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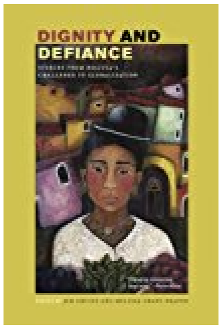
Jim Shultz, Melissa Draper, eds. *Dignity and Defiance: Stories from Bolivia's Challenge to Globalization.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008. x + 341 pp. $60.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-520-25698-9; $24.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-520-25699-6.



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Bolivia(s) Ascending

In mid-December 2010, tensions in several working-class neighborhoods in Argentine cities erupted into violence. As elsewhere, in the Villa Soldati, Barracas, and Villa Lugano sectors of Buenos Aires, dozens of families moved suddenly into public spaces and other vacant lands. They were without a roof, they told the media, without land. The government had forever promised them shelter; now they were taking matters into their own hands, erecting makeshift housing and making clear that they were there to stay. In the days that followed, violence in Soldati highlighted a sharp division between local residents and the "okupas" (a media-coined term referring to the occupiers and to the occupations themselves). Physical confrontations between local residents and the occupiers quickly overwhelmed the small police presence as Argentine president Cristina Fernández de Kirchner and Buenos Aires mayor Mauricio Macri each passed responsibility for the crisis to the other while exchanging insults. In two long, hot days of small, ferocious pitched battles, local residents killed three occupiers. A fourth was severely beaten after being dragged, injured, from an ambulance.

In how Argentines read the crisis, race and nation shaped the confrontations between "residents" and "occupiers." Repeatedly, working people who lived around the public spaces in contention made their case against the occupiers by describing themselves to rapt media as the "children and grandchildren of European immigrants who had built Argentina." They wanted their public spaces back. At the same time, there was no mistaking their racist frustration as they watched Bolivian immigrants–the occupiers–take what they viewed as one more piece of what had once been the promise of a prosperous Argentina. The "k" in the term "okupa" highlighted what many Argentines viewed as a subversive Bolivian presence in their midst (the "k" being foreign to Argentine Spanish while identified with Bolivian, nonwhite, indigenous identities). It also denoted the "K"irchner government as dupes of a massive Bolivian presence in Argentine cities–a nonwhite, impoverished presence that many Argentines across class lines had long viewed as culturally, racially, and politically dangerous.

At the height of tensions, there was word from La Paz. Bolivian president Evo Morales, the figure at the center of *Dignity and Defiance: Stories of from Bolivia's Challenge to Globalization*, spoke to Bolivians in Argentina. Occupation was not the answer, he told them. Morales urged his fellow Bolivians to abandon immediately the public spaces they had occupied. That was it. There was no offer of assistance or other advice from the man who had placed Bolivia at the center of the new Latin American Left, who had led an indigenous revolution in Bolivia, who had taken on entrenched elites, who had organized dozens of marches and occupations over the years, and who had challenged United States hegemony in Latin America. Where was the firebrand leader who represented millions of working Bolivians and their struggles for dignity?

Like other national leaders in the Americas, Morales has not been immune to a range of pressures that have relegated to the back burner the interests of working Bolivians (both inside and outside the national boundary), as well as to those that have sometimes rendered the interests of working people diverse and conflicting. In this case, the only plausible explanation for Morales's cold response to desperate and brutalized Bolivian men, women, and children in Argentina is part of what has made him a successful political leader. Quite simply, he was attending to other interests. In this case, Morales was doing a favor for a beleaguered regional ally, the Argentine president, who needed a solution fast (and whose support numbers in public opinion polls dropped a stunning 10 percent during the crisis among Argentines unhappy with her not having dislodged the Bolivians immediately).

Were one to rely exclusively on *Dignity and Defiance* for an understanding of this and other cases of Bolivian power politics, cultural shifts, and social change over the past decade under the Evo Morales presidency, or for an analysis of Bolivian communities broadly conceived, one would be lost. This highlights both what this edited collection does exceptionally well, and what it lacks. Editors Jim Shultz and Melissa Crane Draper have assembled a collection of original chapters on Bolivia's path to revolutionary change that is of mixed quality. While some authors purport to take their analysis past the 2005 election of Morales to the presidency, none delves deeply into Bolivia's remarkable social change after 2005. The book is not explicitly about the post-2005 period; however, it does purport to document the Bolivian popular assault on globalization and the remarkable social revolution in that country. As such, the failure to address rapid change after 2005 is not only a problem in and of itself, but it also reflects a larger methodological weakness in these chapters. *Dignity and Defiance* is less a strong analysis of social and political forces in Bolivia over the past thirty years that brought about revolution, than a celebration of the movement Morales led and the ways in which it has challenged national and international authority in a search for social equality.

