

CAPSTONE ABSTRACT

Exploring historical power in Nicaragua to explain the 2018 uprising

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Part one of this study investigates historical dominant power in Nicaragua by the political establishment and the foreign intervention of the United States. I look at how they have maintained power and for what ends. Concomitantly, I look at how the Nicaraguan population has responded to those with historical dominant power and what has occurred after the fact. This study will analyze historical conflict, violence, struggle, and resistance by the aforementioned. My findings will historize the Nicaraguan uprising of 2018. It also gives an historical framework to my creative nonfiction memoir in part two of this study.

Part one, an historical analysis

Introduction

Nicaragua sits between Honduras and Costa Rica in the region called Central America. Like the rest of the Central American nations, Nicaragua suffered the damnation of colonialism by Spaniards (1519-1821). Along with colonialism, Nicaragua also suffered the damnation of the Somoza family dictatorship (1936-1979). Presently, an uprising against the government of Daniel Ortega's Social Security Reforms has occurred, causing more suffering to the population (2018-ongoing). This suffering is a 500-year laceration in Nicaragua that has not yet healed.

This laceration is the relationship between those with dominant power, and the Nicaraguan masses who have been oppressed with historical power tensions. Power tensions that continue to stress Nicaraguans and marginalize them politically and economically. Although I use multiple disciplines, an historical framework will be my primary discipline to examine Nicaragua. For example, the occupation by the United States of Nicaragua was sustained through an historical power tension (1912-1933). The historical power tension impoverished Nicaraguans. But it also ignited them for revolution.

A brief story of U.S. occupation.

What was the major reason for a U.S. occupation of Nicaragua? The major historical reason was for a desire to build a canal in Nicaragua. A canal to go through the waterways of Nicaragua to reach the gold that was discovered in northern California. For Euro North American imperial expansion into the global south (The term Euro North Americans in this study is used to define whites from the United States). To thus benefit Euro North Americans in the north. The canal would fulfill a capitalist ambition without Nicaraguan's interest in mind.

Sergio Ramirez in *Sandino Without Frontiers* points out, "in 1848 gold was discovered in

California, a region that the United States appropriated...by conquest in its war with Mexico” (15). Many Euro North Americans wanted to go to California. They wanted to seek out their fortune. However, for Euro North Americans crossing the north American continent from the east coast to the west would take them a long time.

The journey was also dangerous. For Native Nations would defend their lands. Lands that were constantly being violently usurped. For the occupation by the expanding white republic. In *Not A Nation of Immigrants...*, Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz points out, “Native Nations [resisting] settler spread...were an existential threat to settlers’ ambitions of “free land” [for]... empire” (13). As a result of the existential threat, Euro North American thus needed another route. Nicaragua would offer that other route to fulfill their capitalist ambitions.

In 1848, the Nicaraguan government accepted the economic world order of capitalism. They gave concessions to Euro North American businessman, Cornelius Vanderbilt. Vanderbilt would build a transport service through Nicaragua's waterways. This historical agreement would give Euro North-Americans seeking fortune the fastest route to California. Vanderbilt and his business partners would make millions off the transport service.

But over time, they would have disagreements. These disagreements would fuel a “civil conflict between Liberals and Conservatives in Nicaragua...North American mercenaries [were hired] ...money and arms [were supplied]”(16-17). The United States, U.S. American mercenaries, and self-interested Nicaraguan factions understood that to make profits. The waterways (more specifically, a canal) of Nicaragua were necessary for the economic world order of capitalism. These same groups knew they would become wealthy. The transport service however would not benefit poor Nicaraguans.

In 1893, the conservative government of Nicaragua was defeated by the Liberal military

dictatorship of General Jose Zelaya. Interested in building the canal, Ramirez points out, “[Zelaya...Always...[in] his plans...[was] the construction of a canal...Zelaya [believed in] the idea that progress...[is] achieved only through worldwide capitalist expansion” (18).

Concomitantly, President Theodore Roosevelt would go on and take Panama from Colombia to build a canal there. To fulfill the white republic’s imperial-capitalist ambitions.

Zelaya would thus seek Germany and Japan for canal concessions. But the United States did not like this. They were determined to control the country for their sake, and violently dominate Nicaragua for its resources and lands. Sergio Ramirez points out, " the United States...converted the state department into an agent for bankers...financiers...loan and mortgage operations... [in Nicaragua] ...the Marines became the police for these same bankers"(19).

As a white master overexploiting Africans in the U.S. colonial south, giving them generational white wealth. Nicaragua became such a place. The United States viewed Nicaragua as a colony, disregarding its sovereignty. With the help of the marines, their colonizing violence made sure Nicaragua produced conservative governments. These conservative governments would benefit the United States. In 1914, the United States would receive what it desired. The opportunity to build a canal (and construction for naval bases). The United States however never did build that canal. No one else did either. They occupied Nicaragua and controlled it.

Augusto Cesar Sandino

The white republic’s desire for a canal was the major historical harbinger for Euro North American domination in Nicaragua. But who was Augusto Sandino? How did he respond to the “Yankees”? Augusto Cesar Sandino (born in 1895) was a Nicaraguan turned radical/liberator and national hero. He took up arms against the “Yankees” occupation of Nicaragua and recruited overexploited Nicaraguans. They would organize the “Army of Defense of the National

Sovereignty of Nicaragua”.

From 1927-1933, Sandino fought against the U.S. for a liberated Nicaragua, and against their puppet, Jose Maria Moncada. Sandino was an anti-imperialist who viewed the invading United States as the major enemy. Consequently, the Nicaraguan poor, landless peasants, the serfs for foreign Euro North American corporations, “day laborers, sharecroppers, and field hands” went to war with Sandino. They took on the U.S. Marines invaders who were the vanguard for U.S. business and the U.S. government. Therefore, the “Army of Defense of the National Sovereignty of Nicaragua” needed to be direct in their actions.

In his political manifesto, July 1, 1927, Augusto Sandino responded to the U.S. and Conservative Nicaraguans. He proclaimed, “My greatest honor is to emerge from the bosom of the oppressed-...who have been disregarded... [by]shameless assassins...the Nicaraguan conservatives...of the Fatherland” (48). Sandino viewed Nicaraguan conservatives as a group of people who betrayed Nicaraguans. Who aligned themselves with the “invaders”. Sandino responded by picking up arms. He waged a war against Nicaraguan elite “traitors...[who]...went to the foreign enemy” (49).

Sandino would lead a revolution. He provoked, “blond invader...come you bunch of drug addicts; come murder us on our own soil where I await you...standing firmly” (49). With great courage, limited resources, and nothing to lose. Sandino would take on the giant of the North with so much power.

Sandino recognized the history of unconstitutional governments. They were placed by “Wall Street bankers” like Jose Maria Moncada. Sandino viewed the presidency of Moncada as illegal. He proclaimed several demands to the illegal Moncada government. Sandino demanded, “the United States Government immediately [should]...withdraw its occupation forces...

[presidents should] refuse...Yankee loan[s]...consider void...treaties, pacts, or agreements... [with the United States] (53-54). If these demands were not meant. The revolutionary liberation army would respond by force and with direct action.

Beyond his anti-imperialist demands and military actions, Sandino would demand the end of child labor by the Conservative government. He would not only recognize men's labor but women as well. Sandino recognized that both gendered groups had the right to unionize against overexploitation, and he responded with symbolism. With the flag of the liberation army, Sandino proclaimed "Red and Black are the flaming colors of our flag, symbolizing "Liberty and Death," that is, the firm determination to be "Free, Sovereign, and Independent" (82).

