

Public Lecture by
Nobel Peace Laureate

*“Healing Communities Torn by
Racism and Violence”*

Rigoberta Menchú Tum
Nobel Peace Laureate

Friday, Nov. 9 at 7:30 PM
MU Memorial Union room N210-211
University of Missouri-Columbia
Columbia, Missouri



1992 Nobel Peace Laureate and 2007 Guatemalan Presidential Candidate Rigoberta Menchú Tum will present a public lecture for the central Missouri area.

Rigoberta Menchú was born in Guatemala on January 9, 1959 to a poor Indian peasant family and raised in the Quiche branch of the Mayan culture. In her early years she helped with the family farm work, in the northern highlands where her family lived, or on the Pacific coast, where both adults and children went to pick coffee on the big plantations.

Rigoberta Menchú soon became involved in social reform activities through the Catholic Church, and became prominent in the women's rights movement when still only a teenager. Such reform work aroused considerable opposition in influential circles, especially after a guerilla organization established itself in the area. The Menchú family was accused of taking part in guerrilla activities and Rigoberta's father, Vicente, was imprisoned and tortured for allegedly having participated in the execution of a local plantation owner. After his release, he joined the recently founded Committee of the Peasant Union (CUC).

In 1979, Rigoberta, too, joined the CUC. That year her brother was arrested, tortured and killed by the army. The following year, her father was killed when security forces in the capital stormed the Spanish Embassy where he and some other peasants were staying. Shortly afterwards, her mother also died after having been arrested, tortured and raped. Rigoberta became increasingly active in the CUC, and taught herself Spanish as well as other Mayan languages.

In 1981, Rigoberta Menchú had to go into hiding in Guatemala, and then flee to Mexico. That marked the beginning of a new phase in her life: as the organizer abroad of resistance to oppression in Guatemala and the struggle for Indian peasant peoples' rights. In 1983, she told her life story to Elisabeth Burgos Debray. The resulting book, called in English, I, Rigoberta Menchú, is a gripping human document which attracted considerable international attention. In 1986, Rigoberta Menchú became a member of the National Coordinating Committee of the CUC, and the following year she performed as the narrator in a powerful film called When the Mountains Tremble, about the struggles and sufferings of the Maya people.

Over the years, Rigoberta Menchú has become widely known as a leading advocate of Indian rights and ethno-cultural reconciliation, not only in Guatemala but in the Western Hemisphere generally, and her work has earned her several international awards.

The lecture is sponsored by William Woods University, MU Peace Studies, MU Centers for the Arts & Humanities, MU English Department, Women's & Gender Studies Dept., the Center for Religion & the Professions, the Arts & Sciences Dean's Office, Cambio Center at MU, MU Multi-cultural Certificate Program, Provost's Lectures Committee and Dr. DeSpain's Skintuition Medical Spa.

No ticket is required, but a \$5 donation is suggested.



University of Missouri
Columbia



D. Scott Miniea (WWU)
1.800.995.3159 x1633
Tel 573.592.1633
scott.miniea@williamwoods.edu

Dr. Elaine Lawless (MU)
Tel 573.882.0065
lawlesse@missouri.edu

