

Latin America Resources

The resources below have been compiled by Global Mission Office staff: some are our personal recommendations or the contents of our libraries, and others have been suggested by members of diocesan mission Networks. While we have not personally read all of these, we hope that they provide a helpful starting point for those who are looking to learn more about global mission and the regions with which we partner. **We welcome additions to this list!** If you have book recommendations or comments on the resources catalogued here, please email Lauren Zook at lzook@diomass.org.

All resources are available from online retailers unless otherwise noted.

History and Culture

Chasteen, John Charles. ***Born in Blood and Fire: A Concise History of Latin America***. 4th Ed. 2016.

This textbook incorporates the histories of individual countries into the history of a region, providing readers with a foundation for further study. It embraces race, class, and gender as principal issues in the Latin American experience, and the fourth edition heightens emphasis on current cultural analyses of Latin American society, as well as providing many full-color maps and illustrations.

Galeano, Eduardo. ***Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent***. 1971.

Uruguayan journalist Eduardo Galeano organizes Latin American history according to the patterns of five centuries of exploitation, tracing veins of gold, silver, and more through the body of the continent. He fuses scientific analysis with the passions of a plundered and suffering people to create both an analytical triumph and an overwhelming narrative.

LaFeber, Walter. ***Inevitable Revolutions: The United States in Central America***. 2nd Ed. 1993.

First published in 1983 and updated to cover the Reagan and Bush years and the Iran-Contra affair, this book explains the history of U.S./Central American relations, explaining why these countries have remained so overpopulated, illiterate, and violent and why U.S. government notions of economic and military security combine to keep in place a system of Central American dependency.

Mann, Charles C. ***1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus***. 2005.

Contrary to what many Americans learn in school, the pre-Columbian Indians were not sparsely settled in a pristine wilderness: The Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan had running water and immaculately clean streets, Mexican cultures created corn through humankind's first feat of genetic engineering, and native cultures were shaping and manipulating their world in ways that we are only beginning to understand.

Sin nombre. Directed by Cary Joji Fukunaga. 2009.

In this film, a young Honduran girl and a Mexican gangster are united in a journey across the American border. Writer/director Cary Fukunaga spent two years researching the film, spending time with people on the trains and with gangsters in Central America. Two gang members also helped edit the script to make the slang and language as up-to-date and realistic as possible.

Theology

Brackley, Dean. *The Call to Discernment in Troubled Times: New Perspectives on the Transformative Wisdom of Ignatius of Loyola*. 2004.

This hopeful book by Jesuit priest Dean Brackley integrates a realistic analysis of 21st-century social crises with the deep personal spirituality of St. Ignatius Loyola. A manual for personal and social change, the book gives the Ignatian spiritual discipline of wise decision-making a new dimension for the modern world.

Sobrino, Jon. *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth*. 1991; trans. 1993.

This work is a presentation of the truth of Jesus Christ from the viewpoint of liberation. Building and expanding on his previous works, Jon Sobrino develops an image of Christ as Liberator by focusing on the methodology of Latin American Christology, the message and mission of Jesus, and the circumstances and meaning of Jesus' suffering and death.

Sobrino, Jon. *No Salvation Outside the Poor: Prophetic-Utopian Essays*. 2007; trans. 2008.

The provocative title of these essays plays on the traditional Catholic slogan "no salvation outside the church." Jon Sobrino argues that the world of the poor sheds a unique and irreplaceable light for theological analysis, and he hauntingly reminds us that our individual and collective souls are at stake in the matter of how we respond to the scandal of global poverty.

Bolivia

Amistad Mission. "A Bolivian Journey: Daily Devotions and Reflections." 2000. *[available from the diocesan Global Mission office upon request]*

This short booklet collects prayers and reflections used throughout a mission trip to Cochabamba, Bolivia. Cochabamba is the location of Villa Amistad, a home and safe haven for abandoned, abused, and orphaned Bolivian children.

