

Río Negro Memorial Textile

Weaver Profile

Isabel Osorio Chen, 37

Isabel was eleven years-old on March 13, 1982 when her grandmother Juliana Chen, 50, died at Pak'oxom with her one-year old sister, as well as several cousins and aunts. Isabel was in the nearby village of Pueblo Viejo buying corn with her mother when the violence occurred. Her father was already hiding in the mountains after the massacres in Xococ in February 1982.

As they were returning from the store, other refugees from the village told her mother what was occurring in Río Negro. They returned to the village to see what had happened and then fled into the mountains. The next day, she and her mother went to Pak'oxom to bear witness. "There were women and children everywhere, naked and robbed of their jewelry. The mountain lions had eaten them." They found Isabel's father soon after and lived for two years without reliable access to food, clothing or shelter in the mountains around Río Negro.



Isabel had seven brothers and sisters in Río Negro, six of whom died in the 1982 massacres-Pablo, Matilda, Luis, Elena and Eugenia, and Tomasa. She and her mother arrived in Rabinal in 1984 followed by her father a few weeks later. Today, Isabel lives in Pacux with her husband, Jesus Tecú Osorio, and seven children of their own, including little Juana, who accompanied her in this photo.

She is an eloquent, forceful speaker who brings the story of Juliana to life as she speaks about how much both she personally and the Río Negro community lost. "Nothing is the same. We have to buy everything now. Women of my grandmother's generation knew how to do everything. Juliana lived alone, cut and hauled her own wood, planted corn and beans and worked as a midwife and spiritual leader." For The Advocacy Project, Isabel wove a textile for Juliana with images of the small mountain lions that roamed Pak'oxom after the massacres.