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**Reproducing Nicaragua: A Feminist Reading of
Debates over Motherhood and Abortion Under
Sandinista Rule, 1983-1988**

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May 6, 2014

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Introduction

Since 2006, abortion has been illegal in Nicaragua even in cases of rape, incest, or to save a woman's life. This is not a legacy of the authoritarian Somoza dynasty that monopolized political power from 1936 to 1979. Nor is it a policy introduced by the conservative governments that ruled Nicaragua from 1990 to 2006. Paradoxically, Sandinista President Daniel Ortega signed this draconian policy into law as one of his first acts after he regained the Presidency, in 2006. In doing so he acknowledged his debt to conservative Catholics for their monetary and electoral support.¹

Although Ortega helped lead the radical Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN) to military victory over United States supported dictator Anastasio Somoza in 1979 and served as Nicaraguan president from 1979 to 1990 when the FSLN strove to revolutionize the country's politics, economy, and society; he has emerged as the face of reaction. Among other things, this reaction has led to denial of the significance of the 1980s liberalization in Nicaragua, a liberalization achieved through mass mobilizations that crossed gender, race, and class lines. The strength of this conservative backlash suggests *not* that utopian revolutionary dreams have been crushed, but that they are alive and well. Nowhere is this more important than in the case of women's consciousness. Women's political participation in revolutionary initiatives created a sense of agency and entitlement that is not easily erased. My thesis examines debates over reproductive health, and in particular abortion, in Nicaragua during the 1980s in order to recapture the radical

¹ Kristen Shelby, "Abortion Outlawed In Nicaragua Ten Days Before Controversial Election," *Upside Down World*, October 27, 2006, <http://upsidedownworld.org/main/nicaragua-archives-62/472-abortion-outlawed-in-nicaragua-ten-days-before-controversial-elections> (accessed on April 28, 2014). Daniel Ortega was a member of the National Assembly when he voted to ban therapeutic abortions on October 26, 2006. Ten days later he was elected President and quickly signed this draconian law.

openings that allowed women to envision different lives for themselves and to reevaluate the legacies of these openings.

My reading of the historiography of Nicaragua did not prepare me to find such a wealth of documentation of the broad public debates over reproductive rights that took place in Nicaragua during the 1980s. Despite the widespread misconception that the FSLN was rigidly opposed to expanding reproductive rights, the story is far more complicated. Although the FSLN alliance with the Liberation Theology sectors of the Catholic church posed obstacles to reform, the church was not united, as evident in the existence of an active Nicaraguan branch of “Catholics for the Right to Choose.” From the official FSLN newspaper *Barricada*, to the halls of public hospitals, to debates among nuns, issues relating to family planning and abortion were hot topics. Policy debates on how to reduce maternal death and whether—or under what circumstances—to provide sterilization or even abortion opened the Pandora’s box for public discussion of formerly taboo topics, raising new possibilities and expectations.

After 1979, women entered the health professions in record numbers. While the medical school of the National University trained a new cohort of doctors that included more women than ever, the FSLN designated a hospital in Managua, the Bertha Calderón Women’s Hospital, as the first hospital dedicated to maternal health. The Hospital employed many of the new female doctors. Women in medicine, especially gynecologists and obstetricians, quickly rose to assume leadership positions. These included: Minister of Health, Dora Maria Tellez; Director of Gynecology and Obstetrics at Bertha Calderón Hospital, Dr. Ligia Altamirano; and an “army” of doctors. These women were the soldiers of the Health Crusade in Nicaragua in the mid 1980s who

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forced discussion of family planning into the public realm. This paper seeks to analyze the impact of the work done by a group of doctors at the Bertha Calderón Women's Hospital to improve Nicaraguan women's lives, and the legacy of these doctors professional activism.



Image 1 - Photo by Felix Largaespada. These women represented a contingency of doctors and nurses from the Bertha Calderón Hospital going to make house visits for patients who could not make it to the hospital. Courtesy of Instituto de Historia de Nicaragua y Centro América, Universidad de Centro America, Managua, Nicaragua.

Scholars have glossed over these public discussions on family planning that contributed to defining Nicaraguan women's political consciousness. Ignoring this debate trivializes the significance of women's bodies within revolutionary politics, underestimates the power of women within the revolution, and downplays the radical potential of the revolution. Women's role in the military conflict and economic gains are

both significant indicators of feminist progress.² But they do not address the impact of revolutionary politics on broader social structures that oppress women: in particular, men's control over women's bodies, which is a key obstacle to women's economic and social autonomy.

Focusing on the debates surrounding reproductive rights, this thesis argues that the Nicaraguan revolution's radical promise to transform gender relations allowed for significant changes in women's subjectivities despite the "failings" of the revolution to achieve a feminist agenda. Debates during the 1980s introduced inspiring (or dangerous) models of a different world that might have been, and still might be.

Although macro changes (such as legislative and policy shifts) are important indicators of shifts in gender hierarchies, these are not the only indicators of change, nor are they always the most important. Just as crucial are the micro changes that occur in consciousness and in the quality of daily social relations within families and communities. Testimonies of Sandinista activist women collected by Margaret Randall in 1981 and again in 1994 indicate profound transformations of their subjectivities. These testimonies highlight the contrasts between Nicaraguan women's feminist values and self-perception on one hand, and the social roles they are often assigned on the other hand. Their stories are just the tip of the iceberg, suggesting that Nicaraguan women think their own independent thoughts and continue to strive to control their own bodies. Today in Nicaragua, as fertility plummets, and women make educational, political and professional

² Much of the feminist scholarship that highlights the feminist gains from the Revolution focuses on the political and economic gains. Meanwhile, the scholarship that focuses on the failings of a feminist agenda highlights the revolutionary government's unwillingness to change abortion laws.

gains, the memory of the more liberal gendered political culture of the 1980s remains an important undercurrent.

Historiography

Historiography on post-1979 Nicaraguan gender relations and reproductive politics emphasizes the paradoxes of women's liberatory experiences of revolutionary struggle alongside the hyper-masculinity fostered by men's revolutionary experiences. Notably, within the extensive historiography about women and gender in the Nicaraguan Revolution, little attention has been paid to reproductive rights. When reproductive rights are discussed, the discussion critiques the lack of access to abortion under FSLN rule. While abortion was a hot topic internationally in the 1970s and 80s, the larger issue of reproductive rights was (and is) a much more important issue for women's empowerment in Nicaragua. Since women's ability to control their bodies requires access both to quality maternity care and to birth control, no assessment of the impact of the Sandinista Revolution on women is adequate without consideration of this key issue.

