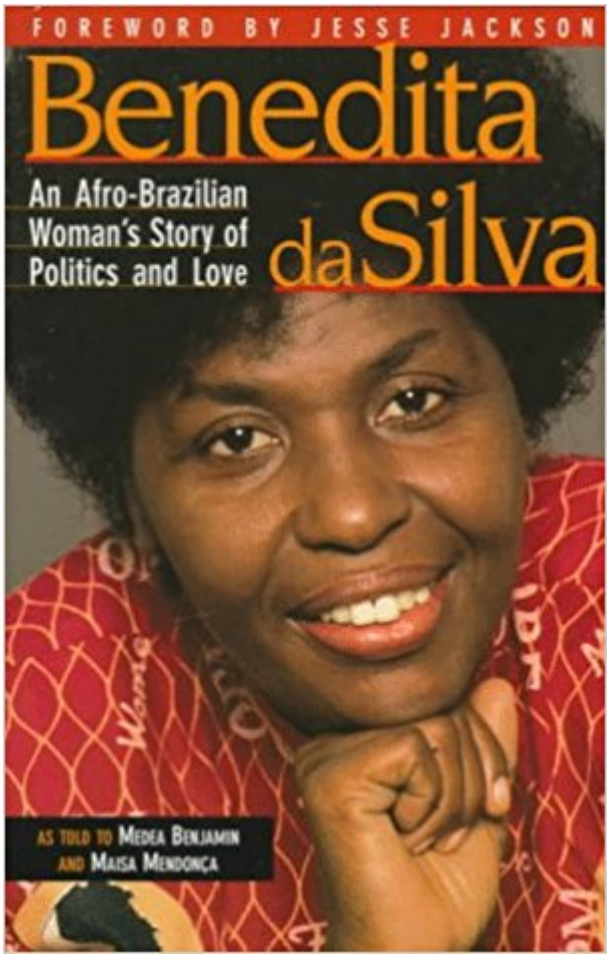
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Benedita Da Silva: An Afro-Brazilian Woman's Story Of Politics And Love



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Synopsis

In this engaging memoir, Brazilian cabinet member Benedita da Silva shares the inspiring story of her life as an advocate for the rights of women, people of color, and the poor, and argues persuasively for economic and social human rights in Brazil and everywhere.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"An excellent introduction to Brazil, and to one of the most exciting new political leaders to emerge from that country." -- Ken Silverstein, author, Without Fear of Being Happy: Lula, the Workers Party, and Brazil"Benedita has helped to liberate the soul of Brazil. Read this book and be inspired to walk in Benedita’s footsteps!" -- Evelyn C. White, editor, The Black Woman’s Health Book,"It is my fervent hope that this book will be widely read an discussed in every part of our country." -- Rev. Jesse Jackson"This book will be enjoyed by readers looking to heal their own communities." -- Tracy Anne Wagers, The Bloomsbury Review

I enjoyed reading about Benedita’s rise to the Senate. Though filled with unhappy moments; the loss of her children, poor medical care, living in inhuman conditions, this woman still rose like a phoenix from ashes. In her book, she reveals her pride for the Brazilian people and herself. She never gave up, even when her critics were cruel and demeaning. I am an African American. Every day, we should pray for the favelados and also for people that live in similar conditions worldwide.

Afro-Brazillian women are not often covered in Diaspora studies--an enlightening read.

Needed the book for grad school. It was in good shape and easy to navigate. This is a helpful book for anyone studying Latin American anthro. Benedita is a wonderful woman, and she tells a great story about life in the favela. Most importantly, she notes that urban poverty causes the poor to justify actions that others may find unethnical, but it is not for lack of a moral compass but because of necessity. She talks about the life of poverty as one of choices and abandonment, but also as a foundation for potential, if one is strong and determined enough. Aside from her beginnings as a poor woman, Benedita’s story is also one of the accomplishments of an Afro-Brazilian woman in a white, male dominated political realm. She is truly inspiring.

It is a tempting to describe Benedita da Silva using labels: you may know that she was the first black woman in the Brazilian Senate or that, in spite of her national prominence, she still lives in the poor neighbourhood where she grew up. An autobiography offers the chance to learn more about her life than these obvious labels allow.This short and highly readable book does indeed fill in some of the blanks for readers outside Brazil, who will find out more about, say, what it actually means to live in a favela (or slum). It is impossible, naturally, for Benedita to describe her life without considering how those slums came to be, and what should now be done to help the people who live there. Likewise, we may have heard that Brazil is a colourblind society, whereas Benedita’s experiences, as a black person, lead her to see things differently. In this and other aspects of her life-as a woman, say, or as a rare combination of evangelical Christian and leftist politician-Benedita’s memoirs naturally take us away from her particular circumstances and into areas of policy.In some ways, then, the book is satisfying but necessarily limited. As an autobiography it usefully covers the main events in her life but does not try to go into much detail. She relates many brief episodes that make revealing, even startling, points about, say, racism or life in the favela-rather than a sustained account of (to take another example) just how she first came to be involved in the local community association.On the other hand, her thumbnail sketches of current issues in Brazilian life and society-issues such as land reform, health and education, or the role of the churches-may indeed be helpful to those who know little about Brazil. Of course, given the nature of the book as a memoir, they don’t enable us to get very far in analysing the relevant causes and prospects.If my last two paragraphs appear negative, they are only intended to point out that the book is too short for us to find out what "really" makes Benedita tick, much less to cover the complexity of modern Brazil. Nevertheless, the book is helpful and the translator has certainly come up with an easy style that

makes it a pleasure to read. Even though I was already quite familiar with Brazil (having lived there, and speaking Portuguese), I still found this book intriguing and enjoyable.

The autobiography of Benedita de Silva is a must read narrative of this woman's heroic and incredibly human life. She balances tales of her victory in politics with her victory in love; it is easy to relate to and to admire her humanity and enduring spirit. The story traces her trajectory from the favelas (hillside slums in Rio de Janeiro) to the Senate, where she voices the needs of and injustices suffered by her community. Additionally, the book serves to illuminate many contemporary aspects of Brazilian culture: the rise of the PT (Brazil's grass-roots organized Workers' Party), Brazilian spiritual life, the myth of racial democracy in Brazil, class, gender, race, modernization, and history. This is a must read because Benedita's courage is worth emmulating, and her triumph deserves to be understood. Her victory deserves to be known, counted, and admired. You "owe" it to her to read this book. It will help you make more of your own day, week, month, and year when you have the benefit to have the tenacity of her spirit to challenge you and accompany you in the pursuit of your own dreams.

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