The Women of the Revolution

Romanticized figures of war have received statues in public squares like Augusto Cesar Sandino. In Latin America, these figures have disproportionately been men. However, women in Nicaragua were consistently involved in the liberation of Nicaragua. In the early days (1926-1933) with Sandino. During the Nicaraguan revolution (circa the 1960s-1980s), led by the FSLN (Sandinista National Liberation Front), women participated in the removal of the Somoza family dictatorship (1979). In *Sandino's Daughter's...*, Margaret Randall points out, "Women fought in the front lines as FSLN militants...worked undercover...and were involved in... anti-Somoza opposition movement(xii).

What conditions did the Somoza family dictatorship produce that Nicaraguan women responded with revolutionary participation? The family dictatorship produced extreme poverty. It produced unemployment, and underemployment by owning and controlling most of the country. The Somoza family dictated how the country was run, and who would benefit from its overexploitation.

Highlighting a dialectical relationship of extreme wealth and poverty, Randall points out, “poverty and economic backwardness is the underside of the development over the past 100 years of a dependent capitalist economy...[benefitting]... [U.S.] multinational corporations at the expense of the majority of Nicaraguans”(xiii). As a group living in a Nicaraguan sexist society, women were vulnerable to the dominant political power controlled by men. The control by men led to economic backwardness that directly impacted Nicaraguan women.

Single motherhood was a result of "unemployment, poverty, and insecurity" that impacted the fathers and husbands. Fathers and husbands therefore would abandon their families (a culturally accepted norm). They had the freedom to leave their families. Women thus suffered the hardship of raising children on their own. Randall states, "mothers would take any job... [with few options] ...domestic work or selling food...trinkets...Many women were forced into prostitution” (xiii). The desolate marginalization placed upon women thus stimulated a response by women. They would become revolutionary. The damnation for women was no longer an option.

Beyond picking up arms and fighting, Nicaraguan revolutionary women organized women of all social classes with the support of FSLN. *In Mobilization without Emancipation? Women's interest, the state, and Revolution in Nicaragua*, Maxine Molyneux states, “the FSLN recognized women’s oppression as something that had to be eliminated in the creation of a new society” (238). The FSLN supported gender equality and was determined to put an end to “economic, political, and cultural” inequality.

Women confronted issues that oppressed them as women. For example, during the last years of armed struggle (1977), Lea Guido became the *Minister of Public Health in the National Reconstruction Government*. In her testimony, Lea Guido states, “we organized a work

commission to look at women's problems...this was 1977...a year of tremendous repression...total lack of human rights in this country...horrible conditions...and torture of our comrades" (2).

During their first meetings, women from different social classes would participate. Their involvement was based on the protection (or lack thereof) of their racial and class status. Guido states, " "bourgeois [white]women...made it possible...to see certain government officials...They could...use international forums to denounce what was happening in Nicaragua"(3). Their bourgeois status protected them from physical assault, rape, or murder.

Their bourgeois status allowed them to have contacts with government officials of the Somoza regime. However, Guido states," these women had limitations... [they would take vacations] ...they would stop what they were doing...and go off to the resorts"(3). The peasant women of color had a different social reality.

Guido points out, "[in the meetings] ...peasant women...were willing to come... [from the] ...mountains. They talked about disappearances and the atrocities of the Guard...Testifying meant exposing themselves publicly"(4). The peasant women did not have the protection that their bourgeois sisters had. Peasant women lost family members to the Guard. Peasant women did not have the social capital. Or cultural value and major economic funds to go to resorts. To escape the problems from home. Peasant women faced their problems at every moment.

Peasant women like Amanda Pineda from the Nicaraguan hills gave testimony about the cruelty of the Somoza regime. Pineda states, "I'm a peasant woman...married...[with] children...always been poor...[I] get up at two in the morning...[make] tortillas...then work in the fields alongside [my husband] ...around 1963 we had a little coffee plot. My husband was working in the union" (82). FSLN comrades would come around. They would help Pineda and her husband pick coffee. They would leave literature to read. In those days workers were fighting

for higher wages.

Pineda points out, "the struggle against the landowners was gaining strength. That's when they began to call the Guard and the repression got very heavy...I began going to union meetings...the repression [however] cracked down on us"(84). Consequently, Pineda's husband went into hiding. The Guard found out he had joined the Nicaraguan Socialist Party. Pineda responded by joining the Organization of Democratic women. She would feed the FSLN comrades in her home and attend union meetings. One day Pineda gets arrested for her association with the FSLN.

Pineda explains the methods of brutality. And her experience while under arrest. Pineda states, "They used different kinds of approaches...torture...they would beat me...sometimes soft talk...When they came to rape me...it was unbearable...they...destroyed me. Raped me seventeen times" (87). Later, after her release from seven days of torture. She went to Managua to see a doctor. She didn't want to be pregnant.

Pineda's father would ask her why she joined the revolution. Men were the only ones that should participate in his view. Pineda highlights, "for him...men were the only ones who could study... [women should] devote [themselves] to our home" (91). The revolutionary struggle and women's participation changed all that. Nicaraguan women not only had the right to participate in the struggle. They needed to "rebuild this [colonial] wounded country and to fight for our own rights as women..." (92).

FSLN and land Reform

To remedy the historical situation of peasants like Pineda. The FSLN committed to "social justice, popular mobilization, and participatory democracy". What was the FSLN? What did they do? Aviva Chomsky in *Central America's Forgotten History; Revolution, Violence, And*

the Roots of Migration, highlights, "The Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), founded in the early 1960s... drew together...popular organizing...popular church, and nationalist, anti-imperialist, and Marxist analysis"(99). The central goal of FSLN was for a liberated Nicaragua. From the over-exploitation of the Somoza family dictatorship.

The FSLN took direct action for predominantly every member of FSLN were impacted by the Somoza family dictatorship; therefore, they became participants in the liberation of Nicaragua. Chomsky points out, " The Sandinista critique of their country...was sui generis ([Unique]): it grew out of their own history and everyday realities...like rural landlessness, and poverty, the expansion of cotton and cattle...USAID...radical strands of Catholicism"(100). They also had a direct experience with U.S. occupation for decades, and the Guard (trained by the United States) that functioned as Somoza's personal police.

Land reform historically had been a major issue for FSLN. Aviva Chomsky points out, " land reform. Rural poverty, unequal land distribution, exploitative working conditions on plantations, and landlessness [of] rural Nicaraguans [...needed immediate attention]"(105). After the revolution defeated Somoza, lands (20%) were expropriated by FSLN. These lands were for the export of coffee, sugar, cotton, or cattle. Because of their export earnings, the Sandinistas turned these same lands into state-run farms. But Chomsky points out, "Landless Campesinos continued to agitate for...their own land"(106).

To respond to the demand for landless campesinos. The FSLN government in 1981 produced an agrarian land reform. Chomsky states, " Large landholdings that were abandoned, idle, and decapitalized would be confiscated for redistribution"(106). FSLN tried to respond to campesino demands. And equally, inspire commitment from the large landowners. To be loyal to the "national project". Ergo, to finance the promise of the revolution. FSLN needed the export

profits of coffee, sugar, cotton, or cattle to develop their social programs.