In her 1983 article, "Women in Revolutionary Movements: The Case of Nicaragua," Norma Chinchilla attributes great significance to the mass mobilization of women into armed combat, including in leadership positions. For her, this innovation in the history of socialist revolution augured well for the achievement of a feminist agenda. Five years later, Chinchilla published "Revolutionary Popular Feminism in Nicaragua: Articulating Class, Gender, and National Sovereignty," which emphasizes the FSLN's commitment to eliminate women's subordination through promoting women's organizations, getting rid of women's double day, and improving working conditions for female wage workers. Both articles are typical of the historiography that focuses

narrowly on economic and political initiatives—by women themselves as well as by the state—as the key benchmarks of women’s advancement after the revolution.

Similarly, Rosario Montoya, in “House, Street, Collective: Revolutionary Geographies and Gender Transformations in Nicaragua, 1979-1999,” evaluates the success of one of the FSLN’s land redistribution initiatives. She focuses on a small vanguard Sandinista community where active involvement in the overthrow of Somoza had blurred gender roles. She concludes that even in this community, the FSLN’s commitment to the success of a state-formed women’s agricultural collective proved insufficient. This initiative ultimately failed because of deep cultural ambivalence about women’s growing autonomy and the unwillingness of the FSLN to curb men’s sabotage of changes that threatened male privilege.

Katherine Hoyt, in *Many Faces of Sandinista Democracy*, presents a positive analysis of progress made during the 1980s in fostering participatory democracy, direct democracy, and economic democracy. In each of these areas, she argues that women contributed to and benefitted from change. However, she acknowledges that change stalled because of the threat of the Contra War, which made participation in direct democracy more dangerous. In addition, the Contra War created a schism within the largest organization of women, the Luisa Amanda Espinoza Association of Nicaraguan Women (AMNLAE), over how to balance the struggle for gender equality with the need to defend the revolution against external subversion.

In “Mobilization without Emancipation? Women’s Interests, the State, and Revolution in Nicaragua” (1985), Maxine Molyneaux correctly predicted that intense economic and political pressures would make it difficult for the Sandinista government

to resist subordinating women's emancipation to larger national agendas. She also acknowledges that Sandinista redistributive policies benefited women materially through greater access to education, housing, food, and health services and that reforms of family law provided "modest but significant" gains for women.³ Nevertheless, she concludes that in order to maintain popular solidarity, the FSLN had to avoid radical critiques of the family or male power: "the Sandinistas were limited in what they could do both by the conservative hold of the Catholic Church and the relatively small base of support for feminism."⁴ However, Molyneux's narrow conception of "feminism" blinds her to important changes in women's lives and consciousness. By focusing on official policy only, she ignores the significance of daily grass-roots negotiations among women and men over gender roles and the liberatory impacts of revolutionary ideals on women's aspirations.

Molyneux's pessimism colors her argument even more strongly in "The Politics of Abortion in Nicaragua: Revolutionary Pragmatism, or Feminism in the Realm of Necessity?" She acknowledges that gynecologists at Managua's Berta Calderón Hospital released a report in 1985 calling for reform of Nicaragua's abortion and contraceptive laws, but she does not explore the importance of the heated public debates that filled many pages of *Barricada* (the official newspaper of the FSLN) following the release of this report. Molyneux simply labels the Sandinistas sexist and condemns them for failing to liberalize the abortion laws. Using familiar second wave feminist rhetoric, Molyneux judges that the revolutionary government failed Nicaraguan women

³ Maxine Molyneux, "Mobilization without Emancipation? Women's Interests, the State, and Revolution in Nicaragua," *Feminist Studies* 11:2 (1985): 298.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 294.

by failing to legalize abortion: that women's lives were essentially unchanged by the Insurrection as long as safe abortion remained unavailable. By ignoring the importance of a larger reproductive rights agenda, Molyneux flattens the issue and mischaracterizes FSLN politics of the mid 1980s, which were characterized by a diversity of opinion.

The basic premise that underlies my thesis echoes Heidi Tinsman's important claim: "patriarchal power [is] about sexuality: particularly, but not exclusively about men's sexual authority over women. Gender ... is centrally shaped by sexuality."⁵ Following her lead, my thesis focuses on one aspect of men's sexual authority over women, control of reproduction, to reevaluate the gendered impacts of the Sandinista revolution. I also take inspiration from Tinsman's emphasis on the importance of transformations in ideology (even when practice did not match discourse) and her long-term view. She explains the remarkable feminist agency of Chilean women agricultural workers in 1991—just after the fall of Pinochet's seventeen year military dictatorship—as a legacy of "an earlier utopian moment: the radical populism of Chile's Agrarian Reform between 1964 and 1973."⁶ When studying the Nicaraguan Revolution—like the Chilean Revolution—political defeat and reversal of economic gains must not erase recognition of the longer-term significance of transformations in consciousness. Like in Chile, where dictatorship failed to expunge popular memory of revolutionary empowerment and entitlement, in today's anti-feminist Nicaragua, women's memories

⁵ Heidi Tinsman, *Politics of Conflict: The Politics of Gender, Sexuality, and Labor in The Chilean Agrarian Reform, 1950-1973* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 11.

⁶ *Ibid.*, xi-xii.

of utopian feminist dreams remain alive and relevant. This thesis examines the historical importance of women who conjured utopian feminist dreams.

Militant Motherhood

To understand the 1980s public debates about reproductive politics, the politics of motherhood are key. For most Nicaraguan women, the material reality of motherhood was grueling, relentless hard work. Constantly pregnant or nursing, they also bore the burden of economic responsibilities. Nevertheless, women and men, radicals and conservatives idolize motherhood. The FSLN's commitment to democratization did not include freeing women from motherhood. After women gave birth to the new revolutionary nation, the enduring ethic of "sacrifice" dictated their return to physical birthing of new generations and made contraception and abortion unpatriotic. Traditionally, women's altruistic sacrifices led them to be seen but not heard as citizens. After women's militant mobilization made their daily sacrifices a matter of public discussion, they gained honor but no relief from the religious imperative to demonstrate altruism. Women's consolation for their sacrifices in the revolution was glorified motherhood, not liberation.

