

Entre la dignidad y la muerte: mujeres negras, dominación patriarcal y estragias espaciales de resistencia en el oriente de Cali

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Entre la Dignidad y la Muerte is a manifesto in which once again black women are raising their and our voices to make every one of us visible; to say to the world that we have historically had agency to tell our own stories, with our own experience as framework. The book addresses gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, Afro-Latin American, Afro-Latinx and cultural studies. It belongs in the fields of African Diaspora feminisms, Black Feminisms, and Decolonial Feminist Theory. The stories reveal women who have untiringly worked in favor of human rights, gender, anti-racist initiatives, and at the same time leave an invaluable legacy from Colombia to humanity. Each story in the book represents the experiences of many of us black women who have resisted patriarchal domination and have designed and implemented creative strategies around the world to survive, and to safeguard our lives and the lives of people around us. In other words, these are our stories, of how we face symbolic and physical death, how we overcome the deaths of our lives as women who are racialized, oppressed and discriminated against. Each testimony is like a strand of hair in a braid, the same braids woven centuries ago by enslaved black women, as they braided each other's hair in order to illustrate the maps that would allow them to escape, or emancipate themselves and others, from slavery.

As a whole, the work reveals women who challenge hegemonic thought. The main characters, or contributors, are

“popular scholars,” as they call themselves (investigadoras populares). They perform academic research in spite of racism, patriarchalism and classism that have been obstacles for them to have a high-quality formal education since childhood. Moreover, they create a methodology for social studies scholarship, called “Auto-etnografía viva” (Living Auto-Ethnography). This is a way to discover themselves, rather than scholars from academia “discovering” them, and to develop a method of research that is more coherent to their intersectional reality. The result is a collective research project, scholarly work done in community, by a group of black women who collectively write their own experiences, turn it into a scholarly work, and into a literary masterpiece.

Entre la dignidad y la muerte was possible thanks to thirteen black residents in Distrito de Aguablanca in Cali, Colombia, who identify as women. Juanía, Ana, Maria Elvira, Vicenta, Alicia, Iris, Cristina, Andrea, Elena, Ximena, Samara, Mauri and Isa are the writers of the stories of the book. They are more than authors; they are messengers for black women and black communities who have been silent in our history, or whose contributions have been minimized.

Their book is a window for people to peek into black women's intimate and complex life experiences, and to witness such experiences as a consequence of a socioeconomic system which insists on erasing them. The analysis of the stories in each section helps to understand what

methodology and theory to use in order to comprehend African Diaspora culture and resistance in Cali, Colombia. For example, one of the analysis sections highlights the importance of reading the stories as an ensemble.

This piece is clearly conceived to make black women feel hugged, understood and accompanied. It is a sacred book. It is an ongoing conversation among ancestors and those still living. It is a way to give redemption to our existence as women of the African Diaspora. It is a way of preserving our extended family bonds and to value our historic collective struggles. Its audience is wide: on one hand, people interested in learning about political science, history, culture, philosophy and many other fields from an intersectional perspective with black women as protagonists. On the other hand, black women from different ages who are able to immerse themselves in each page while their hair stands on end because of the pain and trauma, but also, the resistance illustrated in the stories that can inspire anyone aspiring to make the world a better place.