It was necessary for the FSLN to respond to the interaction and contradictions between the rural poor and the landed elite. A study on this found that " One of the government's biggest headaches... was trying to resist the demands of peasants in order not to threaten the well-off landowners"(106). This contradiction in the agrarian land reform, when applied, for the oppressed campesino, produced a conflict with the landed elite. Chomsky points out "Plantation workers wanted better wages and conditions; landowners did not want to have to pay more...when peasants got access to their own lands, they didn't want to work in the export economy"(106).

Over the upcoming decade (the 1980's), the Sandinista government would oscillate between demands and needs of all social classes and produced new reforms. The national project of land reform ultimately needed to benefit all Nicaraguans. It was no easy task in a country that historically had a wealthy landed elite. Which depended on the poverty of others and their over exploitation.

Literature

With literature, Nicaraguans have responded with the written word; They have explored the Nicaraguan experience, social issues, their national and personal histories. Using poetry, memoirs, short stories, and the like, Nicaraguans have produced diverse works from their homeland or beyond their borders. In *A Survey of Central American Literature...*, Jose Colin and Lourdes Yen point out, "[Nicaraguan] literature [is] resistance... [a] public awareness...of...external repression...characterized by social issues and protest" (35-36). To borrow from Aviva Chomsky, Nicaragua literature is "Sui Generis" (Unique).

In the anthology of Latin American poets, *Resistencia; Poems of Protest and Revolution*.

Nicaraguan poet, Daisy Zamora in her poem, "Daguerreotype of a mother", responds to her mother's limitations in Nicaragua because she was a woman. A sexist Nicaragua that historically oppressed women to the private space of the home. Who limited the humanity of women.

In contrast, the public space was for dictatorships with social, cultural, political, and economic power for men to attain. About her mother, Zamora states, "You understood everything perfectly...the limits, your place. Your intelligence was wasted...your imagination confined to...household work"(138). The mother had to keep her mouth shut. To speak was rebellion. However, Zamora proclaims, "your dignity nourished my rebellion...your silence [,]my will to speak"(138).

In her poem, "Precious Mahogany", Nicaraguan poet Brigitte Zacarias Wattson responds to the colonial settler state of Nicaragua's behavior with Mahogany. Precious to Nicaragua, the colonial settler state turned Mahogany into a commodity. Mahogany lost its sacred protection for the world economic system of capitalism. Zacarias Wattson states her environmental activism, "I tried to defend you...I love[d]you...Protecting you...From those who claim to love you" (162). The capitalist in Nicaragua turns land and resources into commodities for an export economy that benefits the ruling class. There is no love, care, or protection for Mahogany. Zacarias Wattson proclaims, "They see you bleed...they laugh... [make money] ...from your suffering" (162).

Nicaraguan poet Ernesto Cardenal in *The Doubtful Strait/ El Estrecho Dudoso* highlights Nicaragua's historical experience with the Spanish invasion. Applying historical documents, Cardenal reveals the words from Christopher Columbus' diary. Columbus, as a representative of the Spanish crown, documented what he saw to report back to his bosses. In *Not a Nation of Immigrants...*, Dunbar-Ortiz points out, "Columbus [and his] enterprise [was] funded and

sponsored by the king and queen of [Spain]" (32). Columbus would go on and express "inferior views" about the people who were already here (in the so-called Americas).

In song II, Columbus states, " [the Natives] are not very attractive...They have no chiefs or war leaders...moving uncommanded...obey know one...their way of eating is very crude"(7). Here, Columbus' observation was ignorant, limited, and dismissive. The observation is based on Columbus viewing himself as superior to "them" the "other". It therefore allowed him to be brutally shameless for wealth.

Columbus goes on, stating that although Natives were well built and clean. They were not interested in "gold or precious stones". "Gold or precious stones" had different meanings for indigenous peoples. They did not equate them to what would be Eurocentric commodification for wealth accumulation. Columbus enriched Spain with resources that would be stolen from other groups of people like the Indigenous of Nicaragua.

In this context, Cardenal reveals a social system that was different to the European one. Cardenal highlights an Indigenous social system that challenged Columbus' limited world view. In song IX, Cardenal states, " They were not governed by...a lord.... rather by a council of elders...[who] chose an overall war captain...when he died or was killed...they chose another...sometimes they killed him...if he was doing harm to the republic"(55). Here, we can see how Indigenous groups did develop a social system that had rules. They imposed their rules to protect the "republic". They governed by council which dictated terms collectively.

The collective had more importance than the individual. This social structure had a way of being that became distorted by the violence that came in from Europe. That highlighted individual gain over community gain.

Relationally, "Pedrarias Davila" presented in song X became Nicaragua's "first dictator".

Cardenal points out that Davila introduced the European system of slavery into Nicaragua. Europeans would view the Americas as a region of surplus value to be exploited. Davila thus viewed enslaved Indians as animals to work the land for their economic gains. In *The Depopulation of Nicaragua in the Sixteenth Century*, Linda Newson states, “[In Nicaragua] ...the sale of [Indian] slaves was a profitable business...the subjugation of the Indian population, colonization...resulted in...Profits from the sale of slaves” (271-272). Thus, Cardenal further states, “[Davila would be] the first "promoter of business" in Nicaragua (of Indians and negroes) ...so that the settlers of these parts might prosper”(57).

Upon arrival, the Spanish settlers of these parts applied racist ideas upon groups of people they viewed as inferior for economic, social, and political control. These racist ideas still accompany contemporary Nicaraguans no matter their social status. In *Skin color, Race, and Racism in Nicaragua*, Roger Lancaster points out, “always at issue...in...daily power plays...that began with the Spanish conquest...[are] things Spanish or white [as superior] ...things Indian or Black [as inferior]” (9). As Cardenal is concerned, the Spanish would turn the Americas, upside down. All for their benefit. Racism became part of the laceration that has remained in Nicaragua. Pedrarias Davila was the harbinger for the historical tension that has produced social problems to this day.

The diaspora of U.S. Central Americans, of Nicaraguan descent, have responded with literary works as well. Their works represent those who left their homelands and carry with them a transnational historical memory. Others were born in the wealthy white republic of the United States. Many have escaped violence, destabilization, and poverty; the United States government, in big part, is responsible for U.S. Central American transnational historical realities. As a result, U.S. Central American literature is "a significant piece of a much larger picture".

As Leticia Hernandez-Linares highlights, "Central American immigration to the United States... [can be] traced to the [wars of the] 1950s and 1960s...to immigration patterns in the 1970s and 1980s... earthquakes, hurricanes, the importation of gang violence from the U. S.... economic instability...push our gente to make the journey"(10). How have these immigrants, refugees, first, second, and third generation U.S. Central Americans responded to their experiences? Racialized in the United States, these groups have responded through poems, essays, short stories, creative nonfiction, and memoirs.

In Gabriela Poma's poem "Las Ofensivas" (The offenders-feminine noun,), Poma responds to an internalized guilt. She finally is liberated to sing ABBA songs. Yet feels emotionally imprisoned. Poma states, "the revolution, had produced girls, Lip-synching ABBA songs"(144). However, to "Lip-sync" ABBA songs, the young girls' fathers had to die. Their uncles died. Their brothers died. In this poem, the revolutionary death of fathers, uncles, brothers represent a future that is bright. Those martyrs died so others could celebrate their humanity with the joy of song. For Poma this was hard to accept.

Silvio Sirias, born in Los Angeles, California, a transnational writer, writes in "Writing About Central America; A Translation of Love", an intimate memoir of Nicaragua. With his transnational memoir, he desired to become a writer. He wanted to inform English speakers of the love and pride he felt for his "ancestral homeland". This desire took shape during his adolescent years living in Nicaragua. Sirias states, "I came to adore the country...its people...the stories...I shed my American skin...embraced a new identity...loving the seven years I spent in [Nicaragua] (208).