Frequent pregnancies, multiple childbirths, and poverty killed more women than Somoza's National Guard, revolutionary violence, and the Contra War combined. Due to poor record keeping and destruction of official documents accurate demographic data is unavailable prior to the 1980s. Nevertheless, data collected in the 1980s by the Bertha Calderón Hospital indicates the horrific reality of women's lives. One study of 513 women patients, who came to the hospital due to botched abortions, showed that only 1 had never been pregnant; 88 had 1 prior pregnancy; 94 had 2 prior pregnancies; 100 had

3 prior pregnancies; and 169 of 513 had 4 to 6 prior pregnancies.⁷ Furthermore, most women had been pregnant by the age of 18.⁸ Of those same group of 513 patients, 30 women (5.8 %) died as a result of inducing an abortion; 22 of the women who died were between 20 and 35 years old.⁹ Importantly, 100% of the who died had children they were leaving behind.¹⁰

The majority of families in Nicaragua were female headed throughout the Somoza dynasty and most were poor.¹¹ Many fathers and husbands joined the FSLN or deserted their families in search of work, leaving mothers financially responsible.¹² “The proportion of women wage earners rose from 14% in 1950 to 28.7% in 1977. These are extraordinarily high figures for Latin America.”¹³ Mothers not only assumed economic responsibilities, but also social and moral responsibilities for their families’ needs. Research on women’s survival strategies prior to the Insurrection notes that women typically performed reproductive tasks that allowed them to combine family responsibilities with working long hours outside the home.¹⁴ For example, women who worked at the market or street vending did not “need” child-care because they brought their children with them to work. The Insurrection provoked another economic crisis that

⁷ Ana Maria Pizarro –Jimenez, “Comportamineto del problema del aborto inducido ilegalmente en el Hospital Bertha Calderón, 1 de Julio, 1985 al 31 de Agosto, 1988,” (Managua: Universidad Nacional Autonoma De Nicaragua, Ministerio de Salud, 1988), 58-86.

⁸ Richard Garfield and Glen Williams, *Health Care In Nicaragua: Primary Care Under Changing Regimes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 253-257.

⁹ Ana Maria Pizarro –Jimenez, “Comportamineto del problema del aborto inducido ilegalmente en el Hospital Bertha Calderón, 1 de Julio, 1985 al 31 de Agosto, 1988,” 58-86.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Glenda Monterrey, Amanda Pineda, and Dr. Mayra Lourdes Bolanos, “Women in the Revolution,” in *Nicaragua a New Kind of Revolution: Forty-five key Spokespeople*, interview by Philip Swerling and Connie Martin (Westport: Lawrence Hill, 1985), 100.

¹² Margaret Randall, introduction to *Sandino's Daughters: Testimonies of Nicaraguan Women in Struggle*, ed. Lynda Yanz (Toronto: New Star Books, 1981), xiii.

¹³ Ibid., xiv.

¹⁴ “Becoming Visible Women in Nicaragua,” *Envio* 78 (1987) accessed April 5, 2014, <http://www.envio.org.ni/articulo/3183>.

hit Nicaraguan women hard, tested their ingenuity, and increased their dependence on wages.¹⁵

Despite these material burdens, the ideological glorification of motherhood thrived. Religious and educational institutions celebrated motherhood as women's natural role, a god-given biological imperative. This doctrine reinforced the structural oppression of women. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Nicaragua's unique observance of "La Purisima." This holiday celebrates the Virgin Mary's "lack of original sin and thus her suitability to be Jesus' mother."¹⁶ The Virgin's great authority rests solely in her "role as the ideal sacrificing mother."¹⁷ In Catholic countries, the church socializes, educates, and often controls or strongly influences the institutionalization of gender hierarchies through law and public policy, legitimating unequal relationships as "natural." Gustavo Gutiérrez, the founder of Liberation Theology, noted that women's oppression was so engrained in Latin American culture that "when we point it out we sound a bit like foreigners bent on causing trouble."¹⁸ Troublemaker Sofia Montenegro claimed that, "Virginity in the sky... violation on the earth", was the norm, as evident in the physical and verbal abuse of large numbers of Nicaraguan women.¹⁹ Her comments

¹⁵ Ana Maria Pizarro -Jimenez, "Comportamineto del problema del aborto inducido ilegalmente en el Hospital Bertha Calderón, 1 de Julio, 1985 al 31 de Agosto, 1988." (Managua: Universidad Nacional Autonoma De Nicaragua, 1988), 2.

¹⁶ Stephanie Linkogle, "The Revolution and the Virgin Mary: Popular Religion and Social Change in Nicaragua," *Sociological Research Online*, no. 2 (1988) accessed on April 13, 2014, <http://www.socresonline.org.uk/3/2/8.html>.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Gustavo Guitierrez, introduction to *A Theology of Liberation* (New York: Maryknoll, 1973), xxi.

¹⁹ Sofia Montenegro, "La Gritería: La Otro Cara del Culto a la Inmaculada Concepción," *Gente*, December 4, 1992.

emphasized “the neurotic and ambivalent attitude of the Nicaraguan man before the figure of the mother and therefore before women in general.”²⁰

Socialization of young girls prepared them for subservience to their husbands, and dominance over their children. Women compensate for minimal social power by exerting immense control over their children. In a 1991 article, Luz Maria Torres, director of a women’s clinic wrote, “Nicaraguan culture is ... reinforced at home, as women are the ideological torchbearers in this society... reproducing the very system that harms them. This is perhaps most obvious in the socialization of children.”²¹ This power that came with motherhood provided an avenue for agency within oppression. Girls matured into reputable women by becoming mothers. Motherhood therefore became girls’ ideal profession, their means for gaining social power, making the identities “mother” and “woman” interchangeable. Tellingly, *The Historic Program of the FSLN*, a document first presented in 1969, then reprinted in 1981, highlights the interchangeability of mother and woman in section seven, entitled “Emancipation of Women.” While the introduction promises to “abolish the odious discrimination,” five of the seven points refer to women as mothers, with the very first promising to “pay special attention to mother and child.”²²

The Catholic worship of Mary and the lasting effects of what Margaret Randall refers to as the Spanish Catholic tradition, “preached [that] woman [stayed] home,

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Luz Maria Torres, “Women in Nicaragua: Revolution on Hold,” *Envio* 119 (June 1991) accessed on April 12, 2014, <http://www.envio.org.ni/articulo/2912>.

