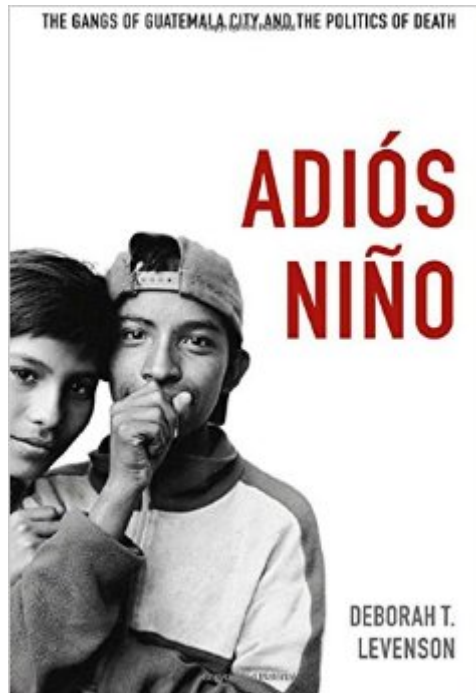


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# Adiós Niño: The Gangs Of Guatemala City And The Politics Of Death



## Synopsis

In *Adiós Niño: The Gangs of Guatemala City and the Politics of Death*, Deborah T. Levenson examines transformations in the Guatemalan gangs called Maras from their emergence in the 1980s to the early 2000s. A historical study, *Adiós Niño* describes how fragile spaces of friendship and exploration turned into rigid and violent ones in which youth, and especially young men, came to employ death as a natural way of living for the short period that they expected to survive. Levenson relates the stark changes in the Maras to global, national, and urban deterioration; transregional gangs that intersect with the drug trade; and the Guatemalan military's obliteration of radical popular movements and of social imaginaries of solidarity. Part of Guatemala City's reconfigured social, political, and cultural milieu, with their members often trapped in Guatemala's growing prison system, the gangs are used to justify remilitarization in Guatemala's contemporary postwar, post-peace era. Portraying the Maras as microcosms of broader tragedies, and pointing out the difficulties faced by those youth who seek to escape the gangs, Levenson poses important questions about the relationship between trauma, memory, and historical agency.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

That Guatemala is plagued by ongoing political and social problems is, sadly, not surprising, but for scholars who have dedicated their lives to trying to understand the roots of this violence and why it persists can be incredibly difficult and disheartening. The shift from state-sponsored forms of violence, largely perpetuated against the country's indigenous population, to more amorphous kinds--assassination, theft, assault, rape, and murder--by shadowy figures, drug cartels, and gangs

is not limited by gender, ethnicity, politics, or even class. Violence in Guatemala is omnipresent and elusive, as criminals are rarely caught and authorities are more corrupt than not. It is into this murky and, often, inaccessible world that Deborah Levenson takes readers with her book *Adiós Niño*, *The Gangs of Guatemala City and the Politics of Death*. Levenson's deep understanding of Guatemala's history, especially of Guatemala City and of labor organizations, comes through many years of experience in the very problem-filled neighborhoods she writes about. *Adiós Niño* goes beyond an historical analysis of the causes of gang violence and avoids falling into reductionist and sensationalistic tropes of gang members' identities and behaviors to generate fear or pass moralistic opinions. Instead, Levenson humanizes the gang members and families that are described in the book. Without shirking from addressing the truly horrible crimes committed by the gangs, she shows the economic, political, and social conditions that fomented them and continue to incubate future gang members.

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