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Threads of My Life: The Story of Hilaria Supa Huaman A Rural Quechua Woman

Hilaria Supa Huaman
Theytus (February 2008)
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Hilaria Supa Huamán's is a notable life. She has campaigned against female sterilization, for sustainable agriculture, and for the right to preserve indigenous cultures. She has worked to end the abuse of women and to provide Peruvian women with the same opportunities as men. With this activism, Huamán risked much. Of her fellow community organizers she says, "Many times … there was no way for us to go back to our houses, and I slept with them on the street, on the road, wherever; and if we ran out of toasted corn we would be hungry together." Huamán's obstacles have also been many: claiming the right to speak as a woman, overcoming abuse, grieving the loss of a child. She writes of all this in her memoir, *Threads of My Life*.

It is Huamán's life, but it mirrors those of other women too. She notes, "Many women, upon reading my story, will say, 'That happened to me as well.' That is the reality of Indigenous women in Peru." *Threads of My Life* calls attention to the harsh realities that many women suffer.

The book is meant to teach and engage. Each chapter concludes with questions that prompt readers to reflect, compare their experiences, and look for injustices in their own communities. For example, Huamán asks, "Why don't women household employees who suffer sexual harassment denounce it?" Each question will not apply to all readers, but the set of questions will stimulate those who use this book.

And a useful book it is. Huamán provides topic subheadings to make the book easily navigable. Readers who are unfamiliar with Peruvian geography will benefit from the maps of the region. These are accompanied by photographs of the people and places that Huamán discusses. In addition to numerous photographs, almost every page includes an illustrated border that intricately and symbolically depicts Huamán's message. These illustrations represent Huamán's culture, as do the appendices, which include traditional recipes and instructions for making a doll out of corn leaves. The book works to educate and promote respect for indigenous peoples.

Writing of success and sorrow, Huamán speaks hopefully because she has seen change. "With the establishment of women's committees in all the communities of our province," she notes, "women awoke from passivity and became active." Huamán writes to encourage "women to speak with their own hearts instead of repeating what others taught them." As an extension of Huamán's advocacy, *Threads of My Life* stands to bring progress.

JANELLE ADSIT (July 15, 2011)

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