²² Tomás Borge, Carlos Fonseca, Daniel Ortega, Humberto Ortega, and Jaime Wheelock, *Sandinistas Speak*, intro. Bruce Marcus (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1982), 19.

passive, dependent and 'ornamental'...²³ Many daughters passed directly from the guardianship of their fathers to the control of their husbands.²⁴ Girls who learned to be submissive became mothers who "lead lives of service to others, most prominently their men."²⁵ Even liberation theology and radical sectors of the Catholic Church sanctified women as mothers of heroes and martyrs. Christian revolutionaries presented Mary (the Mother of God) as a liberator, rather than submissive, but as Randall notes, "there were limits to the usefulness of a figure whose own sexuality was denied."²⁶ The Luz Torres article published in *Envio*, a student newspaper from the University of Central America in Nicaragua, further explained that "Mothers were exalted first and foremost as mothers, and praised for giving their greatest gift—their sons—to the cause."²⁷

Women's sexuality led not to self-realization; rather it reinforced their role of sacrificing for others. *Barricada* reported testimony by a doctor at the Berta Calderón Hospital that one patient in particular had 12 children, but had never experienced an orgasm.²⁸ A study by Dr. Torres at the Berta Calderón Hospital reported that "most women had never had an orgasm, and many did not even know what the word meant."²⁹ This reality did not change even after Tomas Borge, Home Affairs Minister, opened a nationally broadcasted speech in 1982 by declaring that, "among other rights, women have a right to sexual pleasure."³⁰

²³ Margaret Randall, introduction to *Sandino's Daughters: Testimonies of Nicaraguan Women in Struggle*, xiv.

²⁴ Margaret Randall, introduction to *Sandino's Daughters: Testimonies of Nicaraguan Women in Struggle*, 15.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Luz Maria Torres, "Women in Nicaragua: Revolution on Hold"

²⁸ Leonel Urbana, "Que hacer con el drama del aborto," *Barricada*, November 25, 1985.

²⁹ Richard Garfield and Glen Williams, *Health Care In Nicaragua: Primary Care Under Changing Regimes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 235.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 235.

Motherhood became more than a religious symbol; it became a politicalized role. In 1983, the male leadership of the FSLN, which viewed women's emancipation with considerable ambivalence if not outright hostility, passed an all male draft, an institutionalized attempt to squeeze women out of the military.³¹ At the time, women composed 20 percent of the army and 50 percent of the militia. Nevertheless, Defense Minister Humberto Ortega argued that their "objective limitations" were a distraction to national defense.³² Over the next year, the FSLN demanded that AMNLAE (Luisa Amanda Espinoza Association of Nicaragua Women, an organization dedicated to organizing and mobilizing Nicaraguan women in defense of the Sandinista Revolution) focus solely on mobilizing mothers of draftees (or potential draftees) in order to assist the male leadership to defend Nicaragua militarily.³³ While AMNLAE became subservient to the FSLN's national political agenda, it fought to maintain control over the rhetoric about motherhood. Some members of AMNLAE protested that if "objective limitations" existed, it was not women's biology but man's attitudes that were "limited."³⁴ Their struggle to control the discussion can be seen in their various publications and through the foundation of an organization called "Mothers of Heroes and Martyrs," which led

³¹ "Becoming Visible Women in Nicaragua"

³² Jennifer Leigh Disney, *Women's Activism and Feminist Agency in Mozambique and Nicaragua* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008), Kindle edition, Kindle locations 1061-1071. [The FSLN initiated a mandatory draft while simultaneously forcing women out of combat roles. This forced AMNLAE to shift its focus toward organizing mothers of draftees, incorporating the mothers into various revolutionary campaigns in an effort to keep them invested in the defense of the Revolution.](#)

³³ Since many credit the creation of AMPRONAC, AMNLAE's predecessor, to Jaime Wheelock, the leader of one of the factions of the FSLN in 1975, [male leaders](#) of the FSLN felt an unwarranted entitlement to control strategic positions [adopted by FSLN women and by AMNLAE.](#)

³⁴ Luz Marina Torres, "Women in Nicaragua: The Revolution on Hold"

frequent and visible marches through the streets of Nicaragua's cities and towns.³⁵ (See illustration below.)



Image 2 - Photo by Aragón, July 19, 1983. "No More Bloodshed! No More Kidnapping our Children, or Peasant Brothers!! We demand." After the FSLN expelled women from the army, AMNLAE called on them to participate in the revolution by becoming better mothers to the nation. Motherhood thus became not only a social occupation but also a political identity that justified their continued political activism and legitimated their public presence. Courtesy of Instituto de Historia de Nicaragua y Centro América, Universidad de Centro America, Managua, Nicaragua.

As the FSLN increasingly promoted motherhood as women's highest calling and national duty, women as women became irrelevant. Historian Katherine Isbester asserts "the Sandinista ideal shifted from personhood to its diametrical opposite, motherhood....

³⁵ Jennifer Leigh Disney, *Women's Activism and Feminist Agency in Mozambique and Nicaragua*, 1061-1071.

As a result of its new focus on motherhood, AMNLAE lost its ability to create an alternative identity for women."³⁶ The glorification of motherhood “naturalized” Nicaragua’s conservative laws governing reproductive health, and abortion. In conjunction with the Catholic Church, the FSLN co-opted the revolutionary space women created for women, and confined it only to mothers. Many young adult Nicaraguans thought of themselves as the “sacrificed generation.”³⁷ They embraced the defense of the revolution as their highest priority and accepted that this had to take priority over private interests. Nevertheless, subordination of women’s “private” or “individual” interests paved the way for the FSLN to reverse social advancements women had fought for, trapping them in traditional roles. Rather than prioritizing the well being of individual women and children, the FSLN’s policies and initiatives focused on “national interests.” Sociologist Maxine Molyneux quoted Daniel Ortega’s criticism of “women’s liberations”: “Some women ‘aspiring to be liberated’ decline to bear children...these women ‘negate...the continuity of the human species’.”³⁸

The FSLN’s conceptualization of women’s maternal roles allowed and praised women for stepping out of the home temporarily to “mother” the country. Evidence is found in FSLN propaganda honoring the civil service of women after 1979.³⁹ Women nursed citizens, demonstrating their natural maternal disposition. Besides giving birth to their own children, woman could nurture, protect, and serve the larger national “family.” Revolutionary Vigilante Committees emerged in each barrio during the Contra War,

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Salman Rushdie, *The Jaguar Smile* (New York: Penguin, 1987), 41.

