

Book Summary

Dignity and Defiance

Stories from Bolivia's Challenge to Globalization



Edited by Jim Shultz and Melissa Crane Draper

The Democracy Center
Cochabamba, Bolivia

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I. Introduction

The world's attention has turned once again to Latin America.

A region viewed too often as the United States's "backyard," is in the midst of a powerful political and social transformation. Countries that fought to move from dictatorship to democracy in the 1980s, and that were converted into laboratories for "free market" economic reforms in the 1990s, have shifted political course, dramatically, once again. No nation is more emblematic of that change than Bolivia.

Over the course of just seven short years, South America's most impoverished and most indigenous nation has become synonymous with political change from the grassroots upwards – from its now-famous water revolt against the Bechtel Corporation in 2000, to the inauguration of its first indigenous President, Evo Morales, in 2006. At the heart of this transformation is Bolivia's historic challenge to the forces of globalization.

For two decades Bolivia has been Latin America's chief testing ground for an experiment in pro-market economic reforms driven by Washington and international financial institutions such as The World Bank and The International Monetary Fund. Bolivia privatized its most important resources and industries (its water, gas and oil, railroads and more) and it adopted economic austerity programs, all policies crafted a hemisphere away. When those reforms failed to deliver the prosperity that was promised, the people rebelled, demanding a future of their own design.

The story of Bolivia's challenge to globalization is about a people demanding basic dignity. Sometimes that challenge is about popular rebellion and democracy carried to the streets. Other times it is about individuals making difficult choices for how to deal with a globalizing world. But overall it is a powerful cautionary tale about the economic theories developed in wealthy nations and what those theories really mean when they become practice in impoverished ones. In short, Bolivia is challenging the world to make globalization something other than a set of economic orders from the north. It is about a people calling for global integration to be something different than it has been, something more fair and more just.

Dignity and Defiance offers a close-up look at Bolivia's historic transformation in a way readers will get nowhere else. It weaves together stories of regular people striving to make their lives better along with vivid accounts of the political struggles that have made Bolivia international front-page news. It also tells those stories against the striking backdrop of the country's rich cultures, stunning geography, and diverse people, in a way that will leave readers with deep and lasting images.

In its pages readers will meet the elderly woman whose life herding llamas is threatened by an Enron/Shell oil spill; the former housekeeper who became the nation's Minister of Justice; the young people who stood down a former dictator to take back control of their water; and many others whose lives reflect the turbulent recent events of a nation that has captured world attention.

Dignity and Defiance offers a powerful mix of story telling and analysis by a collection of writers who have made Bolivia their home and who have worked closely with Bolivian colleagues to get the story right. Bolivia's recent history, like Latin America's and the world's, is about people demanding justice and self-determination in a world of new global forces. By looking up close at what this means for one nation, readers will have an opportunity to deepen their grasp of issues and trends that are universal and that are likely to shape all our lives for decades more to come.

II. Eight Stories

Dignity and Defiance is comprised of eight chapters (averaging 25-30 pages), each one the story of an event, an issue, or a group of people that embodies the essence of Bolivia's struggle to maintain its independence and integrity as the nation deals with economic and political forces from abroad.

1. The Cochabamba Water Revolt and Its Aftermath

In the opening months of 2000 the people of Cochabamba faced down World Bank doctrine, armed forces dispatched by a former dictator, and one of the largest corporations in the world (Bechtel), to take back control of their water. In the years since, the Cochabamba Water Revolt has become a global symbol -- a modern Andean version of David and Goliath. Jim Shultz, who was the only ongoing source of foreign reporting from the streets in the midst of the protests -- coverage that was the catalyst for subsequent reporting by The New Yorker, PBS, and others -- looks back at the water war as few others can. What led to a revolt over water? What really happened on the street? And perhaps most important, what has the water revolt meant since -- to the global debate over water, the transformation of Bolivian politics, and to the struggle for clean and affordable water in Cochabamba.

