arrival in the Americas, indigenous identity became an even more important focus in the struggle for citizenship rights. This chapter focuses on how, even among varying ethnicities, a common strand of identity can bring people together into a unifying force. The chapter also will give two brief case studies to exemplify how identity may be used political or economic gain and the failures and successes of the 1992 march.

Chapter 4 explores CONAIE's role in the overthrow of President Jamil Mahuad in 2000 as well as CONAIE's role in electing Lucio Gutierrez to the Ecuadorean presidency. This chapter emphasizes the enormous power and recognition that indigenous people attained throughout the 1990s and the threats posed to CONAIE after internal fractioning between indigenous leaders.

The final chapter briefly summarizes the source, fomentation and manifestations of the indigenous movement and analyzes how Ecuador's circle of inclusion has widened. Ecuador's 1978, 1998 and 2008 constitutions are my primary sources to demonstrate the growing consciousness and acceptance of ethnic diversity. The three constitutions serve as chronological time capsules that illustrate the amount of government acceptance vis-à-vis indigenous peoples in each given time period. Over the last three decades, the circle of inclusion widens as indigenous peoples are granted more social and cultural rights with each subsequent constitution. Although there is limited data on fluctuations of governmental positions held by indigenous versus non-indigenous leaders, changes in party seats and voting patterns will broaden my

assessment that Ecuador has opened its circle of inclusion to embrace cultural diversity and collaborate with politics brought forth by indigenous leaders.

## **Chapter 1: Redefining “Indian”**

Identity is fundamental for how one perceives one’s role in society and how one relates to the state. Identity determines if one is socially considered to “belong” to a nation as a citizen in possession of the same rights and opportunities as the general populace. Nations that have experienced colonization are particularly sensitive to ethnic hierarchies which historically gave power only to the colonizers at the top of society. In the case of Ecuador and many other Latin American countries, Spanish and Creoles<sup>2</sup> exclusively governed the nation and society during the colonial period. Since only those from European descent were allowed within the circle of inclusion, power and citizenship became equated with European or Creole identity. In turn, indigenous peoples were forced out of the realm of citizenship, resulting in an alienation and denial of indigenous identity from society. This chapter addresses the difficulty in defining “indigenous,” outlines the transformation of indigenous identity in both affirming oppression and encouraging rebellion along with its effects on access to equal citizenship. The chapter will also outline successes and failures of governmental policies meant to advance social equality and their effects on indigenous citizenship before 1979, the year Ecuador transitioned to a democracy.

The terms “Indian” and “Indigenous” are fundamental in understanding indigenous identity. Both terms are socially constructed labels left over from colonization to refer to the native race of the Americas. For example, the word “indigenous” cannot function outside of a

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<sup>2</sup> American-born Europeans

relative context. Populations are not deemed “indigenous” unless they must be distinguished from foreign settlers, as native Ecuadorians were from the Spanish (Urban and Sherzer 1992: 12). Being “indigenous” speaks no more to ones language, culture or traditions than being “European.” Instead the local populations have historically identified themselves as Quichua, Shuar, Otavaleño, or any other of the regional ethnic groups, yielding “indigenous identity” as an ambiguous term.

Similarly, the word “Indian” is an erroneous, yet common way to refer to the native peoples of Ecuador. I observed while studying in Ecuador that the term “indian” or *indio* was sometimes used to insult someone’s intelligence. Nevertheless, indigenous people have adopted being “Indian” as part of their identity. “Indian” is widely accepted in contemporary academia and according to Amalia Pallares, Indian is actually a “self referential term,” used by national activists to neutralize the negative connotation of the word by associating it with a new, positive, and national Indian identity (2002: 229). In this thesis both “Indian” and “indigenous” will be used to refer to the original peoples of Ecuador.

Ecuador’s ethnic groups vary widely in language, environment, and tradition. The Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE) claims Ecuador to be home to some 31 ethnic groups ([www.conaie.org](http://www.conaie.org)), a much higher number than the 9 national ethnicities cited by Pallares in 2002 (9). Although some of the difference in statistics may be attributed to variations in data collection or social agendas, statistics quantifying the number or type of indigenous groups is rarely uniform. Ethnic groups may separate to declare more specific ethnic identities while others may assimilate entirely. One example of the inconsistency of data can be found between the U.S. State Department and the CIA. While the U.S. State Department claims 6.8% of Ecuadorians are indigenous ([www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov)), the CIA estimates 25% are indigenous

([www.cia.gov](http://www.cia.gov)). Wide variation in data shows that indigenous identity is not neatly and definitively determined. Rather, indigenous identity flows and transforms to meet social and political needs. In the remainder of this chapter transformations of indigenous identity and relation to the state will be outlined in three main time periods: the colonial era, the early twentieth century, and the late twentieth century.

During the colonial era, indigenous ethnic groups were collectively referred to as “Indians,” placing all groups within a single identity despite their ethnic differences. Labeling all indigenous peoples under a blanket term homogenized these groups from the perspective of the colonizers, making them distinct only in relation to whites and *mestizos*<sup>3</sup> (Pallares 2002: 59). Separation between Indians from whites and mestizos was most clearly manifested in Spain’s construction of the Indian Republic and the Spanish Republic (Pallares 2002: 10). Before the land reform laws of the twentieth century, Indians were kept in separate spheres of life from the whites and mestizos and were likewise placed under different citizenship regimes. Indians became citizens of the Indian republic, where they were forced to pay tribute to the Spanish crown in exchange for legal protection and land security (Sattar 2007: 34). The Spanish Republic, on the other hand, was the dominating elite class charged with governing the state.

Out of these two republics grew a paternal relationship from the Spanish Republic vis-à-vis the indigenous, which classified Indians as legal minors lacking in certain rights such as the ability to sign contracts or represent themselves in court (Sattar 2007: 34). Despite the ethnic inferiority that the system perpetuated, Indians enjoyed certain aspects of the tribute system such as exemption from taxes and obligation to the military (Van Aken 1981: 432). As the paternal relationship between the two republics persisted, Indians developed a psyche of inferiority that made them dependent on the Spanish for protection. As a result, many indigenous peoples

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<sup>3</sup> Spanish term used to describe someone of Indigenous and Spanish descent.

contested the abolition of tribute and the state's official declaration of equal citizenship in 1857 (Sattar 2007: 34). Sattar cites the Parish<sup>4</sup> of Calpi where 300 Indians rebelled against the abolition of the tribute system along with their special status in the state (Sattar 2007: 35). Indeed Indians so fiercely contested the merging of the two republics because they had internalized common rhetoric that indigenous peoples were *la raza miserable*, or the miserable race (Sattar 2007: 25). Spain's fulfillment of a paternal role toward the indigenous population and discourse of indigenous inferiority not only prevented Indians from wishing to break away from unfair institutions, it allowed for inequalities to persist even after the system was abolished.

The consolidation of the Indian and Spanish republic did not eliminate the long-standing social inequalities between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples. Van Aken asserts that although declaring equal citizenship to the indigenous people was intended to promote "social ideals and economic justice" and "the gradual integration of the Indian into Hispanic society," (1981: 440) Indians were still brutally mistreated in slavery-like conditions through debt-peonage where hacienda owners gave Indians the rights to use land in exchange for labor (Pallares 2002: 11). Land owners would typically underpay the indigenous laborers, only to give them money advances for their basic survival which would keep them eternally in debt and bound to work the land (Gerlach 2003: 27). Since the state formally viewed Indians as equal after the integration of the two republics, Indians lost their special protection from the state and grounds to defend themselves when mistreated.

In 1895 Ecuador entered into a liberal period, a time when national officials largely sympathized with indigenous peoples and the *de facto* inequalities they experienced. During the years leading up to 1925, the Ecuadorian state took on a philanthropic role toward indigenous peoples, emphasizing the role of the state in helping the "unfortunate" Indians (Clark 2007: 92).

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<sup>4</sup> Unit of territory originally centered around a church.

In 1897, Ecuador's minister of justice exemplified their call to duty to help the Indians in his statement that "it is necessary that the officials of the liberal government make an effort to rescue this neglected race from its prostration and barbarity" (Clark 2007: 93). During this era, the Ecuadorian government passed a number of laws that began the process of extending full citizenship in indigenous peoples. In the liberal period Indians earned the right to leave haciendas once their debts were paid, refuse to work without pay, and earn at least minimum wage for their labor (Clark and Becker 2007: 9). Despite these advances, critics like Kris Lane claim that no regime was able to actually enforce these policies due to the long-standing history of racial and monetary inequalities (Lane 2003: 95).

Other critics of the liberal period agree that the reforms passed during the era helped indigenous advancement in spite of the reforms' failures. Baud argues these reforms started the movement, not because they succeeded in giving Indians more legal power, but by not fulfilling their promises, causing disillusionment and unrest (2007: 76). One example of a failed reform was the abolition of the *concertaje*, or concierto system.<sup>5</sup> Theoretically the end of the *concertaje* would mark the end of debt peonage, but instead the system persisted under the name of *huasipungo*. Pallares credits reforms passed in the liberal period as a catalyst for rural rebellion that began in the 1920s and 1930s, namely the expropriation of church lands for agricultural use (2002: 12). The sudden availability of land taken from the church created a struggle between indigenous workers and already established land owners for ownership (Pallares 2002: 12). Clashes between Indians and non-Indians began amid the struggle for land and failed promises for reform.

