

ZAPATISAS Vs. AMLO

In a speech given in October by the now Mexican **President Lopez Obrador (AMLO)** he announced that a project that will continue as planned is the 1500-kilometer Trans peninsular Tourist Train in the Yucatan, known as the Maya Train. Speaking in Cancun on October 11th, Obrador said that the train would be constructed *“whether our adversaries like it or not,”* dismissing claims that it will cause severe environmental damage in the region.

If anyone has shown fierce opposition not just to the Maya Train but also other AMLO proposals including the **new airport, special development zones, and the promotion of monoculture**, it has been the Zapatistas and its Indigenous allies, the National Indigenous Congress and the Indigenous Governing Council - CNI-CIG.

They were unified in their position regarding the new Mexican government and the programs it's looking to implement, saying that *“words are also superfluous in comparison to the announced plan to plant a million hectares of trees for fruit and lumber in Southern Mexico.”* This was a response to Lopez Obrador's declaration that he considers *“100 million hectares of communal and cooperative property to be abandoned”* in the region, thus justifying his plan to develop monoculture as a way to *“convert these into productive lands.”*

As for the construction of the new airport northeast of Mexico City, at Texcoco Lake. Says Heriberto Salas one of the delegates and involved in Land, Water and Culture Defense: *“Our rejection of the construction of this death project is total, and there is nothing to consult about. The project will provoke not only the death of*

Texcoco Lake, but also will bring about irreversible environmental damages in all of our communities in the Texcoco basin. The lake is part of our history and patrimony.”

In a speech in July of 2018, AMLO announced that there would be continuity of the pro-development policies of his predecessors, such as the gas pipelines throughout Mexico that connect to the United States. The pipeline in question is owned by the U.S. corporation *Sempre Energy*, and is intended to provide natural gas from Arizona to the Mexican Pacific states. Floreta Vosquez Molina, a Yaqui indigenous woman from the community of Loma de Bacúm in Sonora in northwest Mexico said



¡YA BASTA!

“this new government is not going to help us stop this pipeline project. The people who killed my son are protected by the government and the police. Four months ago, her 18-year-old son was murdered for opposing the Sonoran gas pipeline which will traverse Yaqui territory.”

Among the programs of the Fourth Transformation is the announced plan to begin on his first day in office employing 50,000 young people in the Army, Navy, and Federal Police. *“If Obrador thinks that our children are going to quit the defense of our lands to become soldiers or police, he's dead*

wrong. This isn't going to happen. I don't believe that Obrador is going to bring us justice,” Vosquez Molina said.

“For the good of all, first the poor,” is the slogan that Lopez Obrador uses to bring about what he calls the Fourth Transformation of Mexico. According to his New Mexican Mandate, this transformation implies *“the strengthening of the domestic market, trying to produce*

everything we need to consume in our own territory. That all Mexicans can be happy with where they were born, where their customs and traditions are.” To this end, AMLO has taken up negotiations around NAFTA, now known as USMCA, and will approach the negotiations with vigor in the second half of 2019.

The San Andres Accords were agreements signed by the Mexican government and the Zapatistas on February 16th, 1996. Lopez Obrador wants to establish the San Andres Accords in the Mexican Constitution. Indigenous peoples argue that the San Andres Accords has permitted the commercialization of their lands for national and transnational corporations. It is therefore self-contradictory that Lopez Obrador wants to approve the San Andres Accords *“without killing off the concessions of water, mining, natural goods and hydrocarbons, and without imposing limits on the imperial power granted by the current free trade agreement...[nor limiting] huge transnational corporations, without destroying the control over our territories exercised by massive criminal cartels with state security forces' support.”*

Mario Luna, an indigenous Yaqui, asserts that the San Andres Accords are being exercised through the daily construction of autonomy by the peoples organized under the CNI-CIG, and that they don't need AMLO's legislation. Luna argues that *“with the structural reforms established in our country, there is no need for the San Andrés Accords to be enacted by Mexican legislation. It is essentially contrary to our aims, because our processes are autonomous, consensual and not subject to law, much less the calendars of governments or political parties”.* As the CNI-CIG plenary expresses it, *“Words are also superfluous when they cynically speak of recognizing in their deeply rotten laws the San Andres Accords or our free self-determination without even touching the murderous capitalist assemblage that is the Mexican state.”*

Navarro F. Santiago, Avispa Midia

SEED: STOCKTON ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT DEMONSTRATION

A city-led guaranteed income demonstration project.