³⁸ Maxine Molyneux, “The Politics of Abortion in Nicaragua: Revolutionary Pragmatism, or Feminism in the Realm of Necessity?” *Feminist Review* 29 (March 1988), 123.

³⁹ *SOMOS AMNLAE Boletín Informativo*, Año II No 2, June 1982.

mobilizing women to take turns walking through the street at all hours to protect their neighborhood.⁴⁰ Outside of the home, social motherhood was a “respectable” social occupation for women.

The culture of the Sandinista revolution reinforced the Nicaraguan woman martyr archetype, demanding that women “subsume individual aspirations...for the betterment of the community.”⁴¹ Dora Maria Tellez sacrificed her individual desires in order to promote the FSLN cause. She explained to Margaret Randall that her generation of revolutionaries came from a culture of doing what needed to be done, and rarely thought about themselves.⁴² In retrospect, she did not regret the many years she devoted to sacrificing her own needs to the Sandinista cause; rather, she resented Daniel Ortega’s corruption of Sandinismo. She left the FSLN in 1995 and helped to create the “Movement to Rescue Sandinismo.” In a speech in 2005 she proclaimed, “Nicaragua still needs Sandinismo, but Danielismo is a corruption of Sandinismo.”⁴³

⁴⁰ Glenda Monterrey, Amanda Pineda, and Dr. Mayra Lourdes Bolanos, “Women in the Revolution,” 100.

⁴¹ Lizabeth Paravinsi-Gerber, “Decolonizing Feminism,” in *Daughters of Caliban: Caribbean Women in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Consuelo Lopez Springfield, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 12.

⁴² Dora María Téllez, “Nicaragua is a Surprising Country,” in *Sandino’s Daughter’s Revisited: Feminism in Nicaragua*, interview by Margaret Randall (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 251.

⁴³ Richard Feinberg and Daniel Kurtz-Phelan, “Nicaragua between Caudillismo and Modernity: The Sandinista Redux?” *World Policy Journal* 2 (Summer 2006), 77.



Image 3 - Photo by: Orlando Valenzuela.

This iconic photograph powerfully communicates that women should and could embrace militancy without giving up the duties of motherhood. Radiantly smiling, this young soldier appears to have no difficulty or conflict balancing the demands of nurturing the revolution while nursing her baby. While she brings domestic (childcare) tasks into the public sphere, the FSLN ultimately failed to provide adequate public support to relive women's domestic burdens. Courtesy of Instituto de Historia de Nicaragua y Centro América, Universidad de Centro America, Managua, Nicaragua.

Making the Private Public

Following the revolution, women were present and public with their demands, politically mobilizing to change Nicaragua's gender roles and empower women as full citizens. They knew that without women's participation in reconstruction of the country, gender issues would be ignored by the all male government. These women also believed that women's issues and national issues were one and the same, not divisible. Women as the foundation of a country: reproduce population, cultivate land, and perform jobs in all areas and levels of the work force. Importantly, Nicaraguan women insisted on redefining "private" issues (regarding sexuality and domestic life) as "public".

Publications controlled by women launched a public discourse about women's sexuality that shifted the ground regarding what defined a "legitimate" political issue. *La Voz de La Mujer*, the first Sandinista information bulletin⁴⁴ published by AMNLAE launched its first issue in 1979. *SOMOS AMNLAE* followed *La Voz*, more specifically addressing women's issues. Regardless of the FSLN's effort to control AMNLAE, the organization never became a mere conduit of (male) Sandinista rhetoric. While, it could not counter the larger revolutionary agenda, it could force a public discussion of issues previously considered private.

AMNLAE used *SOMOS* to cater to female readers, making women's issues central and pushing FSLN issues to the periphery. Articles addressed: getting to know your body (from anatomy, to sexually transmitted diseases, to pregnancy); nutritious foods to grow in different regions; how to purify water; and where and how to build a "sanitary" outhouse. Other sections addressed family issues, including how to build

⁴⁴ These were monthly publications called information bulletins.

healthy marital relationships in the new revolutionary Nicaragua, and how to socialize boy and girl children to become better citizens. More political articles informed readers about new laws protecting women workers and provided a history of feminism; other articles, offered tips for parents on how to educate their children about the revolution's history by using games such as connect-the-dots that turned into the face of revolutionary hero Carlos Fonseca. Finally, almost all issues included instructions for creating revolutionary propaganda, such as how to draw and create a stencil of a woman holding a gun to paint this image on a wall or the side of a building.

In January 1983, *SOMOS* began a series that explained the external reproductive organs of a woman. With shocking explicitness for the time, the first article features a frontal illustration of a nude woman with a close up drawing of vagina, clitoris, and labia. The next month's installment goes deeper into reproductive health and explains the internal organs of the fallopian tubes, ovaries, uterus, etc. The following month describes the menstrual cycle, explaining when women are most fertile. The following months continue the lessons with explaining the first, second and third trimesters of pregnancy. *SOMOS* devotes the most attention to the first of the three trimesters, probably because that is when miscarriages are most likely. Finally in November 1983, the first mention of sex appears, with articles about contraceptives. The three listed are, IUD, Pills, and Condoms.⁴⁵ The Pill was the most used contraceptive in Nicaragua because it did not require the man's involvement (i.e. consent). The IUD was the second most used, however, many women would ask doctors to cut the string too short because "if I can

⁴⁵ There was a gap in the archives, the next issue was from February 1984.

tell the IUD is there, so will my husband.”⁴⁶ In February 1984, the “getting to know yourself” section focused on “women’s diseases:” vaginitis, moniliasis, non-specific vaginitis, atrophic vaginitis, filled cysts, and herpes. The only infirmity described as resulting from sex is herpes.⁴⁷

SOMOS’s commitment to dominating the discourse about women extended beyond women’s bodies and into women’s homes, one of the few places women held power, especially over their children. A *SOMOS* article published in April 1983 directs women to allow their boy children to play with dolls. The article asserts that when a girl plays with dolls, it is an indication of what a great mother she will be; stressing that parenting is not for only girls, *SOMOS* encourages mothers to give their boy children dolls to play with so they, along with their sisters, can develop the skills to be good parents.⁴⁸

Feminizing Medicine

Under the FSLN, medicine became increasingly female. When women activists found themselves closed out of realms of political power including the military, many turned to caring professions. After 1979, health care became free and available to all, which resulted in doctors and health care professionals being paid less. With an exodus of affluent (male) doctors to the United States, women filled the lacuna.⁴⁹ The most well-known is Dora Maria Tellez. After her vital contributions to the military victory, she reluctantly accepted a position as Chief of Police, then in 1985 as Minister of Health.

