



November 25

International Day for the
**Elimination of Violence
Against Women**

Learn about the
Mirabal Sisters and
their revolutionary legacy:

Content Warning:
The following slides contain depictions of
gendered violence



Las Mariposas

"THE BUTTERFLIES" / LAS HERMANAS MIRABAL / THE MIRABAL SISTERS



International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women is based on the 1960 assassination date of the Mirabal Sisters, political activists murdered by Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo.

Collectively the three activist sisters became known by the codename *Las Mariposas* (the Butterflies). **Las Mariposas contributions to the resistance and highly publicized deaths were a catalyst for the collapse of Trujillo's regime.**



Las Mariposas

“THE BUTTERFLIES” / LAS HERMANAS MIRABAL / THE MIRABAL SISTERS

Las Mariposas were from a relatively well-to-do provincial family. The sisters all went to Catholic boarding school, married men, had children, went to church... in other words, not obvious candidates for revolutionaries.

Throughout his reign, Trujillo employed scores of “beauty scouts” to scour the countryside for young children girls for him to groom, kidnap, and inflict sexual violence upon. One such mission led him to the Mirabals. When the eldest, Minerva, was targetted and repeatedly turned down his advances, Trujillo made it a point to personally interfere with her life thereafter.

Despite being a brilliant student, upon starting her second year at law school, **Minerva found she was barred from classes until she gave a public speech praising Trujillo’s virtues. When she graduated years later, the government denied her the license to practice law.**



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Once, Minerva and her mother, on a visit to the capital of Santo Domingo, were kept as prisoners in their hotel under threat of sexual violence by Trujillo. Eventually, they both escaped.

With the Mirabal family reputation and finances ruined by Trujillo’s meddling, the entire Mirabal clan were primed for political action and began organizing.

In 1960, the entire group was put in prison. While *Las Mariposas* were initially freed, they were ultimately assassinated while visiting their remaining family in jail by special police forces. **Six months following the sisters’ assassination, Trujillo met the same fate.**

In the years following, **the Mirabal sisters have become hallowed icons for the Dominican Republic.** Dedé (the younger, less politically active sister of *Las Mariposas*), raised her late sisters’ children, many of whom entered the government.



Las Mariposas

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Virtually all Dominican towns today bear some commemorative marker, school, or street bearing the names of the Mirabal sisters. Their home province was even renamed ***Hermanas Mirabal*** — an ironic inversion of Trujillo’s renaming the capitol city Ciudad Trujillo (a name that did not stick).