Throughout the 1920s and 30s, Indians took part in localized rebellions on haciendas, protesting for land rights and better labor conditions (Pallares 2002: 12). But unlike in the past,

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<sup>5</sup> System of debt-peonage

where Indians emphasized their ethnic differences as a means to seek protection by the state, (Clark and Becker 2007: 96) indigenous rebels now organized on the basis of class, ignoring their regional differences to seek genuinely equal citizenship. The shift in collective identity from Indian to Peasant occurred for a variety of reasons, including land disputes, assimilation policy, and Socialist influence.

Disputes concerning land ownership were perhaps the single most important factor behind indigenous rebellions. In the highlands, indigenous peoples' livelihoods depended on farming and access to land, deeply associating them with rural life and peasantry. In the early twentieth-century, indigenous resistance was organized on a class-based, in order to achieve economic justice concerning wages, land, and working conditions (Pallares 2002: 14). Former president of CONAIE, Luis Macas, cites land ownership as being at the core of the indigenous struggle, stretching back into colonial times and continuing into present day (Gerlach 2003: 66). The ongoing struggle for land emphasized the protestors' relation to the land, creating a struggle for peasants rather than Indians.

Assimilationist rhetoric proposed by the government was another factor that led to class-based organization. As mentioned previously in this chapter, the Ecuadorian state passed many reforms with the intention of assimilating the indigenous population into general Ecuadorian society and culture. Ethnic divisions were thought to be a threat to the modernization and cohesion of the state, so "Indianness" was removed from political discourse and intentionally ignored.

The third factor is the rise of socialism in Ecuador. There is debate about whether discontent and rebellion preceded socialist influence or vice-versa. The Socialist Party was one of the first organizations to the countryside to educate indigenous people on techniques for

petitioning and protest (Becker 1997: 5). According to Pallares, the *Partido Socialista Ecuatoriano* (PSE) actively created peasant unions in the country-side and promoted rebellion (2002: 12). Yet the formation of the PSE did not occur until months after the first major peasant rebellion at Cayambé in 1926 (Becker 1997: 3). Regardless of who first organized the rebellions, the PSE offered solidarity and networking skills that added momentum to the movement and encouraged a series of land reforms that were passed throughout the twentieth century.

## **Land reform**

Yashar cites land reform laws passed in 1937, 1964, and 1973 as the basis for broader independence and citizenship for Indians, with reforms passed in 1937 yielding limited results until the 1964 and 1973 reforms (2005: 88). The 1937, *Ley de Organización y Régimen de las Comunidades Indígenas y Campesinas* (commonly known as the Law of Communes), legalized communes, or small communities with fifty or more residents governed by *cabildos* (5-person councils responsible for day-to-day decision-making in the commune) (Yashar 2005: 89). The 1937 Law of Communes obligated communities to register with the state, keeping communes under the central government's control. For example, although cabildos were elected by commune members, Ecuador's Ministry of Agriculture had veto power over whoever was elected (Yashar 2005: 89). Governmental control over these small communities can be seen as another manifestation of paternalism. Ecuador's legacy of "protecting" indigenous peoples continued even after official declaration of universal equality. The government's close watch and control of indigenous communities demonstrated a persisting mistrust of indigenous leadership.

The 1937 Law of Communes was greatly limited in that the law did not extend to workers on haciendas, until the 1964 Agrarian Reform Law. Until the early 1960s, haciendas dominated most of the land used for economic production (Clark 2007: 101). The intention of the 1964 law was to make farms more productive, by breaking up haciendas' monopoly on vast amounts of land. The reform worked by abolishing the *huasipungo* system that had kept many highland Indians tied to land through debt-peonage (Pallares 2002: 16). *Huasipungeros*, or workers on the hacienda, were granted their civil rights they had been denied as debt-peons, but the law failed to effectively redistribute the land. Although the 1964 land reform law marks an end to virtual slavery as debt-peons, it would take another nine years before land was effectively distributed due to the 1973 law.

The 1973 agrarian reform law expanded on the 1964 law by enforcing land redistribution and placing a special focus on education, health, infrastructure, and irrigation. After 1973, Indians, mestizos, and whites supposedly all had equal access to land and rural modernization. But because Ecuador was still deeply-entrenched in ethnic hierarchy, Indians were still discriminated against. During the period of land reform in the mid twentieth century, Indians were labeled as "backwards" and "irresponsible" by middle and upper-class elites who claimed that Indians would mismanage the land and use it inefficiently (Pallares 2002: 37).

Indians were denied equal access to the newly distributed land from discrimination that labeled Indians lazy and unable to modernize. Reluctant hacienda owners intentionally slowed down land reform by complicating land transfer. Change occurred so slowly that sixteen years after the reform was implemented, only 15 percent of rural land had been redistributed with 68.4 percent of Indians gaining access to only 8.9 percent of land surface (Handelman 1980: 11). Corruption between landowners and the governmental group responsible for allocating land, *the*

*Instituto Ecuatoriano de Reforma Agraria y Colonización (IERAC)*, was one of the ways that elites secured access to the best land while Indians often received the smallest and least fertile plots of land (Pallares 2002: 38). The rhetoric of indigenous incompetence coupled with corrupt governmental officials and land owners, kept Indians from enjoying the full benefits of equal access to land that the 1964 and 1973 land reform laws had originally promised.

Discrimination against indigenous people was one result of land reform. Pallares argues that land reform transformed the relationship between indigenous peoples and the state, not by ridding the country of ethnic subordination, but by reordering it and revitalizing discrimination against the Indian (Pallares 2002: 40). Post-land reform, many Indians were economically displaced and chose to migrate to urban areas in search of work (Pallares 2002: 61). The influx of indigenous people into cities in the 1970s brought Indians into direct contact with mestizos and whites in schools, buses, and commercial centers for the first time on a large scale (Pallares 2002: 62).

In Pallares' interviews, indigenous activists recall various forms of harsh discrimination that they encountered in the years following land reform, such as punishment for speaking Quichua or wearing traditional clothes in school (Pallares 2002: 64). One indigenous man recalls getting kicked off a bus for refusing to let a mestizo take his seat (Pallares 2002: 65). One of the most degrading forms of discrimination was the practice of *arranche*, or "snatching" (Pallares 2002: 66). *Arranche* is the forceful taking of an article of clothing belonging to an Indian which they could only get back in exchange for labor. Pedro de la Cruz, an indigenous activist, explains "as we went to mass, if there was some damage [to a public building, road, etc.] the police would grab a piece of clothing...if there was some damage, we were the ones who had to work and repair it" (Pallares 2002: 66). The practice of *arranche* reinforced a stereotype of

indigenous people being equated with slave laborers that could be put to work at any moment when needed.

According to Pallares, disillusionment with the success of the land reform along with blanket policies that ignored ethnic differences and discrimination propelled the ethnic identity movement (2002: 70). Placing blame for Ecuador's lack of modernization on the *Indian* rather than the *peasant*, revitalized the use of ethnically differentiating terminology in political and social discourse for the first time since the abolition of the tribute. Migration to the cities was also an important factor in the shift from class-based to ethnic-based resistance. Indigenous people living in cities or towns could no longer be classified as "peasants" by virtue of no longer living in a rural environment or working the land. Migration also forced Indians into mestizo-dominated public spaces, bringing out racism that was not as visible before the land reform. Discrimination manifested in practices such as *arranche*, which kept Indians in slave-like status after their official liberation from haciendas. A variety of indigenous groups who had previously joined together on the basis of peasantry, began to mutually identify through ethnicity based on their shared experience of ethnic discrimination.

According to Hill, it is a natural for "an ethnicity to factionalize when faced against a dominant power" (1996: 2). Indeed many indigenous resistance groups began popping up in the post-land reform era of the 70s and 80s. Many of these formed through networks and know-how that had already been established for peasant rebellions (Yashar 2005: 105). Ecuador's national indigenous federation and one of the most successful indigenous organizations in all of Latin America is known as the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE). CONAIE consolidated various regional ethnic-based indigenous organizations that were struggling to mobilize and became the driving force behind the indigenous movement. The

second chapter will draw more on the development and critical role of CONAIE and Ecuador's transition to democracy in strengthening the indigenous movement and realizing the first ever national mobilization of indigenous groups in 1990.

