

Mary's Pence Summer Reading List 2013

Stories of Struggle and Resistance

These real life stories of women and men shed light on the lives of those affected by racism, war and violence. Some of these stories from Latin America and the United States have political and historical significance; all provide insight into struggle and resistance.

The Art of Political Murder: Who Killed the Bishop?, Francisco Goldman (2007)

When Mary's Pence staff were visiting Guatemala recently, this book was mentioned by a number of our local contacts as one of the best books available for understanding the barriers to justice in Guatemala and the enormous courage of those fighting for justice despite these realities. Goldman's "tense and astonishing true detective story" about the 1998 political murder of leading human rights activist Bishop Juan Gerardi is an engaging and illuminating window into the reality of Guatemala in recent decades. This account is especially relevant given the historic genocide trial of former Guatemalan dictator Efraín Ríos Montt this year. Goldman is a talented and engaging writer who turns this serious non-fiction into a gripping page-turner.

Beloved Child: A Dakota Way of Life, Diane Wilson (2011)

In *Beloved Child*, Wilson explores the "soul wounds" suffered by members of the Dakota tribe. The issues she describes, traceable to longstanding U.S. policies intended to eliminate the Dakota and their culture, have ravaged these mostly-Minnesota families with alcoholism, substance abuse, violence, incarceration, high suicide rates and a subconscious self-hatred. What Wilson does is both profoundly radical and deeply moving: she brings readers inside the lives of several contemporary Dakota who have changed their lives by holistically embracing their Native American culture. They have found that the way to heal is not to forget the past and "move forward," but to remember and return to their traditions.

The Country Under My Skin: A Memoir of Love and War, Gioconda Belli (2001)

If you are interested in learning more about the 70's and 80's in Nicaragua, Gioconda Belli's "electrifying" memoir is certainly an interesting way to do so. Belli is an acclaimed Nicaraguan poet and writer and central figure in the Sandinista Revolution. Her memoir is both a revelatory insider's account of the Nicaraguan Revolution and a vivid, intensely felt story about coming of age under extraordinary circumstances. As Adrienne Rich notes: "This book is about American history, North and South; about power and the seeds of revolution; about one woman's life and choices entangled among many lives—and deaths—expended in the unkillable hope for human freedom and love." This suggestion comes from Auxiliadora Salgado, coordinator of the ESPERA Fund in Nicaragua.

From Grandmother to Granddaughter: Salvadoran Women's Stories, Michael Gorkin, Marta Pineda and Gloria Leal (2000)

The life histories and testimonies of nine Salvadoran women from different generations shape this intimate portrayal of contemporary El Salvador. The authors interviewed a grandmother, mother, and granddaughter from three Salvadoran families: La Familia Nuñez, members of the upper class; La Familia Rivas, from El Salvador's growing middle class; and La Familia García, from the *campo*, the Salvadoran peasantry. The voices we hear convey a deep sense of the world of Salvadoran women and how life is lived in El Salvador today.

Krik? Krak!, Edwidge Danticat (1991)

When asked for book recommendations, Renate Schneider, liaison to the ESPERA group in Haiti, said "anything by Edwidge Danticat!" Danticat is a Haitian born award-winning author. When Haitians tell a story, they say "Krik?" and the eager listeners answer "Krak!" In *Krik? Krak!*, Danticat's nine short stories encompass both the cruelties and the high ideals of Haitian life. Survivors at sea in a too-small, leaky boat endure any indignity for the chance at escape. A woman must watch her mother rot in prison for political crimes. A young father longs so much to fly that he gives his life for a few moments in the air. A prostitute plies her trade while her son sleeps. The result is a collection that outrages, saddens, and transports the reader with its sheer beauty.

No Word for Welcome: The Mexican Village Faces the Global Economy, Wendy Call (2011)

Wendy Call visited and fell in love with the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, the lush sliver of land connecting the Yucatan Peninsula to the rest of Mexico. Over time, Call witnessed farmland being paved for new highways, oil spilling into rivers, forests burning down. Through it all, local people fought to protect their lands and their livelihoods – and their very lives. Call’s story invites readers into the homes, classrooms, storefronts and fishing boats of the isthmus, as well as the high-rise offices of those striving to control the region. Call shows that the people who have suffered most from economic globalization have some of the clearest ideas about how we can all survive it.

Social Change

Social justice and social change are core to Mary’s Pence’s values, and a deeper understanding of how effective change happens keeps our work vibrant.

Due Diligence: An Impertinent Inquiry into Microfinance, David Roodman (2012)

Due Diligence is the book, if you are looking for a thorough overview of the research on the effects of microfinance around the world. *The Guardian* touts it as “a voice of reason amid the sound and fury of the microfinance debate.” This book has certainly been a useful resource for Mary’s Pence as we’ve developed the ESPERA program over the past few years. Drawing on extensive research and analysis from around the world, Roodman probes the truth about microfinance, including the question of whether or not microfinance is the answer to poverty that it is often claimed to be. We are proud to notice that many of the critiques raised in this book are addressed by the Mary’s Pence ESPERA model.

Enough: Why the World’s Poorest Starve in an Age of Plenty, Roger Thurow and Scott Kilman (2009)

Thurow and Koman, award-winning Wall Street Journal reporters, show how, in the past few decades American and European policies conspired to keep the world’s poorest people hungry and unable to feed themselves. Very readable and well researched, this book demonstrates how good works don’t automatically make the change we desire, and how an understanding of all elements of a system – in this instance soil, seed, water, transportation and local and national markets – is essential to make the change needed and avoid great harm.

Accompanying: Pathways to Social Change, Staughton and Alice Lynd (2012)

The Lynds bring together two topics Mary’s Pence ponders frequently – accompaniment/solidarity and social change. What are the elements of accompaniment that make it an effective social change approach? According to the Lynds ‘accompanying’ means having a common vision, and working together for a desired outcome, with each stakeholder bringing an expertise or skill to the shared project. Commitment for the long term is an essential and often neglected piece. This book examines five separate social movements to better understand these components.

The Empowerment Manual: A Guide for Collaborative Groups, Starhawk (2011)

Elise DeGooyer, Mary’s Pence board co-chair, suggested this book by Starhawk, a global justice activist and organizer. Elise describes this book as full of practical, wise advice, and activities and tools honed through decades of spiritual and political organizing. Like Starhawk’s other books and writings, it reminds the reader of the power we have through community and collective action. *The Empowerment Manual* is required reading for anyone who wants to help their group become a wellspring of creativity and innovation. This toolkit provides keys to the following: understanding group dynamics, facilitating communication and collective decision-making, and dealing effectively with difficult people.

Faith and Spirituality

And now let’s feed our souls.

No Ordinary Time: The Rise of Spiritual Intelligence and Evolutionary Creativity, Jan Phillips (2011)

This book is also recommended by board co-chair Elise DeGooyer. She calls this book “refreshing, with new spins on old themes, and with a poetic sense of the opportunities to make change around us.” Phillips’ weaving of personal, political, and cosmological is believable because she has lived both a spiritual and activist life, and understands the interplay of personal transformation as well as systemic change. Phillips is also quite funny! Her e-news is full of inspiring wisdom, beauty and humor: www.janphillips.com.