

Río Negro Memorial Textile

Weaver Profile

Maria Chen Sanchez, 26

Maria was born in the mountains outside the village of Río Negro in 1982. Her mother, Carmen Sanchez Chen, survived the Rio Negro massacre and was six months pregnant with Maria when she fled from the Los Encuentros massacre on May 14, 1982. They arrived in Pacux in 1984.

Maria was sick throughout her infancy in the mountains and developed a skin infection in her foot that to this day has limited her ability to walk. As a child in Pacux, Maria was not able to study for lack of funds. 'It was so hard growing up here. We barely had food and I had only one small notebook for all three of my classes.' She finished middle school, but it involved a lot of sacrifice and effort.

Maria married Benito Osorio Vargas at sixteen and she is now a mother of three young children. She weaves when she can and help with her family's dry goods shop in Pacux. The two textiles that she wove for The Advocacy Project commemorate her aunt and uncle, Pedro and Dominga. Pedro died in Xococ on February 13, 1982, and Dominga one month later at Pak'oxom. Maria's father worked on the forensic team that exhumed the bodies at Pak'oxom and found Dominga's remains. Maria visited the site to understand what happened, saying "Dominga was not only killed, she was strangled and hanged from a tree. Her five children died with her that day." Both Dominga and Pedro's remains are now in the Rabinal cemetery.