From colonialism to the formation of CONAIE, indigenous identity has homogenized indigenous groups, alienated Indians from Ecuadorian citizenship, and provided a common ground for collective action. The concept of "Indian" was initially a Spanish construction imposed on the indigenous population that deprived them of uniqueness, a term that was centuries later proudly adopted by indigenous activists to reclaim their identity. Through the abolition of the tribute system and various reforms in the liberal period, the Ecuadorian government attempted to lessen the divide between Indians and whites/mestizos. These policies purposely ignored ethnic and cultural differences in order to assimilate Indians into a supposedly equal and homogenous society. But Ecuador's history of ethnic hierarchy kept indigenous people at the lowest levels of society. Frustrated by unfulfilled promises for land and labor rights and with the help of the Socialist Party, Indians organized on the basis of class to demand a better standard of living. Land reforms that were later implemented throughout the twentieth-century freed many indigenous people from the centuries-old cycle of debt peonage, although their slave-like status persisted through discrimination. Rivalry over newly distributed land and indigenous migration into urban areas highlighted racial discrimination and gave Indians a shared sense of ethnic identity. Indigenous peasant groups formed to demand economic rights, reformed during the latter part of the twentieth century on an ethnic basis, the most successful being CONAIE which will be further discussed in Chapter 2.

## Chapter 2: Conditions for Protest and the 1990 Indigenous Uprising

In June 1990, CONAIE organized and led the largest mobilization of protestors in Ecuadorian history in what came to be known the *Levantamiento Indígena* or Indigenous Uprising (Pallares 2007: 150). Indians as well as students, members of NGOs, and members of other non-ethnic organizations assisted in blocking roads and occupying buildings, immobilizing the country for a period of days (Yashar 2005: 144). Some ten thousand Indians, primarily from the highlands, marched to Quito with a 16-point petition<sup>6</sup> concerning mainly territorial and cultural rights (Yashar 2005: 144) and many peacefully occupied the Santo Domingo church in Quito, refusing to leave until their demands had been met. According to Luis Macas, first president of CONAIE, the indigenous had achieved such power, that not even the police or military could force them to halt the protest (Whitten 2003: 284). This chapter focuses on the effects of Ecuador's transition to democracy on citizenship, factors that culminated into the 1990 Levantamiento, the actors involved, and the effects it had on government policy and Indian/state relations.

One of the most important factors that catalyzed the 1990 uprising was Ecuador's transition to democracy in 1979. The Rodriguez Lara military dictatorship stepped down at a time of uncertainty, when it was becoming apparent that the social programs they had implemented would not be sustainable (Zamosc 1994: 47). According to Routledge, democracy was a vital step on the path to equal citizenship by extending the right to actively participate in

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<sup>6</sup>CONAIE's Sixteen Points: 1. A public declaration that Ecuador is a plurinational country (to be ratified by the constitution). 2. The government must grant lands and titles to lands to the nationalities. 3. Solutions to water and irrigation needs. 4. Absolution of indigenous debts to FODERUMA and the National Development Bank. 5. Freezing of consumer prices. 6. Conclusion of priority projects in Indian communities. 7. Nonpayment of rural taxes. 8. Expulsion of the Summer Institute of Linguistics. 9. Free commercial and handicraft activity. 10. CONAIE protection of archaeological sites. 11. Officialization of Indian medicine. 12. Cancellation of government decree that created parallel land-reform granting bodies. 13. The government should immediately grant funds to the nationalities. 14. The government should grant funds for bilingual education. 15. Respect the rights of the child. 16. The fixing of fair prices for products. (Yashar 2005: 145-6)

government to all inhabitants (2003: 54). Prior to the transition from a military regime, illiterate individuals were not granted the right to vote (Yashar 2005: 141). This new law expanded Ecuador's circle of inclusion by creating an electorate of many indigenous voters who had previously been left out of political participation (Yashar 2005: 141). As a result, political candidates in the 1979 elections were obligated to address indigenous demands to target a recently expanded electorate. Presidential candidate Jaime Roldós appealed to the new voters by promising literacy, education, and rural development programs in "most of the highlands," the territorial region with the greatest history of interaction with the state (Pallares 2002: 187).

After elected, Roldós fulfilled his promises in creating literacy programs throughout the countryside and raising indigenous literacy from 30% in 1974 to 55% in 1982 (Pallares 2007: 141). He was also the first president ever to speak Quichua in part of his inaugural address (Pallares 2002: 187). His embrace of indigenous cultures began what Pallares refers to as "the plurinational state," where ethnic groups called for a recognition of not only several cultures composing Ecuadorian society, but many *nationalities* (Pallares 2007: 143). After the transition to democracy, state policy no longer advocated homogenization and assimilation as the best means of creating an egalitarian society. Instead, the government worked on development and education, specifically targeting indigenous communities.

Ecuador's acceptance and agreement to meet indigenous demands occurred in the 1980s (Pallares 2002: 189), when much of Latin America was transitioning away from dictatorships and recovering from humanitarian atrocities. Enthusiasm for implementing policies to aid indigenous development was not only expressed in Ecuador. In fact, countries all over Latin America were becoming sensitized to indigenous rights during the 1970s and 80s when several conferences on indigenous rights were held (Lassnigg and Burzlaff 2007: 37). One of the most

important of these conferences oversaw the writing of the Declaration of Barbados, convened by anthropologists determined to end genocide across Latin America. The declaration emphasized the need for indigenous self-determination and declared that the state should be responsible for indigenous advancement, placing the state back into a paternalistic role vis-à-vis the indigenous (Lassnigg and Burzlaff 2007: 37). In the years following the Barbados declaration, other international organizations followed suit, creating conventions to address the problem of indigenous discrimination such as the United Nations' Working Group on Indigenous Populations in 1982 and the International Labor Organization's Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention in 1989.

During this period of increased awareness of indigenous inequalities, activists sought to ensure that indigenous peoples played a role in leadership. Ecuador's new democracy implemented state-development programs to educate Indians on agricultural development and rural planning (Pallares 2002: 199). These programs familiarized indigenous leaders with how to create agendas, write proposals, undergo negotiations and participate in legal proceedings (Pallares 2002: 201). Although these programs did not penetrate the Amazon, indigenous leaders in the Amazon still emerged, receiving their education and training from evangelical missionaries in the area (Yashar 2005: 122). Literacy and bilingualism spread throughout the indigenous communities, empowering a new generation of indigenous leaders who were more equipped to deal directly with the state (Pallares 2002: 201).

The Declaration of Barbados, while being credited for advancing sensitivity to indigenous affairs, has also been criticized for placing the state back in the protector role and leaving Indians out of leadership positions (Pallares 2002: 188). Although there was no effort to keep Indians from participating in the writing of the Declaration of Barbados, not a single of the

original framers of the document was indigenous. Likewise, the Roldós administration was reluctant to give any actual political or economic power to indigenous people, despite the emerging generation of competent and educated Indians.

Education coupled with the land reforms laws of 1964, 1973 helped spur indigenous organization because it created a means for Indians to directly articulate grievances and circumstances that caused social unrest. Some of these bitter circumstances that sparked unrest were a result from the land reform that caused massive migration into cities, and urbanization that modernized Ecuador's economy (Zamosc 1994: 13). As Ecuador's economy became more dynamic, indigenous and rural peoples became increasingly dependent on the market for purchasing agricultural supplies and selling their harvest, creating a risky dependency on the strength of the Ecuadorian economy for survival. Since indigenous peoples relied on a high price level for basic foodstuffs for survival, they were especially sensitive to neoliberal policies. The Ecuadorian government would attempt to implement repeatedly over the course of the 1990s despite indigenous resistance. Manipulation of land distribution by the land-owning elite was another negative aspect of land reform that distributed some of the worst plots of land to Indians (Waters 2007: 137).

In the Amazon, it was the 1977 Law of Colonization of the Amazon Region which laid down the backdrop for unrest. The law was created as a means of justifying the colonization of the Amazon to satisfy the demand for territory under the new agrarian reform laws and exploit the land for oil, which had been discovered in the late 1960s (Sawyer 2004: 44). The law redistributed over 2,500,000 hectares to over 55,000 families by 1985, 22% more land was distributed than what was targeted originally (Yashar 2005: 113). Colonization posed a threat to Amazonian communities who began to sympathize with highland communities who had suffered

colonization centuries earlier. Between the Amazonian Indians and the Highland Indians runs a common thread where colonization has threatened their access to land and the free practice of their indigenous culture.

The two main indigenous organizations grew out of very different contexts and histories. In the highlands, workers unions and political activists had shared a common space with Indians in the countryside since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Issues of land reform and substandard living conditions for indigenous laborers drew rebellious groups such as the Socialist Party to rural areas to raise peasant consciousness about the class struggle. Becker credits the Socialist Party for being the first group to organize indigenous peoples cohesively to petition and mobilize, laying the foundation for logistical infrastructure that was later used by indigenous groups (1997: 4). Furthermore, many organizational networks were already in place left over from parish organizing in the highlands (Yashar 2005: 107). The leading indigenous organization in the highlands came to be known as *Ecuador Runacunapac Riccharimui* or Confederation of the People of Kichua Nationality of Ecuador (ECUARUNARI) founded in 1972 and would later become one of the three regional pillars of CONAIE (Yashar 2005: 107).

