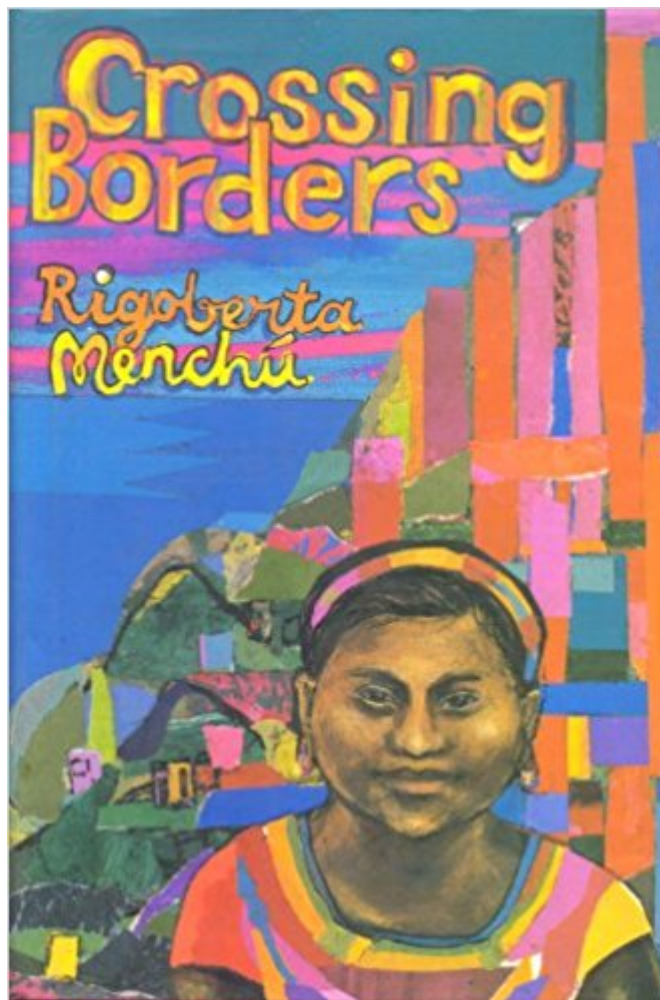


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# Crossing Borders



## Synopsis

The second installment of the life of the Nobel Peace prize-winning activist. Rigoberta Menchu is a worldwide symbol of courage in the continuing fight of indigenous peoples for justice. The Guatemalan Indian leader first came to the world's attention with the publication of her autobiography *I, Rigoberta Menchu* in 1984. The book chronicled the terrible hardship of her childhood in Guatemala, including the murder of her brother, father and mother at the hands of a ruthless military. But it also captured the dignity of Indian daily life in a cadence that was beautifully simple. *I, Rigoberta Menchu* has become an international bestseller with one million copies in print. In *Crossing Borders*, Menchu picks up her story where the first volume left off. In 1981 she fled from Guatemala to Mexico City, deeply traumatized by the violence against her family and community. She resolved to dedicate her life to the Indian cause and painstakingly built a solidarity movement with the Indians living as outlaws in Guatemala's mountains. In 1988 she returned to Guatemala as a representative of the opposition in exile. She was immediately arrested and was released only after an international outcry. Danielle Mitterand and Desmond Tutu were amongst the leading names in an international campaign to secure the Nobel Peace Prize for Menchu which she was awarded in 1992. The long haul to build effective representation for indigenous peoples has taken Menchu around the world and its telling is a thread throughout this book. But *Crossing Borders* is more than an account of a political campaign. In these pages Menchu also talks with deep affection about her mother and the traditions of her Mayan background. In her introduction to *I, Rigoberta Menchu* the ethnologist Elizabeth Burgos Debray writes: "Her voice is so heart-rendingly beautiful because it speaks to us of every facet of the life of a people and their oppressed culture. Her story is overwhelming because what she has to say is simple and true." In *Crossing Borders* that story continues to enchant and inspire.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 252 pages

Publisher: Verso; 1st Edition edition (August 17, 1998)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1859848931

ISBN-13: 978-1859848937

Product Dimensions: 1 x 6.8 x 9.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.3 out of 5 stars 2 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #436,305 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #39 in [Books > History > Americas > Central America > Guatemala](#) #79 in [Books > History > Ancient Civilizations > Mayan](#) #214 in [Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Latin America](#)

## Customer Reviews

Part memoir, part political manifesto, this impassioned testimony by the Guatemalan Maya human-rights activist and winner of the 1992 Nobel Peace Prize is a stirring sequel to her 1984 autobiography, *I, Rigoberta Menchu*. The author, who fled Guatemala in 1980 after both her parents were murdered by a right-wing military regime, launched, while in exile in Mexico, a movement for the rights of indigenous peoples. Although she notes that Guatemala has made progress toward becoming a pluralistic, multi-ethnic society, it remains, she charges, "a bloodthirsty, repressive, racist, dirty, backward country," where big landowners and the military oppress the poor and deprive native peoples of basic rights. *Menchu-Tum* explicates Maya customs, myths and a moral cosmology rooted in reverence for Mother Earth, writing movingly of her close relationship with her mother, who was a peasant leader, midwife and healer. Recounting her 12 years of lobbying at the U.N., she argues that that world body can become the main problem-solving force only if it gives a greater voice to nongovernmental organizations representing the dispossessed. *Menchu-Tum* makes a good case for the U.N.'s adoption of a proposed universal declaration to protect the world's indigenous peoples from ethnocide, massacres and discrimination. Her political agenda of equitable land distribution and struggle against racism gives her book broad appeal. Illustrations not seen by PW. (Aug.) FYI: *I, Rigoberta Menchu* has sold more than 500,000 copies worldwide in 13 languages. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.

