

Ending Violence...Creating Peace?  
Rediscovering the connections between  
The Women's Movement and a Culture of Peace in Nicaragua

Sami Poindexter

Johnston Center for Integrative Studies, University of Redlands

Academic Director: Aynn Setright

Advisor: Zoilámerica Narvaez

Managua, Nicaragua

Spring 2009

## **I. Introduction**

The goal of many women's movements and organizations around the world is to eliminate violence in general and violence against women specifically. Can we infer that because they are struggling against violence, they are automatically creating a culture of peace? My enquiry into the connections between the Nicaraguan women's movement and a culture of peace uses this basic correlation between the struggle for non-violence and peace as a take-off point to further explore the subtle and comprehensive relationships between the work of the women's movement and the construction of a culture of peace.

### **Why study this?**

In the last few decades, as the rise in conflicts between and, even more so, within nations has increased so have international efforts to end and further prevent the violence that they cause. However, most of these efforts are still based within a system that only addresses conflict at the level of the state. It fails to take into consideration conflict at a local level as well the resources to end violence that exist at this grassroots level. One of these grassroots level resources are women's movements because more often than not they already have an established network in the community and are already working on issues of conflict resolution and mediation in some way. For this reason it is important to recognize the contribution of women's movements to the construction of a culture of peace.

### **Why Nicaragua?**

In Nicaragua, especially, there is a legacy of women working towards constructive social change whether it was in the form of fighting against the dictator or participating in the literacy crusade. The women's movement within Nicaragua, beginning with the women coming together against the dictator, has an extensive history that reflects its continuing struggle to create a society where human rights are respected and violence is reduced.

The reduction of violence has proved to be a most difficult task for Nicaragua, considering the majority of their history is made up of wars and conflicts. As such, the violent environment that still pervades Nicaragua in addition to the legacy of women's involvement in issues of social change made it the perfect location to complete this study.

### **What to Expect from this Paper**

My paper begins with an explanation of my methodologies including the role of the researcher, the research process, and shortcomings of the project. It then moves into an exploration of the theoretical framework on which I base my subsequent fieldwork and research. Next, I move into a discussion on the history of Nicaragua from the lens of the women's movement. It makes a point of showing how the various historical contexts have influenced and shaped the history of the women's movement in Nicaragua. I then present my research findings in a way that both collaborates with my theoretical framework and allows the sources to speak for themselves. The concluding section both makes recommendations for the organizations within the women's movements in addition to leaving the reader with questions as to the viability of the process of a culture of peace.

## II. Methodology

### Conceptualization and the Role of the Researcher

This idea for this project evolved from my university emphasis in feminism, human rights and peace studies. This emphasis is not simply made up of multiple disciplines; rather, it is interdisciplinary. Based on the idea that all of these fields are interdependent—that we cannot have one without the other—my emphasis connects and combines philosophies, theories, and frameworks from the studies of feminism, human rights, and peacebuilding. For this reason, I chose to attempt a project that brought at least two of my studies together, feminism and peace. In the beginning the task appeared daunting because, during our first two months here in Nicaragua, there were no explicit connections made between the women’s movement and a culture of peace. In fact, when I mentioned my idea to various local Nicaraguans, I often received the scrunching of the nose, which here is meant to express puzzlement and/or dissatisfaction. But I was determined not to have to choose between doing a project on either feminism and the women’s movement or a culture of peace. I realized early on that my determination to find connections between the two areas might blind me to certain aspects of my data and fieldwork that did not connect. However, being aware of this challenge, I accordingly sought out these aspects and attempted to fully integrate them into my final paper in a way that neither judged nor discredited.

In addition, my role as a researcher was affected by my position as a white, “North American,” feminist. Traditionally feminism in Latin American countries has experienced the stigma of being a northern, bourgeoisie concept, having nothing to do with the plight of real Latin American women. Considering the vast number of indigenous Latin American women’s movements, especially here in Nicaragua, we know this is not true. Nevertheless, my position as a white, American feminist doing research on women’s organizations in Nicaragua may perhaps encourage this false stigmatization. Furthermore, as a feminist, it was often hard to keep my

opinions to myself when confronted with ideas contrary to a feminist perspective. I did, however, manage to remain neutral for all of my interviews, taking my facial cues and responses from the interviewee rather than my own thoughts.

Additionally, my role as researcher was often undermined by my being a foreigner. All of the organizations that I included in my study are financed partially, if not exclusively, by international organizations. Consequently, I believe that some of the interviewees might have felt like they were being evaluated as an organization, no matter how hard I tried to simply be a curious student learning what they had to teach me.

## **Methods and Process**

Because I chose to do a theoretically based paper, I realized that I needed to begin with an extensive literature review that covered the theoretical aspects of feminism and peace studies as well as the historical aspect of the Nicaraguan women's movement and the movements for peace. Consequently, I immersed myself in works on peacebuilding, reconciliation, feminist theory, women's movements, and theories of violence, domination, and militarization. This breadth of literature allowed for a deeper understanding of the theoretical connections which then allowed me to begin the preparation for my next step: a typology of women's organizations in Nicaragua.

I chose to do a typology of women's organizations in Nicaragua in order to avoid misrepresenting the women's movement as a whole. By creating a typology of organizations of all types, sizes, and influences, I was able to gain insights into the many different aspects and outlooks of the institutions and the women within them. Accordingly, this process allowed for the inclusion of a diversity of opinions and was thus able to prevent over-generalization.

In order to complete this typology, I began by trying to make appointments with whichever organizations were willing to meet with me. The first day of trying to make appointments, I ran

around Managua with a guide and a taxi hired by the hour, personally visiting the organizations' offices and centers in order to ask for an appointment. Although this did not result in many appointments (and did result in getting lost multiple times), eventually, with enough phone calls, I ended up with quite a few appointments.

At each of these I appointments, I completed a preliminary interview. The goal of my preliminary interviews was to discover the basic principles and structures of the various organizations as well as determine whether or not there was an understanding of the interdependency between movements. I wrote a set of questions that addressed these goals and, generally, they remained the same for all of the preliminary interviews; although depending on the need for more depth or in order to avoid repetition, some questions were added or eliminated as needed. I opted to do these interviews in addition to internet research and other types of enquiry because I wanted to raise questions about issues that could not be answered through a website alone (such as questions relating to a culture of peace) as well as to hear what the women themselves had to say rather than just reading the polished words on a website or pamphlet.

In total, I completed thirteen interviews. Each interview was one-on-one with a representative of the organization. I conducted the interviews within the organization's office or center and tape-recorded each session with the interviewees' permission. All the participants were given the option of anonymity and privacy and all but one opted for full disclosure of their names.

After each interview I asked if the organization had publications that I could take back with me. I received something from almost every organization, although some documents were more helpful than others. I used these publications—as well as websites for those organizations that maintain one—to both triangulate the content of the interviews as well as gather any new helpful insights or information. From information gathered in the interviews in addition to information from publications and websites, I was able first decide which of the thirteen

organizations to use for my typology. I decided to only use those organizations that were specifically geared towards women (as opposed to family or human rights organizations with women's programs). From the original thirteen interviews, I chose six with which to construct a typology based on organization type (economic, social, political, etc.), structure (horizontal or vertical), goals and methods, and level of theory guiding their work. Additionally, the preliminary interviews for the typology allowed me to develop a general overview of the connection between the women's movement and a culture of peace.

### **Shortcomings**

Although I say that my typology is inclusive of a variety of women's organizations in Nicaragua, in reality, it only covers the pacific side of the nation. Some of the organizations do operate on the Caribbean coast, but the majority of the organizations I interviewed only worked in the western districts.

After this having done the typology, I had planned on performing a more in-depth study of three to four of the organizations through the use of secondary interviews and participant observations. However, as every field researcher must learn, projects such as this do not always go according to plan. After many phone calls and busy signals, I was only able to schedule one follow-up interview. Additionally, the three organizations that I wished to follow-up on were not having any events or workshops planned for the rest of my time here in Nicaragua. Consequently, my field research remains on a much broader level than I had originally intended. However, I have also realized that this was a blessing in disguise, allowing me to focus more on the connections between the Nicaraguan women's movement and peace originally made by the participants.

### III. Theory

#### Feminist Theory

I cannot claim to be the first to make the connection between women's movements and efforts to attain a culture of peace. Women in the United States have begun organizations such as Code Pink which protests current and future wars as well as the redistribution of resources to social programs. Israeli and Palestinian women have created feminist groups such as Bat Shalom and The Jerusalem Center for Women that reach across violent divisions to bring peace and equality to *both* their peoples. Women in Black, another feminist peace organization begun in Israel, has now gone global with 10,000 activists worldwide ([www.womeninblack.org](http://www.womeninblack.org)). The Feminist Peace Organization in Switzerland recommends using a feminist framework for the prevention of violence, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding. Evidently, this connection is worldwide. Nevertheless, the connections between women, feminism, and peace can be made using many different logics and frameworks, and as a consequence, each movement—each organization—creates its own individual association between women and peace.

For example, one of the many arguments that claim to explain the inclination of women towards peace work suggests that, in general, women operate based on an ethos of care. The idea is that because women tend to care more about the wellbeing of others, that we will recognize the harm that war does and work to end it. However, having an ethos of care does not necessarily guarantee a proclivity towards peace and pacifism. On the contrary, it may manifest itself in aggressive ways, such as a mother protecting her children through whatever means necessary. This brings up our counter-argument: women are not incapable of violence, just as men are obviously not incapable of non-violence (as evidenced by our many famous male peace advocates: Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., the Dalai Lama, etc). Yet, despite the reality of violent women and non-violent men, the fact remains that women are generally associated with peace and men with violence.



