



Compañeras: Zapatista Women's Stories

By Hilary Klein

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Compañeras is the untold story of women's involvement in the Zapatista movement, the indigenous rebellion that has inspired grassroots activists around the world for over two decades. Gathered here are the stories of grandmothers, mothers, and daughters who became guerilla insurgents and political leaders, educators and healers—who worked collectively to construct a new society of dignity and justice. *Compañeras* shows us how, after centuries of oppression, a few voices of dissent became a force of thousands, how a woman once confined to her kitchen rose to conduct peace negotiations with the Mexican government, and how hundreds of women overcame ingrained hardships to strengthen their communities from within.

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Compañeras: Zapatista Women's Stories By Hilary Klein Bibliography

- Rank: #147720 in Books
- Published on: 2015-02-24
- Released on: 2015-02-24
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.18" h x .97" w x 5.50" l, .81 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 384 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

"A guiding light for a new generation of feminists and others who would challenge patriarchy, poverty, gender oppression, racism, and all the other inhumanities maintained by global capitalism."—Elaine Brown, Black Panther Party leader and author of *A Taste of Power* and *The Condemnation of Little B*

"Beautifully written, *Compañeras* is a story of love and courage that gives a new depth to our understanding of the Zapatista movement and resonates beyond Chiapas." —Silvia Federici, author of *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation*

"Belongs on the bookshelves of social justice activists and scholars everywhere." —Chandra Talpade Mohanty, author of *Feminism Without Borders*

"Hilary Klein is a major talent and a welcome fresh voice."—Luis Alberto Urrea, Pulitzer Prize finalist for *The Devil's Highway*

"*Compañeras* is a powerful testament to the collective vision and *lucha* of the Zapatista women. Here are the intimate stories of becoming politicized as *mujeres*—of taking risks, questioning everything, and rewriting history. This book is a guide for anyone who is trying to walk a new *camino* at the intersection of gender, class, and race struggles." —Daisy Hernández, author of *Colonize This! Young Women of Color on Today's Feminism*

"Full of gritty insights. . . . *Compañeras* is as moving as it is eye-opening." —Cynthia Enloe, author of *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*

"The most complete, well-documented, and moving work about the struggle of Zapatista women spanning twenty years and told from the indigenous communities of Chiapas' own heart." —Guiomar Rovira, author of *Mujeres de Maíz*

"Klein underscores that women's emancipation is tied to the emancipation of land, to indigenous sovereignty—to liberation. Women's lives, struggles, and leadership are still invisibilized and our stories are often untold. I am grateful for the herstory of the powerful and mighty Zapatista women." —Cindy Wiesner, National Coordinator of Grassroots Global Justice Alliance

"The perfect mix of good storytelling, careful documentation, and the sympathetic observation of someone who lived and worked among the Zapatistas for six years. . . . Reading *Compañeras* gives me hope." —Margaret Randall, author of *Sandino's Daughters Revisited* and *Che on My Mind*

"This is a book that should be on every activist's reading list, and in every social studies class." —Raj Patel, author of *The Value of Nothing* and *Stuffed and Starved*

"*Compañeras* provides a view from within the Zapatista communities of the women who are making history in the Lacandon settlements. . . . Working in producer and market operations, the women gained the ability to voice their history in moving accounts that reveal what led to the revolt and the changes they have succeeded in making during the twenty years since the uprising." —June Nash, Distinguished Professor of Anthropology Emerita, The City University of New

York

"Hilary Klein has given us a rare gift: an accessible book that beautifully conveys the experience of many indigenous Zapatista women in a time of incredible social mobilization and change." —Shannon Speed, Director of Native American & Indigenous Studies at the University of Texas at Austin and editor of *Dissident Women: Gender and Cultural Politics in Chiapas*

"The Zapatista movement captures the essence that—as we build collective power to achieve social justice, we make the road by walking. *Compañeras* contains many valuable lessons for those of us in the immigrants' rights movement in this country, and is a must-read for all organizers and movement-builders." —Javier H. Valdés, Co-Executive Director of Make the Road New York

"Women are taking leadership in social change. Again. In this very special book, Hilary Klein describes how women do this within the Zapatista movement and explains why Zapatista women can firmly say, 'Today there is hope and freedom in our lives.' Not only is this a fascinating book, it should be a solid point of reference for all those interested in constructing a new world of freedom." —Gustavo Esteva Figueroa, author of *Celebration of Zapatismo*

"Klein has made a tremendous contribution to the world. . . . *Compañeras* would be a delight to use in college courses in Women's Studies, Latin American Studies, Sociology, or Political Science." —Karen Kampwirth, Robert W. Murphy Professor of Political Science at Knox College and author of *Feminism and the Legacy of Revolution: Nicaragua, El Salvador, Chiapas*

"This is a book for women and men, for activists and for students, for survivors and world-changers, for the oppressed, the poor, and the precarious. Onwards compañeras y compañeros!" —Peter Linebaugh, author of *Stop, Thief! The Commons, Enclosure, and Resistance*

"This account of resistance is a unique document that will enable the reader to understand the profound implications of the Zapatista uprising for indigenous women. Hilary Klein brings to the Englishspeaking world the soulful stories of indigenous women who have decided to build 'a world in which many worlds fit.'" —R. Aída Hernández-Castillo, author of *Histories and Stories from Chiapas Border Identities in Southern Mexico* and editor of *Dissident Women: Gender and Cultural Politics in Chiapas*

"Hilary Klein has provided us with the most beautiful gift. . . . I was beyond moved by this book. I love it. It is a tool for constructing freedom, by women, in the creation of new worlds." —Marina Sitrin, author of *Everyday Revolutions: Horizontalism and Autonomy in Argentina* and co-author of *They Can't Represent Us!: Reinventing Democracy from Greece to Occupy*

"As refreshing as cool water in a heat wave. . . . A richly textured narrative where political and historical context blend seamlessly with the compellingly personal." —Aurora Levins Morales, author of *Medicine Stories* and *Remedios: Stories of Earth and Iron from the History of Puertorriqueñas*

About the Author

HILARY KLEIN lived in Chiapas, Mexico, for several years, where she worked on projects in Zapatista communities. After she edited a book of Zapatista women's testimonies to be circulated within their own villages, women within the movement suggested that Klein compile a similar book for an outside audience. *Compañeras: Zapatista Women's Stories* was the result. Klein, a D.C. native, has been engaged in social justice work and community organizing for twenty years. She currently works at Make the Road New York,

a membership-based organization that allies with immigrant and working-class communities to help them achieve dignity and justice.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Frances Hairston:

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