

# AMAZING WOMEN: EUFROSINA CRUZ

Hosted by *Quien*

Speakers:

**Eufrosina Cruz Mendoza**,  
Politician and Activist; Rising Talents Mexico 2016

**Laura Manzo Aguilar**,  
Editor in Chief, *Quien*

In 2010 Eufrosina Cruz became the first woman to chair the Oaxaca State Congress, and four years later she secured a constitutional amendment recognizing indigenous women's active and passive rights to vote. During her conversation with Laura Manzo, *Quien's* editor-in-chief, Ms. Cruz talked about the challenges to succeed as an indigenous woman and the importance of seizing opportunities, mainly through education.

On 4 November 2007, Eufrosina Cruz Mendoza won a victory in the municipal elections in the small village of Santa María Quiegolani, situated nearly half-way between Oaxaca and the Pacific coast, but male authorities of the community annulled this vote. "I was told that because I was a woman I could not be an authority in my town," she recalls. The young politician realized that the condition of women in her community had not changed since she left it at the age of 11 to study. "I did not hold that environment responsible because people there did not know how to read and write; they did not even know what human rights are."

So Eufrosina Cruz decided she would defend the rights of indigenous Oaxacan women. "Traditions cannot be above human rights," she explains.

Education is at the core of empowering women and Mexico's indigenous population in order for them to participate increasingly in the political process. "Education is for me the most important tool to become free from poverty and marginalization.

When a woman has that tool, she breaks through barriers." Ms. Cruz added that education can help girls to understand that their future does not necessarily come down to marriage and house chores, and can also help them realize what is right for them: "The best investment you can make is educating a girl because she will transform her family, community and society," she said.

Yet women should also provoke opportunities to achieve autonomy. "As women, if the society does not give us what we deserve, we should grab it, this is our only choice." Change cannot happen without women's involvement. Her advice is to "raise awareness and do this conscious revolution without undermining the rights of others."

Ms Cruz said she has noticed a positive evolution: indigenous women realize they have a right to decide. She often feels the need to recall that being indigenous does not amount to being vulnerable; rather, it constitutes the sign of another cultural identification. Such recognition is essential for equality. "The day Tenoxtitlán [the ancient Aztec capital] understands that we can decide for ourselves will be the day we will see more women governors in this country." Ms. Cruz explained that in more than 100 municipalities in her own state of Oaxaca women still cannot vote or be elected.

