

Mexicans Are Told: 'We Shall Overcome'

Here is the July 8 speech Mexican Presidential candidate Andrés Manuel López Obrador, delivered to a crowd of up to a half-million people in Mexico City's central plaza. The address was translated from Spanish; subheads have been added.

Friends, citizens all, women and men of good will.

Before anything else, my thanks for your presence at this first informational assembly regarding the Presidential elections of last July 2.

I believe that the majority of those of us who are here, and many others who could not attend, knew that it was not going to be easy to make democracy prevail in our country.

We are conscious that we are facing an economic and political power group that is accustomed to win at all costs, without moral scruples of any kind. They really don't care about the country, much less the suffering of the majority of the Mexican people. Their only goal is to maintain and increase their privileges.

It has been precisely the domination by this group, of this rapacious minority, which has brought the country to ruin, and has converted it into an ocean of inequalities, with more economic and social differences than when Morelos [one of Mexico's founding fathers—ed.] proclaimed that indigence and opulence had to be restrained.

It is they who truly conspire against democracy, because they oppose real change. It is they who defend the prevailing anti-popular and submissive economic policy, which has only brought the country economic stagnation, unemployment, and the emigration of millions of Mexicans who, out of necessity, have had to abandon the country and their families to go look for work on the other side of the border.

It is they who have taken the companies and the goods of the nation. It is they who covet the privatization of the oil and the electrical industry. It is they who have turned the government into a committee at the service of the few. It is they who now want to impose in the Presidency an unquestioning employee, a lackey who will guarantee them the perpetuation of corruption, influence-peddling, and impunity.

As is natural, this group sees its interests threatened when we propose and defend an alternative national project, capable of creating a new legality which is needed, which is urgent in our country; a new economy, a new and more honorable way

of engaging in politics, a social coexistence, with less inequality and with more justice.

That is our project, which we will defend, come what may. This people needs a real change. And it is not just the issue of the Presidency; as I said throughout the campaign, the Presidency is important, but what is fundamental is that we be able to transform our country, and that is why we are here, and we are going to continue to be here, for as long as necessary.

Therefore, as this extraordinary Mexican writer, Fernando del Paso, stated here, long before the elections—and you know this, because you supported me, you backed me, you defended me—this group attempted to lift my immunity, to strip me of my political rights, and to keep my name from appearing on the ballot.

That's why I agree with Fernando del Paso, that this isn't simply a matter of election day, this wasn't simply the insult of July 2, and the days which followed; this has been happening for a long time. During one of the most ruthless anti-democratic assaults that has ever occurred in this country, this was the group which launched the "Black Legend" about me and launched the fascist propaganda according to which I was a danger to Mexico.

The Concerted Attacks Against Me

Everything was thrown into the campaign to discredit me; there was a lot of dirty warfare. They bought time on radio and television to defame us with impunity. They spent billions of pesos on the campaign, which went way over what the law permits; they used public institutions and resources to favor the candidate of the right.

The proof is there, in the tape recording which we just heard. What is a Secretary of Communications doing, on a Monday, during the work day, doing political organizing to favor the candidate of the right? He shouldn't be doing that.

This morning I held a press conference with foreign journalists, and one of them, very dubious, said to me: "So things haven't changed in Mexico? There hasn't been any progress in the area of democracy?" He's probably listening now; he probably heard the tape. Those practices go way back, speaking with a governor to tell him, in the middle of an election: it's time to get the operation going, and get in line.

What does this mean? It means votes for the candidate of the right, and against us. It means fraud, to state it clearly. Vicente Fox, with no shame at all, and without concern for the Presidential office, went about attacking us, and ended up being a complete traitor to democracy.