Like many U.S. Central Americans who are transnational. They never break the bond with their ancestral homeland. Sirias recognized the humanity of his people, their stories, their

way of being, and fell in love. Thus, he wanted to produce literature that would counter the master narrative of the United States that views Nicaraguans as problems.

In the United States, Nicaragua is viewed as a problematic place, and in the distance somewhere in the unknown. Nicaragua has problematic people who are fleeing and are coming to a society that doesn't understand them nor want them. They are rejected at the U.S. colonial border as they flee and seek refugee status. But they are dehumanized like their Caribbean sibling, the Haitians. Who are currently seeking refuge at the U.S. southern border. Sirias goes on explaining his transnational relationship to Nicaragua. Which was based on living in Nicaragua, fully "being" with folks who are human.

Coming back to Los Angeles, going back to Nicaragua and Los Angeles once more is to be complete. A whole human being. Sirias concludes, "today...my life has never been more centered...I... reside...in a cultural and linguistic yin and yang"(209). Living in a colonial settler society like the United States, as part of the diaspora in which the United States, in part, produced. Sirias, as a "Nicaraguan American writer," tells the reader that to be transnational is to be a whole human being. Who has a past, a present, and a future.

Although not a Nicaraguan herself (She is Chicana), I would like to include the diary of punk rocker, Alice Bag. In her diary entitled *Pipe Bomb for The Soul* written during her stay in Nicaragua. Bag reveals how the new FSLN government responded to the high illiteracy rate among Nicaraguans. In the 1980's, Alice Bag, still a punk rocker, would attend college.

To pay for college, she became a teacher's aide. Her experience with Central American children in Los Angeles inspired her to become a teacher. However, due to her student debt, Alice Bag would return to college (circa 1985). At college, a friend of hers would give her a pamphlet about Nicaragua. Bag states, "[the pamphlet was about] a place called the Nica school,

where one can volunteer to work in Nicaragua, learn about the revolution, and live with a local family” (5).

In 1986, Alice Bag arrives in Nicaragua. The class Bag joined at the Nica school had students of all ages. An example of instruction is as follows. Bag states, “The teacher writes...on the board *‘La reforma agraria recupera la production de la Tierra Para El pueblo’*” (31). The sentence is about land reform. The teacher asks the class if they have any comments on the sentence. Bag states, “[one student asked what] types of crops are beneficial (31). A discussion on land reform occurs. In the context of extreme poverty and revolution, we must remember that the students had never had the opportunity to go to school. Nor to think critically about their position in society.

The sentence on land reform reflects the students’ lives. It shows how land reform can impact them as the pueblo. The teacher goes back to the sentence. She points to the word, “*recupera*”. The class reads the word out loud. Bag states, “She breaks [the word] into syllables...she underlines...*re*” (31). The teacher then asks what other vowels can be combine with only the letter “*r*” (from, “*re*”).

The class engages eagerly, creating “...new syllables...constructed with the previous [syllables]...introduce...[new] consonant and vowels” (32). About this lesson, Bag concludes, “to have...students go from understanding the meaning of the sentence...to breaking down...words into syllables and letters” (32). Bag recognizes students learn the power of language. The impact ideas have on people. Bag states, “to learn to read and write is to harness...power” (32).

Somoza and Ortega

The tragedy of leaders who lead the fight against an oppressor (those that cause suffering)

is that they too can become the oppressor. Daniel Ortega was a leader in the Sandinista revolution. He fought against the Somoza family dictatorship. Unfortunately, Daniel Ortega has responded like Somoza, causing suffering. In the article, *Chilling Similarities Between Ortega and the Somoza* in ENVÍO from Central American University in Managua. Retired General, Hugo Torres, of FSLN, explains what Somoza did during his rule. The General thus provides comparisons with how Ortega is responding today.

General Torres states, “Somoza...converted the National Guard into his own Praetorian army...organized shock troops to repress his opponents”. The General goes on to state that Somoza would reduce the power of private businesses to only “their ” businesses. He would impede any political participation from business leaders, limiting their power. The General states, “Somoza...enjoyed the backing of the U.S. governments over all the years” (45 years to be exact). Somoza’s public policies only came along with sponsorships for his regime, controlling, therefore, Nicaraguan society.

In comparison, the General points out Daniel Ortega’s (the president of the current government) similarities to Somoza. He states, “[Ortega] has taken over... the FSLN, the party responsible for the revolution, perverting it... [making it] his own family-based party”. Other similarities include training shock troops. Ortega’s public policies with sponsorships, controlling society. Ortega has the same views regarding private businesses. He himself once said to business leaders, “You dedicate yourself to business and leave politics to me”.

A sector of the national political class that Daniel Ortega advocates for responds like the Somoza dictatorship. General Torres points out, “[They have] no national vision...[focusing] on [their] small circle...their own personal or group interests... [and like Somoza] use...power for personal enrichment”. Daniel Ortega and the national political class also have amassed wealth.

And the Nicaraguan people have been denied access to wealth to better their lives.

Revolutionary Protest

Daniel Ortega and the national political class have amassed wealth since Ortega was elected in 2007. They consequently have caused suffering to the most vulnerable of Nicaraguans. Nicaraguans in 2018 responded with an uprising against the former Sandinista leader. Who at least ideologically was for the people in his revolutionary past. The Nicaraguan uprising of 2018 was led first by the elderly. They then were joined by student activists, and they quickly would be joined by many of the civil society at large. The protest was in response to Ortega's Social Security Reforms.

In *The Nicaraguan Protest Crisis of 2018-2019: Assessing the Logic of Government Responses to Protests*, Graig Klein points out, "The protests were a direct reaction to... social security reforms... set to increase tax retentions...It also imposed a rise in contributions to a social security fund by employees"(4). Ortega would reduce pension benefits for the elderly and extend the retirement age to 60-65. How then did the protest develop and what occurred?

On the 18th of April, protests began against the Social Security Reforms in Managua (Capitol of Nicaragua), Leon, and Matagalpa. These were peaceful marches. However, the government responded ruthlessly. Klein points out, "These marches ended in clashes with Sandinista groups...riot police...violence and... government repression...spiraled into intense clashes"(5). Because of the intense clashes, the government responded by a six-month withdraw of the Social Security Reforms on April 22nd. Nevertheless, there was more violent clashes between the protesters, the state and other groups that felt let down.

Klein highlights, "small-scale farmers, human rights activists, political opposition...former Sandinista figures...felt betrayed...The private sector... the church... an

economic protest turned into a "revolutionary" protest that demanded the change in regime"(5). As the revolutionary protest got bigger. The protest went into different cities. The government responded with more repression. Klein explains, "The government mobilized police... parapolice units...the government... remov[ed] barricades and road blockades used by protesters"(5-6). Months of revolutionary protests, increased violence, harassment, and intimidation by the state led to Ortega, on February 19th, to begin a dialogue with the opposition.

The Open Veins of Nicaragua's Covid Crisis.

Although one might think that the government's response to the current Covid pandemic has nothing to do with Nicaragua's revolutionary history for human rights. We must look at what the constitution of the Republic of Nicaragua states. And how the Ortega regime has responded to the Covid pandemic. In *Nicaragua Health Care: A Post-Revolutionary Failure*, Paxton Duff points out, "[The Sandinista] revolution spawned hope for the implementation of a progressive social agenda...universal health care". In the Nicaraguan constitution today, the constitution states, "Every Nicaraguan has an equal right to health. The state shall establish the basic conditions for its promotion, protection, etc....".