There is no denying that this peace/women//men/violence dichotomy has been greatly influenced by the patriarchal system because, as mentioned above, there are many exceptions. However, we cannot discount the generalization just because it, like the majority of ideas in this world, has been shaped by patriarchy. A deeper examination of this dualism reveals two general misconceptions that must be reconsidered before we can truly see the connections between women and peace. The first misconception is people often relate the peace/violence dualism to the passive/aggressive dualism: women are peaceful because they are passive; men are violent because they are aggressive. And, while aggressiveness as a trait is seen as a good thing in our society, passiveness is viewed very negatively. Consequently, women often associate being peaceful or pacifist with being passive. However, I would argue that the connections between women and pacifism have less to do with our “designated” role as passive and more to do with our shared experiences as women that allow us to understand patriarchy as a damaging system to not only ourselves, but to the environment and to the men and boys of the world. This understanding of the negative impacts of patriarchy has led countless women (and some men) to further examine the ways in which patriarchy functions as well as the ways in which we can potentially undo the damages. As a consequence of this inquiry, feminist theory was developed and, after the rise of second wave feminism during the 1960s and 1970s, has continued to flourish. I would hardly call this burgeoning of feminist theory passive. And, while not all women are feminist, and not all feminists are pacifist, all women are affected by the violence of the patriarchal system.

The second misconception about the peace/violence dichotomy is the assumption that men are violent by nature. And while associating men with violence is a relatively valid correlation (war, for example, is generally seen as a “man’s world” and “manly” traits are those which also carry connotations of violence: aggressiveness, stoicism, and physical strength), we must also recognize that just as patriarchy places women in a passive role, it places men in an aggressive one. Boys grow up learning to be “men.” They learn that they must be strong and aggressive and not show their weaknesses or emotions. Men are expected to be the providers

and protectors of their families and the pressure of this role is often more than they can handle. Men are also constantly faced with the threat of violence or war, knowing that, as a man, he is expected to choose to fight. These lessons, and they are lessons, perpetuate the use of violence as a weapon of domination to be used over those who are considered weaker or more inferior. Consequently, the violence of patriarchy is as detrimental to men as much as it is to women, as we can see through the prevalence of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders in male war veterans.

In response to these often invisible effects of patriarchy, feminist theory seeks to understand the world through a framework or “lens” of power and domination, the very root of patriarchy. Basically, a feminist asks, who has power over whom and why? And, although early feminism began with a general prioritization of gender relations (why do men have power over women?), modern feminism now recognizes that gender cannot be separated out of one’s identity. That is to say, our experiences as women are also shaped by our experiences of race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, and other aspects of identity. Feminist theory recognizes that domination of one group over another is central to patriarchy and, for this reason, believes that other forms of discrimination are also elements of the patriarchal system. So, in reference to earlier work, Warren points out, “any feminist movement to end the oppression of women will also be a movement, for example, to end the multiple oppressions of racism, classism, heterosexism, ageism, ethnocentrism, anti-Semitism, imperialism, and so on” (2).

Feminist theory also has proposed that the continued use of hierarchal structures based on top-down leadership and bureaucracy can only lead to more domination and less equality. As a result, feminist theory suggests that structure and organizations should be based on a horizontal framework, where there are equal levels of representation, democratically selected (and regularly changing) commissioners or coordinators, and bottom-up, grassroots ideas, structure and leadership.

This type of structure is often accompanied by a certain idea towards strategies and methods of activism. The embracing of grassroots ideas and leadership is not just a means to

end; it is also a strategy to empower women. Many feminists agree that one of the major effects of patriarchy on women is the lack of self-esteem needed for them to take on leadership positions. Consequently, a horizontal structure gives women more opportunities to gain necessary skills and expertise, take-on leadership positions, and hopefully increase their confidence in themselves. In addition to the goal and method of empowerment, feminist activists work extensively on consciousness-raising or demonstrating to people the damage the patriarchy has on our lives through awareness campaigns, popular education, conferences, and workshops. Consciousness-raising is both a means and an end because the goal is to increase awareness while at the same time hoping that the awareness will lead to action. And this action is essentially the core of feminist activism...process of constructive social change

### **Peace Theory**

Having discussed the basics of some feminist theory, we can now begin a corresponding exploration of theories of peacebuilding. In his book, The Moral Imagination, Lederach focuses on the centrality of relationships. He uses the metaphor of a spider's web to demonstrate the ways in which all beings are connected and how we must recognize and rebuild these connections in order to end the cycles of violence. He suggests that, "In reference to our inquiry, the centrality of relationship accrues a special meaning, for it is both the context in which cycles of violence happen and the generative energy from which transcendence of those same cycles burst forth" (*Moral Imagination* 34). Relationships can either be beneficial or detrimental, but either way they continue to be relationships. For example, there is certainly a relationship between the dominator and the subordinate; but it is a relationship that perpetuates the cycle of violence. Because, if one group dominates over another, the considerable inequality of access to power and resources creates a destructive "dualistic polarity" that perpetuates the cycle of violence by forcing people to think in "either-or categories: We are right. They are wrong. We were violated. They are the violators. We are the liberators. They are oppressors. Our intentions

are good. Theirs are bad” (*Moral Imagination* 35). Consequently, relationships between the two groups are defined by anxiety, fear, anger, resentment, and hatred. Members of both factions see one another as “the other” and are thus unable to empathize with anyone from the opposite side. These types of relationships make it difficult to realize the truth of the situation: “Who we have been, are, and will be emerges and shapes itself in a context of relational interdependency,” even with our enemies (Lederach, *Moral Imagination* 35).

Although in situations of violence, relationships are often built upon negative associations of “the other,” it is also possible to use the web of intersecting relationships to demonstrate how the wellbeing of one group is intrinsically tied to the wellbeing of the other and that positive change cannot happen independently of these relationships. For this reason, the process of reconciliation must take place. Reconciliation begins by opening a space for dialogue about the past—testimonies of grief, trauma, and loss—as well as dialogue about the future—recognition of the need to work together. Through this dialogue each side begins to acknowledge the pain of their enemies and consequently begins to recognize the humanness of one another.

Lederach believes that this process—the process of rebuilding negative relationships into positive ones—is the true definition of constructive social change: “Constructive social change seeks to change the flow of human interaction in social conflict from cycles of destructive relational violence toward cycles of relational dignity and respectful engagement” (*Moral Imagination* 42). And it is only when we are on this path of constructive social change that we are on the path of a culture of peace. The idea that creating constructive social change is the way to peace parallels the work of women’s organizations and movements around the world, especially here in Nicaragua, as we will see later on.

Also, Lederach gives us a framework of how structures and organizations ought to work in order to be the most effective agent of change. He proposes a structure based less on hierarchy and top-down decision making, but one based on the idea of locating the people who

have the most potential for making a difference within the conflict. These people are of the “middle range” in that they are not powerful state or military actors, but they do have considerable influence. They are people such as ethnic or religious leaders, leaders of humanitarian organizations or NGOs, or academic/intellectuals that have the ability to be both inside and outside the situation, to maintain connections “across the lines of conflict” as well as connections between the grassroots level of organization to the top leadership of the area (Lederach *Building Peace* 60-1).

Within this structure, there are many approaches that can be taken on the road to building sustainable peace, but one of the main failures of peace projects instituted by international organizations is the lack of inclusion of the local resources: people, spaces, and culture. In order to be successful and sustainable, peace initiatives need to affect people at a local level. Local sources of knowledge and wisdom must be tapped so that the individuals within the community may see that they already possess the necessary tools to create the desired change (Lederach *Building Peace* 108). Additionally, in order for the initiatives to make a difference it must take place in a culturally appropriate local setting, someplace where perhaps both groups in a conflict feel connected to. By including these important local resources, it creates an atmosphere where community members feel that they truly have a hand in what is happening within their lives. This is the true meaning of empowerment: when everyone’s “voice” is heard and has some impact on the decision-making process (Lederach *Moral Imagination* 56).

According to Lederach, creativity is also a necessary aspect of successful peacebuilding. He believes that, although we have frameworks and theories on peacebuilding, in reality, we must be willing to allow for a great amount of creativity and flexibility. It is necessary because all situations are different and there is no such thing as a “one size fits all” solution to situations of conflict and violence. Consequently, he states, “Building adaptive and responsive processes

requires a creative act [...]. The creative act brings into existence processes that have not existed before” (*Moral Imagination* 73).

### **Feminism and Peace**

Theoretically, feminist and peace theories work well together. Feminists and peace activists alike continually talk about the need for a more holistic concept of peace, rather than simply a lack of war. And, as Warren points out, “[...] the most obvious connection between feminism and peace is that both are structured around the concept and logic of domination” (2). Each theory examines the systems of power and domination that create such injustice and inequality in our societies. As such, they both work to discover ways in which these power systems may be transformed into a more equitable societal structure. We can see the ways in which both feminist theorists and peace theorists rely on innovative organizational tactics that avoid hierarchal, top-down leadership and that, instead, focus on distributing the decision-making power among those who are meant to benefit from the organization. Furthermore, feminist and peace theory share many of the same methods, such as introducing capacity building and empowerment workshops, embracing local knowledge, wisdom, and customs, and allowing for a great deal of creativity and flexibility.

