

Editor's Introduction

Tony Platt*

IT IS A CHALLENGE TO DO JUSTICE TO THE EXPERIENCES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF A woman who has led the brimful lives of two people, Elizabeth Sutherland and Betita Martínez; who has distinguished herself as a writer and activist, and as a writer-activist; and who provided leadership in the Civil Rights, Chicano/a, feminist, and youth movements. Her staying power is remarkable: at age 11 in 1937, she won a national prize in an essay contest; in 2012, her 87th year, a book on racism and militarism that she coedited was published.

A year ago we sent out a call to people who have worked with Betita since the 1960s, asking for their recollections and assessments of her contributions. The result is this extraordinary collection of essays and memoirs, plus a chronology of Betita's important life events, a complete bibliography of her published writings, representations of Betita by artists and photographers, publication of some of Betita's unpublished and out-of-print work, and a political biography based on research in her personal papers. All in all, some 38 people participated in this collaborative project.

Special thanks to Tessa Koning-Martínez, who was involved in this labor of love from the very beginning and who as Betita's only child is her primary caretaker; to the Betita Fan Club for providing many years of financial assistance to Betita and to this project; to Ed McCaughan for coordinating the artwork for this project as meticulously as Betita would expect; to Kathy Blackmer Reyes not only for relentlessly tracking down every one of Betita's publications, but also for answering every one of my cries for bibliographic help; to Bob Barber for searching his collection of movement publications to find yet more articles written by Betita; and to the contributors who responded so thoughtfully to my request for memories of Betita that illuminate both her complex life and the social justice movements in the United States from World War II through the first decade of the 21st century.

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