Unlike in highlands, Indians in the Amazon did not have a history of relations with the state. The Amazon lacked roads and other infrastructure until the 1960s and 1970s, keeping it mostly isolated from the capital and governmental policies. As one indigenous teacher from the Amazon pointed out in 1997, “We almost don’t take notice of what is happening with the government of the mestizos” (Yashar 2005: 112). The teacher’s comment echoes a detachment from the government. Not only do they barely “take notice” of Ecuadorian politics, but it is referred to as belonging to “mestizos,” revealing a disassociation with indigenous involvement in the Ecuadorian government.

Amazonian Indians' indifference toward the government quickly disappeared when the Ecuadorian government joined OPEC in 1973 and passed a number of policies that sought financial interests in the Amazonian territory (Sawyer 2004: 44). One such policy distributed large plots of rainforest to create plantations. Much of this land went toward farming African palm, a trade that was later condemned alongside the oil companies for damaging the integrity of the Amazon. Amidst the growing resentment, *la Confederacion de Nacionalidades Indigenas de la Amazonia Ecuatoriana* or the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon (CONFENIAE) was formed. As the second pillar of CONAIE, the organization formed an Amazonian umbrella indigenous group in 1980 that sought to regain territory rights and seek political autonomy (Erazo 2007: 181).

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, leaders from ECUARUNARI and CONFENIAE began discussing ways to integrate into a national confederation that could collectively defend indigenous rights (Yashar 2005: 130). Despite differences in historical relations to the state and overwhelming differences in language and culture, the two indigenous organizations were working for essentially the same goals—land, autonomy, and respect as indigenous peoples. Together they formed the *Consejo de Coordinación de las Nacionalidades Indígenas* or the Coordinating Council of Indigenous Nationalities (CONACNIE), which served as a forum for ECUARUNARI and CONFENIAE to clarify and articulate goals and demands.

The principle debate within CONACNIE was how, as a unified indigenous group, to portray Indians to the state and what demands would be prioritized above others. Focus on economic/material rights, such as access to land and better wages, would be associated with peasant organization, while cultural/ethnic rights such as bilingual education and recognition of a multi-ethnic state would be best demanded by an ethnic organization (Pallares 2002: 175).

Luis Macas asserted that there need not be a distinction between the two since the two were intertwined as in the case of land. Access to land is an economic demand because it is a place to pursue a livelihood and yet cultural because it is necessary in order to reproduce culture and tradition (Yashar 2003: 140). In 1986, the debate was settled with the emergence of CONAIE, which would serve as a unified ethnic representation of all indigenous nationalities and provide logistics between ethnic groups (Pallares 2002: 178). Once CONAIE determined that cultural as well as economic rights were necessary to indigenous advancement, the third pillar of CONAIE was created, *la Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas de la Costa Ecuatoriana* or the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Coast (CONAICE) to represent the coastal indigenous populations.

Pallares cites a discrepancy in how the state perceived indigenous demands and how Indians articulated their demands to explain how discontent emerged despite state efforts to meet indigenous proposals (2002: 207). Rather than addressing economic concerns, the Roldós and Hurtado regimes (1979-84) focused mainly on education and the arts, creating an indigenous renaissance by pouring money into cultural events like festivals and dances (Pallares 2002: 194). In 1984, ECUARUNARI expressed their concern over the state's negligence to attend to economic demands in stating, "the bourgeoisie says that the culture and language of the Indian must be rescued, but they deny our right to land," revealing the state's superficial appeasement of indigenous unrest (Pallares 2002: 206). Funding for artistic events was also seen as a distraction from land reform and price fixing for staple foods (Pallares 2002: 206).

While the state encouraged indigenous art and culture, Indians were kept out of leadership positions, even for direction of programs that specifically targeted Indians, such as indigenous cultural initiatives (Pallares 2002: 205). According to Pallares, "in 1985 there was

one Indian from the highlands in Congress, none in higher levels of ministry bureaucracies, and there never been an Indian mayor even in cantons with a large Indian population” (Pallares 2002: 206). Moreover, cultural events and production of indigenous crafts were seen by some indigenous leaders as a ploy on the part of the state to attract tourists with indigenous folklore, under the guise of meeting indigenous demands (Pallares 2002: 207).

Social unrest resulting from the state’s failure to satisfy indigenous organizations and refusal to allow them into positions of power was exacerbated by economic decline and social discrimination. By the 1980s, mounting foreign debt from international banks and falling oil prices forced the Ecuadorian government to cut social programs, such as education and health, that had been recently implemented under the military dictatorship (Yashar 2005: 135). Other neoliberal reforms were enacted as well, such as eliminating price fixing and subsidies, a trend that resonated throughout Latin America during the “lost decade of development” (Zamosc 1994: 51). With a failing economy, spending decreased, driving down the price of staple foods such as corn and wheat by 66.8% between 1975 and 1986 (Yashar 2005: 136). The decrease in food prices coupled with agricultural modernization, a condition set by the IMF in exchange for continuing to provide credit to Ecuador, impoverished traditional farmers who were largely highland Indians (Routledge 2003: 55).

Amazonian Indians were harmed as well when President Rodrigo Borja granted 3.5 million acres of Amazonian rainforest to foreign oil companies, without consulting the indigenous Huaorani group who occupied the land (Gerlach 2003: 73). Even indigenous groups who receive rights to land may still be the object of exploitation. According to Ecuadorian law, the subsurface belongs to the state regardless of who owns the topsoil. Hence while failed economic policies drove many Indians further into poverty, colonization of the Amazon was

pushing Indians out of their ancestral territory. Indigenous people who opted to willingly move into urban areas were fiercely discriminated against, creating a feeling of homelessness for Indians and a unified indigenous identity of victimization.

Only two years prior to the uprising, CONAIE achieved the right to oversee the National Direction of Intercultural Bilingual Education (DINEIB) (Pallares 2002: 210). Still the Ecuadorian government refused to grant Indians political power or address the question of land reform (Clark and Becker 2007: 18). According to Luis Macas, land reform was the most fundamental goal that needed to be negotiated. In 1991, Macas stated, “We believe that there will be no solution to the Indian problem unless there is a solution to the land problem. The recuperation of our land is essential” (Pallares 2002: 207). In fact, the question of land reform was one of the most difficult to address. Negotiations concerning land reform were almost abandoned after the 1990 uprising because of internal conflict with CONAIE, but after some months the group came back to the negotiating table reunited and managed to resolve 56 long-standing land conflicts (Pallares 2002: 210).

According to Yashar, the 1990 *Levantamiento* was successful because “Indigenous participants occupied spaces that were not [traditionally] theirs” (Yashar 2005: 146). Taking over spaces such as the Santo Domingo church where mestizos traditionally reigned, demonstrated a desire to be accepted into the mestizo sphere of Ecuador. Yet capitalizing on being distinctly indigenous at the same time revealed that CONAIE was not willing to assimilate into mestizo culture for the sake of equality. Instead, the *Levantamiento* highlighted a rejection of mestizaje, where Indians could be guaranteed equal rights and opportunities without being obligated to adapt a mestizo way of life (Selmeski 2007: 158). Leader of ECUARUNARI, José María Cabascango emphasized the impact of the *Levantamiento* stating, “before 1990, indigenous

people were marginalized, after, people were sensitive to their demands (Yashar 2005: 146).

Although CONAIE did not manage to get the state to address all 16 points of its platform, CONAIE demonstrated the broad discontent felt in the indigenous communities with the uprising of tens of thousands of demonstrators who marched for political change (Yashar 2003:147)

Although negotiation with the state had little immediate impact, the 1990 Levantamiento marks a turning point where indigenous people rose up from their invisible spaces to prove the strength of the indigenous movement. At the root of the mobilization were a number of political and social factors such as Ecuador's transition to democracy and expanded literacy and leadership programs that cultivated the right conditions for Indigenous peoples to be able to voice their demands. Likewise, church and parish networks already in place facilitated indigenous organizing to contest laws that threatened their land or livelihoods. Economic decline and social discrimination for indigenous peoples catalyzed the mobilization and ultimately led to some resolution of land disputes. But more important than the few policies that were influenced directly following the uprising, was the respect that CONAIE gained as a result. As will be discussed in the next chapter, after 1990, indigenous uprisings were responded to more quickly and negotiations became more effective (Routledge 2003: 57). The Ecuadorian state finally began to recognize that the indigenous community, once invisible and discriminated against, had undeniable strength (Whitten 2003: 184).

### **Chapter 3: La Caminata – 500 Years of Indigenous Resistance**

The 1990 Levantamiento Indígena brought visibility to Indians who demanded equal citizenship rights. Confronted with the indigenous protest paralyzing the country, the Ecuadorian government was forced to face the strength and momentum of networking that the indigenous movement had been building in the prior decades. On the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Christopher Columbus' arrival in the Americas, Ecuador experienced another indigenous mobilization. This time the protestors wore face paint, beat on drums, and wielded spears in the capital city, proudly expressing their "indigeneity." This chapter focuses on the reasons for the 1992 indigenous march from the Amazon to Quito known as the *Caminata*, and the role of collective identity in uniting the movement. Two brief case studies illustrate the politicization of identity and the malleability of memory which serve to empower indigenous groups. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the limited success Amazonian Indians achieved in reclaiming their ancestral territory.

