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Dying for the Dawn

Martyrs, Narratives and Social Change in
20th Century Latin America



Edited by
Marisol Lopez-Menendez

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SERIES IN SOCIOLOGY

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Dying for the Dawn

Martyrs, Narratives and Social Change in 20th Century Latin America

SERIES IN SOCIOLOGY

“Dying for the Dawn” offers an evocative, rigorous, and timely exploration of the multifaceted meanings and expressions of martyrdom in Latin America. Situating the region as a fertile terrain for examining the religious, social, and political forces that shape martyrial figures and narratives, the book illuminates how martyrdom continues to inform struggles over memory, justice, and political transformation. Highly interdisciplinary and accessible, the book establishes martyrdom as a vital lens for understanding Latin America’s histories of conflict, resistance, and social change.

Dr. Gema Kloppe-Santamaría

University College Cork, Ireland

Author of “In the Vortex of Violence: Lynching, Extralegal Justice, and the State in Post-Revolutionary Mexico”

About the editor

Marisol Lopez-Menendez is a sociologist of religion. She holds a PhD degree in Sociology from the New School for Social Research.

She is the author of the book ‘Miguel Pro: Martyrdom & Politics in Twentieth-century Mexico,’ among other publications, and has coordinated several collective books on religion in Mexico, memory, and social mobilization. She is currently carrying out the research project ‘Martyrdom, secularity and social mobilization in Mexico and Latin America 1950-1988.’

She has linked her interest in the development of civil society with the sociology of religion, using tools from traditional political sociology and social theory to study issues such as martyrdom and the social dimension of miracles in the Catholic Church, and other non-Catholic forms of martyrdom in their relationship with social mobilization and the consolidation of political institutions.

Summary

In a century stained by revolution, dictatorship, and neoliberal violence, ordinary men and women became extraordinary witnesses—dying so that others might live free.

From the bullet-riddled Cristero battlefields of Mexico to the bloodied streets where Óscar Romero fell, from Chico Mendes’s Amazonian stand to the unmarked graves of Chile’s forgotten priests and the deadly migrant trails of today’s Via Crucis—this collection rewrites the meaning of martyrdom for our time.

Edited by Marisol Lopez-Menendez, ‘Dying for the Dawn’ brings together leading scholars to reveal how martyrial stories are not relics of the past but living weapons: shaping politics, igniting social movements, redefining gender and memory, and challenging the very border between faith and resistance. Here you’ll meet worker-martyrs, children saints, environmental prophets, disappeared priests, and the “neo-liberal martyrs” dying at the hands of borders and cartels—figures whose deaths still fuel protests, pilgrimages, and demands for justice across Latin America and its diaspora.

Blending riveting history, sharp sociology, and unflinching cultural analysis, this is the book that finally connects the dots between ancient sacrifice and today’s struggles for human rights, migration justice, and democratic dignity. Perfect for readers of liberation theology, Latin American history, religious studies, and anyone who believes that courage can outlast bullets.

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