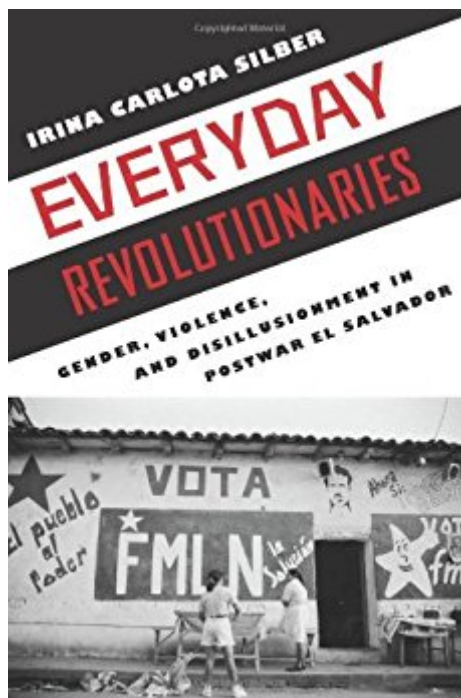


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Everyday Revolutionaries: Gender, Violence, And Disillusionment In Postwar El Salvador (Genocide, Political Violence, Human Rights)



Synopsis

Everyday Revolutionaries provides a longitudinal and rigorous analysis of the legacies of war in a community racked by political violence. By exploring political processes in one of El Salvador's former war zones—a region known for its peasant revolutionary participation—Irina Carlota Silber offers a searing portrait of the entangled aftermaths of confrontation and displacement, aftermaths that have produced continued deception and marginalization. Silber provides one of the first rubrics for understanding and contextualizing postwar disillusionment, drawing on her ethnographic fieldwork and research on immigration to the United States by former insurgents. With an eye for gendered experiences, she unmaskes how community members are asked, contradictorily and in different contexts, to relinquish their identities as "revolutionaries" and to develop a new sense of themselves as productive yet marginal postwar citizens via the same "participation" that fueled their revolutionary action. Beautifully written and offering rich stories of hope and despair, Everyday Revolutionaries contributes to important debates in public anthropology and the ethics of engaged research practices.

Book Information

File Size: 2591 KB

Print Length: 288 pages

Publisher: Rutgers University Press (December 15, 2010)

Publication Date: December 15, 2010

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B00530ZX7M

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Not Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #1,008,805 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #64

in Books > History > Americas > Central America > El Salvador #254 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Nonfiction > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Special Groups > Hispanic American Studies #446 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > History > Americas > Latin America > Central America

Customer Reviews

Taylor Margulies Ethnographic Book Review #1 Irina Silber perfectly encapsulates the struggles and hardships endured in postwar El Salvador. The ethnography centers around two main periods in El Salvador; the immediate postwar and the migrations to the United States. Through the retelling of personal accounts and analyses of first hand experiences in and with the people of El Salvador, Silber argues that the failure of a democratic society in postwar El Salvador is bound to not work, and this could be seen in the unjust migration of the Salvadorans (pg. 11). The book focuses on the juxtaposition of "forced" migration to the United States as a means of helping to be a democratic state. Chapter by chapter Silber builds an elaborate case for the people of El Salvador, highlighting the hardships and brutality endured. She keeps the ethnography very personal, to allow the reader to connect on a deeper level. What helps is that the characters of the accounts are all people whom Silber had become very close with over the years. We feel the pain and suffering of Elsy and Flor and all the other accounts we have read. The facts of the postwar are both shocking and a reality for many people. I think one of her main goals was to make us empathize and feel a deeper connection to the brutal history of these people. This whole notion of the continuum of violence is emphasized, and is connected back through each personal account. There is a disillusionment surrounded around each character. In chapter 5, we are brought back to the story of Elsy. Within the following narratives, Elsy experiences this disillusionment firsthand when she realizes how many promises were broken.

This book was written to educate readers about the post-war landscape of El Salvador. The approach taken in this book is one where theories are supported by anecdotal evidence in the form of personal stories and interviews conducted with the residents of the affected areas. Silber constructs her thesis by discussing how the violence during the war in El Salvador has had a lasting effect on the modern day and how those effects differ between men and women. The basis of this argument is that the experiences of this war were different for men and women. Women were credited with strength, resourcefulness, and resilience. While they received the credit for being the driving force for families that survived the war, they also were also targeted by abuse. To support her argument Silber conducts interviews with women involved in the postwar efforts. Additionally, she illustrates the aftermath of the efforts of NGOs in postwar El Salvador, which later became an international model for negotiating a revolution. These efforts included organizing and assigning roles to citizens that would kick-start the rebuilding of communities. Silber places a significant emphasis placed on people's memories in constructing her thesis to provide a deeper

understanding of the Salvadoran post-war narrative; the memories of what life was like before the war is what motivates the revolution. Through interviews with the residents of northeast Chalatenango, the author shares their memories to illustrate what life was like before the war. This is a new and interesting way to approach a book written for an academic setting. While Silber keeps to the traditional approach by citing scholars in the field, she also provides extensive personal experience.

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