However, in practice, feminism and peace are not always so analogous. The lack of women involved in international peace initiatives has become a hindrance to the establishment of sustainable programs. Upon realizing this, many international NGOs began programs to include women within their larger programs. Unfortunately, despite their focus on power relations, many international peace initiatives fail to take into consideration the huge part that patriarchy plays within the power structure. Consequently, they do not understand that simply including women into the already established structures will not make a difference in either the women’s lives or in the initiative. They must make a concerted effort to include a feminist or gender analysis of situations before trying to come up with a sustainable solution. Additionally, because peace operations are often dealing with the leaders of countries or armies or

organizations, they rarely have the opportunity to work with women and thus feel that patriarchy is irrelevant. However, as we have seen, patriarchy does not just affect women; it also affects men and the way they view the world.

Nevertheless, the discipline of peace studies cannot be blamed fully for their lack of feminist analysis considering that often feminists lack a peace analysis. For many years, feminist activism meant a certain degree of militancy: marches, protests, demands, and refusals to negotiate were all simply part of feminist activism during the 1970s. However, after so many wars and tragedies throughout the world in the last thirty years, we have begun to notice the destructive effects that such militancy has. Not only does it perpetuate certain violent tendencies, many governments have simply stopped paying attention. And while these tactics are nostalgic and continue to build a certain kind of solidarity among feminists, it is necessary for the feminist community to find new ways to create constructive social change without having to resort to violent tactics.

This essay seeks to explore the ways in which the women's movement in Nicaragua views and establishes connections between their work and attaining a culture of peace.

## IV. History: Feminism and Peace in a Nicaraguan Context

### The Revolution—Women against the dictator

It was 1937 when Anastasio Somoza officially came into power and began a forty year long period of oppressive and brutal dictatorships. The Somoza family males—Anastasio Somoza Garcia, the father, and his two sons, Luis Somoza Debayle and Anastasio Somoza Debayle—ruled Nicaragua either directly or through puppet governments throughout these 42 years. The reign of the Somozas began with Anastasio senior's control of the U.S. funded and trained National Guard. This same National Guard was the key to the perpetuation of the Somoza dynasty. Years of economic underdevelopment and political repression went by. The rich stayed rich by exploiting the poor both within the urban areas and in the campo.

But in the early 1960s, inspired by the socialist revolution in Cuba, a new wave of revolutionary sentiments swept Latin America. Inspired by Marx's economic and social theories, many young Nicaraguans, especially students, began to question the system and form groups of their own. In 1961 the Sandinista Front for National Liberation (FSLN) was founded by three young men, formerly members of the Nicaraguan Socialist Party. The goal of these young men was "[...] to create an authentically Nicaraguan revolutionary movement, based on the tactics and sociopolitical objectives of Augusto César Sandino" (Walker 40).

While the FSLN itself continued to shift focus—exercising guerilla tactics in the mountains, recruiting in the universities and urban areas, and, eventually, splitting into factions—it continued to grow in numbers and support. Not surprisingly, considering their lowly position under the dictatorship, Nicaraguan women joined the revolutionary movement in large numbers. Margaret Randall, author of Sandino's Daughters: Testimonies of Nicaraguan Women in Struggle states that, "Women fought in the front lines as FSLN militants, participated in support tasks, worked undercover in government offices and were involved in every facet of the anti-Somoza opposition movement" (Introduction iv). In 1977, realizing what a strong



female support base they retained, the FSLN created an all women's organization, the Association of Nicaraguan Women Confronting the Nation's Problems (AMPRONAC). This organization, while created by and very much connected to the FSLN, was publicly neither revolutionary nor politically partisan, giving AMPRONAC the opportunity to work openly on their projects (Isbester 29). Additionally, although AMPRONAC began with the idea of a human rights organization in mind, it became an organization that was able to encompass the needs of a broad range of women—from the poor working class to the wealthy educated upper class.

Women's contribution to the revolutionary effort cannot be denied. Women such as Dora Maria Tellez and Doris Tijerino made it to the top leadership levels of the FSLN, commanding covert operations and city sieges. Towards the end of the revolution, it is said that one third of the Sandinista army was made up of women. During the struggle, this contribution put women on a level of equality with men that was previously unimaginable. Yet the Sandinista army remained a military organization, subject to all the same patriarchal downfalls, despite their revolutionary ideals. Within this structure, "It was clear that men drew up the programs, made the decisions, meted out the tasks" (Randall 4). And while some women were fighting alongside men, earning their respect, the majority of them were simply relegated to traditionally female tasks: keeping safe houses, washing, cooking, and nursing among others (Randall 5).

### **Triumph—AMNLAE begins**

After the revolutionary triumph on July 19<sup>th</sup>, 1979, it was expected that the economic and social freedom of the new society would indirectly benefit women's situations as well. However, after the revolution, women were stuck in between gender consciousness and the revolutionary (military) ideal. This becomes most obvious when we examine the feminine ideal

created during the revolution—“childless, autonomous, and, above all else, Sandinista” (Isbester 48). This ideal was reflected in the naming of AMPRONAC’s new successor, the Association of Nicaraguan Women “Luisa Amanda Espinoza” (AMNLAE), named after the first Sandinista woman believed to have died in combat. The problem with this new militant model of womanhood was that it demanded that women either abandon their femininity for, essentially, masculinity, or that they remain subordinated in the traditional role of care-taker. Additionally, the fact that AMNLAE was not only conceived by a military organization, they were also controlled by one; the FSLN appointed leaders to the direction of AMNLAE. This greatly limited the amount of work that AMNLAE and subsequent organizations were able to do specifically for women as we will see in our exploration of AMNLAE during the years of revolutionary government.

In spite of this particular fault, in their determination to create a more just and equitable society, the Sandinista government was the first Nicaraguan government that began to think of peace in terms of constructive social change. They instituted programs to combat unemployment and poverty, to improve public healthcare and education, and to guarantee basic necessities such as food and shelter. The two most well-known and well-implemented programs were the Alphabetization Crusades and the basic immunizations campaigns. Recruits from all over the country volunteered to be *brigadistas* for these projects (especially women) and their success rates were amazing: the illiteracy rate dropped from at least 33 percent to 12 and polio was eradicated (Isbester 51-2). And, naturally, these projects could not have taken place without the loyal support of AMNLAE. As a branch of the FSLN, AMNLAE was obligated to help advance the revolutionary reforms, which in and of themselves were very good programs. However, in focusing on literacy and health campaigns, their ability to fight for goals such as improving women’s legal status was greatly weakened. In fact, according to Isbester, “It was in this struggle over legal reform that AMNLAE’s conundrum of affiliation with the Sandinista Party first became apparent. The FSLN supported some but not all of AMNLAE’s proposed

legal reforms [...]” (52). AMNLAE was, however, able to reform the *Patria Potesdad* law, creating a more equitable family unit (Isbester 53).

### **The Counterrevolution—The suppression of women’s issues**

Unfortunately for Nicaragua and the Sandinista revolution, the United States was determined to wipe out any source of communism or socialism in their hemisphere. For this reason, the United States began what is now referred to as “low-intensity warfare” against the Sandinista government. They funded, supplied, and trained the counterrevolutionary movement, known as the Nicaraguan Resistance (la Resistencia Nicaragüense, RN). In order to contain this threat, the majority of the government’s financial resources meant for social programs were rerouted to areas of defense. Because it was a basically stalemated war—the RN did not have the capacity to overthrow the Sandinistas, but neither could the Sandinistas fully wipe out the RN as long as they had U.S. support. Due to this prolonged violence and consistent loss of life, the Sandinista government was forced to execute a mandatory draft.

The fighting of the contra war and the institution of the draft gave AMNLAE a new responsibility as the women’s branch of the FSLN: “AMNLAE’s primary goal was now resisting the counterrevolution rather than improving women’s lives. AMNLAE’s identity, as a result, shifted from a social justice ethos [...] to a defensive approach focused on mothers” (Isbester 54). Despite the previous involvement of women in the revolutionary endeavor, this renewed military atmosphere quickly reverted back to its patriarchal roots. For example, although women were still allowed in the army, they were increasingly moved into non-combative roles (Isbester 55) and, as evident from AMNLAE’s new focus, women’s “new” role had returned to that of mother. Many women in AMNLAE noticed the return to traditional gender roles but, “Conscious about how dissent could be used against the FSLN during the war, women kept their complaints private for several years” (Isbester 56). Although the FSLN

cannot be blamed for needing to defend its developing society, we can call attention to how easily women's liberation was pushed to the back of the line.

Through the operations of the RN armies, the U.S. government was doing everything in its power to destroy what the FSLN had created, perpetuating violence and guerilla tactics as viable solutions to the opposition. The continuing need for and focus on the military in Nicaragua created an atmosphere that fully allowed for the militarization of Nicaraguan society. And while the militarization of Nicaraguan society did not start with the counterrevolutionary war and FSLN's responses, they did much to continue it. On a structural level, the FSLN still retained a military-style government (vertical, top-down), although it had wide grassroots support. Ideologically, the focus on the self-sacrificing soldier ideal combined with the renewed focus on mothers of combatants undermined any possibilities of non-violent resolution or public dissent. In this "state of emergency," the government's response to expressions of dissent or division was to censor the press and insist on unfaltering loyalty and obedience to the party from its members. Additionally, the official draft of the FSLN and the unofficial recruitment of *campesinos* into the RN (as well as their persistent targeting of civilian population) contributed to the blurring of the line between civilians and soldiers.

### **The Closing Stages of a Revolution—The beginning of autonomy**

Even after the 1984 official election of the Sandinista party (meant to bolster the legitimacy of the revolutionary government), the counterrevolutionary efforts were continuing to eat away at the party's ability to follow through on their promises for innovative social programs. Consequently, between dwindling social services and a military draft, the belief in and support of the revolutionary government was slowly declining. Having also altered their priorities due to the war effort, AMNLAE too was beginning to notice a loss of support.