As if that were not enough, the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE), which should be impartial, became a battering ram for the party of the right, and committed itself fully to the electoral fakery. It is enough to point out that Wednesday, the same way they did on Sunday, they manipulated the system of counting and information. And although they knew in advance what the result was going to be, throughout the day,



Website of Andrés Manuel López Obrador

Presidential candidate López Obrador charged that those who want to steal the election from him, are the same forces who have brought the country to ruin, forcing millions to emigrate. He urged the nearly half-million who turned out for this rally, to peacefully mobilize for justice, vowing, "We Shall Overcome."

they used the television to report the purported electoral district count, playing with, assaulting, trampling on the hopes of millions of Mexicans.

We have irrefutable proof of all this. That is why we are going to challenge the election before the Federal Electoral Tribunal tomorrow. We are going to show, without any room for doubt, that the guiding principles of certainty, legality, independence, impartiality, and objectivity established under Article 41 of the Political Constitution of the United States of Mexico, have been violated.

We are going to ask for the elections to be cleaned up. We are going to ask for the vote to be counted, vote by vote, polling station by polling station. The electoral packets should be opened, because there is conclusive evidence that votes were taken from us to favor the candidate of the right.

Let me say that, despite the resistance of electoral officials, where we were able to have the packets opened and the ballots were counted, we were able to prove that the pattern was that the candidate of the right had extra votes, and we had fewer votes than we had really received.

Furthermore, assuming without conceding that the figures showed a difference of only a half percentage point, it is

obvious that this revision will be decisive for the definitive result.

The argument that there isn't time, or that there is no way to recount the votes, doesn't hold water. I only maintain that, beyond technical arguments or legalistic justifications, there is democracy and political stability.

I would also like to inform you that, at the appropriate time, we will appeal to the Supreme Court of Justice to request, under Article 97 of the Constitution, that it exercise its authority to carry out an investigation of the facts that constitute a violation of the public vote, and the illegality of the entire process.

In short, so that no one is confused, the electoral process, according to law, has not yet concluded; the review of the election is only beginning. So no one can proclaim himself or even call himself President-elect. The congratulations from the foreign Presidents are a pure hoax.

Friends:

We are sure that, despite all of the anti-democratic practices, we won on July 2. And we did so with the free, conscious vote of the citizens; we didn't hand out construction materials, nor groceries, we didn't buy votes, nor did we make shameful agreements with the same old political *caciques* [local honchos]. That is why we are going to defend our victory.

If we count vote by vote, IFE's results can be overturned. They can't try to impose themselves, when they themselves have acknowledged that we won in three of the five electoral regions, that we won in 16 states, including those with the largest populations.

I want to tally up for you what was won and is recognized, even though we won in many other places where it is not being recognized. What the IFE does recognize, is that we won in the states of Quintana Roo, Campeche, Tabasco, Veracruz, Oaxaca, Chiapas, Guerrero, Michoacán, the state of Mexico, Tlaxcala, Hidalgo, the Federal District, Morelos, Nayarit, Zacatecas, and Baja California Sur.

Peaceful March for Democracy

Friends:

I want to take this opportunity to respectfully call upon the members of the Federal Electoral Tribunal and the Supreme Court of Justice, to carefully weigh the historic significance of the decision which they must make.

I also call upon the Mexican Army, a fundamental institution and guarantor of our sovereignty, to not permit any intrusions into the district headquarters where the electoral packets are held. I also respectfully address the media of our country, respectfully requesting that they do not shut off access to the news, and do not give in to the pressures which, I'm told, they are coming under from the Federal government and our adversaries.

Friends:

I want to propose to you, for the moment, the following, which are some actions that we can carry out, if you agree:

1. Carry out a national march for democracy, starting next Wednesday, from all of the electoral districts of the country, towards Mexico City. I repeat, because communication is not easy and it's better that we take advantage of this assembly so that everyone knows what's going on. I am going to repeat: The proposal is for a national march for democracy starting next Wednesday, which will begin next Wednesday from all the country's electoral districts, towards Mexico City. Are we agreed?