When Ortega was re-elected in 2007. Ortega had the opportunity to implement the socialist agenda of universal health care. And fulfill the promise of the constitution, "Every Nicaraguan has an equal right to health". However, Ortega's response to the COVID pandemic has been absent of the "universal health care" constitutional principle. In *COVID-19 in the Americas and the Erosion of Human Rights for the Poor*, Peter J. Hotez points out, "[Daniel Ortega] in Nicaragua...has rejected the opinions of scientists and experts...have failed to...implem[ent]...effective strategies to confront...COVID-19".

During the uprising of 2018, Ortega's government repressed the protesters. His government took up public spaces so that protestors couldn't gather in mass. Yet, during the COVID pandemic, Hotez points out, "[Daniel Ortega] ignored WHO recommendations for physical distancing...encouraged mass gatherings...keeping schools...businesses open...". The consistent undermining of the Nicaraguan people is related to those who have been corrupted by power and wealth. Those groups living in poverty, women, mothers, the peasants, indigenous peoples, and the elderly have been thus far the most impacted by COVID-19. As Hotez points out, "COVID-19...has...a... human rights dimension...the poor and underserved populations...[are] at increased risk of COVID-19".

Conclusion

As Nicaraguans continue to suffer damnation. By Ortega's inability to care for the populous in the context of the Covid -19 pandemic. It becomes apparent, which a historical framework reveals, that those most at risk are those who suffer Nicaraguan melancholia. They are the ones who pick-up arms like Augusto Sandino who established a liberation army for the oppressed of Nicaragua. The oppressed who risked their lives during the Uprising of 2018 against the Social Security Reforms.

Unlike those who continue to have dominant power in Nicaragua. Those folks that are at risk are sick and tired of their Nicaraguan melancholia. After centuries of political domination by those in power who only care about their own aggrandizement. Those at risk continue to survive and fight for their right to live as full human beings. Nicaraguan nihilism is transitory but the 500 plus year old laceration goes deep into the skin of Nicaraguans. James Baldwin once said, "I can't be a pessimist because I am alive...I am forced to believe...we can survive". Nicaraguans are forced to believe, and their history of revolution participation has proved it.

Part Two, A Creative Nonfiction Memoir.

We observed the 2018 Nicaraguan manifestations from our television set. “Dios, Mio”. We watched aghast. With pinched nerves. The white republic’s North American mainstream news coverage was a giant whale mouth. It captured topics. It held topics. Then filtered topics. Its giant whale mouth then pushed out limited ideas about those that were risking their lives.

Against the migraine headache of the Ortega regime. Nicaraguans found themselves again healing the laceration since Spanish conquest. The North American giant whale mouth however did not consider the people’s voices. They were to be trapped. Then swallowed. As dominant Anglocentric narrators of the world. Their fat whale tongue moved on endlessly for more topics. We knew we needed to shift how we consumed our information about the uprising.

We knew the streets were a multitude of raw spoken word conversationalist. “Speaking” out, they walked over broken streets of colonialism. “Speaking”, they sliced raw onions. “Speaking” diced onions were tossed on the hot pan with oil. Cooking for over 500 years. The pan is hot. The onions turning golden brown.

(The melody of Nicaraguan Spanish swings gently. It is sweet as Sapodilla. But violated by the Spaniards linguistically. The Spanish came in. They brutalized the indigenous tongue. And produced a bifurcated tongue. Onions move around).

Struggling out a dignified existence, they are “Speaking”. Go on the “happenings” that produce trepidation. The streets “Speaking”. Go into barrios. People “Speaking”. With cell phones clandestinely from rows of trees. They are behind papayas, behind the cemetery, in taxis, streets. They are “Speaking” into homes where dogs barked with alarm. Brown life pushes

sounds of street mouths. To street ears. Concrete homes tremble as spoken word comes through black fences of war. Homes painted with colonial bright colors of domination, imitating Spain. Other homes are makeshift of perpetual poverty.

Managua

Managua “spoke” to us. I like to say, “Manaaagua”, fires and earthquakes have caused lamentations to, “Manaaagua”. The great poet, Ruben Dario, is deified in “Manaaaagua”. Every household has a wooden rocking chair in “Manaaagua”. Red beans simmer. No winters. Hot all year round. Simmer. “Manaaaagua”, your tremendous wet heat would melt the pomade off my hair. Your Gallo Pinto famous dish is eaten. Your lanky children walk back home with a liter of coke.

Your street futbol, dangerous. A prison with Maradona passion. Your dog’s lazy, bathing in the sun. Suddenly, they wake up. The alarm from their throats goes off. Your trees are still. They laugh with the wind. Your beautiful women, intoxicating Mangos. They stand on entrance doorways. Your handsome men are macaws in flight. They walk away somewhere. Your old folks, a history book, remembering. “Manaaagua”, a cool breeze comes suddenly from the Pacific Ocean. It cools down the city. Your trees laugh. My eyes have seen the glory, of “Manaaagua”. The capital of Nicaragua; you risk your life for liberation against sadistic, united, shoplifters who have caused the laceration.

Barrio, Valenzuela

Colonial wound. Laceration in Barrio “Valenzuela”. My grandmother’s maiden last name was “Valenzuela”. She made me happy. Like pink when I paint. Like Fernando “Valenzuela” who played for the Dodgers in Mexican L.A. Richie (Valens) too was, “Valenzuela”. Chicano rock star of Mexican L.A. He told the world about “La Bamba”. A laceration in the last name.

Barrio “Valenzuela” punctured. My wife's family is from barrio Valenzuela. It spoke to us, “the tsunami of manifestations, manifestations, high sea waves of manifestations are crashing”.

“Speaking”, Valenzuela stated with its gates and doors locked, “Blue and white flags are waving, distress, waving in the heat, demanding, demanding, loud, loud, loud, ‘Ortega, out!!’”. Ortega looks like a White-faced Capuchin. Valenzuela laughs. “The manifestations finally have grasped “Manaaagua” fully. We began to get worried. Pinched nerves. Then “Valenzuela,” told us the manifestations have now taken the whole country. Laceration. Tsunami. “This looks like the beginning of a revolution”- “Valenzuela” claimed. “Para Bailar La Bamba” you need a revolution.

Our stomachs dropped. Our hearts followed like a centipede. Aghast. Palpitations went faster. Valenzuela said, “the police are kidnapping young men from their homes because the state does not like agitators”. “Valenzuela” cried. Tears coming down from telephone poles. They went over bridges, on concrete blocks, in plastic flowers, on motorcycles, and children can’t go to school.

Laceration. “...the police are snatching the young men off the streets”. Young men disappear into the mysterious concrete. Behind interlocking tresses of thick suffocating mane. These are dark jail cells – ‘those agitators!!’. Valenzuela feels helpless. Scratching its head. Beads of sweat. Wiping its tears from windowsills. Valenzuela proclaims, “People are going to take up arms”. We told ourselves, “Should we still travel to Nica? Se está poniendo caliente”. The students have taken over the university. Graffiti quotes the rebellion-

JUSTICIA shake the can, 19 ABRIL, 2018, shake the can, ME DUELE RESPIRAR, put your mask on, shake the can, POLICIA MIERDA, shake the can, SE BUSCA ASESINOS, shake the

can NO MAS A DICTATURA, get another can, ORTEGA QUE SE RINDA TU MADRE, ATT EL PUEBLO, shake the can, POLICIA ASESINOS!!!!!!! And another brown woman, shakes the can.