During the 1990 negotiations between Indians and the state, the regional Amazonian indigenous group *la Organizacion de Pueblos Indigenas de Pastaza* or the Organization of Indigenous People of Pastaza (OPIP), who marched along with CONAIE to the capital, presented the Ecuadorian government with a set of demands known as the Agreement Concerning the Territorial Rights of the Indian Peoples of Pastaza (Gerlach 2003: 54). The document proposed indigenous rights to self-rule, political autonomy, freedom to practice customary laws, and participation in deciding which lands would be used for oil exploration. Although the Rodrigo Borja administration (1988-92) was reluctantly willing to negotiate the resolution of land conflicts, Borja fiercely rejected OPIP's declaration for self-rule, stating that the Indians were trying to make a parallel state (Pallares 2002: 211).

Ironically, the Pastaza Indians had already been practicing traditional law and politics for centuries. Mattiace states that indigenous groups have often maintained *de facto* autonomous governments as a way to cope with the state's negligence of indigenous peoples and denial of governmental participation (2003: 20). The state's refusal to recognize ongoing indigenous practices reflect a continued denial of indigenous populations and culture. Refusal for autonomous rights to Indians may have also reflected the fear that the state would lose control of the oil rich territory in the Amazon.

Oil exploration and exploitation beginning in the 1960s disrupted the health, environment, life, and culture of Amazonian Indians. In response to these unwelcome changes, OPIP was formed in the 1970s to protest the presence of oil companies (Yashar 2005: 126). Sawyer describes Texaco's "cost-effective" approach of using techniques and machinery that were unsafe and even illegal in the United States (Sawyer 2004: 100). She describes "huge toxic earth pits," where waste and contaminants were dumped carelessly in the ground (Sawyer 2004: 101). The effects of the pollution were so horrendous, that the rain was reportedly black from the hydrocarbon soot by-products (Sawyer 2004: 101). Oil exploitation in the Amazon was so carelessly pursued that it turned lush forest into uninhabitable land, poisoning the water and the soil

In 1997 Yashar conducted a series of interviews with Amazonian Indians who attributed a lower standard of living to the roads that oil companies paved into the rainforest. One indigenous man condemned the arrival of roads because they brought, "illness, noise, alcohol and an easy exit for children" (Yashar 2005:125). Another commented that the easy access to mainstream fashion was "diluting and destroying their culture" (Yashar 2005: 125). Indigenous objections to the opening up of the rainforest reflect a desire to continue the practice and

preservation of Amazonian tradition. According to Hendricks, the Amazonian Shuar objected to the settling of non-indigenous people into the Amazon for fear that the Indians would be forced to assimilate into a westernized white culture (1991: 55). The Shuar had already had experience with missionaries, schools, and development projects that had previously clashed with indigenous culture. For example, Christianity did not allow for contact with the supernatural world which the Shuar found essential for their way of life (Hendricks 1991: 55). Amazonian indigenous peoples were therefore resistant to the opening of the Amazon which brought pressure to assimilate and discrimination from outsiders (Yashar 2005: 125). Much like the highland Indians who were discriminated against in the cities, Amazonian Indians were confronted with the obligation to “become white”<sup>7</sup> in their own territory. Yet rather than give up their indigenous identity, Amazonian Indians, like the highlanders, united on a common ground of victimhood.

### **Self-essentialization**

Warren and Jackson refer to the process of unification of peoples based on cultural commonalities as “essentialism” (2002: 8). Common “essences” can be derived from a shared history, language, geography, etc. In the case of Amazonian Indians, a common past with the rainforest romantically essentialized the image of the Indians as being pure and incorruptible nature-lovers. During the 1992 mobilization, Indigenous Amazonians related to one another as mutual “guardians of the Amazon” or the “crusaders of the rain forest” (Sawyer 2004: 53). Through this common identity, many different Amazonian ethnicities came together to march against common injustices.

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<sup>7</sup> Adopt Ecuador’s national Anglo-Christian culture.

Self-essentialization is perhaps the most important aspect of understanding the success of the indigenous movement. Among the vast array of cultures and ethnicities of the distinct regions of Ecuador, CONAIE was able to essentialize an overarching indigenous identity with the common thread of victimization and ancestral connection to nature. CONAIE utilizes an essentialized romantic image of indigeneity to unite Indians together for a common cause. One example of CONAIE's use of essentializing indigenous identity can be found in CONAIE's January 20<sup>th</sup> newsletter. The email was sent out the morning of CONAIE's planned mobilization in protest against a mining law that CONAIE viewed as a violation of human rights. The email calls for solidarity among all indigenous peoples in poetic and romantic language. The newsletter's sentiment can be summarized in its last few sentences:

*'La Movilización avanza, se juntan espíritus como lo hacen el aire andino, el viento amazónico, la brisa del mar, en un canto a la vida. Cayambe, Morona Santiago, Azuay, Pastaza, Guaranda, Simiatug, Tungurahua, se impregnan de la dignidad indígena'* (CONAIE 2009).<sup>8</sup>

CONAIE's essentialization of indigenous identity built a cohesive force that banded indigenous together to speak out and create change in their government. This use of identity as political leverage is referred to as "politicization of identity." In recent decades indigenous identity has been or politicized throughout Ecuador as a way of gaining visibility and political strength. Since certain laws benefit indigenous peoples over mestizos or whites, communities may emphasize the indigenous aspects of their collective identity for political gain. For example, in the Macaboa commune on the Ecuadorian coast, a debate emerged concerning the legality of a communal land sale to a Swiss-Ecuadorian in 1996 (Bauer nd: 13). While the Ecuadorian government maintained that Macaboa was mestizo, people who objected to the land sale claimed

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<sup>8</sup> 'The Mobilization advances, spirits join together as the andean air, the Amazonian wind, the sea's breeze, in one poetic song to life. Cayambe, Morona Santiago, Azuay, Pastaza, Guaranda, Simiatug, Tungurahua, are pregnant with indigenous dignity' (authors' translation).

the community to be indigenous, despite rarely self-identifying as being indigenous among themselves (Bauer nd: 10). Although there was evidence Macaboa had a 5,000 year history, the coast does not share an indigenous tradition like the highlands or the Amazon. As little as 2 percent of the inhabitants on the coast are said to be indigenous (Bauer nd: 10). Due to CONAIE's support of the community and activism in giving visibility to Indians, the people of Macaboa were able to essentialize their indigenous identity into a cohesive movement of protest for their land rights . (Bauer nd: 10). Strikes that were meant to seek access to their communal land, were soon transformed into strikes demanding recognition of indigenous status and rights for equal citizenship. Although the Macaboans did not win back their communal land, they gained official status as indigenous through the essentialization of identity in an area that is not typically indigenous.

## **Memory and the Politicization of Identity**

In the process of revitalization of identity, gaps in history or culture may arise. According to Hill, a disassociation of a people from their history is dangerous because it may subject them to manipulation from outsiders (1996: 16). For example, European rejection and oppression of indigenous history disempowered indigenous families who were once royalty within their own culture. A loss of history can result in a loss of social structure and hierarchy. Conversely, blurring the past may create an opportunity for glorifying and embellishing a cultural narrative, which may strengthen ethnic groups.

One example of politicization of identity is the case of the indigenous community in Cacha. Indians living in Cacha had long been oppressed by whites and mestizos who obligated them to perform labor on public works when passing through their town (Pallares 2002: 114).

With the help of a priest, the Cacha community established its own parish in 1980, yet due to their history of subordination, they did not feel any one of them had the capacity to lead (Pallares 2002: 130). It was not until the community held seminars to discuss the Cacha's royal Incan lineage, that their confidence began to grow (Pallares 2002: 132). Every night community members exchanged heroic stories of Cacha ancestors and the Duchicela dynasty (Pallares 2002: 133). In fact, no one remembered the Duchicela dynasty, yet the tales from Cacha's royal lineage have become engrained into Cacha identity, along with a new confidence of leadership and sense of identity (Pallares 2002: 133). Through the story of the Cachas, emerges the importance of identity in orienting a community and the roles of the people within that society.

### **The 1992 March**

Although OPIP was not successful in swaying the Ecuadorian government in 1990 with their proposal for land and autonomy rights, their moment of glory would come two years later in the historic march from the Amazonian city of Puyo to Quito in what would be later called the *Caminata* in 1992. The year 1992 was an auspicious year for indigenous organizations as it marked the 500<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of Columbus' arrival in the Americas (Whitten et al. 2003: 185). According to Whitten et al., indigenous groups interpreted the year 1992 to be a symbolic end to an era of domination over indigenous peoples (2003: 185). The years leading up to 1992 were energetic, and echoed the slogan, "*Después de 500 años de dominación, autodeterminación indígena en 1992!*" (After 500 years of domination, indigenous self-determination in 1992!) (Whitten et al. 2003: 185). In light of the anniversary, OPIP seized the opportunity to gain national attention to their plight, not just as victims of unsafe oil extraction, but of true *indigenas* who have the inherent duty to defend the integrity of nature based on their ethnic background.

