



Horizontalism: Voices of Popular Power in Argentina

Marina Sitrin (Editor)

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Chosen by Rebecca Solnit for her "Secret Library of Hope: 12 Books to Stiffen Your Resolve" (Dec. 2007).

"The movements in Argentina have been among the most creative and inspirational in recent years. Marina Sitrin's collection allows us to learn from the activists themselves and continue the experiments in autonomy and democracy they have begun."—Michael Hardt, co-author of *Empire*

"...a fascinating account about what is fresh and new about the Argentine uprising."—John Holloway, author of *Change the World Without Taking Power*

The popular rebellion that began in December 2001 in Argentina with the IMF melt-down and subsequent capital flight sparked a process of creativity that continues to this day. Different from so many social movements of the past, this rebellion rejects political programs, opting instead to create directly democratic spaces on street corners, in factories, and throughout neighborhoods. Many have come to call this new social relationship, "horizontalidad."

Horizontalism is an oral history of the exciting transformations taking place since the popular rebellion. It is a story of cooperation, vision, creation and discovery. It is a history told by people in the various autonomous social movements, from the occupied factories, neighborhood assemblies, arts and independent media collectives, to the indigenous communities and unemployed workers movements.

Marina Sitrin is a New York City-based lawyer, writer, and activist who has spent large portions of the past three years in Argentina. Her work has appeared in *Left Turn* and *Perspectives*.

Horizontalism: Voices of Popular Power in Argentina Details

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From Reader Review Horizontalism: Voices of Popular Power in Argentina for online ebook

James Tracy says

Marina could very well turn into a Studs Terkel of our generation. These are the oral histories of Argentinians who are reinventing political power through bottom-up worker managed factories and neighborhoods. As the USA goes into election mode, this book will help set our sights on even more profound and lasting change.

blue-collar mind says

I am often surprised when I talk about grassroots work around the world to friends or acquaintances, and they know nothing of it. I often look at them for a minute, and wait for the laugh filled voice of "no, just kidding; of course I know what you are talking about."

It mostly doesn't come.

It has surprised me that I know many people that don't know who the Zapatistas are, or who Karen Silkwood or Rachel Carson were, or the Diggers, or the story of the astonishing imperialist views and actions of the 20th c of America (meaning, people in this country often think America has never invaded anyone without proper provocation-well, that's the wild card debate point- proper provocation-isn't it).

So, there are books that I keep around to lend out, even though those books are mostly returned to me finally at my bidding, with downcast eyes from friends with the hope in those eyes I don't ask what they thought of it.

Oh well.

But still I move forward, always forward in the hopes that a book I have will light up a corner of a mind somewhere.

This book is one I have just those hopes for, but will probably be a prop in the former scenario. It tells in oral history the ongoing, messy, dynamic, thrilling story of the Argentinian movement that surfaced after the economy collapsed thanks to repressive international policies. Their cry "Everyone Must Go" took 4 governments down in record time in succession. This all happened on December 19 and 20, 2001 when the people took to the streets and found ways to collaborate in their own future, taking over factories, setting up their own social and economic systems for themselves.

Those movements are less visible in Argentina as of 2008, but do not believe they have disappeared completely. When people find a path, they will hack away at the undergrowth again and again and ultimately move farther along the path. This book tells you ordinary (?) people's stories in their own words, which is my favorite method of reading history.

The water damaged copy (never leave your window open in the summer in the subtropics) I own sits here on the back of the couch, waiting for someone else to share its stories with; wish it good luck.

Benjamin says

Mostly fun and inspiring.

Dan says

All over the place. But this has some great tidbits of life experiences in Argentina since the big crash Dec 19th and 20th of 2001.

Torie says

Reading this book is like watching a really long, under-edited documentary about something you are really interested in and excited about, but the long, long, lo-o-o-ong talking head style interviews ramble for most of the time, with a few really inspiring nuggets buried throughout. This was written as an oral history, and the author/editor purposely left the translated speech as-is. I can respect not wanting to leave out anyone's words in order to provide context and entire meanings, but it makes for a really dry, repetitive read.