The mayor of Stockton, California, is leading an experiment with **“universal basic income,”** which is set to start by giving low-income residents \$500 a month, no questions asked.

Mayor Michael Tubbs, who was born and raised in Stockton and elected to Stockton's city council at age 22, calls his city “ground zero” for issues like wage stagnation, rising housing prices and loss of middle-class jobs that affect the nation.

The Central Valley city went bankrupt in 2012, and for decades it has been trying to diversify its agriculture-based economy.

“I feel that as mayor it's my responsibility to do all I could to begin figuring out what's the best way to make sure that folks in our community have a real economic floor,” Tubbs said.

Wealth inequality between upper-income and lower- and middle-income families is at the highest it has ever been.

Rising income inequality has been coupled with rising income volatility. A changing labor market has meant that predictable work hours have become increasingly rare and that more and more workers are depending on income from commissions, tips, and hourly work with fluctuating schedules. As many as 89% of Americans see their income fluctuate by more than 5% month to month and 60% see changes in spending greater than 30% from month to month.

These issues become only more intractable as the nature of work changes- though technology propels industries forward, it leaves workers behind. By 2030, automation could displace 375 million workers worldwide and 39 million workers in the United States. Automation is anticipated to claim 47% of jobs in the coming decades, but Stockton residents are already beginning to feel the sting. The question we all face now is not whether our country has an inequality problem, but rather what we will do to address it. We see the rich getting richer and the poor left hopelessly behind. The current social safety net fails to provide the economic security it purports and must be enhanced for the 21st century.

One in four Stocktonians still live in poverty and many more live paycheck to paycheck, struggling to stay afloat. The stakes are simply too high- for the single mother working two jobs and still living below the poverty line; for the man who spends four hours commuting daily for a job that doesn't cover his rent - for us to not try something new. It is in this reality that the Stockton Economic Empowerment Demonstration (SEED) is planted. SEED is born out of the simple belief that the best investment we can make are in our people. Beginning February 2019, approximately 100 residents will receive a Guaranteed Income of \$500 a month, for 18 months.

A hand-up, rather than a hand-out, SEED seeks to empower its recipients financially and to prove to supporters and skeptics alike that poverty results from a lack of cash, not character. We are motivated to test a guaranteed income in Stockton because we believe it is one of the most effective tools to combat poverty. Unconditional cash can supplement and enhance the current social safety net. Though the existing benefits systems target people's most essential needs, unconditional cash meets people's most urgent needs.

Sometimes people require more than food, housing, and medical insurance – they need a new car battery to get to work the next day, or they need cash to pay an unanticipated bill that might otherwise trigger a downward spiral. In these ways, unconditional cash mitigates the capriciousness of life and provides certainty in the midst of chaos. It gives people the freedom to make the most efficient and effective decisions.

Cash also allows people to respond to their needs as they arise, rather than waiting for situations to worsen and associated costs to skyrocket. Further, Guaranteed Income is tested and true. Economists at leading institutions have shown time and time again that when given unconditional cash, the poor take care of their needs and use the free time to focus their energy on climbing up the economic ladder.



Universal basic income is not a new idea. Martin Luther King championed the idea of a guaranteed income in 1967 to ensure a minimum standard of living and to combat inequality.

In **No Strings Attached: The Behavioral Effects of U.S. Unconditional Cash Transfer Programs** -the Roosevelt Institute and Economist Ioana Marinescu summarize the empirical evidence from three major natural experiments previously conducted in the United States.

Across the basic income experiments, educational achievement increased, health outcomes substantially improved, and there was no effect on labor market supply (a commonly cited concern). Other basic income experiments have seen no increase in alcohol and tobacco expenditures as well as a decrease in criminalized activity. It is clear -

Guaranteed income multiplies the good, and diminishes the bad. It is time to put evidence before ideology.

For more information:
www.stocktondemonstration.org

See page 9 for more on **Universal Basic Income**