For women who were more interested in addressing “women’s issues” than the platform of AMNLAE, a new form of organization emerged out of the trade unions: women’s secretariats. According to Isbester, the unions took over where AMNLAE had left off; they provided women with the opportunity to once again organize around issues that predominately affected their lives as women (65). Despite their detachment from AMNLAE, these secretariats worked with and within the FLSN by focusing mainly on women as producers and working on ways to increase productivity. Out of these new organizations, the women’s secretariat of the Association of Rural Workers (ATC) became the most proficient at recognizing and addressing the current dilemmas women faced. They started research projects of the life and work of *campesinas*, exploring the various obstacles women workers faced. The issues of childcare and birth control, sexual division of labor, and violence against women in the home and workplace became topics of considerable importance amongst the women. Isbester suggests that the discussions on topics such as these that took place within the ATC women’s secretariat “[...] opened the discussion on patriarchy” (75).

Although this discussion of patriarchy remained solidly within the bounds of improving productivity—a topic that did not appear feminist so as not to alarm the male directorate—it was able to set a new standard for questioning the patriarchal status quo. This discussion of patriarchy even made it as far as the top leadership of the party; on March 8<sup>th</sup>, 1987, the all-male national directorate of the FSLN presented a public proclamation on women admitting that “Nicaraguan women have historically suffered a social discrimination that has put them in a subordinate position in society” (qtd. in Criquillon 220). Once the topic had been breached, Nicaraguan women were not about to let it fall to the wayside. So in that same year, a small group of Sandinista women—leaders and intellectuals—gathered to create the Party of the Erotic Left (PIE). The name, taken from the title of a poem, started as a joke and eventually evolved into a demonstration of independence from both the FSLN and AMNLAE (Criquillon 221).

In 1988 the emergence of another women's secretariat was able to further the discussion on patriarchy by opening criticizing the Sandinista party. The women's secretariat of the Nicaraguan Confederation of Professionals—Heroes and Martyrs (CONAPRO H-M) was, as evidenced by its suffix, Heroes and Martyrs, still tied to the party. However, unlike other women's secretariats CONAPRO H-M was independent enough to “engage in a sustained criticism of Sandinista policies” and focus on women's constitutional rights (Isbester 86).

The emergence of groups such as PIE and the independence of the women's secretariats caused a stir in the leadership of AMNLAE. Realizing that they needed to restructure their organization or risk losing all their grassroots support, AMNLAE decided to renovate and reorganize. They decided they needed to revamp their bureaucratic, top-down structure through democratization and the popular election of a new committee. Additionally, in order to appeal to a larger grassroots contingent AMNLAE opened several Women's Centers (Casas de Mujeres) throughout the nation. However, the FSLN was not willing to let go of their influence over AMNLAE. In 1989, where AMNLAE had intended to democratically elect their next set of leaders, the FSLN appointed Doris Tijerino as AMNLAE's general secretary.

Although the impacts of “low intensity warfare” on the part of the United States in the form of economic embargos and the funding and training of the RN counterrevolutionary forces had an undeniable effect on the success of the Sandinista government, there is also no denying that there were many internal struggles as well, most notably, the issue of women's liberation.

### **The 1990 Elections—Women and the role of the mother**

On only the second free election since the revolution in 1979, the Sandinista government was voted out of office to be replaced by the saintly mother figure, Violeta Chamorro. Many academics, Nicaraguan and otherwise, have already thoroughly analyzed this event, suggesting that although it was a surprise for many at the time, looking back, it was easy

to see factors that contributed to the loss of the FSLN. The biggest reason was the influence of the United States: If the FSLN was voted back into power, the war and the embargo would more than likely continue. If UNO (Violeta's party) was voted in, the U.S. would put an end to both. Consequently, the vote was not necessarily against the FSLN, it was against the war and embargo.

However, nothing is ever that simple. Many have suggested that the role of women was crucial in this election. Mothers were losing sons to the draft, often more than one, and a vote against the FSLN was a vote to stop the war. But women in the army as well as feminist intellectuals and activists were frustrated with the FSLN's policies, and consequently, some might have voted against the FSLN, believing they would win regardless, just to close the gap a little. Additionally, others have mentioned that because the focus had been on mothers for so long, most especially on mothers of the fighting and fallen, Violeta's motherly image and promises of reconciliation between all her children appealed to women's ethos of care. Many of these ideas are simply speculation; however, they do give us an idea of how important women and the women's movement were to the election of 1990.

### **Chamorro's Government and Reconciliation—Achievement of autonomy**

“What is most laudable [...] is that President Chamorro was a peacemaker who believed that binding of the political wounds of the Nicaraguan family was an essential prerequisite for both successful governances in the short run and democratic consolidation in the future” (Walker 58). On March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1990, the Toncontín Accords were signed between the Nicaraguan Resistance and the Chamorro government. In it, the government promised “to guarantee security of the demobilized and to provide what is necessary for the effective social reintegration and to negotiate humanitarian aid for the Resistance” (CEI, Catalog of Peace Accords in Nicaragua 63). Besides putting into place a cease-fire on both sides of the conflict, it

also promised “secure the rehabilitation and the social re-adaptation of the affected” in addition to providing them with a monthly pension. The accords also promised a medical infrastructure that would provide attention to the victims of conflict during the time of the demobilizations (CEI, Catalog of Peace Accords in Nicaragua 63). While the peace accords succeeded in demobilizing and disarming the Resistance and drastically reducing the size of the national army, the above promises of help for the reintegration and rehabilitation of the demobilized fell short. There were distributions of land, housing and occasional job-training and jobs, but they were “doled out as piecemeal rewards to those groupings of soldiers able to exert the most pressure” rather than being allocated to all the demobilized as promised. Consequently, thousands of young men and women, who had spent the majority of their “adult” life fighting in the war and consequently had few marketable skills other than their ability to fight, were tossed into a society unready to receive such an influx (Walker 59).

As a result of the government’s failure to follow through on their promises, organizations such as the Center for International Studies picked up where they had left off. They created training programs for job skills in addition to workshops and courses on conflict resolution, community development and skills in project management (CEI, Demobilized Soldiers Speak 13). The people that took part in these training were previous members of both the national army and the Resistance. Through these programs, prior enemies were able to reach across the lines of divisions to bring about reconciliation and development where the government fell short. This group of people then formed an organization called the Network of Peace and Development Promoters (CEI, Demobilized Soldiers Speak 21). The network is still very active in conflict resolution and community development projects throughout Nicaragua.

Life during the Chamorro government was not just difficult for the demobilized; it was also very difficult for those who are always hit the hardest during economic and social downturn: women. When Chamorro inherited the nation from the Sandinistas, the economy was on a downward spiral. The cost of food and basic needs was rising just as social services were



being eliminated. The rate of unemployment increased. And those lucky few who were able to find jobs in export manufacturing businesses found that their rights were being continually violated. The lack of employment caused an increase in poverty—starvation and homelessness—which also contributed to the high rates of drug and alcohol abuse and the increase in incidences of domestic and sexual violence. The fact that the majority of households were headed by women meant that they were the ones responsible for the well-being and livelihood of their families. Additionally, those women who had taken part in the war and had been demobilized with the rest faced double discrimination as a woman and as a demobilized soldier with no marketable skills.

However, similar to the way that civil society arose to take the place of the government in the case of the programs for the demobilized, civil society also arose to meet the needs of struggling women. Freed from a stifling dependency on the Sandinista party, the women's movement had finally achieved autonomy. The result of this autonomy was a burgeoning of women's organizations, especially those that confronted the most drastic problems of the day—poverty and violence. These organizations attempted to take the place of the government in the area of social services. Healthcare, especially gynecology and family planning, psychological care and other services were openly available to women through countless local women's centers and organizations. Other, more political organizations also arose in protest to Chamorro's ultra-conservative social policies which continued to focus on women as mothers and unwaveringly adhered to the concept of a nuclear family.

Consequently, while Chamorro's social and economic policies created such a difficult situation for women, it also gave them the opportunity to finally make their voices heard.

Isbester sums up the Chamorro government's contribution to the women's movement:

In regards to the women's movement, the Chamorro government guaranteed that its ideology of the housewife and mother would make a clear target for sustained criticism, thereby assisting the women's movement to develop a clear

alternative; her public policies made a useful foil against which to mobilize; and her support for the developing spaces within civil society helped to integrate a diverse and decentralized social movement (123).

### **Return to Conservatism—Return to suppression**

Even after Chamorro's time in office, the governments that followed continued her tradition of conservatism. Arnaldo Aleman, best known in Nicaragua for his blatant corruption and filching of public funds also gave a hard blow to the so recently autonomous women's movement. During his administration, Aleman decided to restructure the governmental institution that researched and acted on women's position within a patriarchal society, the Institute for Women (INIM) into the currently operating Ministry of Family. This easily secured Chamorro's original campaign of reaffirming women's role as mother and keeping them in the home. The position of Aleman's government on a women's place was reflected in their policy towards the women's movement—nothing. Aleman's administration officially ignored the women's movement, hampering their ability to make a difference on a legislative level.

