OVER the past fifty years, films portraying Central America have increased. However, many represent only the crime, drugs, or stereotypical presumptions about the region. It is being said, there are three films that represent the struggles, beauty, and truth of indigenous life in Mayan communities.

Hombres Armados (Men with Guns) - This film by John Sayles from 1997 tells the story of an aging doctor who goes into an unnamed, militant-infected jungle to find his son who went to America to deliver medicines to the indigenous people (Image 4). Throughout his journey, the doctor meets a young boy (Image 6), a descendent, and a priest. While they are wandering through the countryside, they come upon a beautiful woman and her talkative daughter speaking about a coming visitor who will help care for the mother's leg. However, these women are not speaking Spanish, they are speaking an unidentified native language. This tone of mysticism and idealism, tied to the conservation of indigenous community hidden away from the "Hombres Armados," represents the resilience of the Mayan in their constant quest for life in ever-present armed adversity.

El Norte - The journey through Central America to the United States is a passage that most Americans choose to ignore. Immigration and current political climates make it difficult to think about the realities of those who come to the United States seeking refuge and safety from the oppression and violence of home. El Norte tells such a story, but it tells this story through the eyes of brother and sister, Rosa (Image 2) and Enrique, who start their journey north after the murder of their father (Image 4). The two have to abandon much of their Quiché language as they travel north. However, they quickly learn that the image of The North and the reality are not equal. After months of trying to adjust, Enrique loses his job as a respected waiter and Rosa finds suddenly of typhus contracted from rats on their journey. Before his death, Enrique's father tells him, "For those in power, we are only arms, we are not men." At the end of his journey, after his father passes, this message becomes true as Enrique begins his life as a day laborer, an "only arms." This representation of the reality of the immigration journey is also a reality of how the assimilation to new country can lead to the loss of indigenous roots.

Ixcanul (Volcano) - A Kaqchikel film that premiered last year introduced the world to stories to the most recent view an indigenous woman's life through the themes of unplanned pregnancy, sexuality in a traditional community, and the existing colonial power of the Spanish. During the film, María (Image 1), while in an arranged engagement, becomes pregnant with her boyfriends's child. Out of fear, her mother tries to help her abort the child – going directly against traditional belief. When this does not work, María's mother begins viewing her the Virgin Maria embodied. This mythical belief tool investigates, the language barriers cause them to misunderstand that after her childs birth, María's husband (Image 2) makes overwatching their fields. She is immediately hit and rushed to the hospital for an emergency birth. After she has lost and buried the baby, her grief turns to madness. She begins viewing her the Virgin Maria embodied. The representation of the indigenous women of the area is quite true, this message is belied in the possibly added connections to western civilization and religion make this trope a retelling of the story of the Virgin Mary. María begins viewing her the Virgin Maria embodied. The representation of the indigenous women of the area is quite true, this message is belied in the possibly added connections to western civilization and religion make this trope a retelling of the story of the Virgin Mary.

THE Romans, Greeks, and ancient Mesopotamians have similar histories and mythologies all of which adopt each other's stories. The Mayan people wrote pictographic and alphabetic texts about the histories of their people which have been lost to world irrumation.

El Norte - Oral Quiché history passed from generation to generation and was recorded in textual form in the 17th century. This mythology of the Mayan origin weaves together heroes, villains, creation, gods, and man. This story goes rise to Quiché pride that still despairs through traditional Quiché communities today. The practices, symbols, and characters in the Popol Vuh permeate modern Quiché culture today in their medicine, dress, marriages, childbirth, and religion (Image 9).

Ciriac Balán - In the 17th or 18th century, the Spanish religious elite rediscovered an ancient Mayan text in the Yucatan - a collection of works from Mayan priests. These texts, recorded by Spanish priests and monks, tell the histories of the Maya. These two works focus on the Popol Vuh, which detail the calendar to the Mayan people - aspects of their civilization which waffle and amass modern historians. While the text itself is descriptive and historic, the possibly added connections to western civilization and religion make this text a retelling of the attempted overthrow of indigenous culture. Even with these religious and moral additions, the culture of native Mayans bleed through demonstrating their constant resistance (Image 8).

BALÚN CANÁN - Compared to the two previous works, Balún Canán was published in 1957. Fast-forward 50 years into the future the power of the indigenous people is beginning to rise in southern Mexico. Due to land and social reform, the power and powerlessness of the indigenous people wax and wane highlighting the post-colonial class tensions in a changing world.

Rigoberta Menchú - In the last years, Mayan history has brought to the forefront because of the calendar and the account of Rigoberta Menchú (Image 3, 5). She discusses the brutal public burning of her brother and the deaths of her parents during the Guatemalan Civil War. In the late 90s, after being awarded a Nobel Peace Prize, her account was brought under review by an anthropologist and historian David Stoll. Even if one piece of her story was false, her story represents a dark, bloody, and accurate testimony of a time of violence towards the indigenous people of Guatemala.

LA VOZ INDIGENA | The Indigenous Voice

In the Western Highl glands of Guatemala, the Quiche people sustain their culture in dress, food, and language. The Quiche language is spoken by over one million people in Guatemala making it the largest indigenous group and spoken language of the indigenous populations. The Mayan people make up the largest indigenous group in the Americas with roughly six million people identifying as one of the twenty-three Mayan groups. Today, five million Mayan reside in Guatemala, and the largest group is the nation of the Quiche. The Quiche nation was made famous in the 1980's by the story of Rigoberta Menchú (Images 3, 5), a Nobel Peace Prize winner and indigenous land rights activist. Her story of the treating of indigenous peoples during the thirty-six year Guatemalan Civil War brought the Mayan people and the preservation of their culture to the attention of a global audience. Her testimony along with other cultural artifacts in film - Hombres Armados; El Norte, and Ixcanul - and text - Popol Vuh, Chilam Balam, and Balún Canán - work together to create a picture of indigenous expression. Juxtaposed in Spanish and indigenous languages, the story of indigenous resilience shifts slightly, but through these cultural artifacts, the indigenous voice – in both the mother tongue and colonial tongue – and language sustain the tradition, history, and expression of the Mayan people.