The Isthmus

The volcano Masaya has spoken with its people. “Erupt now, for liberation”. Volcano Momotombo said, “be an active volcano, make them tremble”. Volcano Las Pilas said, “Pick up the can, spray, ‘Criminales’...that is the truth”. Before the manifestations erupted, my wife had booked our flight to visit her family. The punctured hot land of revolutions was calling us. Volcano San Cristobal said, “do it scared”. At the precipice of full revolt, all the beautiful people, family, and places were calling us.

The isthmus. Managua. Surrounded by, agua. To the north, earthquakes. To the south, earthquakes. “Manaaagua”. It leaves my mouth like a kiss. Nicaragua. Reggaeton sounds. El Pueblo! El Pueblo! Indigenous power. African power. European violation. Colonial wound. Deforestation. Punctured. Ancestral mestizaje. ¡El Pueblo, ¡El Pueblo! 500 years. The historical tension: wealth is sucked out and poverty comes in; that is the laceration.

Blunt trauma; the genocide of Indians. Rape and conquest. Enslavement of Africans. Racism and Sexism. ¡El Pueblo! ¡El Pueblo! Spaniard’s diseases. The Conquistador, Gil Gonzalez Davila was sent to explore because Nicaragua was rich, not poor. Davila, you and yours, overexploited. Here we with Spanish surnames sit. “Valenzuela”. Davila has a statue in his honor. Fuck me. The laceration rips the veins open. Christianity came in, spiritual abuser. Foreign cosmology. African enslavement for sugar, cotton, mahogany. More slaves were brought to Latin America than the United States. Resistance. Racism. Sexism. Capitalism.

¡El Pueblo! ¡El Pueblo! Decolonial historical response is-Resistance people power.

Dissension. ¡El Pueblo! ¡El Pueblo! Machetes. Plantains. Coffee. Cotton-export for historical Anglo/European consumption. “We are still colonized,” says volcano Zapatera. “Go fight like Zapata,” says again, volcano Zapatero. Spanish colonial death culture came in. Everything is upside down. Colonial wound, we see the bones. ¡El, Pueblo! ¡El, Pueblo! Thieves. Pillaging. Oro!!!!!! Where is it?!! Excavation, Anglo imperialist occupation. Assholes. The CIA-hijos de mierda. Regan. Capitalism. And Sandino is holding a machete over the pentagon.

This time...

I hadn't been to Central America since 1989. In 1989, my mother and I flew to Guatemala. To surprise my father. To show him what a lovely boy I was. The boy he abandoned. Who loved soccer. Who loved him. Who was confused by wet dreams. Who saw the virgin Mary, illuminating like the moon. She was protecting my mother in her sleep with a cloak. Who didn't know what to do when my incorporeal body began to rise. My body was above my sleeping physical body, “Am I dying?”

I began to yell for you dad. My mouth was full of my pillow. What do I do with this body that is changing? How do I take care of my mother? How do I tell her to date someone else? That it's OK. How do I study? How do I get a job? Why did I grow up in Southern California poverty. And you went back to Guatemala? And now you have another kid! Yup, I found out you have another kid. Same age as my son. You left me here. And my two sisters from my mom's best friend. Were you a whore?

I was going to America's isthmus again. This time as an adult. And this time to meet my wife's family; into the other Central American sibling belonging to the ring of fire, Nicaragua. Colonial wound. The danger was plowing the land. Violence was a hot stove. Anxiety had red

eyes. There was police brutality. Police kidnappings. Sleepless gunshot nights. Daniel Ortega. And the CIA. Hijos de mierda. The embers of tension were floating in the air. They would not die out.

Oh, by the way

The Anglo north's presence in Nica consistently has been a destabilizing force. In Nicaragua, the United States is cannibalistic. It just keeps eating human bone and money comes out. In the Central American region, the United States gourmandizes. The isthmus has asthma. Laceration. Nicaragua is rich but its people are made poor. Have you ever heard of William Walker?

He was illegal in our Central American region. Around the mid-1800s, he became a Manifest Destiny junkie. High as fuck on that Manifest Destiny doctrine shit with white/protestant supremacy. He invaded Mexico. He illegally began a war with the Republic of Mexico.

Like many foreigners, he wanted to hijack Nicaragua too, for himself. With mercenaries from the racist American south. Walker would take Nicaragua. Walker wanted to give the United States another slave colony to produce wealth for the white republic. Walker would ultimately be caught and executed. The Anglo north has always been the problem for Nicaragua. Nicaragua is not a problem. It faces problems. Laceration. Nicaragua.

Hit The Streets

Manifestations went in the spring of 2018. Hit the streets. Like Black Lives Matter rolled out against the vanguard of white supremacy, the police. BLM went. I went with them too. Solidarity homie. Hit the streets. Like Chicano power in L.A. went. Like the American Indian Movement, went. All against white supremacy. The Children of Sandino know how to hit the

streets. They go and cover their faces. They have been here before. Improvised weapons. The brown fist in the air. Young brown women. Brown men. Working folks. Elderly folk. Intellectuals-all of them, went.

Multiple blue and white national flags waving. Multiple voices in unison proclaiming an end to the Ortega regime. The white-faced Capuchin. The manifestations were against the social security reforms by President Daniel Ortega. Inequality was piercing the soul of la gente-and they were not having it. Ortega used to be for the people. A true Sandinista. However, he was now fat with wealth like Trump's back fat. His heart a rotten avocado with mold inside.

Ortega wanted to increase taxes. Ortega wanted to take away pensions. In a country with a population of 6 million, this new protest, which was leading to another revolution against Ortega, went everywhere. Everyone get a gun. Everyone get a machete. Everyone moves, nimbly. Then kick the neoliberal donkey in the ass.

Sleepless gunshot nights. Colonial wound. In the Fall of 2018, Ortega declared all protests illegal. Motherfucker. Long live the activists! Long live el pueblo de Nicaragua! Long live the protesting elderly! Long live the college students that took it to Ortega! Long live Reggaeton barrio sounds. ¡El pueblo unido, jamás será vencido!

An idea

Mexican southern California. Home of the East L.A. Mexican American blowouts of 1968. Against anti-Mexican American racism. By white school administrators and teachers. From here, my father-in-law texted me. He texted me about an idea. He and my mother-in-law had. We all wanted to go to Nicaragua with grandpa and grandma (who is my wife's aunt, but that is another story). They were going to leave from Mexican southern California. We were going to leave from the pacific northwest. Then we would meet up with them in Nicaragua. But

this uprising was impacting our decision.

However, my father-in-law told us that they would fly out first. For certainty. For security that our privilege allowed us. They would be there for a month. We told them, “Esta bien”.

Privilege. And be communicating with us. Privilege. Letting us know how things were really on the ground. Privilege. With day-to-day people. People’s voices, listening. Telling. Informing. My wife’s family, explaining. Red beans, boiling. The rice, done. Coke. Wooden chairs rocking. The family went on with gesticulations, “It’s frightening. It reminds me of the revolution”. Talking with Grandpa with a Buddha face. With sweet Grandma that gets shy with my embraces.

Grandma, who is my wife’s aunt and second mom, said, “it reminds me of the revolution”.