During his administrative, Aleman was continually faced with the public scrutiny of his corruption and was quickly losing power. Daniel Ortega (previous FSLN president and leader of the party), having been publicly accused of sexual abuse, was also in a very precarious situation. As such, both Aleman and Ortega were in a situation to negotiate. The result was *El Pacto*; the agreement between the PLC and the FSLN. *El Pacto* freed Aleman from "scrutiny by the Comptroller General, and both [men] were freed from the threat of successful prosecution under the judicial system. Furthermore, the electoral laws were now revised so as to effectively exclude any meaningful challenges from third parties," as well as reduce the percentage by which the party with the most votes needed to win the election. The impact of *El Pacto* became more apparent after the seemingly short administrative of Aleman's successor Enrique Bolaños.

By reducing the percentage needed to win the elections from 45 to 35%, the FSLN had secured their own return to power after the end of Bolaños' administration. The re-election of Daniel Ortega and the FSLN in 2006 did not return society back to its glory days after the revolution. Quite the contrary, Ortega continued down the same road as his last three predecessors by effectively ignoring the Nicaraguan women's movement and further frustrating them by making an alliance with the Catholic Church to penalize therapeutic abortion. The fact that Ortega was never brought to justice on the charges of sexual abuse in addition to his new-found support of the Catholic Church and the penalization of therapeutic abortion has caused a huge outcry from feminists and has successfully created a profound polarization between the government and the Nicaraguan women's movement.

## **V. Typology of Women's Organizations in Nicaragua**

### **Political Organizations:**

- Network of Women against Violence, Managua

The first organization that I chose to include in my typology is the Network of Women against Violence (Red de Mujeres contra la Violencia, RMCV). RMCV resulted from the legendary 1992 National Women's Conference, "Unity in Diversity," when it was decided that three networks were to be established: the Network of Violence against Women, Network of Health, and the Network of Women for Development. After seventeen years of working for women's rights, the Network of Women against Violence feels that they are, "the bastion of the Women's Movement in Nicaragua" (Meneses). And having fought for the addition of Law 230, which finally made domestic violence a crime in Nicaragua, as well as having helped to bring about police stations for women and girls (Comisariás de Mujeres y Niñas), RMCV has a history of getting things done in Nicaragua.

The network describes itself as a non-partisan political organization because “it is political work to sustain the recognition that violence against women exists” (Meneses). Unlike many of the other organizations, however, RMCV is not a single organization working towards specific goals. Rather, as a network, RMCV is made up of 156 other women’s organizations of various types and sizes throughout all of Nicaragua that coordinate political action and consciousness-raising campaigns in order to eliminate all forms of violence against women. In order to attain this “most antagonistic and time-consuming” goal, RMCV works on two fronts: legislative and societal (Meneses). Through their political actions such as mobilizations and marches, RMCV attempts to convince the government of the need for legal reform such as in the case of the successful addition of Law 230. On the social front, RMCV works on empowering female leaders, sensitizing journalists to how their use of negative language perpetuates violence against women, and educating teens and youth on the effects of *machista* culture (Meneses). The commemoration of days such as March 8<sup>th</sup>, International Women’s Day, November 25<sup>th</sup> International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and December 10<sup>th</sup> Human Rights Day, is also a substantial focus for the Network and its constituents. Currently, the biggest campaign for the Network of Women against Violence is based on a woman’s right to life in the form of the de-penalization of therapeutic abortion in Nicaragua.

The structure of the Network is made up of a National Assembly that deals with logistics and strategies and a Coordinating Commission composed of nine elected members, who rotate the position of coordinator of the entire network every six months. Then there are also work commissions for judicial concerns, political action, and development strategies as well as sub-commissions for issues such as communication (Meneses). Virginia Meneses, the political action coordinator for RMCV, had no doubts during our interview about the horizontal nature of the organization and their website makes a point of it: “We promote a horizontal, respectful, ethical, diverse, and collective leadership” and “We seek to exercise and practice a

political culture that is ethical, transparent, horizontal, participative [...]"

([www.reddemujerescontralaviolencia.org](http://www.reddemujerescontralaviolencia.org)).

- Feminist Program of Central America "La Corriente," Managua

Although many of the organizations that I interviewed identified themselves as feminist (which will be discussed later on), the Feminist Program of Central America "La Corriente" (Programa Feminista Centroamericano La Corriente) is the only organization with the word "feminist" in its title. La Corriente is a regional movement that, like RMCV, was born in the early nineties (1994 officially) "in the context of the pacification of Central America" (Blandón). Nicaragua was not the only Central American government in the process of signing and implementing peace accords; the governments of El Salvador and Guatemala were also taking part in their own peace processes during the early nineties. María Teresa Blandón, the director of La Corriente, also pointed out that "We were also an organization that, together with another, arose with the will, with the purpose of contributing to the growth, to the fortification of the Autonomous Women's Movement in Central America that was equipped with a feminist thinking about key point of the lives of women" (Blandón). As such, La Corriente was determined to contribute a feminist analysis to the issues that women were then facing and then place those issues within the public consciousness and, consequently, the political arena. For this reason, La Corriente considers itself a political organization.

The feminist thinking that began their movement also became their goal: "to promote within the feminist movement, the diffusion, the debate, and the reflection on feminist theory." The spreading and strengthening of feminism and the feminist movement continued to be the main goals of this regional movement for quite some time. However, as the years past, the strength of the regional movement faded while the local movements continued to grow. Now, La Corriente Nicaragua focuses less on establishing a strong, united front in Central America and more on the needs of the Nicaraguan women, such as defending rights that have been continuously delayed, particularly, a woman's right over her own body. In this process of

achieving sexual and reproductive rights, La Corriente began an advocacy program with teens and young people that subsequently emerged as a new organization, La Corriente Jóven Feminista. La Corriente Jóven Feminista remains independent of the larger organization, while still having access to its various resources.

La Corriente also directs their energies towards the lack of informed and active citizenship among women in Nicaragua. In our interview, Blandón discussed how few women are aware of their rights and how even fewer women mobilize to defend those rights. She believes that “through investigation, formation (education/training), and public demonstration, we [La Corriente] contribute to the incidence of women exercising an active citizenship” (Blandón). More often than not, this is done through the Women’s Movement, which is why another main goal of La Corriente is to democratize the movement so that it becomes a more inclusive space where organizations can have open discussion and dialogue about their differences and controversies, as well as decide on a plan of action (Blandón). This seems to suggest that relations within the movement have been strained at times.

While technically a non-governmental organization, Blandón suggests that La Corriente is run nothing like one (interview). There is an Assembly of Members which then elects the members of the Directive Board, but she states that the Board solely deals with organizational, logistical, and administrative issues as opposed to making decisions about what the various groups will be doing (Blandón). Within their structure, there is open debate and exchange and if the members cannot reach an agreement, they stop and move on to something over which they do agree: “The most important political process is the exercise of consensus” (Blandón).

### **Social Organizations:**

- Movement of Women Workers and Unemployed “Maria Elena Cuadra,” Managua

During the nineties, the rapid switch to neoliberal economic policy led to a rise in export-oriented corporations within Nicaragua. This increase in exportation also caused an increase in violations of workers' rights, especially the rights of women who worked in the *maquilas*. As a result, the women "who were tired of so much abuse, decided to organize and form" the Movement of Women Workers and Unemployed "Maria Elena Cuadra" (Movimiento de Mujeres Trabajadoras y Desempleadas "Maria Elena Cuadra," commonly referred to as MEC) in 1994 (Urtecho). MEC is named after a woman who worked as a domestic and began to spread information and to organize other domestic workers in Carazo. The movement took her name "in recognition of the work of many Nicaraguan women that is invisible" (Urtecho). And, as a testament to their name, MEC continues to work with women whose work is invisible: *maquiladoras*, women miners, domestic workers, and the unemployed. MEC also works with women in the neighborhoods, young women, and students.

While the name of the movement seems to suggest that they focus completely on women in the workplace (or getting women into the workplace), MEC's goal is actually much broader: "MEC supports as a fundamental principle the dignity and the emancipation of the women, the fight for her equality and the defense of her rights, as a person, as a social being, as a worker, and as a mother" ([www.mec.org.ni](http://www.mec.org.ni)). MEC has six main areas of work: gender and self-esteem, worker health and security, human rights, labor rights, sexual and reproductive rights, and techniques of negotiation, mediation, and conflict resolution ([www.mec.org.ni](http://www.mec.org.ni)). Their office in Managua, which appears to always be bustling, offers legal assistance for victims of labor rights violations as well as for survivors of sexual assault or domestic violence. Personal counseling services and self-help groups are also offered to the survivors. Because of these services and their dedication to the personal empowerment of women, MEC considers itself a social organization "fighting under the flag of women's rights" (Urtecho). Their campaigns are often focused on consciousness-raising and public education. For example, the campaign, "For a life without violence [we need a] change in outlook" deals with interfamily/domestic violence and teaches families in the community how to end the cycles of violence. Also, the

campaign, “Employment, yes...but with Dignity” is a campaign that seeks to inform women workers of their rights as written in the Labor Code. Additionally, as a part of the Network of Women against Violence, MEC also participates in marches and demonstrations for the rights of women, such as the right to therapeutic abortion.

The movement is “national;” it operates in six departments here on the pacific side of the country. Each department has its own director and its own structure made up of four different work areas. The structure of MEC continues in a relatively hierarchal manner in that there is a council of direction above the six department directors and a General Assembly that meets once a year in order to mandate the work that is going to be done by the organization. After explaining the structure of MEC, my interviewee, Gladys Urtecho, who is responsible for the team working on issues of domestic violence, suggested that I could make my own conclusions as to the vertical or horizontal nature of their structure.