2. A River Turns Black: Enron and Shell Spread Destruction across Bolivia's Highlands

Bolivia's vast highlands are home to indigenous peoples that trace their roots and their culture back before the time of the Incas. Crossing those lands at the start of the new century was the long snake of a steel pipeline, operated by a subsidiary of two foreign oil giants, Enron and Shell. In January 2000, after repeated warnings to the corporation that its pipeline was about to burst, the

tube of steel broke spreading a deadly stain of black across almost a million acres of farm and grazing land. In the spill's aftermath, the corporation was called "a model of corporate citizenship", for its clean-up and compensation program. To go beyond the public relations and seek out the real story, Christina Haglund has lived for weeks at a time in the villages hit by the disaster. With vivid testimonies from the people whose lives were decimated by the Enron/Shell spill she documents how foreign oil companies escaped accountability for an environmental calamity, in a front-line report of both great beauty and great authority.

3. Oil and Gas: The Elusive Wealth Beneath Their Feet

On October 17, 2003, with the entire nation tensely watching, President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, the architect of Bolivia's oil and gas privatization, fled Bolivia seeking refuge in the suburbs of Washington, DC. Sánchez de Lozada's fierce crackdown on national protests against a government plan to export Bolivia's gas to the United States had left 67 people dead and hundreds wounded. The demand for public control over Bolivia's rich gas reserves brought down two presidents and swept Evo Morales to his historic electoral victory last December. Aaron Luoma and Gretchen Gordon dig deep into the events, personalities and issues to capture the history of Bolivia's failed experiment with gas and oil privatization and the plans, promises and challenges as Bolivia's new government embarks on a controversial plan to "nationalize" the nation's energy wealth.

4. Lessons in Blood and Fire: The Deadly Consequences of IMF Economics

In February 2003, on a dilapidated rooftop visible from the International Monetary Fund's modern Bolivian office 14 floors above, a 24-year-old nurse was killed by army sharpshooters trying to quell mass protests against an IMF coerced tax increase. Jim Shultz traces the path that connects the IMF's demands for fiscal austerity to death on a rooftop. Drawn from interviews with Bolivia's former President, protest leaders, IMF officials and others, the chapter provides a chilling account of how economic policies crafted in Washington can translate into chaos and bloodshed when they meet the realities of a impoverished nation.

5. Economic Strings: The Politics of Foreign Debt

One of the most important global social justice victories in recent years has been debt cancellation for poor nations. Global lending institutions such as the World Bank, the IMF and others have cancelled billions of dollars in country debts. Bolivia, which became hugely indebted under both dictatorships and democracies in the 1980s and 1990s, was a focus for the global debt campaign and an early beneficiary of debt cancellation. Nick Buxton looks at how debt was used as a tool by foreign lenders to seize influence over Bolivia's most significant economic decisions, at what debt cancellation has really meant for average Bolivians, and

at how free trade agreements are becoming the new tool through which foreign governments hope to maintain heavy influence over Bolivia's economic path.

6. Coca: The Leaf at the Center of the War on Drugs

In his historic appearance before the UN General Assembly, in September 2006, President Evo Morales stood before world leaders, held aloft a small coca leaf and declared, "This is the green coca leaf, it is not white like cocaine. It represents Andean culture." That leaf has been at the center of a U.S.-backed drug war that has put thousands of Bolivians in jail and forced crop eradications that helped push the national economy into crisis for a decade. A collection of authors offers a series of essays that look at: the culture and history of coca; a brief history of the U.S. war on drugs in Bolivia; stories from los cocaleros (a Bolivian term that refers to those who cultivate the coca plant), the families who have experienced this "war" on their doorstep; the tale of a Bolivian mother of five who was sent to jail to boost U.S. drug war statistics; and a look at the viable alternatives for farmers growing coca and the potential for Bolivia to redefine its policies to be anti-drug but also pro-coca.

