

# 1968: A Global Perspective

<http://www.1968conf.org>

Nancy Tille-Victorica <[ntillevictorica@mail.utexas.edu](mailto:ntillevictorica@mail.utexas.edu)>  
The University of Texas at Austin

## **Tlatelolco and its Impact on Mexican Intellectuals: The Cases of Elena Poniatowska and Octavio Paz**

Despite the censorship that followed the killing of hundreds of students by paramilitary forces on October 2nd 1968 in Tlatelolco, many Mexican intellectuals appalled by their government's barbaric behavior, wrote and acted to protest the massacre. This was especially the case of Elena Poniatowska and Octavio Paz, who reacted personally to the tragedy with public actions that, although separate, were related to their writing. Poniatowska interviewed in person hundreds of witnesses and published *Massacre in Mexico*. Paz resigned from his long time position as Ambassador of Mexico in India and wrote the poem "Mexico: Olimpiada de 1968", as well as *Postdata*.

Both writers shared an ambivalent view of the student movement. While they both supported the students' ideology, they did not completely approve of their actions. Tensions appeared therefore between the authors' written discourse and the public actions they took following the massacre. My objective is to demonstrate, through a comparison of Poniatowska's and Paz's reactions, that the massacre led them to seriously question their role as intellectuals. As a result of this questioning, numerous intellectuals started to distance themselves from the government, despite the tradition that united them. This progressive distancing between Mexican intellectuals and their government is at the origin of a more ample reform movement that led to the first democratic presidential elections in 2000.