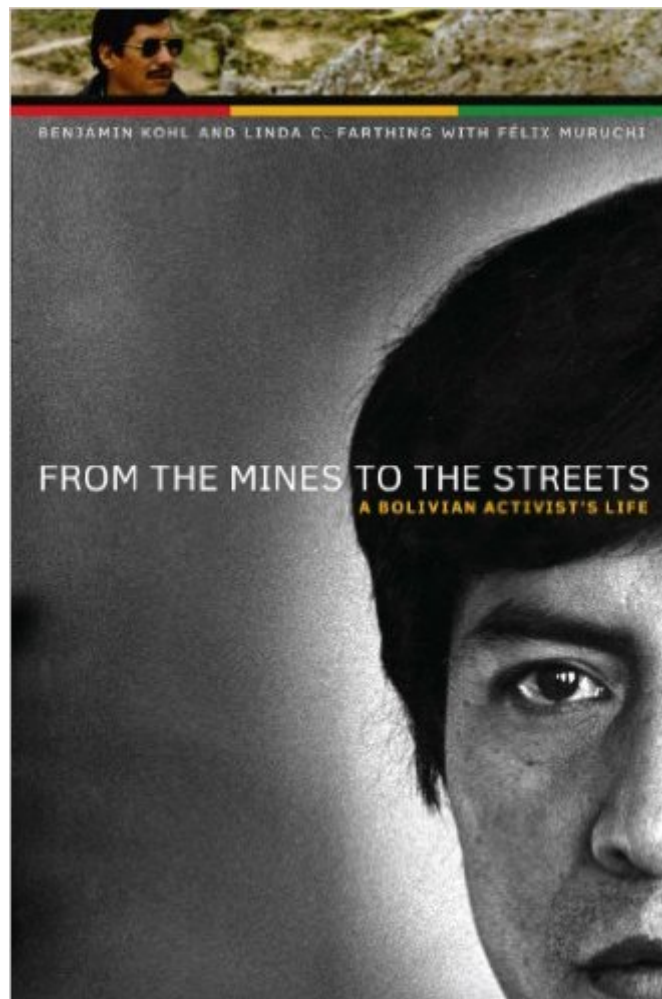


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# From The Mines To The Streets: A Bolivian Activist's Life (William And Bettye Nowlin Series In Art, History, And Culture)



## Synopsis

From the Mines to the Streets draws on the life of Félix Muruchi to depict the greater forces at play in Bolivia and elsewhere in South America during the last half of the twentieth century. It traces Félix from his birth in an indigenous family in 1946, just after the abolition of bonded labor, through the next sixty years of Bolivia's turbulent history. As a teenager, Félix followed his father into the tin mines before serving a compulsory year in the military, during which he witnessed the 1964 coup d'état that plunged the country into eighteen years of military rule. He returned to work in the mines, where he quickly rose to become a union leader. The reward for his activism was imprisonment, torture, and exile. After he came home, he participated actively in the struggles against neoliberal governments, which led in 2006 "the year of his sixtieth birthday" to the inauguration of Evo Morales as Bolivia's first indigenous president. The authors weave Muruchi's compelling recollections with contextual commentary that elucidates Bolivian history. The combination of an unforgettable life story and in-depth text boxes makes this a gripping, effective account, destined to become a classic sourcebook.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is quite possibly the best book about labor and political organizing in Latin America that I have read. It is the autobiography of Felix Muruchi, from his childhood in extreme poverty in a Bolivian mining camp, his early activism in the mines, first on a local level, moving into politics, on a broader

regional and national level. It is interspersed with short sections by Kohl and Farthing explaining the political and economic developments, national and international, that form the context in which all this occurs. This is a very effective technique, so you see both the broad picture and what it's like on the local level; what the local organizer has to do (and what is done to him). Best yet, the book is a real page-turner. Once one gets involved in this exciting story, it's hard to put the book down.

FROM THE MINES TO THE STREETS, the story of Felix Muruchi, the indigenous Bolivian union activist is an inspiring tale of courage in adversity. Muruchi grew up in poverty and went to work in the tin mines where the conditions are tough and the life expectancy low. During the course of this very readable account of his life by academics Ben Kohl and Linda Farthing we learn how he joined the communist party and became a dedicated union activist. This led to imprisonment, ill treatment at the hands of police and military, imprisonment in Chile, and then to exile in Holland. Returning at last to Bolivia he resumes his role as union leader and activist. Kohl and Farthing have pulled off the difficult trick of producing a book that can be enjoyed by the general reader as an introduction to the political and social struggle in Bolivia but that will also be important source material for university researchers. But at its heart it is a story, told in Muruchi's own words, of endurance and bravery.

In the book, *From the Mines to the Streets*, Bolivian union leader Felix Muruchi narrates his amazing personal story, from child llama herder to miner to union leader. In telling his own story, Muruchi recounts a tumultuous period in Bolivian history beginning with the aftermath of the abolition of bonded labor, the 1952 revolution, followed by 18 years of military rule and the events that ultimately led to the election of coca grower leader Evo Morales as president. For those not well-versed in Bolivian politics, editors Kohl and Farthing provide useful background information helpfully set apart in boxes (easy for those who do know the history to skip over). For those already familiar with Bolivian history and politics or novices, this is a must read for gaining a deeper understanding of the country that is arguably undergoing the most interesting political - and citizen's led - revolution in Latin America today. Reviewed by Coletta Youngers

This book is great for anyone interested in Latin American politics and social movements. It is also a great way to learn about Bolivia's history through the eyes of an exceptional citizen.

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