In barrio Valenzuela where we would stay. Conversations, conversations went on, “And the CIA, they are here too”. “Fuck, no surprise there”. “They are taking our boys”. Valenzuela was sorta safe. Valenzuela where people usually took strolls on the evening streets. I saw this one time. It was elegant and full of tradition. It never happened again because the revolution was coming. A fat albino man would say hi to me. A nod up of the head. On evening streets. I saw the best soccer game in the world on evening streets. The soccer ball was ugly and brutalized. Like Daniel Ortega’s white Capuchin face. His wife looked awful too, looking like a construction worker’s dirty elbow.

Walking the broken streets of colonialism. After a month of daily contact, my father-in-law told us to “come”. Nicaragua is a ball of fire. But I assure you. You will be safe with me. My father-in-law is a man of no fear. And his heart is made of iron. And if you mess with his brown-eyed grandchildren-your life is done. With much trepidation, we decided to go to Nicaragua. We did not know when this opportunity would come up again. “Do it scared”, the volcano Zapatera said.

Coronavirus has hit Nicaragua. Ortega behaves like a neoliberal donkey. We haven't been back. Hurricanes now are punching Nicaragua. Roughing it up. Left hook. Uppercut. Body shots. Nicaragua cannot be knocked down. Another punch. Jab. Jab. Cars are floating down the streets. Like toy cars in a bathtub. Bulging hurricane muddy waters. Water floods towns. Some people can only stare. Colonial wound. We went inside the colonial wound. On our flight, there were only 10 people.

Poems

Poem 1. Here in the waist of the Americas. I go inside Managua. El barrio Valenzuela is where we will reside for the next seven days. Humidity goes deep into this man. Managua, you wet my lungs. I can't stop sweating. I walk around the barrio. It's an oven's heat.

Poem 2. In barrio Valenzuela, a brown woman holds a white baby with yellow hair. Marine occupation. German immigration. An Afro-Nicaraguan man says "Buenos dias". The English opened further the colonial wound. In the 17th century, Blacks would be found cutting Mahogany.

Poem 3. Gesticulations go with the flow of Nicaraguan speech.

They give similes like tamarind trees. We want a cola. Walking, someone points to go that Way to the market. They roll their hand out. Go up one block. Bend left on the block.

Right there you can buy plantains. Cookies. Cola. All that. Managua doesn't have addresses. They just have blocks.

Poem 4. A man says "una nube está llena de agua". He is right. It begins to rain. Rain stops. We

went for a walk. Everything became cool. We began to walk to where my wife's mother was born. The sky was blue and clear. We are walking. It looks like a war zone. The sun is slamming its heat on us. A car goes by full of men. They yell "there's a protest there. Don't go. The cops are beating up people". We then heard gunshots. "Pop, pop, pop!!!"

We turned on another street. We got ice cream. Our kids had no idea what's was going on.

Poem 5-We traveled to the Caribbean side of life in a commuter plane. Where the Spanish I was told couldn't defeat the indigenous. Africa broke every chain link. In the Caribbean, morning agua-pura-rain keeps on coming down. Straight and hard on the rojo dirt. On colorful homes, rain comes down, hitting tin roofs, on people going-gone on the corner, into blocks, riding their motorcycles. Puddles here. There. It rained all last night and in the morning. Suddenly I heard a big pow!!, plap, posh, pop, rak, on the tin roof. I asked, "what the hell was that?!" Someone said, "un coco".

Poem 6-In Nicaragua, I remember how to go in and re-enter the inside of the plantain that carries with it the colloquial, central American, Nicaraguan Spanish- like "Ideay", "puchica", "A la mano", "ba pue", "buenas", "dale pues". Although my family spoke Guatemalan Spanish, Nicaraguan Spanish comforts me like a rolled corn tortilla we all eat.

Poem-7 I have spoken so much Spanish in Nicaragua that my tongue rolls out into a circus. Jovial me. Big ass smile. The vowels "A, E, I, O, U" are found in markets, taxis, homes, ice cream shops, airports, and on horses. With lovers and revolutionary students. My heart is Latin American for sure. Spanish, its metaphor. My Spanish jumps behind a pick-up truck, packed with folks, going into the wind. Old Nissan trucks. Old Toyota trucks. My Spanish goes. My stupid

face has a dumb smile. I'm living incomplete in the white republic. Where we are not wanted.

Poem 8-The rage of the civil unrest is everywhere. Even the sewers feel it. Even the birds flying high in their rainbow arch feel it. The guy on his motorcycle, his wife, their child, and a gas tank feel it. Tension is palpable like a dark jungle. Death is walking and looking for young boys. Sometimes the young boys make fun of each other. Of death. To get by. One boy jokes with another. "Well, if they take you at least there will be one less Indian in the house!!". One late night, one of the boys escaped to see his girlfriend. A butterfly was inside his stomach. He made love to her. She made love to him. They were both wet. The butterfly flew away.

Poem 9- 3 am and dogs are barking. Alarms. Shots woke us up. The night silence has anxiety. Bark dogs bark. There are fires right in the middle of the streets, surrounding our block. More shots. No one saw anything even if they did. Everyone knows why fires burn.

Poem 10-There are balls of fire in rubber tires. Their black smoke rises towards the heavens. It disappears in the celestial mantelpiece. One ball of fire on one street. One ball of fire on another. Don't go there. It's a warning. Its rage. And no one does.

Poem 11-It was painful today. A deep sigh of relief was let out into the sea. Some normalcy was felt when we purchased eggs. Yesterday, and the day before there were no eggs. Lots of eggs now. Today, they made me an omelet. Nicaragua is having contractions. The watermelon was great too.

Poem 12-In Managua I had a naked tortilla. Pounded into with a brown thin female fist. Salty

cheese tucked in. folded and folded again. “Holy tortilla”, my father-in-law spoke. Buddha face. A bird groomed its wing next to me. A dog lay next to the bird. An old lady next to the dog, falling asleep on her chair. And the taco was 25 cents. One more please and a cola. The bird jumps on my shoulder. The dog wakes up. The old lady yawned.

Poem 13- My wife’s mother died. In a hospital bed in California. It did not love her. My wife was nine years old. My wife has her face. A face that can be seen several times over in Nicaragua. On wooden chairs. Cooking beans. On motorcycles. Selling in the market. Walking the market. Taking care of children. Being coy. Having gravitas. Being mothers. Being sisters. Being doctors. Teachers. Revolutionaries. And the sun has browned their skin. My wife didn’t know too much about her mother’s life in Nicaragua. How she starved. She disappeared to no longer starve.

Poem 13-part 2. We flew from Managua to Puerto Cabezas. In a commuter plane. To check out the Caribbean. To visit my wife’s uncle. In the Caribbean, there was a fantastic story awaiting. It would open a door to a revolutionary past. We walked through a door of Nicaraguan historical memory. Like elephant ears we listened. We were told my wife’s mother had been involved in the Sandinista revolution. Having breakfast. Coffee. Tostones. We began to hear stories of the war.

A surprising coco hit the tin roof. We eat. Listen. We were told my wife’s mother took off to the mountains. The dangerous peasant mountains. Her mother had become a revolutionary. People were starving. People’s bodies looked like twigs. My wife’s aunt explained, “She would find food in trash cans to survive”. Her aunt said. Casually, she said. Because that was life then.

Helicopters with bombs, families scattered, animals hiding, mountains trembling.