⁴⁶ Richard Garfield and Glen Williams, *Health Care In Nicaragua: Primary Care Under Changing Regimes*, 253.

⁴⁷ *SOMOS AMNLAE Boletín Informativo*, Año II, No 19, February 1984.

⁴⁸ *SOMOS AMNLAE Boletín Informativo*, Año I, No 11, April 1983.

⁴⁹ Glenda Monterrey, Amanda Pineda, and Dr. Mayra Lourdes Bolanos, “Women in the Revolution,” in *Nicaragua a New Kind of Revolution: Forty-five key Spokespeople*, 100.

As Minister for Health, Tellez's major achievements included making contraceptives, sex education, and family planning increasingly accessible. The feminization of medicine and doctors, including those who had not been military combatants, politicized medicine as a tool for promoting social well-being.

For the FSLN, alleviating Nicaragua's health crisis and widespread illiteracy complimented its focus on defense and production. Healthy soldiers benefitted national defense immensely. Furthermore, a literate population made the distribution of propaganda easier. Women led both the Health and Literacy Crusades by initiating classes in public health and traveling to the barrios and to the countryside to offer medical care.

Professional women's struggles to develop Nicaragua from the bottom up impacted their consciousness and the consciousness of women they met. They served as important models for what all women could achieve, powerfully influencing those who had never before seen women in active leadership roles outside the home.⁵⁰ An example of a woman leader in health care is Ligia Altamirano, doctor and mother, who tapped into the culture of social commitment by starting a surgeon's brigade one day a week at the Bertha Calderón Hospital. This brigade of doctors and nurses volunteered their expertise to women patients who overwhelmed the hospital's capacity to provide service. Initially, she thought it would be hard to get doctors to commit to working extra hours; however, she found that the number of doctors willing to serve on the emergency brigades continued to grow.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

Exclusively female networks in civilian professions fostered a political consciousness that at least sometimes (and maybe often) turned into a feminist consciousness. In female professions, women mentored each other and set their own female-centered priorities and agendas. Dr. Altmarino, a pioneer in gynecology in Nicaragua, exemplified female leadership in health care. While she was writing reports demanding that the revolutionary government improve health care for women, she mentored young women doctors like Ana Maria Pizarro Jimenez, who in turn mentored other young women doctors, like Ivania Flores Cardenas. All three women investigated women's health issues while at the Bertha Calderón Hospital, and all made pointed demands on the FSLN leadership to prioritize women's health.

Although Altamirano, Pizarro, and Cardenas aggressively challenged women's oppression, their revolutionary stories have been overshadowed by "the women in olive green" who, by joining the military, became honorary men and seldom explicitly critiqued or challenged gender hierarchy. Working with all female professional colleagues fostered women's feminist consciousness more often than did transgressing into the male territory of the military. For example, Doris Maria Tijerino, who joined the anti-Somoza struggle in 1985 as a commander alongside Tellez, remains avidly anti-feminist.⁵¹

⁵¹ Doris, Tijerino, "It's True: We Can't Live on Consciousness Alone, but We Can't Live Without It," in *Sandino's Daughter's Revisited: Feminism in Nicaragua*, interviewed by Margaret Randall (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 211.

Bertha Calderón Hospital

In 1983, the Sandinista government opened the first maternity hospital in the country at the Bertha Calderón Hospital.⁵² This initiative sought to address the “crisis” of women’s health. Men too welcomed the opening of this hospital (fathers, husbands, partners) in respect for Nicaragua’s conservative traditions that barred women from seeing male doctors, especially gynecologists. The state-funded medical school, the National Autonomous University of Nicaragua (*Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Nicaragua, UNAN*), educated female doctors, while the women’s hospital provided them attractive employment opportunities. This hospital became the primary facility for training OBGYN and a key site for implementing Sandinista health policies.

The predominantly female doctors at the Bertha Calderón Hospital were sisters of the Revolution, having been young students during the Insurrection. As collaborators of the revolution, they felt entitled and obligated to address the revolutionary state in demanding higher quality health care for women. As members of typically big families and tight social circles, even these affluent privileged women experienced the disruptions of daily life under Sandinista rule. Moreover, the blurring of traditional class, generational and geographic boundaries caused by the Insurrection and the Contra War encouraged in this group of professionals a sense of public responsibility.

Bertha Calderón doctors took aggressive initiatives to control the discussion about women’s health. Among these initiatives was the publication of pioneering reports that documented medical issues women faced and that shifted the focus of the FSLN’s health

⁵² “Ministerio de salud expande servicios,” *Envío* 70 (1987) accessed on April 5, 2014, <http://www.envio.org.ni/articulo/3613>.

care agenda.⁵³ These reports, backed by statistical data, offered doctors ammunition to argue for strong measures to reduce maternal deaths. With Tellez's support, Bertha Calderón doctors forced the medical community and the revolutionary state to confront the impacts of self-induced abortions.

A consensus emerged among the medical community that women's health was failing. Three primary issues dominated the public discussion initiated by the reports from Bertha Calderón Hospital. First, alarming rates of maternal mortality and sterility resulted from too many childbirths or induced abortions. Second, the cost of treating botched abortions, in lieu of simply performing legal abortions, was excessive. Third, access to sex education and safe and accessible contraceptives was an urgent matter of life and death.

⁵³ With the help of the [staff at the](#) library at the Bertha Calderón Hospital, and Dr. Ana-Marie Pizarro at the SI Majors Clinic, I was given access to 7 reports published about 1983 until 1988. Of the seven reports, a man wrote only one.



Image 4 - Photo Taken by: Dr. Ligia Altamirano at the Bertha Calderón Hospital. This woman, who just gave birth, is lying on an uncovered mat with no pillow. Torn rags hold her IV together. Her hospital gown is stained. Rather than celebrating her child's birth, she looks defeated by motherhood. Courtesy of Instituto de Historia de Nicaragua y Centro América, Universidad de Centro América, Managua, Nicaragua..

