



We Are the Face of Oaxaca: Testimony and Social Movements

By Lynn Stephen

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A massive uprising against the Mexican state of Oaxaca began with the emergence of the Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca (APPO) in June 2006. A coalition of more than 300 organizations, APPO disrupted the functions of Oaxaca's government for six months. It began to develop an inclusive and participatory political vision for the state. Testimonials were broadcast on radio and television stations appropriated by APPO, shared at public demonstrations, debated in homes and in the streets, and disseminated around the world via the Internet.

The movement was met with violent repression. Participants were imprisoned, tortured, and even killed. Lynn Stephen emphasizes the crucial role of testimony in human rights work, indigenous cultural history, community and indigenous radio, and women's articulation of their rights to speak and be heard. She also explores transborder support for APPO, particularly among Oaxacan immigrants in Los Angeles. The book is supplemented by a website featuring video testimonials, pictures, documents, and a timeline of key events.

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Editorial Review

Review

"*We Are the Face of Oaxaca* is a magnificent book. A model of engaged scholarship and the best work yet by Lynn Stephen, it is an original analysis of the massive popular rebellion in Oaxaca, Mexico, during 2006–07. Given her deep, long-term ties to Oaxacans in both Mexico and the United States, Stephen is uniquely positioned to analyze the social movement and the significance of participants' testimonials in its production and reception."—**Patricia Zavella**, author of *I'm Neither Here nor There: Mexicans' Quotidian Struggles with Migration and Poverty*

"Given the new visibility of protest, Lynn Stephen's fascinating book offers a valuable opportunity to understand how protest movements work at the grass roots. This ethnography of the Oaxacan protest of 2006 focuses on testimony: the performed, embodied act of telling a story. Protesters' courageous testimonies broadcast over the radio made a difference. The book and its website with recordings provide a wonderful opportunity to hear the testimonies of those with courage to speak."—**Sally Engle Merry**, author of *Human Rights and Gender Violence: Translating International Law into Local Justice*

"*We Are the Face of Oaxaca* is well suited for upper- or graduate-level courses, and is supported by the web site contents which are a welcome additions for interactive teaching. The work is unique in that the author has a personally informed view of the area of study and was able to capture testimonies and events on video and tape to create the book's accompanying web site. . . . *We are the Face of Oaxaca* is an engaged ethnography that represents what the struggle was about, the voice of the people."
(Paulette F. Steeves *North American Dialogue*)

"The analysis of testimony and human rights is valuable well beyond the case of Oaxaca. Woven throughout the text are segments of testimonies from the activists involved in the APPO, and links to a bilingual website containing video clips, maps, and photos, which will be particularly useful for university classes. Highly recommended. Upper-division undergraduates and above."
(C. M. Kovic *Choice*)

"Readers who are familiar with conditions in Oaxaca as well as those who were unaware of recent events will appreciate Stephen's masterful weaving of scholarship in English and Spanish to provide a concise yet probing summary of 50 years of social unrest across a diverse state."
(Jayne Howell *Journal of Anthropological Research*)

"Through the lens of oral history, Stephen offers a new way of looking at how the state engages with native peoples. . . . [T]his rich and innovative book offers an incredible contribution to social movement literature. It will be of interest to activists and scholars alike."
(Kathleen M. McIntyre *The Latin Americanist* 2015-09-01)

"While Oaxacan journalists and scholars have published articles and anthologies about the 2006 movement, *We Are the Face of Oaxaca* is the most important English language study on the movement to date. The pages of this book are seeped with the insights of a distinguished scholar with years of fieldwork and

personal ties to Oaxacan transnational communities.”

(Luis Sánchez-López *Biography*)

“[A] good book is one that provokes thought, new questions, and new research. Lynn Stephen’s book chronicles one of the most important contemporary Latin American social movements and raises many questions key to their analysis. For that she is deserving of much praise and a wide readership.”

(Howard Campbell *The Americas* 2015-10-01)

About the Author

Lynn Stephen is Distinguished Professor of Arts and Sciences, Professor of Anthropology, and Director of the Center for Latino/a and Latin American Studies at the University of Oregon. She is the author of *Transborder Lives: Indigenous Oaxacans in Mexico, California, and Oregon* and *Zapotec Women: Gender, Class, and Ethnicity in Globalized Oaxaca*, both also published by Duke University Press.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Carissa Ware:

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