

“Mexico should be our example of what is possible.”

AMLO and the Morena Party

Interview with Teri Mattson

By [Teri Mattson](#) and [Rick Sterling](#)

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Teri Mattson is producer and host of the weekly podcast “WTF is Going on in Latin America & the Caribbean?” broadcast on Spotify, Apple podcast, CODEPink, as well as on [Popular Resistance](#).

Rick Sterling (RS): How did you wind up living in Mexico City?

Teri Mattson (TM): I went to Mexico City in September of 2020 in response to how the Covid pandemic was being managed in Washington DC, where I was living at the time. I was walking every day outside to get moderate exercise, fresh air and sunshine to stay healthy during covid. And on two of my outings, I was stopped by the DC Metropolitan Police. They wanted to know what I was doing outside and where I was going. I told them I was out trying to stay healthy, and they asked for my papers, my id, and the address of my destination. After the second time that happened, I thought the writing’s on the wall, the direction the US is going, and I just can’t live here any more.

I love Mexico, particularly having grown up in California with the shared history. So I went to Mexico City. There were restrictions but they didn’t close their economy down. Like so much of the global south, it’s a cash-based economy. Things were open but managed. For instance, the restaurants were all open with outdoor seating but everything closed at five. To go into a brick and mortar business, you had to line up outside six feet apart, mask on. When you got to the door, somebody would take your temperature, make sure your mask was on correctly, and make sure you sanitized your hands. People continued to use the buses and the subway. Vaccinations were free, testing was free. I didn’t get sick and none of my Mexican friends got sick.

The other BIG reason I went to Mexico is to witness what is happening with Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (AMLO), the Morena Party and the fourth transformation. To see what is

happening in Mexico.

RS: The Morena party is relatively new but in 2018 won a plurality in the Mexican Congress. How have they organized so effectively?

TM: They have a formal institution of political education. They do in person classes almost daily. I've gone to many of them. They have a small college campus that they can use in the evening. These classes and events are broadcast live throughout Mexico and other regions of the world, specifically the United States, where they have a large Mexican diaspora. That institute has 15 satellite sites throughout Mexico. They also do in-person teaching events throughout the country. There are thousands of people on those zoom calls and hundreds of people in person, young and old, Mexicans of all ages.

RS: Was the Institute created by the government or by the Morena Party? How often do they have these meetings?

TM: It is by the party, not the government. Sometimes there are meetings every night. They have a whole calendar. You can see their programs and activities at INFPMORENA.MX. This summer every Thursday night they have a theme about social movement building and political formation to help people learn the process and what's involved and different philosophical elements of it.

RS: How are these organized?

TM: Here's an example. There was a panel discussion with the Bolivian Ambassador, a Peruvian representative and Morena spokesperson Jesus Ramirez. It was right after AMLO had nationalized the lithium fields. Bolivia, Peru and Mexico all have valuable lithium fields. Bolivia was couped because of their lithium fields and Peru the same. Now there's the threat of US intervention in Mexico. They talked about the history of European and US colonialism and about the extraction of natural resources. The modern day scenario is lithium. It was petroleum, and now it's lithium. The discussion was phenomenal.

That's just one example. And then I've gone to an afternoon of Marxist films. They showed all these films that were blacklisted in the McCarthy era and the film producers and directors who were on the Hollywood blacklist. We looked at those films and what the messaging was, the Marxist themes out of them. We did a whole film study of that. Wow, it was good. I've also been to a few political formation classes. One I attended was an all day class on Hugo Chavez. It was great stuff covering both domestic issues and foreign policy issues, weaving it all together for the Mexican population.

This is how they are empowering their population to ensure that AMLO's party and his vision continue. There is a base of people to succeed him so it won't just be one six year project.

RS: When is the next Mexican presidential election and how are they preparing for that?

TM: The election will be in June 2024. AMLO cannot run again per the Constitution. It's one six year term for a Mexican president. AMLO is a popular charismatic leader, but he can't run again.

The Morena party itself has a lot of talent and a lot of experience, and is enormously popular. Mexico City is split 50 -50 but the rest of the country is solidly Morena, led by

Morena Governors and local leaders.

The key people who are running to be next Morena candidate for President are Claudia Sheinbaum, governor of Mexico City and the former foreign minister Marcelo Ebrard. Ebrard has been studying and preparing to be president of Mexico someday. And he has the resume and the experience to support that for sure. Claudia is younger and people love what she's done for Mexico City. And each of the mayors within her city as well, she's empowered all of them as well. So, so she is very popular. And then you have the president of the Congress. There's two other candidates. They're all good.