The march from Puyo began on April 11 with 2,000 marchers, decked out in feathers and warrior paint (Yashar 2005: 294). Participants were encouraged to bring musical instruments and play them as they made the long trek to Quito (Whitten et al 2003: 189). On their march through the Amazon and subsequently the Andes, they beat drums and chanted songs, proudly displaying their indigenous heritage (Whitten et al 2003: 194). Along their journey, more and more marchers joined them in protest. By the time they arrived in Quito on May 14, the group of marchers had swelled to anywhere between 5,000 to 10,000 with representatives from Azuay, Cañar, Chimborazo, Tungurahua, Cotopaxi, Pichincha and Imbabura provinces (Whitten et al. 2003: 187, 200, Gerlach 2003: 75). Gerlach offers a more romantic account stating that the number of protestors grew to as many as 20,000 by the time they reached Quito, who had come from “all corners of Ecuador” (2003: 75). OPIP along with its supporters marched to the Plaza San Blas where Jumandi, the Amazonian war hero, was condemned to death in 1579 for his rebellion against the Spanish. (Sawyer 2004: 66). The plaza became the gathering place to hear dramatic speeches in condemnation of five hundred years of oppression (Gerlach 2003: 75). Police in full riot gear stood by as the marchers progressed to the Plaza de San Francisco, in the heart of Quito where they refused to leave until they had met with the president (Whitten et al 2003: 200).

In many ways the thousands of feather-donned marchers in the Plaza de San Francisco, were like the Cachas who asserted an identity that strengthened and justified their right to challenge the dominant political system. OPIP was successful in some respects, yet in many ways the Ecuadorian government let them down or even increased tensions. According to Pallares, OPIP’s bold request for the continuation of native practices tarnished their relations with the state, as they were deemed unpatriotic and accused of trying to carve up the country into

multiple states (2002: 215). Borja's rejection of OPIP's declaration is most clearly expressed in his words, when he addressed the Indians saying, "We will give you land, but not sovereignty" (Pallares 2007: 151). President Borja eventually approved the concession of 19 different territorial blocs that totaled 138 communities and 1,115,475 hectares (Yashar 2005: 126). Still, these blocks were only 55% of the ancestral land that OPIP claimed, and the state arbitrarily drew them up, disregarding cultural and lingual divisions (Sawyer 2004: 52, Yashar 2005: 126). Furthermore the state retained the rights to the subsurface of the territories (Whitten 2007: 240). Borja agreed to extend the Yasuní national park, but it would remain under government, rather than indigenous, control (Whitten et al 2003: 208). Also, Borja established a "security zone" along the Peruvian boarder which was under military control, completely disregarding the presences of indigenous groups living in the area (Sawyer 2004: 52).

The state's retention of rights to the subsurface of the Amazon demeaned OPIP's territorial gains because it secured the state's access to oil exploitation. Likewise, the Yasuní National Park was subject to oil drilling (Whitten 2007: 240). The arbitrary drawing up of territorial blocs and the imposition of the military in the new "safety zone" did not serve to fully satisfy indigenous demands. Regarding the safety zone as vacant land for military occupation dehumanized the indigenous groups perhaps even more than prove the state's growing sensitivity to indigenous rights. Furthermore, the state refused to recognize Ecuador as a multicultural and multiethnic country, as proposed by OPIP in 1992 and CONAIE in 1990.

From the 1990 Levantamiento Indígena to the 1992 Caminata, the indigenous movement has become increasingly focused on identity as a means of seeking political strength. In many ways, the 1992 mobilization picked up where the Levantamiento Indígena left off. Overarching demands for cultural respect and recognition of political weight was ultimately driven by the

need for land, a space to reproduce and develop culture and provide a decent livelihood for future generations. Like the Levantamiento Indigena, it brought visibility to indigenous peoples in the mestizo sphere of society and proved the strength of the indigenous peoples to the whole of Ecuador (Whitten et al 2003: 204). Although OPIP did not succeed in getting the state to meet all of its demands, it introduced bold ideas of autonomy and self-rule that would later be granted under continued pressure from the indigenous community. Amazonian Indigenous culture proudly displayed in Quito's city center was also a step toward the attainment of the declaration that Ecuador is a multiethnic, multicultural state in 1998.

## Chapter 4: World turned upside down

Since the 1990 *Levantamiento Indígena*, CONAIE has capitalized on its capacity to mobilize protests as a form of political leverage. Indigenous organizations adopted several tactics of opposition to the government, including blocking highways, occupying buildings, or refusing to set up food markets. In 1990, CONAIE even called upon all indigenous people to refrain from voting in an act of protest against Ecuador's democracy which CONAIE deemed corrupt and unfit to recognize the needs of all Ecuadorians (Collins 2003: 9).

But by 1996 CONAIE had backed away from the external rejection of the system by incorporating themselves into the governmental machinery to change the system from within. CONAIE began "playing by the rules" with the creation of *Unidad Plurinacional Pachakutik* or the Pachakutik Plurinational Unity. Pachakutik was created as a legitimate medium for executing indigenous agendas and became the first indigenous political party (Picq 2008: 276). The word Pachakutik is Quichua for "upside-down world." The concept comes from indigenous cosmovision<sup>9</sup> that describes the world turning upside-down when Spain colonized the Americas. Since indigenous cultures view time as cyclical, this inversion of the world is expected to one day be righted, marking the return of indigenous domination over the Americas.

In the subsequent years, CONAIE continued to sway the state into meeting indigenous demands and gain legitimacy as a competent sector of Ecuadorian society. In 1997, CONAIE and Pachakutik, along with other national-level social organizations, collaborated on issues to be raised in the constituent assembly, a feat that resulted in Ecuador's recognition of being a multicultural and multilingual state (Andolina 2003: 743). In 1998 CONAIE continued to enjoy international presence when it began work with the World Bank and the Ecuadorian government

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<sup>9</sup> A general perspective on the world possessed by a culture.

on the Project of Development of Indigenous and Afroecuadorian People (PRODEPINE). This project marked the first collaboration between an indigenous organization, the World Bank, and the government. According to the website for the program, PRODEPINE has been successful in creating a liason between state institutions and ethnic organizations (<http://www.ifad.org/>)

By 2000, CONAIE had gained so much political clout that the military called upon the immense mobilization power of the indigenous organization to take part in the overthrow of President Jamil Mahuad Witt. The coup d'etat that came to be known as the *revuelta indígena-militar* or the indigenous-militant overturn, marks one of the greatest accomplishments of CONAIE. This chapter will focus on CONAIE's involvement in the presidential overthrow as their ultimate demonstration of power and reveal the ways in which indigenous peoples have created an irrevocable space for themselves in Ecuador's democracy.

The years leading up to the presidential overthrow were marked with economic failure. External debt was rising, oil prices were falling and coastal industries were struggling to recover from devastation brought on by el Niño (Lucero 2007: 230). Inflation was rapidly rising, increasing 249 percent from 1999 to 2000 (Whitten 2003: 2). In the midst of economic panic, Mahuad took the advice from the IMF, elite bankers, and a group of American economists and personal friends known as "the Harvard Boys" (Whitten 2003: 2). Mahuad froze all bank accounts and dollarized the economy when Ecuador's then currency, the sucre, was at 25,000 to the dollar (Whitten 2003: 2). As a result, Ecuadorians lost 75 percent of their purchasing power overnight (Whitten 2003: 2), exacerbating social discontent that had been brewing amid the faltering economy.

One of Ecuador's newspapers, *Hoy*, reported that weeks before the coup and days before the dollarization, the country was buzzing with doubt that Mahuad's regime would last much

longer (Jan 22, 2000). As early as November of 1999 CONAIE had requested that Mahuad resign for his mishandling of the economy and trust in the IMF (Hoy Jan 22, 2000). Between November and January 21, CONAIE continued to meet with other powerful organizations, seeking out strength in numbers. During these months, CONAIE negotiated with company owners, armed forces, the Catholic Church, merchants and most importantly—the military (Hoy Jan 22, 2000). Through these talks, CONAIE prepared for resistance in the event of an even worse economic decline that would require taking measures into their own hands.