- Association for the Promotion and Development of the Nicaraguan Woman, Acahual, Managua

The Association for the Promotion and Development of the Nicaraguan Woman, Acahaul (Asociación Promoción y Desarrollo de la Mujer Nicaragüense, Acahual), is the smallest organization in my typology. They began as a group of women wanting to confront the two major problems that they believed confront women: lack of access to quality healthcare and violence. As a result, in 1990, a group of twenty-five women began to work with the women in the community of Acahualinca on issues these issues. It began simply as a pilot program and developed into a permanent fixture in the community.

The stated mission of their organization reflects these two original concerns: “To compel the women of the community of Acahualinca to strengthen and development their understanding integral health and their sexual and reproductive rights. [...] To urge the women to fight against violence through strategies of education and capacity-building” (Mujeres de



Acahual pamphlet). The woman I interviewed from Mujeres Acahual stated that, their goal was “for women to have access to quality health-care, to diminish the incidences of sexually transmitted diseases, to diminish violence against women and that women know their rights and can defend them” (anonymous). While this seems like a large commitment for such a small project, Mujeres Acahual is contributing to the elimination of violence against women on a personal and community level. They present capacity-building and educational workshops on five different topics (sexual and reproductive health, family planning, sex and gender, self-esteem and violence) in addition to consciousness-raising campaigns within the community and through the media. Mujeres Acahual has twenty-five volunteers that help to spread the information throughout the community, and, if women from a different community cannot come to Acahual, Mujeres Acahual goes to them. Because they focus on making a difference in their community through consciousness-raising and education, they consider themselves to be a social organization.

Mujeres Acahual is also a complete health center offering general consults as well as specializing in OBGYN (including the dispersion of birth control). They even have their own laboratory and pharmacy. Also, because they promote integral health, Mujeres Acahual also provides psychological care and self-help groups for survivors of sexual or domestic violence in addition to providing legal assistance and accompaniment.

Because the organization is currently small and completely local, open discussions and exchange of ideas are relatively simple. But, despite their small size, there is still a Board of Directors and a general assembly.

- Casa de Mujeres, Estelí

As we saw in the history section, Casas de Mujeres were a product of AMNLAE and their early attempts at becoming more local and grassroots-oriented movement. While many of the Casas de Mujeres became independent during the early nineties, Casa de Mujeres—Estelí is still

very much connected with AMNLAE. And, now that the FSLN has returned to power, AMNLAE and their Casas de Mujeres are in a very comfortable position with the government while still maintaining their NGO status.

Casa de Mujeres, like Mujeres Acahual, is both a functioning clinic and a center for action. They, too, focus on interfamily and domestic violence, sexual assault and abuse, and issues of women's health. Within their center, they have a general medicine clinic, psychological care, legal aid, social work, and accompaniment for survivors of sexual or domestic violence. In order to provide these services, Casa de Mujeres asks the people who make use of their services (other than survivors of sexual or domestic violence brought in by the police) to make a voluntary contribution to the center. Casa de Mujeres also offers capacity-building in life skills for adolescents and teens of the community in addition to health education for the public (Hernandez). Since they attend to women and girls on a community level—through services, capacity-building, and education—they also consider themselves to be a social organization.

Casa de Mujeres—Estelí works in close relations with many other organizations in both the government and civil society. They coordinate with the police on issues of sexual assault and violence, they work with the Ministry of Families and the Ministry of Health on various campaigns, and they, like the many other organizations in the Women's Movement, support the marches and demonstrations on days such March 8<sup>th</sup> with other women's organizations (Hernandez). As a result, many of their campaigns, such as the vaccination drives, originate from the Ministries or other organizations.

AMNLAE is a very national organization, with branches and Casas de Mujeres even on the Atlantic coast. The structure of AMNLAE, of which Casa de Mujeres is branch, remains very vertical, although Sonia Vanessa, a psychologist at the center, states that AMNLAE tries “to take into account the point of each woman that it represents [...]” (Hernandez). There is a national coordinator, still appointed by the FSLN. Under the national coordinator there is a directive team that is based in Managua, and then there is a national counsel, which includes all

of the coordinators of the various departments. These department coordinators then organize and supervise the activities within their departments and municipalities (Hernandez).

### **Mixed Organizations:**

- Autonomous Women's Movement, Managua—**Socio-political**

Like the Network of Women against Violence and La Corriente, the Autonomous Women's Movement (Movimiento Autónomo de Mujeres, MAM) developed in nineties along with the rapidly increasing number of other autonomous organizations. When MAM finally achieved autonomy in 1992, there was a split between the women who wanted to be an "organic" movement and the women who wanted to have a network. Eventually, the network established itself as the Network of Women against Violence, in addition to a health network, a network for women in the economy and a network for women in politics. However, RMCV was the only network to survive and flourish. The organic faction, on the other hand, launched the National Feminist Committee which, in turn, planted the roots of MAM. Three years later, MAM had successfully created its own organization (Román).

MAM is a movement belongs to both the social and the political category and they consider political change fundamental to their organization (Román). When asked about the goals of the organization, Azahalea Román, a member of the political coordination of MAM, stated, "The Movement in itself is the objective, to create a movement" (Román). She then explained that they should not feel as if they had to organize, attend, or give assistance in order to justify themselves as a movement. But to create a movement is to create a space for learning, discussion and dialogue as well as to become a political actor in society. Consequently, as a women's movement MAM opens up a space for dialogue about women and their situation and puts these topics on the public agenda, and gives women a public presence, which Azahalea

states, “is the central point of the Autonomous Movement” (Román). In order for these processes to take place, however, there must be a certain level of democracy and respect for individual rights in society, which is why one of their fundamental concerns is the “fight for democracy” and the rights of women (Román).

The Autonomous Women’s Movement, like others, makes use of citizen mobilizations and demonstrations, especially on days such as International Women’s Day and Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (as mentioned in the section about RMCV) and September 28<sup>th</sup> which is the day for the de-penalization of therapeutic abortion in Latin America. MAM also makes use of group discussions, workshops, consciousness-raising through the media, and the production of documents that are then published and circulated.

Ramón did not elaborate much on the structure of MAM, but she did emphasize that, “It is a movement and it has a structure of a movement” (Román). Being a national movement, this structure is made up of a political coordinator, a general assembly, and district chapters.

- Association “Miriam Project” for the Intellectual Promotion of the Woman, Estelí—  
**Socio-educative**

The last organization in my typology is the Association “Miriam Project” for the Intellectual Promotion of the Woman (Asociación “Miriam Proyecto” para la Promoción Intelectual de la Mujer). From their name, we can see why they identify themselves as a socio-educative organization. Their focus is on all-types of education: formal, informal, alternative, primary, secondary, university level. The project began in 1989, emerging from the Ecclesiastical Communities based in liberation theology, which used the interpretations of Bible texts to demonstrate the need for social justice. Project Miriam began with a group of women who were “reflecting on the role of women in the Bible in the old testament [such as Miriam in the stories of Moses] and the role that women play in the transformation of society” (Benavides). Many of the women of the group were not formally educated past primary level and when the Austrian

couple that was facilitating the group discovered the ability of these women to reflect and contemplate such profound topics with so little education they thought, “if with such a low academic level these women achieved so much, how would they be with a high level of education?” (Benavides). With this thought, the Austrian couple began to work with their colleagues to support this group of women through a primary and secondary education and started Project Miriam as a program of scholarships with an emphasis on integral education (Benavides).

The main goals of the center in Estelí are primary education—teaching people to read and write—and the promotion of human rights. In addition to education, Project Miriam seeks to prevent the sexual exploitation and commerce of children and teens in addition to child and teen domestic labor. Additionally, Project Miriam promotes equality between genders and the eradication of violence against women (Project Miriam pamphlet).

Magdalena Benavides, a member of the coordinating team of Miriam, lists the methods of her organization: “Our goals are primarily direct attention through psycho-legal attention, processes of empowerment, [and] processes of reflection where we reflect on our rights [...] and the [labor, penal, etc] codes so that the women know their rights” (Benavides). Miriam Project also uses capacity-building, workshops, and community reflection to achieve their goals. Their current campaign is “Right to Education” which focuses of the week of world action for education (Benavides). In addition to their scholarship and support program for access to formal education, Project Miriam also offers technical classes in beauty, sewing, and computation for adolescents, young people and adults (Project Miriam pamphlet). Finally, like the many other organizations, Project Miriam also rallies up for International Women’s Day and Day of the Elimination of Violence against Women.

Project Miriam does not just work in Nicaragua; there are also projects in Guatemala as well as support in Switzerland and Austria. They have a general assembly, which is made up of all the members, a board of directors that represents the assembly, and then there is a general

coordination which is made up of all of the coordinators of projects and programs at a national level, and then there are work teams. While this does sound a bit like a vertical structure, Benavides suggests otherwise, “This organization has a horizontal structure” (Benavides). She states that the board of directors is elected every two years, “to represent the organization and to continue the execution of the different projects” (Benavides). She also states that each of the headquarters has their own team which meets every two months to make decisions and coordinate for their area (Benavides).

## **VI. Rediscovering Connections**

### **What is a culture of peace?**

“It is our greatest goal in Nicaragua to succeed in having a Culture of Peace” (Meneses). This simple phrase represents the sentiments of almost all the women interviewed. And while each description of “a culture of peace” was unique, common themes ran through them all. For example, the word respect was used multiple times in four out of the seven interviews. It was mainly in reference to the respect of everyone’s human rights, respect for diversity and differences, and the eradication of discrimination: “where we recognize ourselves as human beings with rights, where we respect our differences” (Meneses). Additionally, non-violence was also a prominent theme. The achievement of methods of communication that do not resort to violence—“to achieve mediation and not con fights, yelling, but with talking” (Urtecho)—and a lack of war were both mentioned as necessary conditions for a culture of peace. A few people also connected the lack of peace with the abundance of poverty suggesting the need for social justice (Blandón) and that a culture of peace is “where we work to eradicate hunger” (Meneses). Even less people mentioned the salvation of the environment as part of a culture of

peace, but it was mentioned by Virginia Meneses: a culture of peace is “where we work [...] to recuperate our environment and better the situation of the earth” (Meneses).