Colombia

Erlick, June Carolyn. *A Gringa in Bogotá: Living Colombia's Invisible War*. 2010.

Experienced journalist June Carolyn Erlick fell in love with Bogotá in 1975 and returned for a year's stay in 2005 to understand how the city had made such strides toward building a peaceful civil society in the midst of ongoing violence. The complex reality of Bogotá comes to life through her series of vivid vignettes on many aspects of city life and the "invisible, but constantly present" war that haunts the city.

Ecuador

Icaza, Jorge. *The Villagers (Huasipongo)*. Trans. Bernard Dulsey. 1934; trans. 1964.

This novel tells the story of the ruthless exploitation and extermination of an Indian village in Ecuador by its greedy landlord. A seminal work of social protest, *Huasipongo* is an indictment of the latifundista system and a still-relevant picture of the native Ecuadorian worker who finds himself a victim of an antiquated feudal system aided and abetted by a grasping clergy and an indifferent government.

Miller, Tom. *The Panama Hat Trail: A Journey from South America*. 1986.

This classic travelogue follows the making and marketing of a Panama hat from the straw fields of Ecuador and its weaving by Indian peasants, to its completion in a North American hat factory, and finally to a customer in a San Diego retail hat shop. Along the way, it tells a captivating story of cultures in collision, raw capitalism, and a colorful, humorous journey.

Resau, Laura, and Maria Virginia Farinango. *The Queen of Water*. 2012.

In this novel based on a true story, Virginia lives with her large family in a small, earthen-walled dwelling in an indigenous village in the Andes of Ecuador. When Virginia is taken from her village at age seven to be a servant to a couple from the ruling mestizo class, she has no idea what the future holds—or how hard it will be to find herself when caught between two cultures.

El Salvador

Benitez, Sandra. *Bitter Grounds: A Novel*. 1998.

Spanning the years between 1932 and 1977, this beautifully told epic is set in the heart of El Salvador, where coffee plantations are the center of life for rich and poor alike. Following three generations of the Prieto clan and the wealthy family they work for, this is a story of mothers and daughters who live, love, and die for their passions.

Dalton, Roque. *Poemas Clandestinos/Clandestine Poems*. Ed. Barbara Paschke and Eric Weaver. Trans. Jack Hirschman. 1984.

These posthumously collected poems, presented in both English and Spanish and written in the voices of five imaginary poets, deliver their political insights with biting humor, strength, and tenderness. One of El Salvador's most important writers, Roque Dalton was a member of the People's Revolutionary Army during the civil war and was executed by them in 1973.

Danner, Mark. *The Massacre at El Mozote*. 1994.

In December 1981, soldiers of the Salvadoran Army's American-trained Atlacatl Battalion murdered hundreds in the village of El Mozote, often by decapitation. The Reagan administration dismissed reports of the massacre as propaganda; the war in El Salvador continued with American funding. This book expands on journalist Mark Danner's 1993 *New Yorker* account that shocked the nation.

Didion, Joan. *Salvador*. 1983.

Joan Didion delivers an anatomy of civil war-era El Salvador's particular brand of terror—and its intimate relation to United States foreign policy. As she travels from battlefields to body dumps, interviews a puppet president, and considers the distinctly Salvadoran grammar of the verb “to disappear,” Didion offers insight germane to any country in which bloodshed has become a standard tool of politics.

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

For this intimate portrayal of contemporary El Salvador, the authors interviewed three generations of women from three Salvadoran families of different social classes. These nine testimonies convey a deep sense of the world of Salvadoran women and convincingly illustrate how individual lives can reflect the larger changes within a society.

Muth, Tim. *El Salvador Perspectives*. elsalvadorperspectives.com.

This is a site/blog focused on El Salvador news and politics and also containing articles on culture, tourism, art, food, and more. It is run by an American lawyer, and its intended audience is English-speakers who have some relationship with El Salvador.