7. Workers, Leaders, and Mothers: Bolivian Women in a Globalizing World

The wave of globalization brings both challenges and opportunities to the lives of Bolivian women. Melissa Draper bases her analysis on the stories of six women whose lives have been shaped--albeit in distinct ways-- by global forces. She weaves together stories of mothers, fighters and workers examining a series of dynamics, including: how women have been impacted disproportionately by harsh policies from abroad; what it means for them to have access to foreign markets for their traditional indigenous wares; how some have built leadership with support from a globalized civil society; and how some benefit so directly from those globalizing forces that they begrudge those who present any resistance to it. Melissa draws on three years of personal experience working with women's labor unions, social movement leaders, and professional women in Bolivia, bringing their stories to life with thoughtful analysis.

8. And Those Who Left: Portraits of a Bolivian Exodus

In 2006, each week nearly five hundred Bolivians board buses and planes to leave their families and seek opportunity and employment abroad. Nearly a fifth of the nation's population now lives outside of Bolivia. Mothers leave their children, fathers leave behind their families – to seek out some slice of opportunity in a world where, for many, leaving seems the best real option. Based on interviews with Bolivian immigrants in Washington DC, Buenos Aires, and Barcelona, and with families in Bolivia, Lily Whitesell traces the stories of those who have left. Why did they leave? What were their dreams? What has become of their lives in their new nations? Do they plan to return to Bolivia and

why? In Bolivia's emigration story we learn the universal story of those who leave.

These chapters are complemented with an introduction from the editors, setting out the themes of the book and each of these varied issues in a common context. Finally, there is a substantial conclusion section that draws the lessons from the stories together in a clear and original analysis.

III. The Editors and Contributors

To produce *Dignity and Defiance*, an able group of foreign writers who make their home in Bolivia joined forces with a team of Bolivian colleagues, to build a unique bridge between the Bolivian experience and readers in the United States and abroad. While the foreigners did the writing, the Bolivians collaborated at every step with ideas, input, and guidance that makes the book theirs as well. The result is insightful reporting and story telling that goes well beyond the existing foreign writing about the indigenous nation in South America's geographic heart.

Editors

Jim Shultz, Editor, is the Democracy Center's executive director. A graduate of the University of California at Berkeley and Harvard University, he is the author of two books, most recently the award-winning *Democracy Owners' Manual* (Rutgers University Press, 2002). His writings on global issues have been published in magazines and newspapers across the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. His on-the-ground reporting on the 2000 Cochabamba Water Revolt won top honors from Project Censored. Jim has lived in Bolivia for ten years.

Melissa Crane Draper, Editor, earned her Masters in International Relations at Johns Hopkins University (School of Advanced International Studies) with a concentration in women's issues in development. A graduate of Dartmouth College, she worked for two years with women in grassroots organizations in Bolivia and also in rural Maharashtra, India. She returned to Bolivia in 2005 as an Earhart Fellow to work on issues of women and globalization in coordination with The Democracy Center. Melissa has lived in Bolivia for almost five years.

Authors and Contributors

Nick Buxton, Author, a U.K. native, served as communications manager for the Jubilee 2000 campaign against debt, and has published chapters on the successes and limitations of this historic global movement. He has also worked with Fundación Solón, a Bolivian organization that conducts research, holds cultural events, and publishes on issues of free trade, water, and women.

Carol Conzelman, Contributor, received her Ph.D. in cultural anthropology at the University of Colorado at Boulder. As a Fulbright Scholar, she conducted ethnographic fieldwork in the Bolivian Andes in 2003-2004, studying democracy and development in a legal coca-growing region. She examined municipal and community democratic practices, rural development, adventure tourism, and the impact of the U.S. "war on drugs." Carol also teaches university anthropology courses on globalization, development, and democracy.

Caitlin Esch, Contributor, is a graduate of George Washington University who has spent a year and a half living and writing from South America, including both Argentina and Bolivia. She served as editor of the Democracy Center's magazine from Bolivia, *Jallalla!*, during 2006.

Linda Farthing, Contributor, is a writer, educator, and activist who has worked on Bolivia for twenty-five years and lived there for eight. She has extensive experience in grassroots community development in both Bolivia and Nepal. In addition, she has written and produced over fifty articles and radio reports on Bolivia, most recently publishing *Impasse in Bolivia: Neoliberal Hegemony and Popular Resistance* (Zed Books, 2006) with Ben Kohl.