In order to avoid the appearance that someone was anointed by AMLO, and also to hold the party together, all four of the candidates had to resign their public positions so they could run their campaigns without appearing to be benefit from their government position. So all four candidates had to resign their position. It was also agreed that regardless of who wins the Morena presidency, the remaining three are guaranteed either a cabinet position or a legislative position. So the new president will have the infrastructure around him or her to continue the overall project. It's just brilliant.

On September 6 the party will announce who will be the candidate to represent Morena in the election next year.

RS: What has impressed you about changes in Mexico under AMLO?



TM: Well, the first thing is communication with the people. AMLO is very clear: this is who we are as a government; this is what we want to achieve and this is how we're gonna do it. This is the brainchild of the president's brilliant press secretary, Jesus Ramirez.

The president has a press conference every working day at 7:00 AM no matter where he is. Sometimes they're an hour, sometimes much longer. AMLO gives updates on the major departments, foreign policy, domestic policy, healthcare, education, etc. If the military is being used to alleviate a flood or natural disaster, or if there is a big drug interdiction, he talks about it.

It also gives him opportunity to challenge or correct any negative news from the day before. And sometimes he will say, oh, that's completely false. Here's what really happened. Or he'll say, you know what? That did happen and we were wrong, and here's how we're gonna fix it. Or he can say, you know, it sort of was that way, but it was more this way. So he can get out in front every morning, get out in front of the news cycle. When the newspapers and news are being broadcast, he is on Twitter explaining their perspective and actions.

AMLO goes live on Twitter at 7:00 AM and many people in Mexico, not just Morena, start their day listening to their president. AMLO reaches a really broad segment of the Mexican

population, building a relationship with the people, helping them understand what is happening day to day in their government, what's been achieved, what still needs work.

RS: In AMLO's book *New Hope for Mexico* he talks about moral values. How do you see that?

TM: AMLO is 69 years old. For many of the young people that voted for him, he's their grandfather. They love him, and he them. So they relate to him that way. AMLO's government tries to find popular solutions for the majority of the people, which to me is liberation theology.

There are young people who say he's not doing things fast enough. I can appreciate that, but their parents and grandparents will tell you if you ask them, sometimes with tears in their eyes, never in their lifetime did they think they would see a president like they have now. So for them, it's more than they ever dreamed possible.

But the young people will keep pushing harder, harder.

RS: What are some other examples of positive things done by the Mexican government?

TM: The biggest thing has been the infrastructure projects, for example public transportation. There is now a gondola system providing easy access for people in the northern hills of Mexico City. They call it the cable bus. There are two lines so far with more planned. It's been a life changer for the people in those colonias. I have friends who live in one of those areas. Public transportation is a game changer for many people.

Another example of effective governance is regarding parks and public spaces. Since I arrived in September of 2020 I have seen so many parks renovated. They can be little parks that you'll see down alleyways where people sit, have coffee and talk to the neighbors. Or they can be kids playgrounds. They're green, the fountains are working again. It's unbelievable how many I have seen come back into fruition. The investment in public space is the investment in your people. Having those outdoor public spaces supports the emotional and physical health. People use those places for picnics. The other thing is all the public art installations. It's profound. And now the art installations are used for educational purposes, like teaching people about Mexico, history of Mexico City, former presidents etc.. And there is art all over. They'll feature historical artists, modern day artists, youth, collective art ...they rotate.

RS: You've been living in Mexico for over two years now. How does the US look from the outside?

TM: From the outside it seems there is nothing happening. I don't mean that all of you activists are not doing anything. But as a nation it seems there is no change happening in the US. We are not doing anything to create a new system, a new structure, or to renovate the structure we have in any significant way. It's all collapsing. A good percentage of progressive and leftists don't believe it's possible to have a third party, a viable third party.

Meanwhile in Mexico there is a national organized strategy and strategic change happening. Morena was created as a third party to break up the P A N / PRI duopoly that existed in Mexico for 70 plus years. It is the same type of system we have in the US. I get so tired of hearing a third party's not possible. Mexico has done it. It took a lot of time and groundwork but they have broken the two party duopoly. They are our neighbor and they

should be our example of what is possible.

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Rick Sterling is an independent journalist based in the SF Bay Area. He can be reached at rsterling1@gmail.com.

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