Towell, Larry. *El Salvador*. 1997.

In these haunting photographs documenting the latter half of the El Salvador Civil War and its aftermath, Larry Towell depicts a world in which every person becomes a combatant, every place a war zone. Yet amid the brutality and death is a harsh beauty, and the images reveal a country both of violence and heartbreak and of strength and dignity.

La vida loca. Directed by Christian Poveda. 2008.

This documentary follows some of the members of “La Diecieocho” (the “18th Street gang”) in a poor San Salvador neighborhood. Director Christian Poveda spent 16 months with a hand-held camera documenting everyday life in one of the gang’s base cells, composed of fifty members with an average age of 16 to 18. Poveda was shot to death in El Salvador by certain police and gang members in 2009.

Voces inocentes. Directed by Luis Mandoki. 2004.

In this film based on a true story, a young boy, in an effort to have a normal childhood in 1980s El Salvador, is caught up in a dramatic fight for his life as he desperately tries to avoid the war which is raging all around him.

Voices on the Border. voiceselsalvador.wordpress.com.

This blog, run by the eponymous grassroots non-profit, is a voice from El Salvador providing first-hand information and textured analysis of the country’s social and political climate. It covers key news developments for topics such as women’s issues and security, environmental degradation and conservation, economic policy, politics, organized crime, and Salvadoran-U.S. relations.

Spanish-language news sites:

ContraPunto. contrapunto.com.sv.

El Faro. elfaro.net.

Diario Co Latino. diariocolatino.com.

La Prensa Grafica. laprensagrafica.com.

Oscar Romero

El cielo abierto. Directed by Everardo González. 2011. [free streaming at cinemaopen.com]

This documentary chronicles the life, letters, and homilies of Oscar Romero, viewed through the characters who suffered with him the fear of the outbreak of war in El Salvador. The film traces Romero’s story from the beginning of the war to his tragic, seemingly inevitable, martyrdom.

Romero. Directed by John Duigan. 1989.

Starring Raul Julia, this film portrays the life and work of Archbishop Oscar Romero who opposed the government’s death squads and terror campaign in El Salvador and was ultimately assassinated in March 1980.

Romero, Oscar. **The Violence of Love.** Trans. James R. Brockman. 2004.

These selections from the sermons and writings of Archbishop Oscar Romero share the message of a great holy prophet of modern times. Three years transformed Romero, Archbishop of San Salvador, from a conservative defender of the status quo into one of the church's most outspoken voices of the oppressed. Though silenced by an assassin's bullet in 1980, his spirit and the challenge of his life live on.

Romero, Oscar. ***Voice of the Voiceless: The Four Pastoral Letters and Other Statements***. Trans. Michael J. Walsh. 1985.

Following in the tradition of Jeremiah and Jesus, Archbishop Romero's words demand our attention: the words he spoke to his countrymen and the words he spoke to American citizens. In these pastoral statements, Romero speaks the truth to all in his society and speaks with and for the poor. Two introductory essays also provide background and context for understanding his words.

Vigil, María López. ***Monseñor Romero: Memories in Mosaic***. Trans. Kathy Ogle. 1993; trans. 2013.

Anecdotes gathered in hundreds of hours of interviews with peasants, friends, theologians, and pastoral associates compose the colorful pieces of this biographical mosaic. Together, they describe Oscar Romero as a real human being with doubts and frailties who found the courage to listen to others, examine his beliefs, and step forward into a role that only he could play.

Guatemala

Menchú, Rigoberta. ***I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala***. Ed. Elizabeth Burgos. 1982.

In 1982 Rigoberta Menchú—Guatemalan peasant woman, political activist, and winner of the 1992 Nobel Peace Prize—narrated her life story to Venezuelan anthropologist Elizabeth Burgos. She reflects on the Guatemalan military's murder of her family, the intersection of her activism and her Catholic faith, and her response to feminism and socialism, all illuminated by her courage and passion for justice.