One thing all of the visions had in common was their firm belief in the need for social change, especially in the area of violence against women and girls. Beliefs as to whether or not Nicaragua had achieved peace, on the other hand, varied across the board. Four women out of seven said, no, they did not believe Nicaragua was in peace, and three out of the four were very adamant about it (“Of course not,” “No, definitely not,” and “For nothing”). These three organizations were the Network of Women against Violence, La Corriente, and MAM, the three groups that consider themselves to be either political or socio-political organizations. MEC, also with a ‘no’, was much more diplomatic about their answer, explaining that peace is also part economic, part political, and part social (Urtecho). Two of the other organizations, Miriam Project and Mujeres Acahual suggested that Nicaragua had peace, but Miriam Project tempered their answer by saying Nicaragua had peace relative to other countries (Benavides) and Mujeres Acahual suggested that “It is true we have many problems of violence, but it is different to live in a country with war than to live in a country without war” (anonymous). The only organization to contribute a definite “yes” was the Casa de Mujeres—Estelí; Hernandez answered the question, “Yes, yes there is peace because we are able to express our different conceptions or ideologies” (Hernandez). As we can see, while everyone’s ideas behind what constitute a culture of peace are relatively similar, the degree to which the organizations believe Nicaragua embodies these ideals varies greatly.

### **Women, Feminism, and Peace**

It is true that not all women are feminists. Here in Nicaragua, however, you would be hard-pressed to find a woman who would not readily lament about the negative effects of *machismo* on their culture, especially on the prevalence of violence against women. So, while

many women in Nicaragua may not identify as feminist, the majority recognize that they must reduce the influence of machismo—patriarchy—if they are to have equitable and non-violent society.

During the interviews, I did not ask whether the organizations identified as feminist; five out of the seven organizations, however, openly identified themselves as such and the other two, MEC and Casa de Mujeres, did not say one way or the other. Furthermore, every one of the organizations referred to the prevalence of violence against women and girls and all but Mujeres Acahual noted the connections between violence and patriarchy. For instance, the website of the Network of Women against Violence states that one of their goals is “to contribute to the transformation of relations of power that imposes upon us the patriarchal system that is based in all forms of violence against the diverse women of Nicaragua”

([www.reddemujerescontralaviolencia.org.ni](http://www.reddemujerescontralaviolencia.org.ni)). Sonia Vanessa from Casa de Mujeres also mentioned something similar during our interview, “While there exists *machista* concepts based in the inequality of gender there will continue to be the repetition of violence in one manner or another” (Hernandez). Magdalena Benavides from Miriam Project suggested that to her, patriarchy was the “conducting wire” between all types of discrimination and domination (interview). But it was Gladys Urtecho from MEC that explicitly described how the Nicaraguan Women’s Movement was working towards a culture of peace through their attempts to change the patriarchal system: “In trying to change the patriarchal system that lives in Nicaragua—there is much machismo—the women’s organizations [...] are contributing to the presence of less violence and discrimination and that is part of fortifying the peace that we could have in Nicaragua” (interview). Maria Teresa from La Corriente brings up this idea to an international level by explaining that the feminist movement has always denounced the inhumanity and the injustices of war and that they demand alternatives to violence such as “dialogue, persuasion, and cooperation” (Blandón).



The equal and horizontal structures of organizations such as the Network of Women against Violence and La Corriente also contribute to the blending of feminist and peace-building strategies. As previously mentioned, RMCV stresses the importance of being horizontal on their website. Their status as a network allows them to spread the leadership roles out through all of the organizations. In fact, Virginia Meneses, my interviewee from RMCV, was originally from the March 8<sup>th</sup> Collective before being voted in as the political coordinator (interview). Additionally, their coordinating commission rotates the position of director every two months so that everyone in the commission has the opportunity to lead and no one is continuously in charge. This not only empowers women leaders within the organization but also reduces the likelihood of unhealthy power relations that can form in hierarchal leadership settings. La Corriente is also an example of an exceedingly horizontal organization. Maria Teresa suggests that La Corriente works more as a collective than a NGO so that the exchange of ideas, dialogue, and consensus are the focus of the organization. These structural methods ensure that everyone is represented and everyone's voice is heard, a central concept within Lederach's ideas of structure and empowerment.

### **Empowerment, Representation, and Democracy**

The empowerment of women is a common theme throughout many of the organizations. The Network of Women against Violence states that they “work from a focus on individual and collective empowerment” in the areas of human rights and feminism ([www.reddemujerescontralaviolencia.org.ni](http://www.reddemujerescontralaviolencia.org.ni)). MEC takes the work of empowerment a few steps further by making it a central point of their organization. MEC offers capacity-building workshops and educational seminars to teach women how to raise their self-esteem, to be aware of their rights, and to start to defend them. Gladys Urtecho of MEC states that “through education and strengthening of their self-esteem, they [women] can say ‘now I am going to defend my rights, because they are being violated.’ It is through all of this [...] that we achieve

the empowerment of women” (interview). From Gladys’ statement, we can easily see how the empowerment of women is about more than boosting her self-esteem, it is giving her the knowledge and confidence she needs to move into the political arena and make her voice heard.

As Lederach suggests with his idea of empowerment, the goal of encouraging women to make their voices heard is so that they are able to take an active role in the decisions made about their lives. It is impossible to have peace when not everyone is equally represented and is part of the decision-making process. This is especially true when we are discussing the issue of women’s rights. If women do not have a voice within the decision-making processes about issues that immediately affect their lives, then we do not have a true democracy and we do not have peace. Maria Teresa from La Corriente brought this up in her interview. She mentioned how few women in Nicaragua were aware of their rights and that even fewer were trying to defend them. Consequently, La Corriente’s seeks to reduce this deficit of women’s active citizenship in Nicaragua through empowering women to take an active role in the democratic process. MAM also seeks to promote the active involvement of women in the political arena. Their entire movement is meant to open a public space for women and women’s issues, to give them equal representation in the public sector.

### **Ending Violence and Building a Culture of Peace**

There were few things that every one of the organizations within the typology had in common. One was that that they all work towards ending violence against women and another was that they all believe that their organizations contribute to a culture of peace in Nicaragua. While they might not share the same theories or the same reasoning, all of these organizations help create a culture of peace through preventing violence.

The majority of the organizations focus their attention specifically on violence against women. MEC has developed workshops on techniques of negotiation, mediation, and conflict resolution ([www.men.org.ni](http://www.men.org.ni)) and Gladys Urtecho hopes that this will lead to the achievement of

mediation as a tool for conflict resolution instead of yelling and punches (interview). MEC, like many of the other organizations, is aware of the potential impact that these workshops for women could have within the women's homes and communities. Mujeres Acahaul also provides workshops on alternatives to violence and that suggest that these workshops, although solely attended by women, are also for the family: "our capacity-building workshops address the topic of alternatives to violence [...] and it is for the family" (anonymous). Many organizations also agree that in teaching the mothers about alternatives to violence, they are indirectly teaching the children and young people within the home as well. Consequently, as Virginia Meneses of RMCV suggested, non-violence education begins in the home: "[we need] to start the education of a culture of peace from our houses, from our homes, start with the children. [...] A culture of peace ought to work from the schools [...]" (Meneses). Virginia also states that young people are the future of Nicaragua and in teaching them about non-violence and the effects of machismo, we can contribute to their ability to change society (Meneses). Casa de Mujeres also feels that they can contribute to a culture of peace because they "work with the future generations [...] they contribute to future parents who will be more responsible and will have a better development capacity [...] to make better decisions" during situation of conflicts (Hernandez).

As Azahalea Román points out, "peace is a dynamic subject. Peace is not pacifism; peace opposes violence and pacifism does not oppose violence" (interview).

## **VII. Obstacles to Peace**

### **The Nicaraguan Women's Movement and Politics**

As in the case with the majority of women's movements around the world, the women's movement in Nicaragua does not have the best of relations with the current government. Maria

Teresa of La Corriente describes the government with which they must deal: “There is much impunity, there are many public crimes that are not being penalized, the corruption is not being penalized. There are many corrupt people in the political class, there is much abuse of public power and there are violations of the human rights of the Nicaraguan people” (interview). It is hard to imagine having a relationship with such a government, let alone supporting one. Here Azahalea of MAM expresses her opinions on feminists that support the government:

For us it is inadmissible that a feminist is in favor of the current government or is in favor of the president that we have. For us it is inadmissible because he is a president that is accused of a grave crime and is someone who is a political secretary of a party that negotiates for abortion with the Catholic hierarchy and that has a position of no respect for the lay state (interview).

Through these testimonies we can already begin to see why the women’s movement might be at odds with such a government. Women’s rights are being chipped away at by both the public and private actions of the government and its officials. In addition, when organizations such as RMCV take to the streets in non-violent protest, there are groups of contention often closely related to the government which have been known to physically attack the marchers (Meneses). To make matters worse, while some women’s organizations such as AMNLAE still have some say with the government, “almost all of the organizations that have an aggressive position on the rights of women have been excluded from interlocution with the State for the last two years” (Román). In fact, Virginia Meneses of RMCV goes so far as to say “in reality the relation that we have with the government is absolutely none” (interview).

