



Title: Altars in the Street: A Neighborhood Fights to Survive

Author: Melody Ermachild Chavis

Description:

Altars in the Street is the personal chronicle of Melody Ermachild Chavis, who bought a house in what was a quiet interracial neighborhood on the south side of Berkeley, California, but which became a place where drugs and violence were growth industries. It is about the life of a mother trying with other mothers to raise children in a dangerous world. It is also the inspiring story of how she and her neighbors found ways of working with each other, the youngsters, the elderly, the unemployed, the addicts, the drunks, and even the police and the drug dealers -- in a courageous effort to preserve their homes and their lives. It teaches community action we can all adopt, such as tutoring at local schools, encouraging teenagers to start a gardening project, and accompanying them to court when they find themselves in trouble. This book illustrates our collective responsibility for bringing about healing. It is a brave and wonderful wake-up call, full of the nitty-gritty of how each of us can make a difference when push really does come to shove. Drawing on deep reserves of good humor, common sense, and practical experience of nonviolent action, Melody Ermachild Chavis has written a moving testament to the power of spirit in today's often cynical world.

Altars in the Street is for people who live in cities and those who have fled them. It will speak to anyone who cares about the future of our children, our neighborhoods, and our nation, anyone who wants to look truthfully at the relationship between poverty and prisons, and between community and education. It is also for those who seek to put spirituality to work where it really counts on the street where we live.

Reviews

Congressman Ronald V. Dellums:

Ms. Chavis's moving account of her efforts to build, protect, and enhance a home and community are compelling reading for all who are truly committed to efforts to solve community problems and to build a better future for our children.

Publishers Weekly:

[A] razor-sharp autobiographical memoir. Her highly personal accounting of her effort to reconcile Buddhist compassion with legal work and social activism makes this an unusual, challenging document.

Herbert Kohl, author of *Thirty-Six Children:*

This book makes me sad and mad as hell -- everyone concerned with the survival of our children and communities must read it.

Library Journal:

[A] poignant story ... strongly recommended.

Joanna Macy, author of *World As Lover, World As Self*:

This exhilarating book is must reading for anyone who suspects that there is a link between spiritual awakening and social action. "Engaged Buddhism" takes on flesh and bones in this fast-paced account that both warms and wrenches the heart. Amidst urban danger and decay, it is a love-song to life -- and I dare you to read it without feeling expanded and blessed.

Kirkus Reviews:

A thoughtful memoir of community-level social action and spiritual development.

Carl Anthony, president of Earth Island Institute and director of Urban Habitat Program:

Altars in the Street presents a startling juxtaposition of the fierce and inspiring facts of everyday life in an inner city neighborhood, with an appealing perspective on the greening of the city ... a celebration of life.