

## **The 29th Niwano Peace Prize Commemorative Address**

**Rosalina Tuyuc Velásquez**

Distinguished members of the Niwano Peace Foundation  
Distinguished special guests  
Distinguished ambassadors  
Distinguished members of the media  
Ladies and gentlemen  
Good morning

On the occasion in 2012 of the Twenty-ninth Niwano Peace Prize, it is an honor and a privilege for me to receive this award, as a Kaqchikel Mayan woman, as a mother and a genocide survivor, born in San Juan Comalapa, a town that works in agriculture, trade and handicrafts; respectful of life and weaver of the recent history of my country in the struggle for respect for Human Rights, Women's Rights, especially widows, the struggle against the militarization of our society and against our people, in the search for truth, justice, the right to compensation for the damage suffered by the armed conflict, and the right to live in peace and harmony.

I want to express my deepest gratitude once, twice and three times to our Mayan ancestors, great connoisseurs of time, architecture, mathematics, astronomy, creators of an extraordinary calendar and deep lovers of the cosmos and nature. And also to the indigenous Ainu people of Japan for allowing me to get to know their history.

In our Mayan calendar, today we mark the sacred day Oxlajuj Tz'ikin, which has a deep meaning, because it teaches us the spiritual essence, material form and our double vision. From my view as a woman full of great hopes for a future of peace, I am thankful for my life together with my children and grandchildren, and for the memory of my father who was kidnapped and disappeared on July 5, 1982 and my husband Rolando Gomez Sotz who was kidnapped and disappeared in May of 1984, two people who were my inspiration, and an example of service to others. Also to the memory of the more than 250,000 left dead by the genocide, one of the cruelest and greatest injustices committed against my people in the 1980's in my country of Guatemala.

On behalf of women and men of the corn, who carry in the deepest parts of

ourselves, the hope of being a people that search for the respect of dignity and harmony between the people of my country and the world, on behalf the women of the National Coordinator of Widows from Guatemala, CONAVIGUA. This is an organization through which we, with determination and courage, in a very difficult and painful time of our lives, decided to organize ourselves as a widows and open the path of searching for the disappeared in the clandestine cemeteries; defending our children against obligatory military service; searching for justice and respect for the dignity of women; and denouncing Human Rights violations, especially the rape of indigenous women by military and paramilitary groups.

In this solemn ceremony, I express our gratitude, with humility and simplicity; I pay homage to Mr. Nikkyo Niwano who was the founder of the Niwano Peace Prize, given to encourage the achievement of peace and harmonious coexistence in the world. From Guatemala, the land of the Mayas, I want to thank you for having given me this award. I assume and will carry the responsibility to continue contributing to the development of a culture of peace, to promote with more energy respect for life and the human rights of a people who want to be respected for who we are, for what we want to be, and for what we want to reach for to have a full life.

I also pay tribute to the victims in Nagasaki and Hiroshima of the atomic bomb, and those in Tohoku of the earthquake and the tsunami in Japan last year, an event that shocked all of humanity. I want to share my solidarity with all Japanese. In addition, I want to share the thought that the environmental movement should assume a greater commitment to contributing to the defense and protection of the land, mountains, water and air. Since on them depends human life and the life of animals and plants, we should not continue to pollute what little we have left of what we are living in right now.

I am grateful to the members of the Niwano Peace Foundation who make extraordinary contributions to the promotion and pursuit of peace in the world. This effort is worthy of imitation, so that no country or region of the world continues to promote war, contempt, hatred, intolerance, violence and racism. At this time, as a person receiving the honor of this award, I want to share my thoughts on Harmonization and Peace.

With the permission of the Creator and Maker of the life and energies of the universe, and in memory of the martyrs of peace, I want to address harmonization on the occasion of the awarding of the twenty-ninth Niwano Peace Prize, and to share with you the meaning of Harmony and peace. There is a tremendous need in

the world today for Harmony and Peace, and therefore it is important to also share what we as Mayas believe, understand, practice and see, according to our cosmovision, culture and the reality of life in our communities about these topics and values.

Before I share my thoughts about harmonization and peace, it is important to share my thoughts about the lack of harmony and peace both in my country and in the world.

In Guatemala, for example, despite signing a firm peace agreement in 1996, neither peace nor harmony has yet been achieved. Today we live with a lot of uncertainty, almost in chaos as a society and as a country. There is a struggle between life and death. Fear, pain, and familial, social, economic, and political unbalance prevail. Although there was an end to armed conflict, today there is a lot of death and desolation, there is little space for internal harmony among individuals and collectively, and little confidence between people and the state. There is a lot of violence, hunger, poverty and misery, inequality, injustice and confusion. It is as if it they were lifelong illnesses. There is a lot of ambition and selfishness, and much great wealth and accumulated power. There is great inequality between those with and those without.

