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Let Me Speak! Testimony Of Domitila, A Woman Of The Bolivian Mines



Synopsis

First published in English in 1978, this classic book contains the testimony of Domitila Barrios de Chungara, the wife of a Bolivian tin miner. Blending firsthand accounts with astute political analysis, Domitila describes the hardships endured by Bolivia's vast working class and her own efforts at organizing women in the mining community. The result is a gripping narrative of class struggle and repression, an important social document that illuminates the reality of capitalist exploitation in 1970s Bolivia. Domitila Barrios de Chungara was born in 1937 in the Siglo XX mining town in Bolivia. She became politically active in the 1960s and, in 1975, participated in the UN International Women's Year Tribunal in Mexico. In 2005 she was nominated alongside 999 other "Peace Women" for a collective Nobel Peace Prize.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Reading some of the negative reviews, I almost didn't buy this book, what a loss that would have been. It's not a good book, it's a great book. The other readers missed the point entirely. She doesn't blame the U.S., she mainly blames the bureaucrats in Bolivia who sell out and line their pockets at the expense of the people. It's a powerful indictment against the injustices of her life, her people, and her unrelenting struggle which has given meaning to her life. She's a humble, courageous, extraordinary woman who was raised from the cradle with a social conscience by her equally extraordinary father. She came to terms with her mission in life and paid a brutal price because once she found her voice she wouldn't be silenced. Her account is honest, terrifying and

poignant. She wrote the book long before Evo Morales took center stage but she saw the future of Bolivia in the horizon. May she and her book live forever.Â Beyond the Snows of the Andes

excellent

This narrative of Bolivian social activist Domitila de Chungara can't be called great literature - but it is an extremely informative and horrifying work, focusing on the plight of Bolivia's poor in the 60s and 70s. Brought up in the tin mining region of Potosi, the people were oppressed by the mine owners and the government, in league with the US. Low wages, constant attempts from above to stamp out an increasingly unionized workforce through threats, fomenting discord - and also through torture and massacres - this makes for grim reading. As a wife and mother of seven, the author's activities resulted in opposition from her husband, threats against her children and prison and beatings. She shows an astonishing resolution, from when she first took up the socialist cause (and for which she was disfellowshipped from the Jehovah's Witnesses.) Chungara's interviews were written down by Brazilian journalist and social anthropologist Moema Viezzer.

I recently read this book for a gender and economics class and I thought it was one of the best accounts of the atrocities happening to others in the world. Domitilla presents a harrowing and poignant picture of life in Bolivia that makes me wonder what else the United States and other countries are doing to developing countries that would make my stomach turn. I would guess it is a lot. I would also recommend "I Rigoberta Menchu" to anyone who also enjoyed "Let Me Speak." It too was an amazingly brave and depressing story that made me aware of the struggles others in the world face.

This book is a great read for leisure as well as academic purpose. If reading for leisure, the writing is very smooth and chapters flow into one another, it also teaches you a little of Bolivian history and politics without feeling like you're studying. For academic purposes it is a very useful example of complicities between various groups and how they can undermine people's movements, but it is also a good example of how one can get beyond complicities to help eradicate injustice. It is not naive, and is a very multifaceted analysis of the human condition. If Domitila would write this again I would like to see a fuller discussion of the achievement of trust between different groups that may not have been friendly at times, but that might make it more academic and less interesting for an evening, weekend or vacation read.

As a woman of color, late to academia I found this book validating, illuminating and refreshing. Domatila's life and words clearly illustrated what Paulo Freire was trying to convey in his book "Pedagogy of the Oppressed." In simple language Domatila and Moema Viezzer explained the highly complex nature of the work of organizing and humanizing both the oppressed and oppressing populations of the world. It's high time those of us who live in comfort and peace recognize that we share responsibility, even if only through non-action, for the dehumanization of working-class people throughout the world. Domitila calls for greater communication and understanding among all nations and social classes so that workers in mines, farms, rug factories etc., will no longer find themselves isolated and vulnerable to unscrupulous business interests and repressive governments.

It seems that Sra. Barrios de Chungara has been reading and rehashing Capital and The Communist Manifesto. Her major weakness is the contradiction that she wants equality for everybody but only if she can dictate it. She seems to place a lot of importance on herself. She blames all of her problems and the problems of Bolivia on the United States, like many other Latin American literature books seem to do. She is a lot like Rigoberta Menchu, who I also read, and discredit and do not recommend either. These books do not offer anything new.

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