The history of this movement is so important, and I feel like there's not a lot out there that goes into why and how the popular uprising in Argentina happened. It's too bad this kind of documentation is such a struggle to read.

Brian says

A book of raw oral histories and minimal analysis can only be so exciting... wonderful as a collection of data about an inspiring milieu of socialism from below, but not exactly bursting with useful insights. I'd like to get the English version now that it's been published.

Kris Rowland says

A meditative account of the reality of autonomous creation. It may sometimes be quite repetitive and at times lazy in its inclusion of some of its omissions. But I would recommend this book to anyone that ever dreamed of what the world could be like beyond capitalism. At times upbeat and other times wary of the optimism, it takes accounts from the assemblies discussing why and what they assemblies do and where they dream of going. Above all things you have to admire these people for the difficulty of working through these groups to affect-ivly meet each others needs as a group and organise , mobilise and collectively come together to respect each others individual differences. Basically an Occupiers wet dream with reality thrown in for balance.

xVirgo says

I got two words for you: People power. This book is about communities rising up to make sustainable and legislative change. Has many different perspectives on struggles within the community, womens issues, labor issues, class issues, etc. Well written and inspirational.

Alie says

thanks for reminding me to question and walk.

James says

People have been asking about this one for a long time. This book came out in Spanish a few years ago and was already heavily asked requested. Now, an English translation let me read this for the first time, and it's no disappointment! Horizontalism is about the social movements in Argentina since the economy collapsed in December of 2001, seemingly a part of the bigger movements for social justice sweeping across Latin America. What I really liked about this book is that it's from the point of view of people participating in the movement. It's really seemingly different from a lot of stuff, from the ground-up and not imposed by elites or cadres. It really seems like it's out of the grassroots struggles of Argentina, and the December 19th and 20th 2001 economic collapse were just events that turned people out in mass in an uprising.

The book is divided into sections based on interviews, getting different perspectives on different subjects. The first section deals with how people thought the country changed in December 2001, and hundreds of neighborhood assemblies suddenly appeared throughout the country. In a country where 30,000 people disappeared in the 1980s during the military dictatorship, all of the sudden when no one, even the middle class, could get their money, thousands of people in Buenos Aires took to the streets and banged pots into the night. From there, people began gathering in their neighborhoods to try to run their own places, took over factories and other workplaces where the management had either fled or owed the workers large amounts of money, and occupied buildings that were not being used, which flew in the face of clientilism of Argentina. The famous roadblocks, where people blocked off roads across the country to shut down commerce as protests of the poor of the country, also appeared across Argentina. The popular call was "Oh, que se vayan todos!" ("They all must go!", referring to the nation's "democratically" elected politicians.) A sudden burst of anger from most people sick of the ruling class pretending to represent the will of the people brought down five Presidents in a matter of two weeks. The elites and political parties and financial organizations like foreign companies and the World Bank literally had no part in any of this upheaval other than being the target of anger, cast away like sand against the waves.

From there, in the assemblies, a process of "horizontalidad" became the big philosophy. Before there would be a boss of any organization, and any real decisions would originate from above. But in the assemblies and collectives, people worked together for their common well being, equal in power at least in structure, often with consensus instead of voting. Several people interviewed commented that while having a boss or simple voting for decision making might be easier, you lose the power to the people when you go the easy route. There are several great lines about how the walk is just as important as the talk, and how bullshit speeches and posturing doesn't take a group of people very far. It's really interesting how an idea is put together and made stronger by a group of people interacting and listening where the most powerful, well-done stuff happens.

"Martin S., La Toma and Argentina Arde (an occupied building and alternative media and art collective)

for the rest of the review:

<http://www.woodenshoebooks.com/review...>
