

**Julia E. Monárrez Fragoso, Luis E. Cervera Gómez, César M. Fuentes Flores & Rodolfo Rubio Salas (eds.):**

**Violencia contra las mujeres e inseguridad ciudadana en Ciudad Juárez**

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Carla B. Zamora Lomelí | [chanulpom@yahoo.com.mx](mailto:chanulpom@yahoo.com.mx)

◆ Since 1993, more than two hundred women have been brutally murdered in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, in the north of Mexico. Violence against women has been increasing in Ciudad Juárez due to factors such as drug trafficking, the inefficiency of public policies, corruption, insecurity, and a deep social inequality. This book is an academic approach to understand the reasons why femicide occurs in Ciudad Juárez?

The book is the result of a previous investigation, carried out in 2005 by an academic institution: *El Colegio de la Frontera Norte* (COLEF) because of the governments' interest in the structural causes for the gender violence. In this sense, the main contributions of the book are the recommendations by the academic expertise in terms of public police. Julia Monárrez, Luis Cervera, César Fuentes and Rodolfo Rubio, are a team of researchers at COLEF in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, México, who have been studying the violence phenomena since the 1990s.

The research is based on the hypothesis that gender inequality and socioeconomic structural conditions, cause a context of extreme violence towards women, such as couple mistreatment and femicide in Ciudad Juárez. In this sense, the analysis includes a

gender focus and an interdisciplinary perspective, comparing at the same time, the insecurity that women and men suffer in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua (6).

Julia Monárrez, researcher from El Colegio de la Frontera Norte, has lead the team of researchers to present the actual situation of violence in Ciudad Juárez. The study considers the impact of migration, urban development and a spatial analysis of the phenomenon of gendered violence. The book is hence a product of a research based on official information, like the national and international recommendations of human rights organisms, using conceptual and methodological frames by means of which their geographic range allow to compare the problem of violence in Ciudad Juárez with other cities that are affected by/show a high level of violence in the north of Mexico (18).

The book is composed of three parts: 1) human rights, academy and demography in Ciudad Juárez; 2) couple violence and femicide; and 3) public insecurity. The first part is dedicated to the analysis of recommendations of human rights organizations and actions of Mexican state institutions and the prosecution of the Justice system, considering extreme violence acts as international crimes, specifically the human

rights violation of the murdered women since 1993 in Ciudad Juárez. The book concludes by stating that the government research and explanation of those cases are not convincing.

This part also gives an insight into the state of art of the academic research on femicide from sociology, anthropology, literature and law. However, in my opinion, the complexity of the subject requires an interdisciplinary dialogue in order to understand the different elements that explain a serious social problem, just like Julia Monárrez, Raúl Flores and Diana García do in the text.

The geo-strategic position of Ciudad Juárez at the border with the United States, is a focus of the analysis, written by Rodolfo Rubio in the article “Female migrations to and through Ciudad Juárez”. This text elaborates on the history of the role of migration and the state within the framework of binational relations between Mexico and United States, like the *Bracero* program which was a series of diplomatic agreements for the temporary contracts for Mexican laborers in the US in the 1940s.

The second part of the book provides a detail analysis of physical, emotional, sexual and economic dimensions of violence against women. Julia Monárrez defines violence as an intentional act of power and force with a determinate proposal, carried out by one or more persons who produce physical, mental or sexual damage, which hurts the freedom of movement or causes death of others. Acts of violence can take place likewise at home, in public or in group (234).

*Violence against women* is based on a comparative methodology, and the study draws a context between Chihuahua and

other states like Baja California, Coahuila and Sonora. César Fuentes and Rodolfo Rubio carried out a geospatial information study taking as source the National Survey on the Dynamics of the Relationships at Home (2003) and the results of a multivariate analysis indicate the impact of social isolation of the women who live in the urban area of Chihuahua state. Here the main risk group/high-risk group of suffering violence, are women between 25 and 29 years old, and according to the authors, the couples which have medium and high salaries, shows a high risk of suffering economic and physical violence (357).

One of the most valuable contributions of this book, is the creation of a geographic information system on femicide and insecurity. According to official data, 6,437 people were murdered between 2006 and 2010. All the statistical indicators used by César Fuentes, in the article “Public insecurity in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua: an approach to the violence experimented by men and women in the public space”, show how gender violence is one of the main problems in this city, and the public space is every time more and more insecure, so that 54 per cent of men and 46 per cent of women have been victims of some kind of violence.

Rodolfo Rubio provides data about the citizens’ perception of insecurity and confidence in the authorities of the cities of Culiacán in Sinaloa, Guadalajara in Jalisco, Mexicali and Tijuana in Baja California, and Chihuahua, using the Third National Survey on Insecurity (2005). He reveals that one of the characteristics of the victims, is that most of them do not report the crimes (504). This fact owes to the missing confidence in the

prosecution of the justice system and the high corruption. It indicates the long road to be taken in order to limit insecurity, as the author found that just 16 per cent of women feel safe living in Ciudad Juárez.

To summarize, in my opinion, the book is an important academic effort to understand the situation of violence faced by women and girls in Ciudad Juárez, including murder and disappearance, as well as sexual and domestic violence. Moreover, the compilation offers recommendations designed to assist the Mexican State in amplifying its efforts to respect and ensure Human Rights. It's also a huge contribution to the decision taking on the design of public politics by the government, once that the strategy taken by the President Felipe Calderón administration has shown the cost of mistaken actions in the fight against organized crime.

Social programs and the militarization of Ciudad Juárez are insufficient measures, which can't be the answer the citizens are expecting. The fight against organized gender violence and crimes requires a bigger effort in which social and political actors contribute to finding a solution, but it also requires to start working at home to eradicate gender violence. In general terms, academic research has just begun to approach the insecurity and violence problem in Mexico. That's why this book is an important pioneer study with regard to the subject of violence against women, and further a social science approach clearly committed to contemporary societal problems.♦