

Daniel Wetta

Interview with Ana Valdez

Heroine of The Z Redemption

Conducted by Daniel Wetta

Daniel: Good morning, Ana! It is a pleasure to catch up with you again. Certainly your days are busy, and our readers appreciate the time you take to talk about a couple of your favorite themes: the need for heroes in the world, specifically the urgency for heroes who lead; and the use of social media by ordinary people to effect revolutions. So, to get straight to work, let me start by asking you this: Have things improved since the time you first emerged on the national stage in Mexico, at the beginning of the military coup there, when you made the dramatic descent from the top of the six story building as you and your associate, David James, were attacked by members of the drug cartel?

Ana: Well, Daniel, I would answer that perhaps our organization, The Zs, has made progress in making the worldwide call for heroes known, but, sadly, I think that the worldwide corruption of governments and police forces has strengthened since those days because of the great penetration of organized criminal groups, such as drug cartels and mafias, into the work forces of local and federal governments. There will be no reversal of this trend until ordinary citizens pay attention and take accountability for restoring integrity and good human values among the people who are supposed to lead and protect them.

Daniel: What are the symptoms when this criminal penetration becomes high?

Ana: Like in Mexico, Daniel, democracy comes undone. Even this year under the new administration of President Pena Nieto, there have been eight candidates for mayor or local congressional representatives assassinated while running for office, while the journalists who try to report on criminal activities also are being killed. In certain states of Mexico, vigilantes have formed to replace the police or to fill the vacuum from the absence of federal soldiers because there is no effective protection for the citizens in those areas. There is no public safety. I have spent the past few years of my life bringing these issues to light, and I have tried to warn, especially, the citizens of the United States that these problems are going to be theirs before they can blink their eyes.

Daniel: Why is the United States vulnerable, Ana?

Ana: For two reasons: First, people there do not know or care that their country is the number one consumer of illegal drugs from Mexico and other countries, and also by far it is the number one seller of the powerful and illegal automatic weapons to the drug cartels. The weaponry of the cartels overpower our Armed Forces often. Because of this nonchalance, the cartels have boldly moved the distribution centers of product into many of the large United States cities. Silently these cartels begin to buy off the police forces and the local politicians and judges. They seduce with money, or they intimidate with horrible and unthinkable personal brutality. People in the United States are asleep to this. Soon the blood will be in their streets as the cartels start fighting each other for territory.

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Second, the two major political parties in the United States do not have platforms which recognize the range of cultural diversity in the country, nor the importance of immigration, which made the country great in the first place. While each political party vies for sound-bites in the news, bringing up issues irrelevant to the true needs of the people, neither is making progress in meeting those needs. When governments cannot serve the people they lead, or when they cannot protect them, then those governments are overthrown. History shows this repeatedly.

Daniel: You often describe yourself as just an ordinary homemaker, Ana, and sometimes as a business woman because you once had a successful events planning business. Agree with me that, in fact, you did become a heroic leader in Mexico. What motivated you? How did you find courage in the face of disappearances, extortion, and assassinations all around you?

Ana: I was motivated by pure love, Daniel. I was a mother of two pre-teen children. I drove them every morning to their school worried that we might pass bodies hung from overpasses on the way. I love my children more than can be expressed. I was in love with a man. I am in love with that man. These passions for my children and this man were hot and made me fierce. I think love is a transforming force. I also was in love with Mexico and the women who suffered the losses of their children, husbands, and lovers. I am still a woman in love.

Daniel: They say you are a genius because you leveraged social media to organize, inspire, and rally the youth of Mexico in forming the Zs, and to organize the myriad protest groups and victims' rights groups that encouraged the overthrow of the Mexican government so that a government of integrity could replace it. How, exactly, did you do this?

Ana: I am not a genius, Daniel. Even the kids in the streets today know more how to connect and organize than I. I started by writing blogs to say, "Look, something is wrong!" At first, I intended those blogs to be for friends and associates in Monterrey. As the situation in Mexico worsened and freedom of the press was jeopardized because of the assassination of journalists, I sought editors and columnists of the major newspapers throughout Mexico and sent them my blogs. Before long these people were publishing my opinions, and I suppose that something about my writing caught fire among people, especially women and young people who were willing to be courageous and fight for their country.

Daniel: Whom were you fighting?

Ana: The drug cartels and the people corrupted by them.

Daniel: Once the overthrow began and there was chaos everywhere, how did you use social media? How did people use it so that the country would continue to function, especially public services?

Ana: It was incredible, Daniel, because, fortunately, Mexico is a country very advanced in the use of technology and the use of mobile applications for social networking. One of the most powerful tools was the use of Twitter hashtags to publish instantaneous alerts of outbreaks of violence, armed confrontations, traffic chaos, and areas of high risk. We set up networks of these managed by the Zs in almost all the large cities in Mexico. So people could know not only the problem areas in their home

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towns, but also they could receive instantaneous bulletins of public demonstrations, speakers, and outcomes of organized citizen group events. Some of these happened spontaneously, but the news of these could travel fast.

Daniel: What else?

Ana: YouTube videos. People record everything, wherever they are, whatever the time. These recordings shine the great light of truth on happenings, and they are instantaneously accessible. It is hard for corrupt police or government to deny things that are filmed and uploaded to the world immediately for access. Other things, of course, include text messaging, actual phone calls, and access to wireless internet sites.

Daniel: Besides instantaneous information, what do you think was the most helpful use of social media during the early days of the overthrow?

Ana: Many of the public services, such as public transportation and health services, are run by government agencies. The military was trying to operate these services, but there were huge vacuums in know-how and human resources in some cases. Also, it was important that communications such as cell phone coverage, news broadcasts on television and radio, and internet services continued to operate. These services were spotty and inefficient in the first hours and days, but through the social media we encouraged people to go back to work, and we urged others to volunteer and to support these services. Many of our Zs assisted.

Daniel: How do people become courageous?

Ana: Look, being courageous does not mean that you are not scared. It means taking action even though you are scared. I think courage starts with honesty, and in particular, being honest with oneself. You have to be in touch with your feelings, and you have to express what you believe. "Honesty First" is the first rule of the Eight Rules of Life to which our young people, the Zs, commit. (You have put those rules on your website, thank you, Daniel.)

After honesty, for a person to cultivate courage the next required characteristic is empathy. We have to listen to, understand, and respect always other people and their points of view. When there is understanding, then coalitions can be formed to confront truly powerful, evil opposition. In the case of organized crime units such as the drug cartels, those have powerful weaponry and sophisticated technology and they do not abide by any rules of fair play.

Daniel: When you speak at public gatherings, often you talk about the Zs and The Z Redemption. What exactly do you mean by redemption in this sense?

Ana: Redemption is what you will pay for the pearl of great price. Sometimes redemption is paid in blood. What price would you pay for the lives of your children, Daniel? What would be their redemption value?

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Daniel: I understand. Ana, thank you so much for your time. Do you have any final thing you would like to say to our readers?

Ana: Of course! What I always say: Let's not just be heroes! Let's be heroes who lead!