Childbirth killed many women. A study from 1983-1985 showed that on average, 10 mothers a day came into the Bertha Calderón Hospital with complications from an induced abortion.⁵⁴ Of the 109 women who Dr. Ligia Altamirano observed closely, 10% died and over 26% were left sterile.⁵⁵ Illegal abortions not only killed mothers, but also left potential mothers sterile, and children motherless.⁵⁶ Dr. Ana Maria Pizarro, Dr. Altamirano's student, picked up where Dr. Altamirano left off and found that between 1985-1988, despite the FSLN's health initiative, maternal death was on the rise, not diminishing. Given the lack of data prior to the founding of the Bertha Calderón Hospital, it is not clear whether maternal deaths were actually increasing, or if more women were now traveling to the hospital to die. Whatever the case, no one disputed the seriousness of the high maternal death rate.

⁵⁴ Leonel Urbano, "El Drama Del Aborto," *Barricada*, November 19, 1985.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ "Ya No Podría Tener Hijos Tras Aborto Clandestino," *Barricada*, November 28, 1985.



Image 5 – Photo by Silvia. This photo published in Barricada demanding improvement to women’s health facilities. The caption states “Limitations are real, but they can be overcome with love and empathy.” Courtesy of Instituto de Historia de Nicaragua y Centro América, Universidad de Centro America, Managua, Nicaragua.

The women dying were “respectable” mothers who therefore gained the attention of the revolutionary government. Dr. Altamirano emphasized that the women in her sample already had children and were involved in stable relationships. Iris Aguero, nursing assistant in the Intensive Care Unit, supported Altamirano’s findings by arguing

that if abortions were legalized, more mothers would be alive to take care of the children they already had, and more women would be able to choose to become mothers in the future.⁵⁷ They thus usurped the moral power of the state by highlighting the needs of women who had already given birth to new citizens. While labeling women as deserving or undeserving is problematic, it was a brilliant strategic move that brought attention to the need of working educated mothers to safe legal abortion. In an interview following her presentation, Altamirano remarked that if the abortion law did not change in her lifetime, she hoped it would change in her daughter's lifetime. Again in an inspired strategic move, she highlighted her own status as a mother in order to underline, at least in the eyes of the revolutionary government, her embrace of women's traditional maternal roles. She was a mother herself, not a foreigner who wanted to come in to disrupt the "traditional" role of Nicaraguan woman.

⁵⁷"Mas Sobre el Drama del Aborto," *Barricada*, November 25, 1985.



Image 6 - Photo taken by Ligia Altamirano at the Berta Calderón Hospital. This young woman is being told that due to a botched abortion she will not have more children. Courtesy of Instituto de Historia de Nicaragua y Centro América, Universidad de Centro America, Managua, Nicaragua.

As the revolutionary government struggled to balance the cost of defense with domestic needs, Dr. Altamirano presented her cost benefit analysis of legalizing abortions. Embracing the position that the revolutionary government should not or could not entertain any issues apart from defense or the economic crisis, she emphasized the economic cost of treating symptoms of botched illegal abortions and the significant savings that safe legal abortions would provide for the hospital (and the government).

Physicians rationalized the need for sex education and safe and accessible contraceptives as an urgent matter of life and death. Without contraceptives, too frequent pregnancies contributed to the alarming rates of maternal mortality. However, in a society deeply attached to tradition and religion, providing sex education and/or contraceptives, threatened gender hierarchies. During this time of social reconstruction, the preservation of many traditional roles became scaffoldings that held up the new nation. Giving out contraceptives to young single women would undermine the image of the pure and virginal Nicaraguan woman, which both men and women benefited from protecting.⁵⁸ Men could continue offering their protection (read: control), while women manipulated this image to assert a superior morality, which gave them the means to accumulate social power.

In a country where women were not honored until they became mothers, it is not hard to understand why in a 1985 national survey, 38% of women believed that birth control was “against God’s will.”⁵⁹ That means, however, that 62% believed that “God” does **NOT** oppose family planning. Many Nicaraguan women who readily endorsed family planning (control over when to become pregnant) staunchly opposed birth control (avoiding motherhood altogether). This was evident in the 1987 *De Cara al Pueblo* where hundreds of women met with Daniel Ortega. At this meeting, women reiterated their demand for family planning. “I have ten children,” one working woman said, “and I love them all, but it’s too difficult these days with so many economic problems—how can you give your children enough? We want to be mothers, but not every other year.”⁶⁰

⁵⁸ “Un Hijo No es un Mercedes Benz,” *Barricada*, November 26, 1985.

⁵⁹ Richard Garfield and Glen Williams, *Health Care In Nicaragua: Primary Care Under Changing Regimes*, 254-258.

⁶⁰ Luz Marina Torres, “Women in Nicaragua: The Revolution on Hold”

Roadblocks to improving women's health were many. Beyond lack of access to legal abortion, most women lacked access to birth control pills. In 1986 and 1987, doctors exposed and publicly shamed the revolutionary government for warehousing birth control pills, a government action that reflected deeply rooted resentment over US collaboration with the Somoza dynasty to limit the population of poor and indigenous Nicaraguans.⁶¹ Women's use of contraceptives, however, required not just availability and destigmatization of birth control as an imperialist plot. It also required contestation of Catholic dogma and reconceptualization of traditional women's roles.⁶²

Public Discussion

Barricada, the official FSLN newspaper launched in 1979, reported daily on debates over abortion in late 1985. After the Berta Calderón Hospital issued its first report on deaths and sterilizations resulting from self-induced abortions, *Barricada* organized round tables and reported on discussions that leaned heavily in favor of reforming family planning policies and even legalizing abortion. *Barricada's* journalists interviewed the doctors who had authored the report and published various editorials highlighting the danger of illegal abortions to women's health. While articles expressed diverse opinions over legalization of abortion, *Barricada's* editors communicated a strong consensus on the need to reform reproductive health legislation and policies.

Barricada's attacks on the FSLN's lack of commitment to women's health were not out of character with its other reporting of dissenting opinions. (Indeed, *Barricada* frequently published views of dissident Sandinistas and critiques of the revolutionary

⁶¹ Richard Garfield and Glen Williams, *Health Care In Nicaragua: Primary Care Under Changing Regimes*, 245.