To this end, I call upon all political leaders of the parties in the Coalition for the Good of All—the leaders of the Democratic Revolutionary Party, of the PT [Workers Party], of Convergence, who, incidentally, have acted honestly, have been equal to the occasion. I call upon all the leaders of the parties in the Coalition for the Good of All, also upon our candidates for Congressman and Senator, for Governor, for municipal president, for state legislature, as also upon all free citizens interested in the future of democracy, to help us organize, and to participate, immediately, in these activities.

I particularly invite artists, intellectuals, and writers to participate in this citizens' mobilization, discussing, explaining, exchanging points of view with the people.

These mobilizations will be carried out using our individual rights, without harming the rights of third parties. I underscore this: We do not want to harm the citizens, we are not going to shut down highways, let that be clear. This is a peaceful movement, and we are never going to fall for provocations nor play into our adversaries' game. We have sufficient force to make democracy prevail by peaceful demonstrations alone. We are not going to fall for any provocation. I repeat: We will not let ourselves be provoked, we will not play into our adversaries' game. This has been and it will continue to be a peaceful movement.

2. I propose also that Sunday, July 16, a week from tomorrow, we carry out the second informational assembly, and that we again assemble in this Zócalo of Mexico City. What do you think: Should we make the commitment that each person who is here will invite at least ten others for Sunday, July 16? But since I know that you are going to get that job done, I propose also that not only do we assemble here, but that we march from the Anthropology Museum to the Zócalo of Mexico City. Do you agree? Sunday, at 11 a.m. Is that all right?

3. I call for the formation of outreach committees that help inform all the citizens of the country and help to thwart the strategy, that our adversaries have already activated, to confuse and demoralize citizen participation on behalf of democracy. We have to form these outreach committees. Let it be done freely and voluntarily so that people are being constantly informed, so that—and I don't think this will happen—if we are blocked out of the mass media, we would have direct communication. What do you think? Constant information.

4. It's a symbolic matter, but very significant: that we once again wear, as we did during the lifting of immunity [the attempt to kick López Obrador off the ballot a year ago—ed.] a three-colored ribbon, as a mark of the struggle for democracy in Mexico.

Friends:

I ask you that we remain united, and that you have confidence in me. I will maintain, as always, my principles and my convictions, which I hold dearer than my life. I am not going to betray the people of Mexico.

As you will understand, this goes beyond my role as a leader. It is an issue of not permitting a democratic setback. If we allow them to impose themselves through fraud, it will be a regression. That is what is disturbing about the attitude of Vicente Fox, who gets to the Presidency thanks to democratic advances, and when in power, he becomes a traitor to democracy.

We cannot accept that a group of vested interests would prevent the free exercise of effective suffrage. Democracy is indispensable if we wish to live in a Mexico with justice and dignity. And we are going to defend democracy.

I want to thank you, with all my heart, for your support, your backing. You know that I took the risk, as usual, I took the risk of issuing the call for this meeting when it was already Thursday. Today is Saturday. We have no resources, and look at the response. Thank you.

‘We Shall Overcome’

This is a movement of free and aware women and men of good will. That is why we are going to triumph. We are advancing, friends, firmly and also with joy, because we are defending a just cause. We are defending the right of Mexicans to freely elect their government. We shall overcome. We must defend our alternative national project.

I am extremely happy, it fills me with pride, as I said in my closing campaign rally, that all social classes are participating in this movement, many members of the middle class, many professionals; but the mainstay of this movement—and I don't want anyone to feel excluded—what sustains this movement is our humble people, our poor people.

We are advancing. Thank you. Before anything else, do you approve this proposal to begin this way? Because people have been asking us, what do we do, we want to help. Well, here now are some tasks. Are we in agreement on this as a start? Let's not worry. There is time, and this movement to make democracy prevail is going to keep growing. Those in agreement with these proposals, raise your hands.

Thank you, with all my heart, thank you. This is what supports us, this is what backs us, what allows us to keep fighting, and I repeat, I am not worried at all. I am not going to betray your confidence. We are going to advance until we triumph in our goal of making democracy prevail. Thank you with all my heart, with all my affection, lovingly, thank you.