



THE NEW PRESIDENT OF MEXICO: "FOR THE GOOD OF ALL, FIRST THE POOR"

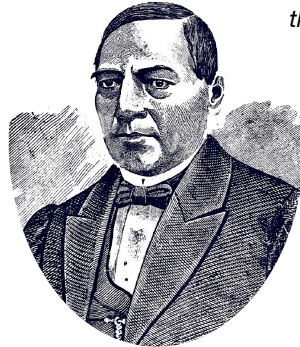
"Mexico will not stop thinking about Simon Bolivar and Jose Marti, who together with Benito Juarez continue to guide with their examples of patriotism the path forward for peoples and political leaders."

-Lopez Obrador at his inauguration December 1, 2018

The so-called fourth transformation has started its clock in Mexico. **Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO)** officially became president this Saturday at 11.20 am. The handover ceremony culminated a long road that the leftist politician began in July 2005 and included two failed attempts to seize power. More than 13 years later, and finally with the tricolor band on his chest, the leader of the National Regeneration Movement (*Morena*) drew in his first speech a project that seeks to bury decades of neoliberalism. *"Mexico's crisis was caused not only by the failure of the neoliberal model applied for 36 years, but also by the predominance of the most filthy public and private corruption... I say this realistically and without prejudice, this economic policy has been a disaster, a calamity for the country's public life."*

AMLO's first message, from the tribune of the Chamber of Deputies of San Lázaro, in the center of the Mexican capital, set out his roadmap for a six-year government. It was a long speech that ranged from his social program to the promise to end fracking and transgenics. At the heart of the message, however, is the promise to end corruption and make an exemplary change in the reflection that power gives to citizens in a country accustomed to seeing its politicians surrounded by opulence and wealth. *"Nothing has harmed Mexico more than the dishonesty of the rulers and the minority that has profited from influence and maneuvers,"* said the president. Minutes later he added: *"I have no right to fail the people of Mexico! Nothing material interests me and I am not attracted to the paraphernalia of power. I am aware of the great expectation that Mexicans now have."*

He is not initiating a change of government; it is a change of political regime. *"A political and orderly transformation, but at the same time peaceful and radical,"* he continued. A few minutes before beginning his administration, López Obrador proclaimed himself the protagonist of a stellar moment in Mexico's history. This moment would follow, according to the new president who won the July elections with 30 million votes, the **Mexico's struggle for Independence (1810-1821)** *"which fought to abolish slavery and achieve sovereignty"*; followed by the **Reform (1858-1866)** *"in which civil power predominated and the republic was restored"*; and then the **Revolution (1910-1921)** *"where justice and democracy were fought for"*.



López Obrador promised to turn honesty and fraternity into a way of life and government.

AMLO began his speech with a brief thank you to Enrique Peña Nieto for **not intervening** *"as other presidents did"* in the elections. *"We have suffered this anti-democratic outrage in elections past,"* said the politician from southeastern Mexico, who was the left's candidate in the 2006 and 2012 elections. Peña Nieto, who leaves the presidency with a 20% approval rating, listened a meter away as López Obrador promised immunity for his administration, one that was marked by corruption scandals in his cabinet and in some former governors of his party, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). *"We are going to begin this new stage without persecuting anyone because we are not going to turn this into a circus. If we start opening files, we would dedicate ourselves to looking for scapegoats, we would have to start with those who are in the public and private sectors. There wouldn't be enough courts or jails. We would put the country into a dynamic that could produce a fracture,"* said the president, who asked the

citizens to put an end to it and start a new story.

This provoked reactions from the opposition. In a surprising act, the right-wing bench of the National Action Party (PAN) began **counting from 1 to 43** in memory of the students who disappeared in Ayotzinapa in September 2014. The gesture has been used in various demonstrations – **never** called by the PAN by the way – that ask not to forget one of the most atrocious crimes happened in the government that came to an end. Legislators from other parties showed messages calling for the prosecution of Enrique Peña Nieto. *"Neither forgiveness nor forgetfulness"* and *"Peña, prison awaits you,"* said other signs in the hands of opposition senators.

