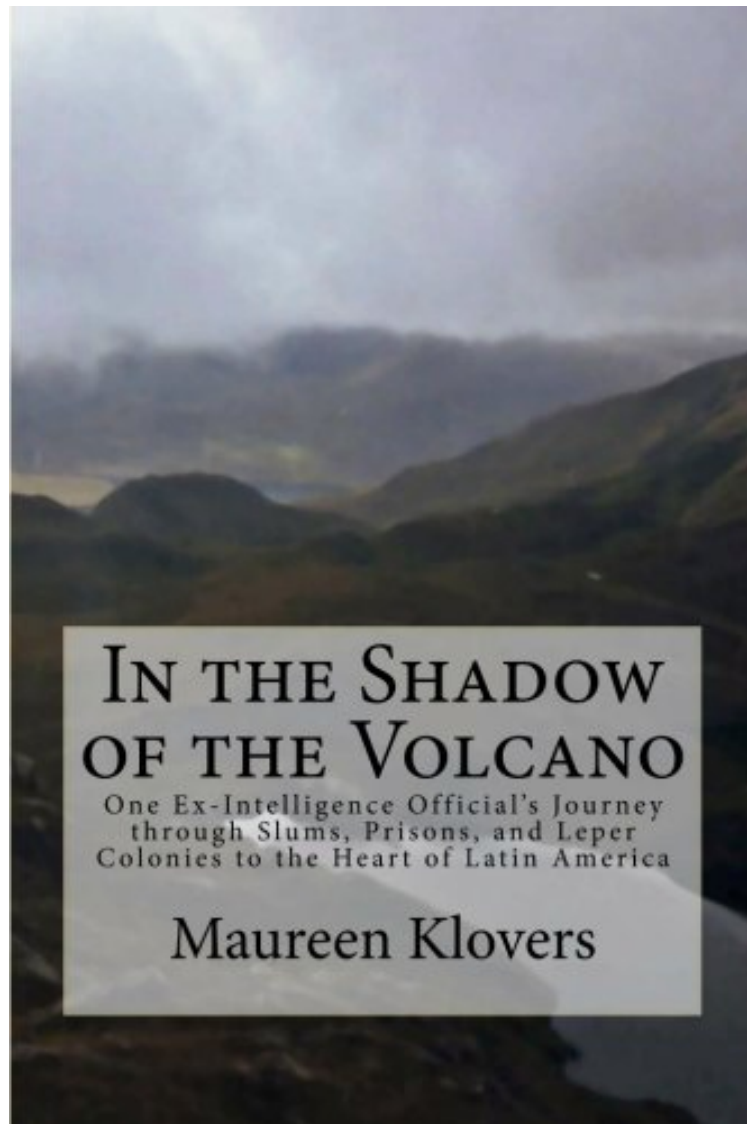


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In the Shadow of the Volcano: One Ex-Intelligence Officials Journey through Slums, Prisons, and Leper Colonies to the Heart of Latin America

Maureen Klovers

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Maureen Klovers : In the Shadow of the Volcano: One Ex-Intelligence Officials Journey through Slums, Prisons, and Leper Colonies to the Heart of Latin America before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised In the Shadow of the Volcano: One Ex-Intelligence Officials Journey through

