

# La Guelaguetza

## A Festival of Reciprocity

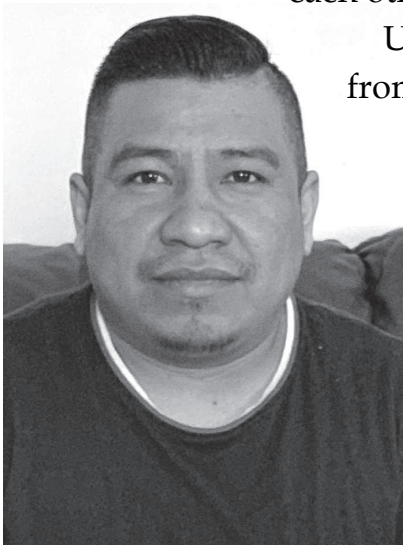
*Sergio Mendoza*

**BEFORE YOU READ:** Define “reciprocity” (noun). Try using it in a sentence. Try using “reciprocate” (verb) and reciprocal (adjective) in sentences as well. Share examples of reciprocity in your life.

I am Zapotec. We are Indigenous people living in Oaxaca, Mexico. Every year in July, Indigenous people in Oaxaca have a big celebration. It is called La Guelaguetza.

Guelaguetza is a Zapotec word that means “offering” or “present.” In our Indigenous culture, generosity and reciprocity are important values. In the festival of La Guelaguetza, we bring gifts to

each other and receive gifts in return.



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*Indigenous people from Oaxaca participate in La Guelaguetza, 2005. Photo from <wikimedia.org>.*

Unfortunately, the festival is very expensive. Tourists come from all over the world. The price to enter is very high. Only people with a lot of money can go. (Some tickets are free, but you have to wait in a long line to get them.) If you want to buy food or water at the festival, you have to pay a lot. If you want to sell anything at the festival, you have to pay a big fee to the authorities. Ironically, most Zapotecs cannot attend the festival. We do not have enough money. I have never attended it myself. I have only heard about it.

**AFTER YOU READ:** Explain how it is ironic that many Zapotecs cannot attend the festival. Read about “A People’s Guelaguetza” and “cultural appropriation” on the next page. In your opinion, has the state-run Guelaguetza been appropriated? Why or why not?