

Tribute seconded in Denver

Gathering hails Menchu's work

By Anjali Sudhiraja
Special to The Denver Post

About 50 people gathered at the state Capitol yesterday to hail indigenous people and honor Rigoberta Menchu, the Guatemalan woman who yesterday accepted the 1992 Nobel Peace Prize in Norway.

Several in the crowd wore braided hair and colorful native weaves, indicating their identification with Menchu and her primary cause, the rights of indigenous peoples.

Rocky Rodriguez of The National Chicano Human Rights Council began the rally with a prayer, saying that was the way most indigenous groups begin their ceremonies.

"We ask the world that it will listen to what it is we are hoping for — sovereignty for our people," she said.

"We are here to honor our compañera, Rigoberta Menchu," she said to loud applause.

Menchu's achievement was especially emotional for Dora Medina, who moved to Colorado from Guatemala 11 years ago.



The Denver Post / Duane E. Nowell

TIME TO CELEBRATE: Two Indian boys, Hok-sil Luta, 3, at left, and Robert Longpumpkin, 4, play during the gathering at the Capitol honoring Nobel Peace Prize winner Rigoberta Menchu.

"This is a very special day for the people of Guatemala," said Medina, who heads the Guatemalan Culture and Policy Project in Denver.

"The only thing we know is how we are not free in our country. We are not free to express our feel-

ings. . . we are not free to hope for a better future for our children."

A representative from Mayor Wellington Webb's office declared yesterday International Human Rights Day and Rigoberta Menchu Day in Denver.

Representatives of the Ameri-

can Indian Movement, Asians in Action and other local groups were also among those who praised Menchu and spoke about the rights of indigenous peoples.

Menchu, 33, won the \$973,000 prize for her work to bring peace and reconciliation to Guatemala.

Nobel prize given to Indian activist

By The Associated Press

OSLO, Norway — Indian rights activist Rigoberta Menchu accepted the Nobel Peace Prize yesterday, calling it a tribute to exploited people in her native Guatemala and around the world.

"Today we must fight for a better world, without poverty, without racism, with peace," said Menchu, clad in colorful, striped clothes traditionally worn by Guatemalan Indians.

The 33-year-old laureate won the \$973,000 prize for her efforts to bring peace and reconciliation to Guatemala.

Some 120,000 people, including Menchu's parents and brother, have died in the Central American country's three decades of civil war.

The award coincided with the 500th anniversary of Columbus' arrival in America. For Menchu and others, 1492 marks the beginning of centuries of violent repression.

"I consider this prize not as an award to me personally, but rather as one of the greatest conquests in the struggle for peace, for human rights and for the rights of the indigenous people who, along all the 500 years, have been . . . the victims of genocides, repression and discrimination," she said.

"Let there be freedom for Indians . . . because while they are

alive, a glow of hope will be alive as well," she said.

The choice of Menchu as the 1992 peace prize recipient was controversial because she has been accused of having ties to armed rebel groups in Guatemala.

She claims that anyone who campaigns for human rights in her country is called a rebel.

Menchu says she will use the prize money to set up a human rights monitoring foundation in memory of her father, a peasant leader burned alive during a protest.