The difference is crucial. Book contributors treat the post-2005 period methodologically as a postscript to electoral victory rather than as part of an ongoing process of profound social and cultural change. The editors and some authors ensnare themselves in a tautology. In their inherent celebration of the Morales triumph, and what it meant to Bolivia (emphasized on the cover with praise for the book from Naomi Klein and Bolivian ambassador to Washington Gustavo Guzmán), contributors to the book have neglected a key component of that triumph–the victory of political dissent in its multiple forms. Since Morales's Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS) came to power in late 2005, Bolivia has remained a nation in turmoil with ongoing regional, ethnic, urban, and other popular challenges to authority frequently directed at the governing party. Readers would never know that from reading these chapters. Nor would they recognize the Morales who had nothing to offer the "okupas" in December 2010.

Chapters focus directly and indirectly on the challenge to globalization. The results tend to extremes–either to the outstanding or to the very weak, depending on how far problems addressed are set from the complexities of dissent from the Morales-led social project. Melissa Crane Draper's "Workers, Leaders, and Mothers: Bolivian Women in a Globalizing World" is superb. There has been little attention to a rich literature on women's leadership in Bolivia over the past fifty years. Even so, the author approaches the lives of five working women to offer fascinating insights into how globalization has touched women in the past decade through interactions with NGOs, the changing nature of work, legacies of sixty-year-old women's battles in the workplace, and shifts in how both unions and business function. Equally impressive is Nick Buxton's "Economic Strings: The Politics of Foreign Debt," which not only traces the history of Bolivia's foreign debt, but also shows how the movement led by Evo Morales addressed the debt question creatively and effectively.

By contrast the chapter "And Those Who Left: Portraits of a Bolivian Exodus" is disappointing. It purports to examine the lives and motives for emigration of the more than two million Bolivians living overseas. But the chapter is a hodgepodge of one-paragraph portraits of Bolivians living elsewhere, the upheavals that have prompted emigration (from the 1952 Bolivian Revolution), and material with little relevance to the current crisis of immigrants living in other countries (including, for example, information on anti-immigrant sentiment in the United States in the 1920s). It offers little insight into the lives of the 1.5 million Bolivians in Argentina, for example, or how their departure transformed family and community in Bolivia.

The chapter "Coca: The Leaf at the Center of the War on Drugs" is also poor. It cobbles together the musings of six different contributors in offering an overview of familiar, long-standing contours of the cultural meanings of coca production and consumption; the U.S.-led war on drugs in Bolivia; and the links between Morales's movement and the coca workers sector. The section on the new government's policy on coca/cocaine is all of two pages. What became of the tens of thousands of coca workers and their families who proved the key political and social base for Evo Morales's rise? It is as though they fell off the map.

There is a paucity of scholarship by Bolivians in this collection. Where Bolivians are included, they appear under the vague tag of "contributor" rather than "author." Stranger still, there is almost no attention to vibrant cultural shifts in El Alto, Cochabamba, and elsewhere that accompanied political and social revolution in Bolivia. There is no mention of *cartonera* publishers Rostro asado (Oruro) and Yerba mala (El Alto) and their assault on literary and performative cultural norms. No chapter touches on the immense popularity of *lucha libre de cholitas* (*cholita* wrestling) in El Alto and elsewhere. In fact, thousands of representations of everyday cultural, social, and political subversions that helped shape Bolivia's challenge to globalization, and have become a reflection of that challenge (often in opposition to norms set by the Morales government) have no place in this volume. In his conclusion to the book, Jim Shultz speaks of "Bolivia," as in "Bolivia's experience underscores ... " (p. 294), "Bolivia is resisting ... " (p. 295), and "Bolivia offers a lesson ... " (p. 295).

Despite the strengths of *Dignity and Defiance*, editors and authors have bound themselves to a single representative Bolivian utopian ideal closely tied to an uncritical Morales government vision of its own work. This, in turn, has set in place methodological barriers that limit attention to many relevant, exciting, and subversive forms of social, political, and cultural change over the past two decades–indeed, Bolivia's most poignant challenges to globalization.

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