

Women, Mujeres, Ixoq: Revolutionary Visions

Claudia D. Hernández

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La lucha revolucionaria ...es una puerta abierta a la inteligencia ... Revolutionary struggle ... is an open door to intelligence.
—Frida Kahlo

This book illustrates the notion that pain inspires the greatest art, the best poems, and the most creative paintings and photographs. In conception of the book, Odilia Galván Rodríguez facilitated an understanding of the ways in which cultural expressions emerge as songs or testaments of suffering from deep within, as she urged me to write a book, and read initial submissions. In the process, I learned that sometimes our art is inspired by pain that finds us on the floor, crying, when we believe we have reached rock bottom. I could see that as we hit the ground, the hurt travels like a roaring river far into our core, converting it into a fire—a torch that once lit cannot be easily extinguished.

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I aim to display our view of the world in English, Spanish, and Poqomchi'. To illustrate our significance and our life-giving force, as we make visible infinitesimal possibilities that emerge when we gather as women. To display our brilliance when we sing, dance, or simply become who we are, or when we speak what we want to voice, feel what we want to feel. Our authentic selves.

When women experience life challenges from discrimination, inequality, misogyny, abuse, abandonment, postpartum depression, or other life difficulties, we forge sisterhood. Inside the trauma of our lives we seek each other out for comfort inspiring and encouraging one another along the way. At my lowest point, when I was scraping my knees off the floor, women came to my side—my mother, my sisters, mis compañeras—and lifted my soul. It was then that I committed to document women's lives.

At the age of thirty-four I found myself in nepantla once again, navigating the roughest phase of my life.

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Exhausted and feeling sorry for myself, and drenched in tears, I took a detour that changed my life for the better. I launched Today's Revolutionary Women of Color, the project upon which this book is organized. Revolutionary women artists whose writing, paintings, and careers carry a theme of social justice rooted in their work quickly responded to my call. Surely, these women would understand what the project meant to me. Those I reached

loved the idea, and after participating, recommended other women. The first month I interviewed and photographed twenty women, and have amassed many photo-memories.

All of us have a story of resilience to tell and every woman is a revolutionary in her own right. Our lives become whole because of women who change us for the better. We have chosen certain paths to create change and this project is my own revolution—my desire to make visible the lives that inspire us, as I shed light unto our accomplishments, to encourage more women to also create their own path.

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With their words, their art, and their photographs, my aim is to display for the world Women, Mujeres, Ixoq—women whose visions may transform communities and inspire young women to lead us into the future. Regardless of gender and positionality, we want to educate and inspire young minds to become the role models we need. Also, as revolutionary women, we must necessarily nurture young boys to become respectful men who love and treat women as equal human beings.

The imperative is to teach our children about these revolutionary women. Rather than memorialize them when they are no longer here with us, we must necessarily place them at the center to display their stories and extol our diversity before they are lost to the ages. In that spirit, this book is a call to women and men to join a peaceful revolution,

inspiring change with words, art, and our inner fire to make the world a better place for all.

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In revolutionary spirit, *Claudia*

Bio: Claudia D. Hernández, a native of Guatemala, is a mother, poet, photographer, translator and bilingual educator living in Los Angeles. She writes short stories, children's stories and poetry in Spanish, English, and Poqomchi', a language of her Mayan heritage. She holds an MFA in Creative Writing for Young People and has published in online literary journals and anthologies in the U.S., U.K., Canada and Mexico. She is founder of *Today's Revolutionary Women of Color*: www.todaysrevolutionarywomenofcolor.com.

* **Conocimientos Press** of San Antonio, Texas is published by Dr. Josie Méndez-Negrete. It publishes accounts that voice the heart of a people, as they document narratives of struggle and resistance. Contact: josephine.mendeznegrete@utsa.edu