Economic and social tension reached the breaking point when Mahuad dollarized the economy on January 9, 2000 (Hoy Jan 22, 2000). Nearly a week later, indigenous protestors began the trek to Quito from various parts of the country and by January 21<sup>st</sup>, around 10,000 Indians occupied the areas surrounding the capital (Hoy Jan 22, 2000). The coup was headed by three distinct men who would comprise the triumvirate once power had been taken away from Mahuad (Whitten 2003: 1). One of these men was Carlos Antonio Vargas Guatatuca, president of CONAIE, and representative of the indigenous sector. The second of the three was Lucio Edwin Gutiérrez Borbúa, a well-decorated colonel of the military. Lastly, they were joined by Carlos Solorzano Constantini, an ex supreme-court judge (Whitten 2003: 1)

According to *Hoy*, the coup was planned so that the indigenous people would spark enough unrest to destabilize the government, providing the military with an opportunity to seize Congress and the Supreme Court of Justice (Jan 22, 2000). Indigenous and non-indigenous people alike surrounded the capital building chanting “*¡Fuera, Mahuad! ¡Fuera gobierno corrupto!*” (Out, Mahuad! Out corrupt government!) (Hoy Jan 22, 2000). Only 40 minutes after the seizure of the governmental palace, Antonio Vargas dissolved the three branches of government (Hoy Jan 22, 2000) and declared General Carlos Mendoza Poveda leader of the new

*Junta de Salvación Nacional* or the National Salvation Junta (Whitten 2003: 7). But the power seized by CONAIE and the military only lasted a few hours before outside pressures, particularly from the U.S. State Department, forced Mendoza Poveda to make a legitimate transfer of power by handing over his position to Mahuad's vice president, Gustavo Noboa Bejarano (Lucero 2007: 231).

Shortly after Noboa was sworn in, Vargas fled to the Amazon and Gutierrez was arrested in his home. Solorzano, who would also be put on trial, was hiding in an unknown location and thousands of Indians began walking home in disappointment (Hoy Jan 23, 2000). Although the plan did not end as the participants had planned, not all was lost. Those who were involved in the coup were granted amnesty (Lucero 2007: 231) and inflation was finally under control (El Universo October 24, 2006).

Even though the Indians could not manage to keep hold of the power in the vacuum they created, CONAIE's strength was demonstrated in its ability to destabilize the government. The coalition between the military and CONAIE was an unlikely alliance given the military's history of suppressing indigenous rebellion. The military's call on CONAIE to assist in the overthrow, speaks to the great power that the indigenous confederation had accumulated. CONAIE had been so successful in networking and mobilizing that the military recognized their alliance would greatly assist them with the overthrow of Mahuad.

Indigenous participation had become essential to Ecuadorian politics. In the 2002 elections, Lucio Gutierrez was elected president with his populist platform that specifically spoke out to historically marginalized groups. He propagated himself as "*el padre de todos los Ecuatorianos*" (the father of all Ecuadorians) who promised to always be "*un hombre humilde, que lucha en beneficio de todos los Ecuatorianos*" (a humble man, who fights for the benefit of

all Ecuadorians) (La Nación 2/28/2009). He and his coalition with the Pachakutik party, won 54% of the vote against Noboa.

But once in power, Gutierrez did not keep his promise of “always fighting for the benefit of all Ecuadorians.” In 2003 he vetoed a law proposed by CONAIE that would have created indigenous and black electoral districts, even after congress had approved it (Mattiace 2007: 204). In fact, Gutierrez enacted many of the very policies he condemned as damaging to already disadvantaged sectors of society, such as signing an agreement with the IMF to pursue neoliberal policies (Lucero 2007: 231). Feeling betrayed, Luis Macas and Nina Pacari (another prominent indigenous activist) left the cabinet, forfeiting the occupations they had long sought after to return to the opposition (Lucero 2007: 231)

CONAIE accumulated undeniable strength and success in the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Beginning as an organization that sought participation in the governmental system it opposed, CONAIE gained the attention of the national government and achieved some of their many goals to advance indigenous peoples. But with the creation of Pachakutik in 1996, CONAIE took an approach that accepted the governmental system in place and worked to change it from within. Following the creation of the indigenous party, CONAIE participated in a number of negotiations with the state and international organizations and won various seats in the government. One such organization that CONAIE collaborated with was the military, who took advantage of CONAIE’s mobilization expertise, to destabilize the government, placing CONAIE back into opposition with the government.

Although neither CONAIE nor the military could hold on to power, the event demonstrated the political consciousness in the mind of the Indians and the networks of contacts that CONAIE had established. Well-acquainted with the power of the indigenous movement,

Lucio Gutierrez campaigned in favor of indigenous rights, only to betray CONAIE after taking office. Gutierrez's use of CONAIE to destabilize the government in order to realize the coup and then subsequent turn to neoliberal policies once in power, reveals that Gutierrez was not firmly fighting for the rights of indigenous peoples. Rather, he recognized the cohesive strength of the indigenous people of Ecuador and his advantage in aligning with the powerful organization.

## **Chapter 5: Implications for Democracy**

This final chapter reminds the reader of the historical events that laid the foundation for the indigenous movement and the events that set social transformation in motion. Each chapter is briefly summarized, followed by an analysis of Ecuador's shift in political patterns since the introduction of ethnopoltics to its democracy. The analysis begins with a challenge to democracy, questioning the validity of a coup as an act of popular sovereignty. Next I cite changes in party seats, examine the 1978, 1998 and 2008 constitution, demonstrate an increased push for indigenous and minority voting, and reveal the fear politicians currently possess with respect to CONAIE's strength. The following analysis concludes that that the circle of inclusion has expanded to include indigenous people within the realm of citizenship and has allowed them to participate in their own political, economic, social and cultural systems.

In the case of Ecuador, indigenous peoples were historically alienated from citizenship initially due to their slave-like social status imposed by their colonizers. Indigenous peoples were kept far from the circle of inclusion during the colonial era when whites and mestizos treated Indians as children who needed "protection," thereby creating a paternalistic relationship. The state and upper-classes assumed this father-like role of "taking care" of the Indians. As the state strove towards modernization, laws aimed to equalize society by assimilating Indians into European-American culture. Denial of indigenous culture as a way to modernize suggests that law-makers perceived indigenous cultures as being inherently backwards and saw European culture as the only way to advance.

These policies erroneously did not take the indigenous peoples' history of subordination into account, ending in failed policies where indigenous peoples were viciously taken advantage of. One example was land reform, where the popular perspective was that Indians could not

manage land and were therefore given the least fertile land available. Another was the *arranche* practice that dehumanized indigenous to slaves on demand. Nevertheless, the law failed to ban the *arranche* for fear that recognition of the practice would allow it to persist. The state did not take into account the ethnic, cultural, and historical differences that were too deeply entrenched in society for these policies to realistically end in an egalitarian society.

Ethnic tension and discrimination was heightened towards the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when land reform freed indigenous people from haciendas and many migrated to the cities. No longer being only peasants, indigenous people in the cities experienced racial divides between indigenous and non-indigenous that had been previously separated by country and city. Indians' shared experience of victimization united them with other indigenous people, even if they didn't speak the same language or come from a similar region. When indigenous people began to unite on the basis of ethnicity, rather than class, it was apparent that a large sector of society was being ignored on the basis of ethnicity. CONAIE specifically emphasized indigenous identity as a way of breaking the stereotypes of indigenous people being incompetent and lazy. Fueled by racial injustices, CONAIE gained followers and support which culminated into the 1990 *Levantamiento Indígena*.

The Indigenous Uprising was the first step in gaining equal citizenship. The significance of occupying Quito was that the capital was a place that had been historically designated only for those *within* the circle of inclusion. The majority of Indigenous people traditionally remained in the country so forcing themselves into the "white sphere" of Ecuador made them no longer invisible to the Ecuadorian elite. Subsequent negotiations with President Borja began to expand the circle of inclusion and citizenship as indigenous voices were heard at the very top level of the government.

In the Caminata in 1992, indigenous people protested inequality on a different level. They rejected the notion that they should have the same rights, and instead demanded that they have different rights on account of their ethnic identity. They demanded that Ecuador be recognized as a country consisting of various nationalities, that everyone would have equal access to regardless of ethnic differences. Included in their membership of various Ecuadorian nationalities would come different sets of cultural rights such as rights to traditional judicial law. Although much of their proposal was rejected, the march was useful in demonstrating indigenous pride and distinction from their walk through Quito.

The most controversial event in the expansion of democracy was the overthrow of President Mahuad in 2000. Even though the president was extremely unpopular at the time, a coup is based on the decision of only the small group of people and therefore may be considered undemocratic. Zamosc argues that social movements are not always useful in extending rights to others. While some social movements such as the American civil rights movement in the 1960s led to better social status and extended citizenship to African-Americans in the U.S., other social movements such as the Nazi movement in Germany led to severe human rights abuses (Zamosc 2007: 7). Lucero, for example, does not agree that CONAIE should be credited for expanding democracy since its plan for “national salvation” was behind closed doors and executed in an illegal fashion (Lucero 2003: 42). Lucero’s argument is not very convincing because it was not just a handful of people who executed the plan. Rather, there was massive coordination between indigenous and military activists, with broad-based popular support, who agreed that the president was not fit to rule. According to Nina Pacari, a leading CONAIE activist, the overthrow was a demonstration of popular sovereignty (Langer and Muñoz 2003: 202). The

ability of the Indians to effectively mobilize to overthrow the president demonstrates indigenous peoples' true participation in changing the governmental system.