In the House of Representatives the new president referred to his controversial proposal of a National Guard, a newly created corps with training and military elements that will help pacify Mexico; now in the most violent year in its recent history. And he justified it with eight worrying words: *"We don't have police to take care of the citizens."*

López Obrador admitted in September not to be completely convinced with the creation of this body. *"It's a controversial issue, but I have the right to express my point of view,"* he said Saturday as commander-in-chief of the armed forces. These words were followed by a fierce defense of the Army, which, along with the Navy, has been in charge of leading the war against drug trafficking and organized crime. *"The Army has never carried out a coup d'état to a civilian authority. In Mexico we don't know of soldiers who are part of the oligarchy and they have the backing of public opinion,"* defended López Obrador, who seasoned his speech with some historical data, such as that the last rebellion within the militia that took place in 1938.

President Andrés Manuel López Obrador reaffirmed his commitment not to lie, steal or betray the people of Mexico. After receiving the baton in front of tens of thousands of people in the capital's Zócalo, he said that he is about to begin a modern society forged from below. *"We are going to give special attention to the indigenous peoples of Mexico, it is an ignominy that our Mexican peoples live under the weight of oppression and poverty on their backs. That's why all government programs will have indigenous people as its priority,"* he said. The president reaffirmed that **"for the good of all, first the poor,"** that was followed by a enormous unison of applause in the Plaza de la Constitución.

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LIFE OUTSIDE THE SHU

Sunday Oct. 14th marked the third anniversary of the landmark settlement agreement in *Ashker v. California*, the class action lawsuit that ended indefinite solitary confinement in California prisons. We have accomplished a lot in that time. Over 1600 prisoners who were looking at spending the rest of their lives in isolation have been released from Security Housing Units. Living conditions have improved for many prisoners. And prisoners who were prevented from seeking parole because they were isolated in SHU have some prospect for release.

Most importantly, prisoners have continued to honor the historic 2012 Agreement to End Hostilities, working to resolve issues peacefully and prevent individual conflict from escalating into group conflict. Through this, we have dramatically reduced violence throughout California prisons and been able to harness our collective power to unite against our true opponent: a prison system that would rather punish and torture than rehabilitate.

However, much work remains. While prisoner culture has changed, CDCR culture has not. The California prison system continues to obstruct meaningful reforms, to attempt to provoke violence by a variety of tactics such as integrating SNY informants into the GP, and to entrap individual prisoners. It continues to violate our due process rights and resist systemic change.

Many prisoners released from SHU have been transferred into Level 4 prisons, which are essentially modified SHUs. While called "general population," prisoners in these units often receive as little out-of-cell time as they did in the SHU, are denied jobs, and have little to no vocational and other programming. To honor the settlement, we need to live in *true* general population housing units that provide adequate social

interaction, outdoor time, programming, work opportunities, and preparation for release.

Additionally, CDCR has done nothing to help us deal with the aftermath of years, and even decades, in solitary confinement. As the report by the Stanford University Human Rights in Trauma Mental Health Lab documents, the torture of solitary confinement does not end when the cell doors open. Many of us are still suffering terribly. Some of us have Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. We can never get back the relationships with parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, spouses, kids, and other loved ones damaged by our years in isolation. We need rehabilitation and reparations. To begin to make us whole, CDCR must help us heal.

Finally, CDCR continues to throw people back in the hole. It is relying on confidential information regardless of whether the informant is credible or reliable. It even fabricates information and falsifies documents. Prisoners continue to be denied fair hearings, and then are thrown back into solitary. This behavior is systemic throughout CDCR, from top to bottom. To honor the settlement agreement, we need independent oversight of CDCR's disciplinary system and individual accountability for CDCR employees who abuse their power.

In a recent ruling, Judge Claudia Wilken has recognized that the settlement requires that reforms be meaningful, including that CDCR cannot simply shuffle people to "general population" units that function like SHUs. And we are requesting an extension of the period of monitoring to ensure that CDCR complies with the spirit and purpose of the settlement.

Finally, we must continue to stick together, to honor the Agreement to End Hostilities, and to fight our true opponent: CDCR's abuses.

Our accomplishments thus far have come about because of our collective power. Collective power is how we will achieve the goals ahead of us.

**Pelican Bay Prisoners' Statement
on 3rd Anniversary of Settlement
Center for Constitutional Rights**

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