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A Creative Non-fiction Political Economy Textbook



Weapons, Drugs and Money:

Crime, Corruption, and Community Based Liberation
in the U.S./Mexico Neoliberal Military Political Economy

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Weapons, Drugs and Money

Weapons, Drugs, and Money is a creative non-fiction political economy and geopolitics textbook, which was written in such a way, so as to be as accessible to academics as it is to non academic community organizers. The purposes of the book are to first: take an in-depth historical and contemporary look at crime and corruption in the US/Mexico military political economy, second: to demystify our understanding of neoliberalism, and third: to look at some specific examples of grass roots liberation in Mexico through community based self determination, self defense, and autonomy.

About the Author

Simón Sedillo is a Professional Partner with the Earlham College's Border Studies Program based out of Tucson, Arizona, USA. Sedillo is also a community rights defense organizer, filmmaker, educator, artist, and the author of "Weapons, Drugs, and Money: Crime, Corruption, and Community Based Liberation in the U.S./Mexico Neoliberal Military Political Economy". For the last 15 years, Sedillo has been teaching geopolitics and political economy.

Sedillo has also contributed to the production of a wide variety of documentary films and investigative articles. His work focuses primarily on the effects of the neoliberal military political economy on indigenous communities, immigrant communities, and communities of color in the US and Mexico. Sedillo's work more importantly focuses on how social movements, particularly in Indigenous communities in Mexico, are organizing and resisting neoliberalism.

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Book Quotes

Neoliberalism is a system of power and money.

“Neoliberalism is a system of political economy. A system of political economy is a system of government and a system of economics working together. Simply put, political economies are systems of power and money. Neoliberalism is a system of power and money.

Neoliberalism is a system of power and money that prioritizes the political and economic interests of wealthy and powerful nations, their transnational corporations, their financial institutions, and some very wealthy and influential individuals. And it does not simply prioritize these political and economic interests; it enforces them with a variety of very specific, political, economic, and military strategies.

Therefore, a more complete definition would clarify that neoliberalism is a system of military-political economy that prioritizes and enforces the interests of wealthy and powerful nations, their transnational corporations, financial institutions, and some very wealthy and influential individuals. In fact, it has become the most aggressive and prevalent system of social, political, and economic organization in the world today.”

Disposable Variables

“Entire ecosystems and sectors of society are considered disposable in this military-political economy. Workers, students, teachers, farmers, peasants, Black people, Indigenous people, other People(s) of Color, Muslims, women, young people, poor people, and in particular Black and Indigenous women are considered disposable and displaceable in this political economic equation. If one or several of these sectors of society begin to organize successfully for grassroots liberation through community-based self-determination, self-defense, and autonomy, they cease to be considered mere disposable variables, and are transformed into threats and, therefore, specific military targets.

What we have collectively learned through decades of surviving neoliberalism is that contrary to the dominant media narrative, the greatest threat to this military-political economy has never been communism, terrorism, the narcotics trade, or so called “organized crime,” but rather grassroots liberation through community-based organizing for self-determination, self-defense, and autonomy. This is particularly true when it comes to a community defending a specific territory that holds an economic interest for governments, financial institutions, transnational corporations, and capitalists in general.

Another irrefutable fact is that the vast majority of these territories are being defended by Indigenous people across the globe. And to be absolutely clear, the vast majority are being defended by Indigenous communities that have traditional cultural practices, strategies, and self-governing models for grassroots liberation through community-based self-determination, self-defense, and autonomy.”

Grassroots Community Based Liberation

In order to talk about grassroots community-based liberation, we have to unpack our ideas about power itself, and not just political, economic, or military power, which are concepts that come from the oppressors. What about other concepts of power that come from below, from poor people, from workers, from students, from communities, from Indigenous peoples? In this sense, we must ask ourselves several questions. What is power? Where does power come from? Who has which power? Who has no power? Does someone or a small group have all the power? Can power be reclaimed? Can power be created or generated? What kind of power leads to grassroots community-based liberation? We can easily perceive that the power of the oppressors is vertical like a skyscraper or a pyramid scheme. We can just as easily perceive power that comes from below, from poor people, from workers, from students, from communities, from Indigenous peoples as horizontal, like a large crowd of people or a machete making a path.

Grassroots community-based liberation is organized through horizontal power structures. An effective horizontal power structure is able to successfully confront a vertical power structure; however, the goal of horizontal power structures is not just to prevent the exploitation of the earth and her people, and the hoarding of power, wealth, and resources by vertical power structures. Those are immediate needs, but their long-term, ongoing goal is to build the type of world in which those participating want to live, or what the Zapatista National Liberation Army refers to as “a world in which we all can fit.”

In each and every one of the examples presented in this book, horizontal power structures simply refer to people organized collectively and in unity for a common objective and/or against a common threat or enemy. The level of collectivity and unity is what has made these examples either stronger or weaker over time. In each example, be it one of Indigenous communities, students, teachers, workers, or an entire city, there already were varying degrees of collectivism; however, being pushed into a corner by a common threat or enemy, brought people together and encouraged them to use what existed or create altogether new horizontal power structures through militant unity and collectivism. Without a doubt, the examples of grassroots liberation presented in this book by Indigenous peoples are the examples with the most success, longevity, and permanence.

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