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Honoring the Hands That Feed Us: Cuentos from the Miltecayotl



From left to right: Lucinda "La Morena" Hinojos, International Muralist and Artist; Maribel Cachu, Organizer/Advocate, Miltecayotl Community Partner; Tonatierra Staff-Felina Rodriguez, Project

***Coordinator, Yaqui, Izkaloteca;
Eve Reyes-Aguirre, Calpixqui
Project Coordinator,
Izkaloteca; Tishman
Environment and Design
Center Staff- Angelica Salazar,
Communications Lead; Taylor
Griggs, Operations and
Systems Manager; Marouh
Hussein, Impact and Learning
Director; and Angela
Mahecha, Director, EJ Disrupt
Design Fellowship; with
volunteers for the Miltecayotl
Project.***

*Author: Felina Rodriguez, Project
Coordinator of Tonatierra, Yaqui,
Izkaloteca*

*Photos by: Patricia Cortado,
Program and Communications
Associate, EJ Disrupt Design
Fellowship*

At [Miltecayotl](#), the essence of the *milpa* is more than just a name; it is a guiding principle. This January, we stood alongside farmworkers, the essence of the *milpas*, stewards of our sacred Mother Earth, to provide support through our Farmworkers' Food Distribution program. On January 17, 2025, Miltecayotl distributed 191 boxes of food to 793 individuals across 17 different zip codes in Arizona. Each box, whether destined for a family of two or ten, was more than a collection of culturally relevant food

to the resilience and dignity of the people we serve.

Farmworkers are among the hardest-working individuals in our communities. They endure Arizona's extreme weather to bring fresh produce to tables across the nation. Yet, despite their labor, farm workers still face innumerable human rights violations in Arizona. The Miltecayotl maintains the continuity of Tonatierra's longstanding commitment to defending Indigenous Peoples' rights across Turtle Island, including, the right to work with dignity.



From left to right: Tonatierra Staff- Felina Rodriguez, Project Coordinator, Yaqui, Izkaloteca; Eve Reyes-Aguirre, Calpixqui Project Coordinator, Izkaloteca

For me, this work is deeply personal. My grandfather picked lettuce in Texas through the Bracero Program. My dad would tell me how he would attend rallies in Arizona in the 70s in support of the farm workers. in his Viva La

Raza jacket that I now have. While I may not have always realized it, I was taught that this work is intergenerational. We take on the responsibility of doing what we can within our lifetimes, in the hopes that we leave the world better for the next generation. Thus, having youth involved here is vital. That intergenerational commitment was palpable at this month's Miltecayotl with all the different generations guiding young volunteers from the community, visitors from the [Tishman Environment and Design Center](#), and a young person from [Arizona State University](#).

A question that we always get from people is how we are able to do this work. It is through our partnerships that make this work possible. [St. Mary's Food Bank](#) and the [Arizona Food Bank Network](#) supply critical resources, while local organizations, high school students, the families of Tonatierra, and even internationally recognized artist La Morena contribute their time, skills, and hearts. [Lucinda "La Morena" Hinojos](#), an international muralist and artist, whose vibrant murals like [the largest Super Bowl mural to date](#) inspire pride and unity, have shown up at the distributions, reminding us of the power of art to heal and connect.



***Maribel Cachu,
Organizer/Advocate,
Miltecayotl Community
Partner***

The farmworkers we serve have been called by our elders as the original *Macehualli*-the word in our language used to refer to the workers. In the present day, the *macehualli* are the workers-farmworkers, day laborers, working people. But in our past, work was growing food for the people. It was the first and also the most important job-feeding the people. As Maribel Cachu, Community Partner and Advocate of Miltecayotl Farmworker Food Distribution said, “The farmworkers are the last people working with our sacred Mother Earth. Serving them is a complete honor.”

As we move forward, the Miltecayotl continues to foster our relationship with the farmworkers we serve, so that together we can advocate for the right to work with dignity and respect, for all Indigenous peoples of Abya Yala (North, Central & South America).

Since time immemorial, Indigenous Peoples of this continent have had a right to freely migrate, plant our corn, and exchange with Indigenous Pueblos across this continent. While there is a lot of rhetoric about who we are, where we belong, and what colonial boxes we should fit into, Tonatierra continues to stand firm in who we are, as Indigenous Peoples with a right to self-determination.



Tonatierra Staff- Xochitl Enrique, Youth Project Coordinator, Izkaloteca; Rio, Youth of the Xinachtli Youth Project, Izkaloteca

It is our responsibility to uphold this work, and to plant the seed—so that one day, that seed will grow, and share this work with the generations to come. By involving youth, honoring elders, and uplifting collaboration, we keep this continuity alive. This is the vision of the Miltecayotl—the essence of the milpa, the farmworkers—caretakers of the earth, intertwined in a shared commitment to justice and community care.

To support Miltecayotl's work, [click here](#).

To learn more about Tonatierra, [click here](#).

Together, we honor the hands that feed us and continue the journey of justice, solidarity, and self-determination.



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