

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Rigoberta Menchú Tum

Learn more about this topic! Each section gives more detail on one of the lyrics from the song. Read each section, and then respond by answering the question or taking notes on key ideas.

1. b'

Notes

## Excerpt from Rigoberta Menchú Tum's Autobiography I, Rigoberta Menchú

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My name is Rigoberta Menchú. I am twenty-three years old. This is my testimony. I didn't learn it from a book and I didn't learn it alone. I'd like to stress that it's not only my life, it's also the testimony of my people. It's hard for me to remember everything that happened to me in my life since there have been many very bad times but, yes, moments of joy as well. The important thing is that what has happened to me has happened to many other people too: my story is the story of all poor Guatemalans. My personal experience is the reality of a whole people.

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There are twenty-two indigenous ethnic groups in Guatemala, twenty-three including the mestizos, or ladinos as we call them. Twenty-three groups and twenty-three languages. I belong to one of them—the Quiché people—and I practice Quiché customs, but I also know most of the other groups very well through my work organizing the people.

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2. b'

Notes

Rigoberta Menchú Tum was born on January 9, 1959 in Laj Chimel, Guatemala. Her family is K'iche', an Indigenous group in Guatemala. Menchú experienced poverty and discrimination growing up, especially due to her Indigenous background. Indigenous people in Guatemala were often excluded from basic services like education and healthcare, and they had to fight to protect their land from being taken. Menchú was involved in activism from a young age because her parents were active in the Committee for Peasant Unity, an Indigenous Guatemalan labor organization. This committee worked to defend poor Indigenous communities from the oppression they were facing and to fight for their rights.

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3. b'

Notes

The Guatemalan Civil War began in 1960 due to the economic and social inequalities Indigenous communities and rural populations faced. This violent civil war between the Guatemalan government and guerrilla groups lasted 36 years and had devastating consequences. More than 200,000 people were killed, many of them Mayan. The Guatemalan army targeted the Mayan population because the government associated the Maya with guerrilla groups. Menchú lost her mother, father, and brother during the civil war. Over 1,000,000 civilians were displaced and thousands fled to Mexico seeking refuge, including Menchú.

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Even after leaving Guatemala, Menchú continued to fight for Indigenous rights and co-founded the United Republic of Guatemalan Opposition. She spoke out against the human rights violations committed by military forces during the civil war and published her autobiography I, Rigoberta Menchú. Her autobiography received a lot of attention from the public, which also brought awareness to the war happening in Guatemala.

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In 1992, Menchú received the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of her work to protect the rights of Indigenous people and to seek social justice. She set up the Rigoberta Menchú Tum Foundation to help Indigenous refugees return to Guatemala after the peace agreement in 1996. This foundation aided them with finding homes, jobs, and healthcare. Menchú continues to advocate for Indigenous, environmental, and women's rights, inspiring people to be agents of change in their own communities.

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