While as a feminist I would tend to agree with their assessment of the situation, I also feel that as a peace activist, the more feminist and more politically aggressive organizations such as MAM, La Corriente, and RMCV have bound themselves within the dualistic polarity that Lederach describes. These organizations consider themselves to be in the right and the government to be in the wrong—“They are the violators. We are the violated.” This position

does not allow one to see the connections that exist between the two enemies. As such there is little chance for constructive dialogue, even if the government opened a space for it. Imagine the scenario: for whatever reason, Ortega decides to open up a dialogue with the more political branch of the women's movement through. But, when the representatives from the movement begin to speak, they blame and accuse, seeing the government as an enemy, as "the other," rather than as a potential ally. Although imaging the Ortega government as a potential ally to the far-left women's movement might be difficult, it is not impossible. The FSLN was once on the forefront of social justice.

Even as the government shuts out any possibilities of dialogue, the women's movement must still keep in mind the negative effects of their adherence to such a pronounced dichotomy so that they may always be prepared for constructive dialogue when the opportunity presents itself.

### **Divisions and Difficulties within the Women's Movement**

Easily inferred from the last section, like most social movement, tensions exist between various factions and organizations. The biggest division within the Nicaraguan women's movement is between the organizations that support that government—meaning they are rather conservative in thought and practice—and those who oppose the government—meaning that they are more to the left side of the spectrum. As we can see from Azahalea's statement about feminists that support the government, the factions are definitely at odds.

Similar to the situation between organizations such as MAM, RMCV, and La Corriente and the government, the situation between the two factions of the women's movement have also become locked within an "either/or" dichotomy. For the same reasons, there is a lack of dialogue, discussion, and debate within the context of the women's movement. And while it was

difficult to picture any connections between the feminist groups and Ortega's government, it is much easier to see the multiple links between the various organizations.

In addition to internal division, the Nicaraguan women's movement, in addition to many other women's movements around the world, is plagued by the same power dynamics of domination and repression. Within the movement, many organizations want to be the most influential, the one with the most members, and the most success, undermining the need for the organizations to work together to achieve their shared objectives—such as diminishing violence against women. And, as we could see through typology, this type of competitiveness and power structure is also in play within the specific organizations. The majority of the organizations had a top-down leadership structure but attempted to integrate the use of election processes, rotations of power, and a board of directors in place of a single director. But, while many of these organizations may have felt that they were horizontal on a local or grassroots level, groups such as Casa de Mujeres—AMNLAE, MEC, MAM, and Miriam Project all had a structure based on traditional patriarchal model.

Lastly, the women's movement of Nicaragua, while making considerable progress in the use of alternate methods of social change, many are continuing to use methods such as protests and the use of terms such as “fight” and “against” that simply further the dualistic polarity between the organizations and what they wish to change.

## **VIII. Recommendations and Conclusions**

The Nicaraguan women's movement is a diverse and dynamic social movement with a fascinating history that includes both successes and failures. Through looking at the history of the movement in the context of social and political influences we can see how the movement moved and fluctuated to fit the circumstances of the time. We can also see from this history how the women's movement has become involved in such so many aspects of civil society and how through theory and practice, the organizations within the movement are able to bring together so many diverse issues. Violence against women, women's economic, labor, sexual, and reproductive rights, empowerment, democracy, citizenship, health and wellness, family, job-training, and alternatives to violence have all been issues that the various organizations have addressed. Through exploring the ways in which the organizations within my typology saw themselves as contributing to a culture of peace, we were able to visualize how all of these diverse topics and objectives work together to create a holistic vision of peace. My theoretical framework was reflected in the many connections that the women saw between feminism and peace, the role of patriarchy in the perpetuation of violence, the need for representation and empowerment, and the necessity of teaching children alternatives to violence.

We also explored the ways in which the Nicaraguan women's movement is still facing issues that are contrary to the construction of a culture of peace. The first is a polar relationship with the government that reduces the ability to find the connections between them and use those connections to create space for dialogue. We also saw that the same alliances were affecting the relationships of organizations within the movement itself. Those organizations that supported or identified with the government also placed themselves within the damaging dichotomy. Additionally, many of the structures, language, and methods used within the Nicaraguan women's movement continue to contribute to the perpetuation of patriarchal systems of domination. Taking everything into consideration, the women's movement, while being shut out of a dialogue with the government, does have the opportunity to apply concepts of peacebuilding to their methods that might contribute to an opening of space for healing dialogue and reconciliation. Maria Teresa of La Corriente describes how they are trying to create this space within the women's movement, "One very important goal is the democratization of the women's movement, to achieve more inclusive spaces, to more thoroughly debate our differences, our controversial points, and our possibilities of collective action" (interview). Maria Teresa exactly describes what is needed to help the organizations within the movement to create constructive dialogue which would allow the organizations to reconcile and see their common points of interest where they could work together for action.

Additionally, in the continued use of patriarchal structure and methods, many of the women's organizations are placing themselves within the same system of domination that contributes to dualistic polarity between the movement and the government. Perhaps in reducing the use of oppositional language such as "against" and "fight," as well as replace methods such as protesting with dialogue, the government would be less threatened by the movement and consequently more likely to negotiate.

Although to many these proposals may sound like a relaxing of principles or a sign of weakness and surrender, in reality, this is merely a reflection on the need for power that so



many people still possess. We all imagine that life would be better if things everyone listened to what we had to say and lived by our principles. But, in reality, constructive social change is not necessarily about managing a complete paradigm shift; it is, as Lederach suggests, about moving relationships from the negative side of the spectrum to the positive. A culture of peace is not necessarily the attainment of “peace” or our desired utopia; instead, a culture of peace is created through openness of a community or society to begin the process of dialogue and their willingness to no longer see their enemy as the “other,” but to see them as an integral part of the system that connects everyone and everything.

When we look at a culture of peace as a process rather than a goal, it is easy to see how much the Nicaraguan women’s movement contributes. However, the question remains as to whether the destructive polar relationship between the government and the women’s movement in addition to the dichotomy within the movement itself can be healed through patience, dialogue, and the recognition of their mutual interdependence so that government and civil society may work together to advance the culture of peace in Nicaragua.

## Works Cited

- Anonymous, Association for the Promotion and Development of the Nicaraguan Woman, Acahual, Managua. Personal Interview re: the organization, the Nicaraguan women's movement and peace. 28 April 2009, Clinic/Center Mujeres Acahual.
- Benavides, Magdalena, member of the coordinating team of the Association "Miriam Project" for the Intellectual Promotion of the Woman. Personal Interview re: the organization, the Nicaraguan women's movement and peace. 22 April 2009. Office of Project Miriam, Estelí. Telephone: 00-505-2713-6064
- Blandón, María Teresa, director of Feminist Program of Central America "La Corriente". Personal Interview re: the organization, the Nicaraguan women's movement, and peace. 20 April 2009. Library La Malinche, Managua. Telephone: 2222-5355
- CEI (Centro de Estudios Internacionales). "Catálogo de Acuerdos de Paz en Nicaragua." Managua: CEI, 2005.
- Criquillon, Ana. "The Nicaraguan Women's Movement: Feminist Reflections from Within." The New Politics of Survival: Grassroots Movements in Central America. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1995.
- Hernández, Sonia Vanesa Rodriguez, psychologist at the Casa de Mujeres—Estelí. Personal Interview re: the organization, the Nicaraguan women's movement, and peace. 21 April 2009. La Casa de Mujeres, Estelí. Telephone: 2713-3038
- Isbester, Katherine. Still Fighting: The Nicaraguan Women's Movement, 1977-2000. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001.
- Lederach, John Paul. Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies. Washington D.C.: U.S. Institute of Peace, 1997.
- . The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace. New York: Oxford UP, 2005.
- Meneses, Virginia, politic action coordinator of the Network of Women Against Violence. Personal Interview re: the organization, the Nicaraguan women's movement, and peace. 16 April 2009. Office of the Network of Women against Violence, Managua. Telephone: 2266-4619
- Randall, Margaret. Sandino's Daughters Revisited: Feminism in Nicaragua. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1994.
- Román, Azahalea Solís, member of the political coordination of the Autonomous Women's Movement. Personal Interview re: the organization, the Nicaraguan women's movement, and peace. 28 April 2009. Center for Constitutional Rights, Managua. Telephone: 8851-1550
- Urtecho, Gladis, in charge of the team that works against domestic violence of the Movement of Women Workers and the Unemployed "Maria Elena Cuadra". Personal Interview re: the

organization, the Nicaraguan women's movement, and peace. 17 April 2009. Office of MEC, Managua. Telephone: 2222-2601

Warren, Karen J. Cady, Duane L. "Feminism and Peace: Seeing Connections." *Hypatia*. 9.2 (1994): 1-9.

Websites and Pamphlets:

<http://www.womeninblack.org>, Women in Black

<http://www.reddemujerescontralaviolencia.org.ni>, The Network of Women against Violence

<http://www.mec.org.ni>, Movement of Women Workers and the Unemployed Maria Elena Cuadra.

Mujeres Acahual Pamphlet "Centro de Mujeres Acahual," bright pink, basic information about the organization and its services.

Project Miriam Pamphlet "Cero Tolerancia a la Explotación Sexual Comercial de Niñas, Niños, y Adolescentes," glossy, grey and colored printed, presents information on the organization, but mostly elaborates on their "zero tolerance" of sexual exploitation of children and adolescents campaign.