**Rigoberta Menchú Tum:**

**A Symbol of Peace in a War-Torn Land**

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Individual Website

I first came across the name Rigoberta Menchú Tum through my Spanish class. I did some brief research about her online, and her story intrigued me. I found that she was an indigenous woman from Guatemala, and who received a Nobel Prize for her human rights activism. Both of these factors appealed to me, because they were topics that I thought I could easily be passionate about and expand on.

However, as I delved more into her story, I also found articles that were extremely negative; critics called her a “Communist agent working for…terrorists” and labelled her autobiography a “tissue of lies” (Horowitz, David; FrontPageMagazine.com). This threw me off, but as I did more research and spoke to my Spanish teacher, I realized this wasn’t the case. Yes, she did embellish facts in her testimonio, but I am firmly convinced that she did this in order to more fully represent and call international attention to the Guatemalan situation. The majority of my research was conducted through online reports, articles, documentaries, and interviews, as well as from printed books. One of the difficulties I came across was finding primary sources from Menchú’s earlier life, because it was virtually impossible to obtain documentation of her revolutionary work during the incredibly destructive Civil War. To compensate for this, I used Menchú’s *testimonios* extensively. Some of the online resources were in Spanish, especially the video interviews and image captions, and I did my best to translate them and utilize their contents. Furthermore, I found it a bit difficult to find large numbers of primary resources because of linguistic and geographical barriers.

I chose to do a website this year for my project, because I had never done one before and I had hoped it would prove to be a unique experience. As I was building the website, I utilized an abundance of quotes from Rigoberta Menchú herself, from her personal memoirs. She tells her story extremely eloquently, and I wanted to preserve the original quality of her work. I also kept some words in the original Spanish for this effect. Later, I put together the website by first outlining the material, then uploading text, images, and video. The text in some areas is out of chronological order; I did this in order for the information to conform to the organization of my thesis.

Rigoberta Menchú’s life story and actions are those of a true leader. She has demonstrated the qualities of such a leader: courage, perseverance, empathy, optimism, and more. She was born out of “wretchedness” and “bitterness” in one of the most violent periods of Guatemalan history (I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala), yet she overcame her difficult surroundings and became an international symbol for peace. She has fulfilled a leadership role in revolutionary organizations in order to secure political and legal rights for her people, and has become a model for them in doing so. Rigoberta Menchú has also substantiated her legacy through her reception of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992, as well as the continuing work of her organization the Rigoberta Menchú Tum Foundation.