Roberto Fernández Terán, Contributor, is a professor at the Universidad Mayor de San Simón in Cochabamba. He has written extensively on issues of Bolivia's experiences with foreign economic policies, including his book, *FMI, Banco Mundial y Estado Neocolonial (The IMF, the World Bank, and the Neocolonial State*, Plural Press, 2003).

Gretchen Gordon, Author, is pursuing a master's degree in Latin American Studies at the University of California at Berkeley. The former director of the Citizens Trade Campaign in Washington, DC, Gretchen researches and writes extensively on Latin America and globalization. Her work has been published by Pacifica News Service, *The New Internationalist*, and *Dollars and Sense* among others. She has worked in advocacy around trade and globalization issues for seven years.

Christina Haglund, Author, made Latin America her home for five years, starting out as a Peace Corps volunteer in Paraguay. In addition to her work with the Democracy Center researching the Enron/Shell oil spill, she is a photographer and has participated in projects related to rural and urban education, health, and empowerment.

Aaron Luoma, Author, received his master's degree from the School for International Training, and has lived in Cochabamba on and off since 2002. While spending most of the last fifteen years abroad, Aaron has been both a teacher and coordinator of intercultural exchange programs. He also spent two years working with immigrants on the U.S.-Mexican border in El Paso, Texas.

Leny Olivera Rojas, Contributor, is a graduate of the Universidad Mayor de San Simón in Cochabamba. For more than five years, she has been an activist with Bolivian youth organizations and social movements, in particular with the efforts of Bolivians to address issues related to natural resources, the environment, and culture. She has been active in international exchanges related to popular education in Bolivia, Sweden, and Tanzania. Leny is currently a project coordinator and head of communication and technology at the Democracy Center.

Marcela Olivera, Contributor, is a graduate of the Catholic University in Cochabamba, Bolivia, and served for four years as the key international liaison for the Coalition for the Defense of Water and Life in Cochabamba. In 2004, she worked with Public Citizen in Washington, DC, to develop an international citizens' network on water rights, *Red Vida*. She currently works as the Latin American coordinator for the *Water for All* program and for *Food and Water Watch*, and organization based in Washington.

Aldo Orellana Lopez, Contributor, is a Bolivian activist who has worked with social movements in a variety of areas, such as natural resources and environmental issues. He writes extensively for independent news outlets in Bolivia and abroad. Aldo works as a researcher with the Democracy Center and studies economics at the Universidad Mayor de San Simón in Cochabamba.

Lily Whitesell, Author, is a graduate of the University of Virginia. She first came to Bolivia in 2003 through the School for International Training, studying the sociopolitics of urbanization in Cochabamba. Before returning to Bolivia in 2007, Lily worked in social justice advocacy in the Washington, DC area and with Bolivian organizations in Arlington, Virginia. She has lived in Bolivia for three years.

Coletta A. Youngers, Contributor, is an independent consultant and Senior Fellow at the Washington Office on Latin America and has monitored developments in Bolivia for twenty years. She is co-editor of *Drugs and Democracy in Latin America: The Impact of U.S. Policy* (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005), author of *Violencia Política y Sociedad Civil en el Perú: Historia de la Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos* (Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 2003), and numerous book chapters on U.S. international drug control policy.

IV. Timeline

Dignity and Defiance was first published in Spanish in Bolivia with Plural Press in April 2008. The Spanish version is being distributed throughout Latin America and to Spanish-speaking audiences in the U.S. and the U.K.

Merlin Press will publish the book in September 2008 and will distribute within the U.K. A book tour in England is being planned for the end of 2008.

The University of California Press will publish the book for distribution in January 2009. An extensive book tour throughout the U.S. is planned for late January and February, 2009.

Cover photo: *Merceditas, Protectress of Coca*, by Valentina Campos (Cochabamba, Bolivia, 2000)

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