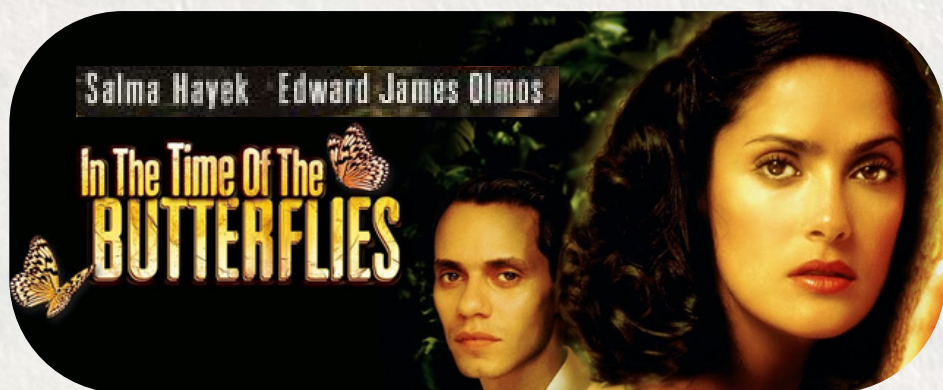
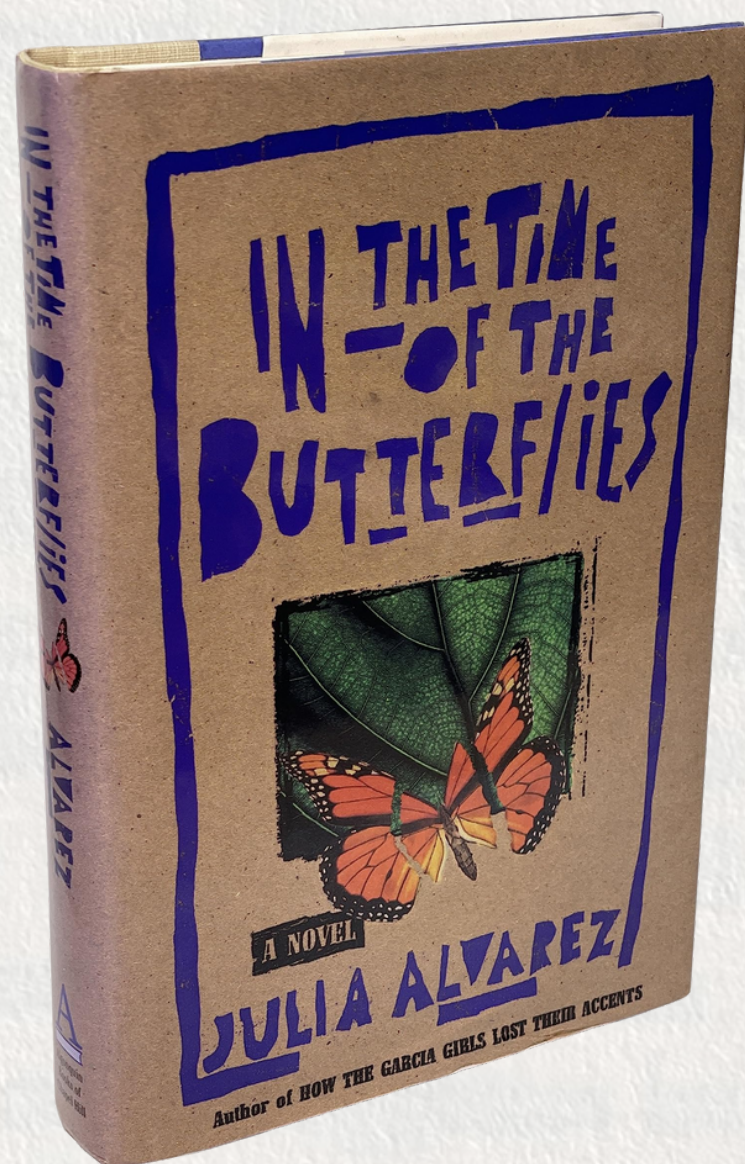
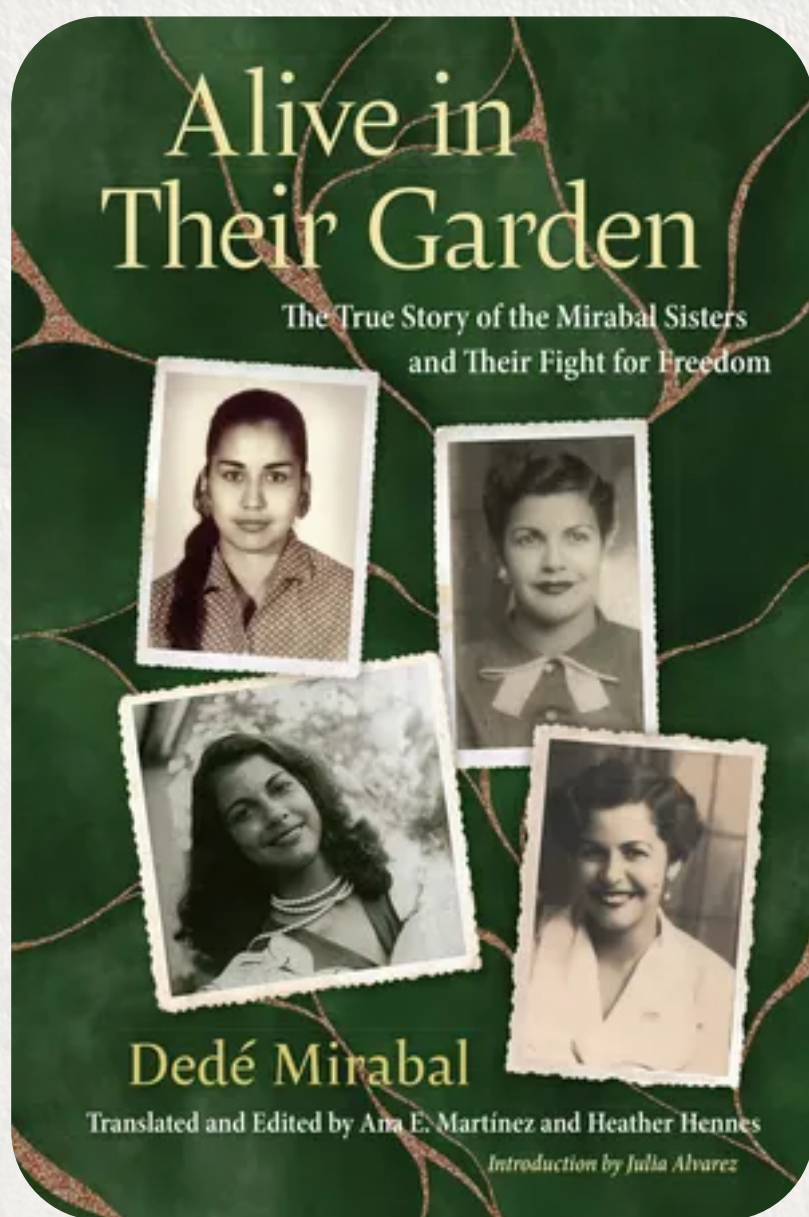
Gradually, *Las Mariposas*’ message spread internationally:

- **1981:** Activists at the Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Encuentros marked November 25 as a day of awareness about violence against women (broadly).
- **1994:** *In the Time of the Butterflies* by Julia Alvarez
- **2000:** November 25th officially recognized by UN.
- **2001:** Movie adaptation starring Salma Hayek released.
- **2009:** Dedé Mirabal also released a memoir about *Las Mariposas*, titled *Vivas en su jardín: La verdadera historia de las hermanas Mirabal y su lucha por la libertad* (2009) or “Alive in Their Garden: The True Story of the Mirabal Sisters and Their Fight for Freedom”.



Las Mariposas

More Media:





Las Mariposas

More Information:

Goncalvez, Vansan. 2011. "In the Time of the Butterflies: Rewriting Dominican History through the Demythologization of the Mirabal Sisters." *Escrita*, Vol. 2 (6), pp. 88-99. Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro. <https://revista.uniabeu.edu.br/index.php/RE/article/view/224/0>

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Porath, Jason. 2016. "The Mirabal Sisters (1924/27/35-1960): The Sisters Who Toppled a Dictatorship". *R.P.* [site]. <https://www.rejectedprincesses.com/princesses/the-mirabal-sisters>.