According to Picq (2008: 277), CONAIE indeed played an important part in expanding democracy and not degrading it, as Lucero suggests. In 1996, six indigenous people were elected to congress and two indigenous people were elected to positions as local mayors (Stahler-Sholk et al. 2008: 168). It was also in 1996 that Luis Macas was elected to congress, making him the first indigenous leader to hold a national office (Stahler-Sholk et al. 2008: 169). In 2003, Pachakutik won four cabinet positions and several secretariats (Stahler-Sholk et al. 2008: 173). Luis Macas was appointed as agricultural minister and Nina Pacari was named minister of foreign relations, making her the first indigenous person in Latin America to be selected as a foreign minister (Stahler-Sholk et al. 2008: 174). In 2006, Luis Macas appeared on the ballot for the presidency representing Pachakutik (Stahler-Sholk et al. 2008: 177). This trajectory from winning the first few deputies seats to having an indigenous leader run for president demonstrates a wide range of advancement that CONAIE and the indigenous movement as a whole has achieved since the Levantamiento Indígena of 1990.

Another way to verify that the circle of inclusion has expanded is by examining 3 of Ecuador's most recent constitutions. With respect to recognition of indigenous peoples, there is a vast amount of difference among the 1978, 1998 and 2008 constitutions. Frequent redrafting of the Ecuadorian constitution should not devalue the legitimacy of these documents. Rather, changing the constitution reflects political instability and frequent change of governmental ideology. As I trace the progression of indigenous advancements within the constitutions, it becomes evident that the circle of inclusion is continuing to expand.

The 1978 constitution precedes international awareness of indigenous and cultural rights. The document also precedes the formation of CONAIE and Ecuador's transition to democracy. The 1978 constitution echoes the laws of assimilation that effectively denied that indigenous people as being citizens as Ecuador. For example, the 1978 constitution declares that Spanish is the only official language, despite the numerous indigenous groups who exclusively speak an indigenous language.

In Picq's analysis she makes the point that indigenous people most often arrived at leadership positions after mobilizations that overthrew a president (2008: 277). After the first of a succession of presidential overthrows that occurred in the late 1990s, Pachakutik gained seven seats in the constituent assembly plus three more from alliances with other moderately-leftist parties (Stahler-Sholk et al. 2008: 169). Although Pachakutik fell short of making Ecuador an officially pluri-national state, CONAIE finally succeeded in getting the constitution of 1998 to recognize Ecuador as a pluri-cultural and multi-ethnic country,<sup>10</sup> guarantee bilingual education for indigenous children,<sup>11</sup> and legalize indigenous judicial law insofar as it does not violate any of Ecuador's federal laws.<sup>12</sup> Recognition of Ecuador as a pluri-cultural and multi-ethnic country served to expand democracy because it acknowledged inhabitants of different languages, cultures and ethnicities as being official citizens of Ecuador. Also, Ecuadorians were guaranteed the right to healthy and uncontaminated flora and fauna, which would serve to protect indigenous communities from pollution caused by oil extraction (Whitten 2007: 240). With the passing of the 1998 constitution, Ecuador embraced the cultural diversity it had denied with decades of assimilationist policies. Legalization of indigenous judicial law was another advancement for

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<sup>10</sup> Title 1, Article 1. 1998. "El Ecuador es un estado social de derecho, soberano, unitario, independiente, democrático, pluricultural y multiétnico."

<sup>11</sup> Title 3, Chapter 4, Section 7, Article 69. "El Estado garantizará el sistema de educación intercultural bilingüe"

<sup>12</sup> Title 3. Chapter 5. Section 1. Article 84. Number 7. Conservar y desarrollar sus formas tradicionales de convivencia y organización social, de generación y ejercicio de la autoridad.

democracy because it gave indigenous peoples the right to participate in the determination of their own cultural systems.

In contrast, the 2008 constitution extends even more social and cultural rights to indigenous peoples. It is in 2008 that Ecuador is finally recognized as a plurinational country.<sup>13</sup> In the 2008 constitution, indigenous peoples are granted twenty-one collective rights, compared to only fifteen in the 1998 constitution and none in the 1978 constitution. Among some of the added rights is the right to develop and strengthen bilingual schools<sup>14</sup> (as opposed to only having access to bilingual schools as stated in the 1998 constitution) and limit military activity on indigenous lands.<sup>15</sup> The right to develop bilingual schools rather than solely have access to them is a huge advancement considering Ecuador's tradition of paternalism that historically placed whites and mestizos in positions to administer indigenous institutions. The 1998 constitution exemplifies an effort by the state to resolve past inequalities and grant indigenous peoples self-determination over their own social and cultural systems, expanding evermore the circle of inclusion.

The 2008 constitution also established the CNE, *Consejo Nacional Electoral* (National Electoral Council).<sup>16</sup> This organization is responsible for organizing and directing elections to ensure that they are transparent and fair.<sup>17</sup> This is first council that Ecuador has had whose exclusive function is to direct and regulate elections. The council is actively making Ecuador's democracy more participatory by encouraging people to vote. One way CNE encourages voting is by handing out pamphlets for youth that explain the new constitution and how to vote. On the back of the pamphlet is a picture of a girl in a wheelchair, a boy in a typical indigenous hat, an

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<sup>13</sup> Title 1. Article 1

<sup>14</sup> Title 3. Chapter 3. Article 14.

<sup>15</sup> Title 3. Chapter 3. Article 20.

<sup>16</sup> Article 219.

<sup>17</sup> Article 219

Afro-Ecuadorian, and a girl in an ambiguously indigenous-looking dress ([www.tse.gov.ec](http://www.tse.gov.ec)).

Encouraging voting by using images of people who have been traditionally viewed as second-class citizens helps to expand the electorate and feelings of inclusion for who can participate in political determination.

My last measurement for the expanding of the circle of inclusion is the impact indigenous people have on elections. Before the formation of Pachakutik, indigenous peoples were discouraged from voting as a way of boycotting the government's unfair practices. Once CONAIE accepted Ecuador's political system as a legitimate route to power, indigenous peoples began to have a significant impact on the outcome of the elections. According to an exit poll in 1996 conducted by Natalia Wray, "80 percent of indigenous voters voted for indigenous candidates" and most of them were participating only because an indigenous person was running (Pallares 2002: 21). As a result, Pachakutik in alliance with the leftist party Nuevo País (New Country), won eight of eighty-two congressional seats (Pallares 2002: 21). Four of the eight elected to congress were indigenous (Pallares 2002: 21). The sharp rise of indigenous voters due to indigenous candidates on the ballot reveals solidarity with other indigenous peoples and an enthusiasm for participation.

An increase in indigenous voter participation also signifies that candidates running for office must appeal to a large indigenous electorate. Gutierrez is a prime example of a political candidate who appealed to the indigenous movement to ascend to power. His betrayal of CONAIE reveals apathy toward indigenous advancement yet recognition of large impact indigenous people have in the electorate. Appealing to the indigenous vote has become central to winning the presidency. In 2006 Correa also garnered the strength of the indigenous vote with his promise to rewrite the constitution, an objective CONAIE had long sought after. In 2006

Luis Macas also ran for president as the first indigenous presidential candidate, but only received about 2% of the total vote. The result of the 2006 elections show that candidates must appeal to indigenous peoples for election, yet an indigenous person in the presidential office is still not yet perceived as a viable option.

Despite these many advances in expanding the circle of inclusion, CONAIE continues to be criticized for using undemocratic means to seek a place in Ecuador's government. After the overthrow of 2000, CONAIE remained a constant threat to the state after its demonstration of power. In the face of a recent mining law, opposed by CONAIE for violating human rights, Ecuador's minister of Government, Fernando Bustamante accused CONAIE of planning to destabilize the government (El Diario Jan 20, 2009). While it's true that CONAIE had threatened with another levantamiento, and had been pursuing hunger strikes to seek negotiation (El Universo Jan 11, 2009), CONAIE's president Marlon Santi denies that CONAIE is planning an overthrow (El Diario January 20, 2009). CONAIE's strength evidently poses a threat to the government today and has consequently caused divisions between CONAIE and politicians. Outbreaks of fear that CONAIE may overturn laws by force that were written and passed democratically has caused CONAIE to lose support among some of its followers.

Looking over the trajectory of indigenous relations to the Ecuadorian state, Indians have radically altered their social position in just the last four decades. While poor living conditions and failed reforms brewed the desire for upheaval in indigenous communities, peasant rebellions only had limited success. The indigenous movement gained strength when the focus was turned to indigenous identity rather than peasant. By virtue of descending from the people who originated from Ecuador, Indians' could justify claims to natural resources through ancestral inheritance. Through the essentialization and cohesion of identity, the indigenous peoples of

Ecuador have gained visibility and mobilized for political, economic, social and cultural advances. Indians' exercise of strength in negotiations with the state and constitutional assemblies has undoubtedly widened the circle of inclusion to include indigenous peoples as participatory citizens in Ecuador's democracy.

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