On a global level, these problems also exist in many parts of the world. There is inequality between countries. There is a lot of wealth with selfishness and tools that make greater misery for the majority. On a global level there is a financial crisis, but at the same time there is a lot of accumulated wealth that is the result of a global system that is conducive to imbalance, fear, chaos and political imbalance. There is excessive pollution, climate change and global warming of the earth.

The imposition of exclusion policies, genocide and the destruction of cultures, especially the culture of indigenous peoples, are policies that do not allow for the harmonization between peoples, industries, state and society in the world. Using arms and bombs destroys people's lives, communities and families, leaving innocent victims. Using bombs and arms and puts brother against brother, and people against one another.

Peace and harmony is not the absence of war. There is no peace for individuals, for families, for communities, for the country, and for humanity if there is hunger, disease, and frustration; if there is trauma and economic, social and political imbalance; if these cause an imbalance of nature; if there isn't solidarity, respect for human rights, the rights of peoples, women's rights, and youth rights. In short, there

is no peace and harmony without observing the values of equality, love and respect. You can say these are the values that our ancestors have been building and for which we were created.

The question is whether humanity has suffered enough pain, enough war, enough hunger. Why have we not achieved harmony, and what prevents it? A good part of it is because we have become stimulated by selfishness and material ambition, as people and as groups of people, as countries and as groups of countries.

Harmonization means to be fine with yourself and with other human beings, with Mother Earth, animals, plants and every energy that comes from the Cosmos. Harmony is: joy, happiness, freedom, and enjoying natural goods, as well as satisfying all material, spiritual, emotional and social needs such as health, education, work, housing, and an environment free of pollution. In our culture, all of this is what we call a full life or the fullness of life. This is what we seek and want for all human beings, for all countries, and for all of humanity.

Speaking about and explaining harmonization is an enormous responsibility because it goes hand in hand with the respect and care we should have for one another, it is the reciprocity between human beings and Mother Nature. Our ancestors, those who came before us and are in another dimension of life, taught us that we should live with all life in all its dimensions. This lesson should guarantee the continuity of life for all that exists; from the smallest to the largest, including also the life of our planet Earth and the cosmos.

Harmonization should be understood as the highest social, spiritual and material expression and social action of human beings as thoughtful people capable of differentiating between good and bad. Also the stages of life offer us the ability to serve and help those that suffer from inequality and injustice, as well as those that suffer from lack of basic needs. and those suffering from the consequences of wars. In the Maya vision of the world, the purpose of being is maintaining balance and harmony. These are the fundamentals of Maya thought, to be able to behave with principles of equity, equality and human and community coexistence, and not disregarding any human being.

Today there is a very acute global crisis being experienced by humanity: social, economic, political, military and environmental devastation as well as global warming. This is what we are going through. We cannot close our eyes before this palpable and inevitable reality. However, my Maya ancestors and other indigenous people of the world tell us that a new era will come from a stricter study of the

cosmos and its energies and from societies and their behavior. This new era is tied to a new cycle of time that marks the Maya calendar. In the Western calendar it will start on December 21 of this year.

It is a new era that also should begin with the understanding of human destiny. That destiny is a fulfilled life; people and societies acting with ethics. Our grandparents said it, and we harbor the deep hope that the future life of the people and of humanity should be life in harmony with all dimensions of both men and women, as well as the planet Earth, Mother Nature and the universe. The new era should be in search of balance, justice and respect, as important elements of harmonization and peace. In many places in the world, there is a stronger awareness that questions the actions of humanity, above all, the powers and causes of chaos, fear, injustice and imbalance. This has been said and embodied by our Mayan grandparents.

The fate of the people, consistent with the signs of the times, should be tied to the dawn that our ancestors have provided. The current situation offers an extraordinary opportunity to think about that destiny, and to create processes that allow humanity to renew itself. At the same time it offers an opportunity to each of you to find unity with both your origin and your destiny. In that sense it is fundamental to prepare yourself for the new coexistence between cultures, respecting the spirituality of people and learning from the past in order to make possible changes. Humanity has the opportunity to change, receiving and giving a new meaning of life, bringing its vital energy to all that makes a fulfilled life possible. This decision also implies a different attitude that has to be consistent with deep spirituality. Only in that way will humanity forge through transcending time. It is not a transformation project, but a process of transformation to achieve harmonization and peace in our countries and in the world. This is our dare and our challenge. All of us are builders of life, respect, work; we all have qualities and abilities. Our mission is to develop them to contribute to peace and harmonization for a future full of happiness, hope, love, understanding and peace. Thank you very much.