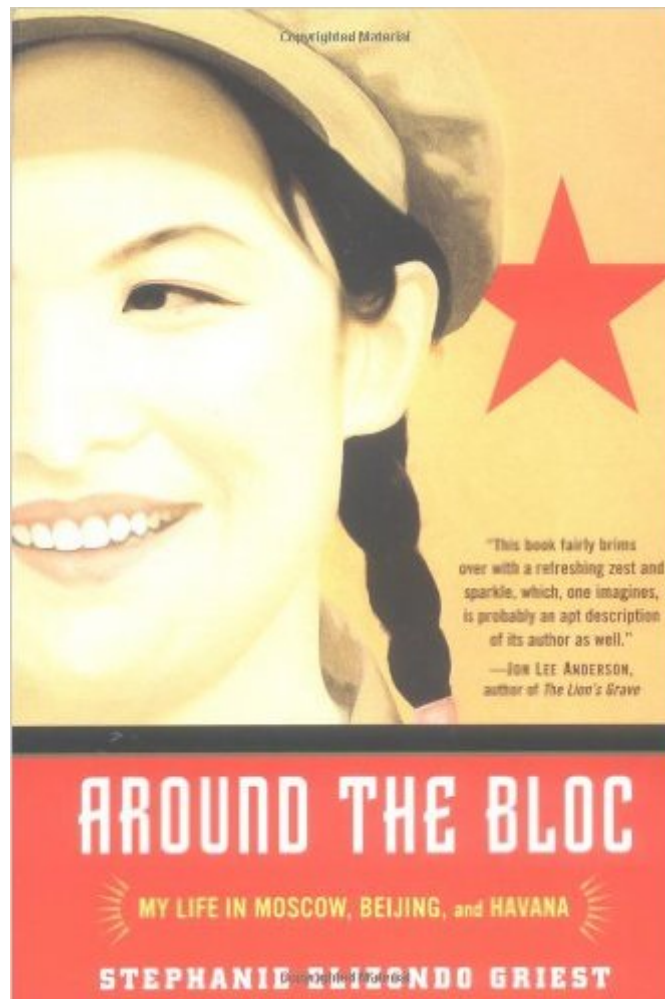


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# Around The Bloc: My Life In Moscow, Beijing, And Havana



## Synopsis

Desperate to escape South Texas, Stephanie Elizondo Griest dreamed of becoming a foreign correspondent. So she headed to Russia looking for some excitementâcommencing what would become a four-year, twelve-nation Communist bloc tour that shattered her preconceived notions of the "Evil Empire." In *Around the Bloc*, Griest relates her experiences as a volunteer at a children's shelter in Moscow, a propaganda polisher at the office of the Chinese Communist Party's English-language mouthpiece in Beijing, and a belly dancer among the rumba queens of Havana. She falls in love with an ex-soldier who narrowly avoided radiation cleanup duties at Chernobyl, hangs out with Cuban hip-hop artists, and comes to difficult realizations about the meaning of democracy. is the absorbing story of a young journalist driven by a desire to witness the effects of Communism. Along the way, she learns the Russian mathematical equation for buying dinner-party vodka (one bottle per guest, plus an extra), stumbles upon Beijing's underground gay scene, marches with 100,000 mothers demanding EliÃn GonzÃlez's return to Cuba, and gains a new appreciation for the Mexican culture she left behind.

## Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.1 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (26 customer reviews)

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## Customer Reviews

Ay, caramba! AROUND THE BLOC is more than a coming of age story, dear Readers. The following is a laundry list of what you're genuinely missing when you ascribe such facile titles to this amazing little read: 1) The wonderful (and many) impactful lines of prose that emanate from the pen of someone so young, yet with so much on the ball (at the time of writing, that is -- the "young" part, not the "on the ball" part). Griest is possessed of an awareness that few individuals of mixed

ethnicity and/or race choose to properly acknowledge. Inside the pages of this book, Elizondo Griest attacks this concept with a doggedness and reckless deliberation that's so downright inspirational! I would like to travel in her wake.<sup>2</sup>) There were several passages which I came across where I just had to place the book down beside me to take a deep "resetting" breath. How author managed to touch so many sensitive chords within me, I'm positive the effect was similar on the others. Ms. Elizondo Griest doesn't hold punches. When she refers to things like love, lust, heartbreak, depression, devastation, and sex, she does **\*\*precisely\*\*** that. When Griest refers to how pained she was when the man who meant everything in her life dropped her for the second time (in as many chances), you hurt right along there with her. If you don't, you don't have much of an emotional bone within your body. Someone so outspoken and delightful doesn't deserve to get hurt like that. At least this was my initial reaction.<sup>3</sup>) This is a young woman who has criss-crossed the world and back again, all in an attempt to seek the answers for the most essential life-donning questions which those of us who take such things for granted are never inclined to ask. Essential burning questions of identity.

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