Slums, Prisons, and Leper Colonies to the Heart of Latin America:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Spellbinding!By RobertThis is a deeply moving and fascinating book that combines a personal story with a portrait of a culture. The author, Maureen Klovers, left her comfortable life in the United States to volunteer for one year as a teacher to junior high school-age students in the slums of Quito, Ecuador in the early 2000s. It was a difficult and sometimes dangerous experience. Her students seemed at the outset to have little interest in their own future, in learning, or in classroom discipline. Violence was a continuing threat within their homes and on the streets, housing often lacked basic necessities, and public institutions were dysfunctional. The authors efforts at school brought some gains against a culture primed to fail. Classroom discipline and academic achievement improved, as did students relationships with their teacher. But this is not an "I came, I saw, I conquered" memoir. It is a very sincere, incisive, engaging, and occasionally humorous account of how the teacher and her students coped with, and sometimes overcame, exasperating conditions. While in Ecuador, the author also visited a prison and a leper colony. Her account of those experiences is equally compelling. The society portrayed in this book was one in which the privileged exploited their status, the disadvantaged acquiesced, and the majority aspired not to better their community or even themselves, but just to continue with life as it was. I saw this culture largely through the daily struggles, deeds and misdeeds of the authors students, their families and fellow townspeople. I came to know human beings, not data. I felt as if I had been punched in the gut by this book - and was left the better for it. I got a much better understanding of the problems that can afflict a society from this book than I had ever gotten from textbooks with academic analyses and charts and graphs. I thought, too, that many of the issues raised in this book are not confined to Ecuador and the early 2000s, so they may be worthy of reflection by us all. As both a personal narrative and a depiction of a culture, I think this book is superb. It would be excellent not only for general reading, but also for various academic programs. Courses in such fields as social science, education, economics, and religion deal with issues of major concern in this book. Finally, I believe this book would be an excellent choice for use in training individuals who are assigned to work that will involve international assistance, whether in the public or the private sector. To succeed, those individuals should anticipate and be able to deal wisely with cultural hurdles that, depending on the setting, may be enormous. I think this book would give them an outstanding appreciation of this challenge, and so help them to develop a sensitivity that will be crucial to their success. I very highly recommend "In the Shadow of the Volcano. In the epilogue, Ms. Klovers says that she may have left Ecuador, but it did not leave her. I think this book will not leave anyone who reads it, to the readers great benefit. 5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. A serious topic approached with a sense of humor and a big heartBy Linda LinguvicSubtitled "One Ex-Intelligence Official's Journey through Slums, Prisons, and Leper Colonies to the Heart of Latin America" this memoir is the story of this American young lady's experience teaching children in the slums of Ecuador. When she graduated from college, and before she went to graduate school, she wanted to make a difference in the world and learn about another culture. She certainly fulfilled that ambition and, along the way, she gained an understanding of this unique part of the world and the realities experienced by its people. This could have been a sad book because of the poverty, the corruption and the non-existent opportunities for the people to better their condition. But Ms. Klovers has a sense of humor as well as a big heart and she approaches this serious topic with a light and youthful touch. There are even parts where I had to laugh out loud. That said, I learned more about this part of the world than I had ever known before. Not only did she introduce some very memorable students, she also brought the reader into one of the prisons where whole families spend years incarcerated together and to a leper colony where the victims of the disease manage to make the most of their deplorable situation. I loved this book. In spite of the reality of the deplorable conditions under which these people live, it was written with a light touch and a sense of humor. I will never forget it. 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. A Must Read StoryBy DaniaMaureen Klovers has produced a produced a fine work that is part memoir, part social commentary, and part a philosophical rumination. Written with vivid, dynamic prose, *In the Shadow of the Volcano* captures both the stunning beauty of the Ecuadorian countryside and the bleak, harsh, and often ugly reality of life in the shantytowns of Quito. Klovers introduces readers to the political, social, and economic upheavals that have plagued Ecuador, but she does so by weaving this commentary throughout a well-constructed and intriguing narrative about the year she spent as a teacher working with some of this nation's poorest children. Klovers's stories about her students are sometimes comical, sometimes endearing, and most-often heartbreaking. *In the Shadow of the Volcano* also includes adventures hiking mountains, touring leper colonies, interviewing prisoners, and time spent bonding with her fellow volunteers. During her time in Ecuador, Klovers was faced with harsh and difficult questions about the value and meaning of human life. These philosophical dilemmas are thoughtfully entwined throughout the story and leave the reader plenty of room for reflection. *In the Shadow of the Volcano* is an insightful, reflective book and would be a wonderful addition to any library.

In a memoir that is at once heart-breaking and hilarious, former U.S. intelligence analyst Maureen Klovers embarks on a year-long quest to understand why so many Latin Americans are willing to risk their lives to come to America. She moves into a convent with a rogue American priest, two nuns, and dormitory full of volunteers, and begins teaching

children from the poorest and most dangerous slums of Quito, Ecuador. Soon, she is fending off marriage proposals from thirteen-year-old Darwin, locked in a battle of wills with his classmate Oscar, and struggling to decode the intricacies of the junior high pecking order. As she visits slums and leper colonies, interviews inmates at the Quito Womens Prison, and tussles with corrupt government officials, she paints a vivid portrait of a nation in transition. Everywhere, she asks the tough questions most travel writers breeze over: What separates the developed world from the developing world? Is the third world destined to be poor forever? And if so, why? But perhaps the most important question is one she never set out to answer at all: Is America headed for the same fate? In the midst of a spirited public debate about income inequality, government regulation, and political dysfunction, "In the Shadow of the Volcano" serves as a fascinating and disturbing chronicle of how ordinary citizens can be affected by a crony capitalism that concentrates wealth and power in the hands of a few.

"A fine pick for any reader concerned about South American social issues..." --Midwest Book