Her family told her, no. Don't go to the mountain with the guerrillas. My wife's aunt told us, sipping her coffee, "one day she just disappeared". She went into the mountains for a whole year. The moment she went into the mountains She became a Sandinista. You couldn't do anything about it. She was 14 years old. In her sweet watermelon voice, my wife's aunt went on,

"The revolution was awful...I remember this one time...walking to the food warehouse with my sister. Your mom...the guerillas were offering food...then suddenly the Guard and the guerillas began shooting at each other...we children...all drop to the floor...When it was over...I went home frightened...And never again left the house...there was always 'suddenly' moments during the revolution..." She sipped coffee, gesticulating with flowing hands. She went on, "I remember Somoza's Guard...they would harass everyone...Me and my sister would be walking... suddenly...we saw...Somoza's Guard pick up these young men...the Guard...would put them in a truck...drive away and suddenly...always a suddenly...we heard gun fire...they killed the young men". "One day...your mom", her aunt said with her sentimental face, looking at her sister's daughter with the same cheek bones, "...suddenly...your mom disappeared...our mother and I...had to abandon the house...Somoza's Guard was going through the barrio...house by house...murdering people...we left to an hacienda...and hid there until the revolution was over...but your mom...disappeared...when the revolution was over...we saw your mom coming down the mountain...she had enlisted in the revolution...and came down the mountain with a smile on her face...because they had won".

Poem 13-part 3. A few years later. My wife was born, and her other sibling, and her other sibling- in the mammoth Anglo north called the United States. In the city of Mexican Los Angeles. Mexican Los Angeles-where there used to be signs that read "No Mexicans. No Blacks.

No dogs". Mexican Los Angeles- where whites built all those freeways so white folks can live in the suburbs (away from Black and Brown folks) and work in the city. Freeways that tore through the historical Mexican hoods of L.A.-for white flight-economic racist power.

Poem 14-El Che in Puerto Cabezas. We drove around in the dark one night to check out Puerto Cabezas. Miles and miles of going. In true Latin American fashion, we all packed the back of the truck. We stood up like wild grass. With every shifting gear, the wind began to blow harder. My hair flowing. On the fifth gear, we took off with great speed. My tattoos on my arms were now full of falling stars. The moon was on the ground with its ancient calendar. Illuminated indigenous faces on the streets. Illuminated land and fishes. Homes on stilts for too much rain.

We went on red dirt roads that looked like the state of Arizona. We went behind taxis, besides dogs telling us to slow down. Children who wanted to play soccer. Young women shopping holding babies. Men smoking cigarettes. Reggae bouncing off the knees. Night clubs drenched in sweat. Church folks talking to Jesus. Markets with no eggs then with eggs. Motorcycles, parks, toads staring at us, fancy drug lord homes. The night sky felt wet. Boats, canals, churches, the Miskito dominant language is everywhere, Spanish is inferior here, lights, cables, mud, more cocos, fishermen.

I saw a freedom fighter. In a home. A light candle wavering. A pregnant woman watching television. She scratches her belly. I saw Che Guevara on the wall. Che still means something here. Large black and white poster. The famous one. With the red star. With the face that says, "Kill me, you, coward". I saw him inside a home. On top of stilts. Too much rain. Indigenous power. ¡Hasta La Victoria Siempre!

Leaving

We left Puerto Cabezas. Out from the Caribbean shoulder of Nicaragua's body that is tattooed with a wet tropical forest. Who has hundreds of years of fishermen going deep into the sea. They go out. They come back to shore. Fatigued bodies. The boats heaved in. Big plastic barrels of sea cucumbers are unloaded. They invite me to look. I look in the barrels. They look like baby aliens from another planet. Another group of fishermen go out. Over and over. This occurs. Small Taxis with rotund drivers go. Listening to reggae. Children playing beach soccer, with oversized shorts, sending goals to dolphins. Trucks rolling like pigs in the mud. More fishermen. More boats.

White cows heading to the beach. Their asses swaying slowly behind one another. Driftwood tossed from the giant wrestler ocean. The wind breaking the heart of palm trees. Palm trees recline forward like old people. But strong. Then they are blown back, bending. We say goodbye to the Honduran man who drove us around the city. He had long hair made of sand.

We said bye to the blue house we stayed in. Which had no running water. Which had wooden rocking chairs. Where the TV always had a baseball game on. And the kitchen held memories in the sink. Between the knives and in the cupboards. Walking to the tiny airport we went. Away. Red dirt. We were heading back to Managua. The uprising was getting hot on the Caribbean side. They told us that the Caribbean Nicaraguan- peoplepower were going to take over the tiny airport of Puerto Cabezas. Let's walk faster.

If they did, we would be stuck in Puerto Cabezas-for how long I don't know. We left Puerto Cabezas with much sadness and anxiety. I was so anxious at the airport. I thought I lost my daughter. I looked around frantically, "where's Jean?!" Everyone started laughing. "She is in your arms silly". My wife laughed. The luggage laughed too, spilling clothes everywhere. The commuter plane started laughing. Laughing back to Managua. When we landed in Managua an

hour later. We were told that the Caribbean, Nicaraguan- people- power had taken the airport. We were the last flight out.

An ending with privilege.

We cut our 14-day vacation in Nicaragua to seven. We had to leave the asthmatic isthmus. We had economic privilege to leave. Many had the desire to leave. But couldn't. One lady, round like a teapot. Dark skinned like a cacao bean in the dark morning. Asked my father-in-law, "Please take me with you". But we couldn't. We decided to fly to Mexico and finish off our vacation. In beautiful Mexico, they had no idea that an uprising was occurring in Nicaragua. In Cancun Mexico, I saw iguanas lick the clouds. I smoked a cigar. Told Hernan Cortes to fuck off.

I told Trump and all his supporters to fuck off. "White Nationalist Assholes". Suddenly, over my left side. I heard the ancient Nahuatl language roll off the ancient moon. It went down busy busses carrying the people of the sun. Busses wet from the rain god Tlaloc. The people were going to work. To the markets. To eat. To sing under the rain.

I went to Chichen Itza. The Great temple told me that the Spanish bishop burned codices. More than 5,000. Knowledge was burned. Spain should apologize for everything. I hope they never win another world cup. Through the thick jungle we went. We found a Mayan woman. She gave us tortillas from her basket. With salsa. In Cancun Mexico, my children danced to reggaeton. Awesome rain smashing the streets. On us too. My children have Latin America in them. Look at how they dance. Free movement. Reggaetón.

I brushed Frida's hair. For once, her pain went away. Mexico told me, "Don't forget about Maria Izqueirdo". "I won't", I said. Mexico said, "Maria too was in pain. She never stopped painting. Until pain stopped her". I was surrounded by art that ran like the Jaguar. I heard the

clapping midnight ocean of Quintana Roo. Iguanas walked in front of me. They asked, “do you have the time?” I told them, “I’m still on Central American time” The Iguanas responded, “its ok. Ever since the Spanish arrived. We are all on the same time that began with a colonial wound”. In giant Mexico, I watched the world cup. I saw the national Mexican team beat Germany 1-0 and out play them. I was surrounded by beautiful Mexican people cheering the goal.

The goal came with power. Near the right post. We all screamed, loud from the gut, goooooooooooooo! The Germans were shocked. But the greatest soccer game in Latin America was not viewed on the world stage. It occurred on the streets of barrio Valenzuela. Young men kicking the ball twice as fast. Twice as hard. Because the ball looked like Ortega’s white Capuchin’s face on one side. And on the other side, his wife’s ugly face looking like a construction worker’s dirty elbow.

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