⁶² "Un Hijo No es un Mercedes Benz" *Barricada*, November 26, 1985.

government.) This reporting opened the Pandora's box for public discussion of reproductive freedom, raising women's expectations. For example, days after Dr. Altamirano presented alarming data about maternal death rates at a Health Conference,⁶³ *Barricada* reported: "the revolutionary government had done little in the six years since the Insurrection to change the anti-human abortion policy."⁶⁴ A week after *Barricada* reported on Dr. Altamirano's presentation, it convened a roundtable on how to solve the abortion problem. This roundtable brought together nine doctors and a psychologist who discussed abortion and its political implications for over three hours.

First and foremost, all present at the roundtable expressed alarm that mothers of Nicaragua were dying.⁶⁵ Although maternal death was not new, the Berta Calderón's staff provided new access to statistical data that allowed quantification of maternal deaths, transforming this into a "real" problem. Reports published by the hospital, then cited in *Barricada*, illustrated the reality that medical students and doctors encountered daily. Most participants in the roundtable agreed that abortion was a serious social problem and that the law needed more than simple revision.

For the next two months, *Barricada* reported on the national deliberations over abortion, fueling public discussion about the barbaric state of reproductive health in Nicaragua. Few articles denied that laws regarding abortion, sterilization, contraceptives, alimony, and child support were inconsistent with the FSLN's promise to Nicaraguan citizens, and needed revision

⁶³ The health conference was held on November 15, 1985, six years after the revolution. This was the fifth annual Health Conference. These conferences were part of the healthcare initiatives led by the Sandinistas.

⁶⁴ Leonel Urbano, "El Drama Del Aborto"

⁶⁵ "Mas Sobre el Drama del Aborto," *Barricada*, November 25, 1985.

Medical professionals who participated in Barricada's round tables recognized that a simple expansion of access to therapeutic abortion would not suffice. Under the Criminal Code of 1974 (and a 1986 law that changed nothing), women had to rely on their legal husbands (or next of kin) to initiate a request for even a therapeutic abortion.⁶⁶ The revolutionary government merely alleviated the law's death sentence for women by not prosecuting women who induced abortions or the people who performed them. But not enforcing the law did nothing to promote women's equality or to reduce their dependence on men.

Conclusion

In 2006, a group of Catholic women who had fallen out of grace with the church founded "Catholic Women For The Right To Choose" in response to Daniel Ortega's signing the law that criminalized even therapeutic abortions in cases of rape, incest, and to save a woman's life. Advocating peace, love, and equality, these women have devoted themselves to organizing actions to protest forced motherhood. Resisting Catholic dogma, they denounce sexual violence and advocate for accessible and emergency contraception, voluntary motherhood, tolerance of diversity of sexual orientation, and the secularization of the state. More radically, they also advocate for the decriminalization of abortion to guarantee women's right to control their bodies.⁶⁷

What encapsulates their mission most dramatically are processions in which they carry a statue of a pregnant woman nailed to a cross. Catholic nuns and women from a diverse collection of religious groups regularly process through the cities of Nicaragua

⁶⁶ Maxine Molyneux, "The Politics of Abortion in Nicaragua: Revolutionary Pragmatism, or Feminism in the Realm of Necessity?," 114-115.

⁶⁷ Catholica Por El Derecho A Decidir, "About Us," accessed on May 15, 2014, <http://www.caticasporelderechoadecidir.org.ni/index.php/quienes-somos>

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bearing the weight of this statute. In a country where a crucified Jesus is carried through the streets on most holidays, the highly theatrical spectacle of women (including nuns dressed in habits) carrying this young pregnant woman nailed to a cross shocks and calls attention to the high maternal death rate caused by denial of safe and legal abortion. Carrying this statue also honors countless unnamed women who have sacrificed their bodies but were never honored.



Image 7 - Photo from the *Catolicas Por El Derecho a Decidir* Website. A pregnant woman nailed to a cross representing the physical and spiritual sacrifices that many women make in the name of motherhood.⁶⁸ Courtesy of the “Catholics for the Right to

⁶⁸ Ibid.

Chose" Website.



Image 8 - Printed in *SOMOS*, taken on October 13, 1988. This photo shows women carrying a cross through Leon, as was typical whenever members of the community experienced violent attacks carried out by the Contras. Normally, the matriarch of the family led the procession. This photo shows the power of the cross to mobilize women in public spaces. In many such occasions, women shoulder the burden of the cross, quite literally. Courtesy of Instituto de Historia de Nicaragua y Centro América, Universidad de Centro America, Managua, Nicaragua.

Contributions made by the radical, liberation theology wing of the Catholic Church to the triumph of the Sandinista Revolution left complicated legacies for women. To the extent that the FSLN embraced deep religious undertones—characterizing their revolution as a religious crusade for a moral cause—it drew on and buttressed a highly gendered ethic of sacrifice. Among the women revolutionaries who made great personal sacrifices, few, however, were content to remain invisible like altruistic Catholic nuns who dedicated their lives to a higher cause with no expectation of public honor or even

acknowledgment. Instead, women revolutionaries expected the FSLN to publicly recognize and revere their sacrifices: in short, to honor and reward them, along with their male peers, as noble “crusaders.”

A relatively small group of doctors, a couple of reporters, and thousands of women are the agents of this thesis. While some may question the claim that feminist consciousness incubated at the Bertha Calderón Hospital could propel a change in result in changing female consciousness nationally, their steady erosion of the state’s control over women’s bodies was prevalent during my time researching last summer. In twenty years, birth control has become easy to obtain and available even in the most rural communities. Sex education is taught in every public school, and boys and girls learn about reproduction and contraceptives. Maternal mortality has dropped tremendously, and women’s clinics have popped up all over the country. The legacy of the small cohort of doctors from Bertha Calderon thrives.



Image 9 - Matagalpa, July 25, 2013, Rocio Rayo. This phrase “The Revolution Will Be Feminist, or it Will Not Happen” appears in multiple places in Matagalpa. This represents the strong feminist undercurrent present in Nicaragua. The feminist agenda did not fail because it was not recognized by the government, because it was recognized and internalized by Nicaraguan people, who continue fighting for liberation.

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Susan Besse 5/6/14 10:12 AM

Comment [1]: Correct citation in the footnotes

Susan Besse 5/6/14 10:12 AM

Comment [2]: The summer issue would be number 2, as above. However, the volume number must be wrong for this citation (vol 29, 1988?) or for the previous citation (Vol 11, 1985?). My hunch is that 1988 is volume 14. CHECK. AND CORRECT.

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