*Menchu*, awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992 for her efforts to end the oppression of indigenous groups in Guatemala, vividly juxtaposes human rights violations with the beautiful customs and dignity of her people in this continuation of her life story (following *I, Rigoberta Menchu*, LJ 11/1/84). *Menchu's* simple, eloquent voice recounts her arrest in Guatemala City in 1988, the massacre of villagers in 1995, her worldwide travels as an ambassador for indigenous peoples, her return to her childhood village of Chimel, and the ideal of community and natural beauty that, nevertheless, was razed by the Guatemalan military. Wright's translation captures *Menchu's* courage and empathy in this inspiring tale. Recommended for collections on human rights and for all public libraries. ?Rebecca Martin, Northern Illinois Univ., DeKalb Copyright 1998 Reed Business

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I'm sorry to hear the allegation that some people didn't receive the credit they deserved for the book; however, it's important to keep in mind that we're only hearing one side of the story from Arturo Arias' review. Moreover, even if one accepts the worst regarding what Arias is saying, it seems to me that if he was concerned about Menchu's message getting circulated, he would've noted the importance of "Crossing Borders" and not sabotage the book by focusing exclusively on this scandal. He could've recognized the importance of getting Menchu's words translated, and that "Crossing Borders" is a vital contribution to our knowledge of communities under assault from military forces, corporatists, and various extractive industries. Mayan Indians and oppressed indigenous people around the world can hardly afford to have their concerns ignored due to battles between academics. Hopefully, people will not let the tag of "intellectual theft" dissuade them from purchasing this book, which covers more pressing issues such as the on-going theft indigenous people experience on a massive and lethal scale. If others deserve credit for the book, they should take it up with Verso and it can be remedied in future editions; but let's not commit another crime by ignoring "Crossing Borders" due to Arias' "review." With all the suffering of indigenous people, the efforts of David Stoll to dismiss "I, Rigoberta" and Arias' review to dismiss "Crossing Borders" seem a bit misplaced. They're the sorts of smears one would expect from the Pentagon's psy-ops personnel, PR firms like the Rendon Group, or the Guatemalan military. Regarding the "Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People" that Menchu discusses in the book, "Cultural Survival" magazine is an excellent resource for keeping current on the development and effects of that document. [...] Another important resource regarding Rigoberta Menchu and the struggles of indigenous people is the DVD, "When the Mountains Tremble." There may exist some circumstance that would enable Stoll or Arias to dismiss this award-winning film, but hopefully they'll find better things to do.

A message from Arturo Arias  
Dear Central Americanists: I utilize this network to inform you of a recent intellectual theft suffered by the distinguished Guatemalan writer Dante Liano, presently teaching at the University of Milan (despite his name, he is not Italian). Dante is an old friend of Rigoberta Menchu, and along with Italian journalist Gianni Minna, decided with her to write her second book. They play the role played by Elizabeth Burgos in the first, with the added touch that it was all done with Rigoberta's complicity, unlike what happened in the first book. In the Spanish edition, titled "Rigoberta: La nieta de los mayas" it is explicit that the book is "por Rigoberta Menchu,

con la colaboracion de Dante Liano y Gianni Mina." There is a prologue by Gianni Mina explaining their collaboration, and a small section called "agradecimientos" by Rigoberta herself, in which she thanks explicitly Dante Liano "Especialmente para respetar o al menos acomodar correctamente el uso de las reglas literarias en el idioma espanol. Hicimos con Dante Liano un enorme esfuerzo para conciliar la manera de vivir, pensar, entender y expresar un gran pedazo de mi vida en Q'iche... algo muy grande que nos ayudo para que la lluvia de palabras culminara en una meta, fue el hecho de que nacimos en una misma tierra, compartimos las mismas raices y nuestros suenos atraviesan los mismos caminos" (26). However, in the English edition recently published by Verso, neither Mina's work nor Liano's is recognized at all. If you look at the edition, the translator, Ann Wright, speaks as if she was the compiler, takes credit for the work, and nowhere at all mentions the work of either Liano or Minna. I quote a private message from Liano: Por ejemplo, mientras estaba en Chicago me entere (a traves de Beverley) que el libro de Rigoberta habia salido sin mi nombre ni el de Mina. Fuimos con Raul a comprar el libro y casi caigo muerto cuando, al revisarlo, comprobe que no solo no estabamos en la portada, como el contrato decia, sino que no estabamos absolutamente por ninguna parte. Borrados. La traductora, la senyora Ann Wright, tiene el tupe de echarse un prologo para explicar sus "dificultades" (!) para traducir y para transcribir el texto, como si lo hubiera hecho ella. Me basto darle una ojeada para darme cuenta que era una vil traduccion de lo que yo habia redactado. Lo unico que hicieron fue hacer un montaje diferente. Al llegar aqui puse a Gianni Mina en conocimiento del asunto y este monto en colera... Rigoberta dice que a ella no le consultaron ningun cambio y que, en efecto, ella se atiene al contrato. This is intellectual theft, pure and simple, from both Ann Wright and Verso, making invisible the efforts of a major Guatemalan writer and a close friend and collaborator of Rigoberta's, against her own will. Please circulate this information as much as possible throughout your networks, so that the intellectual world becomes aware of this act of piracy and discredits both Verso and Ann Wright. Arturo Arias

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