



our developing world's voices

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Mary Hartman beside a mural of influential women. CANTERA's Mary gave us a wide variety of experiences, meeting many diverse people working to make life better for Nicaraguans.

Nicaragua: A Microcosm of the Effects of Globalization & US Policy

Nicaragua can give us a microscopic view of many so-called developing countries. Members of our Reality Tour could see this through the eyes of those working on the experimental model farm of CANTERA. Led wonderfully by Jose Barnett, where small subsistence farmers come to learn how diversification and organic farming methods can give their families a better life through better nutrition and without the toxic herbicides and pesticides being pushed by US corporations. This farm's tools are different kinds of fruit trees, vegetables, medicinal plants, bees for honey, chickens, pigs, African non-wool producing sheep, goats, and a cow and calf. If they had ten more cows they'd have a self-sufficient operation! But that would cost \$5000! Their cow manure with California earthworms produces excellent compost, the pig manure is used for methane for electricity, the sheep produce desirable lamb for food. Both sheep and goats are lawn mowers. They also filter their kitchen and shower water so it becomes drinking water for the animals.

Cooperative League of the USA (CLUSA)
(Coop America is part of it) has programs funded

by US AID. Their goal is to help farmers form coops so they can more easily learn better organic farming methods, business and fair trade marketing skills.

We thought these two programs were part of a process to make farming a viable vocation to stay in. Without these kinds of initiatives, US foreign policy, trade and globalization forces many farmers to migrate to Costa Rica, El Salvador or the US.

Plan now

Venezuela for a ten day Reality tour in March. Focus on Health, Education, Cooperatives. Where does the oil money go??

Late July/August 15 day Reality Ecotour to **Cambodia and Laos**. Option for a few extra days to Vietnam. Visit the joyous Rehab Center, the wonder of Angkor Wat, Stay in a provincial town and meet potters, a school project, arts and crafts! Both tours limited to ten flexible people who want to see for themselves!

In Costa Rica Nicaraguan migrant workers are badly treated and Nicaragua is trying to get the Central American Court of Human Rights to push for an agreement about humane treatment of migrant workers. Last year the 11-year-old daughter of a migrant worker was raped by a Costa Rican. That's still being debated in both countries by the people, not the courts.

Both groups are concerned about CAFTA, the 350 page trade agreement ratified by Congress by one vote. A majority of our representatives didn't even read the agreement. Nicaraguans are still trying to get their General Assembly to modify it so as not to restrict small and medium size farmers.

CLUSA also works with UNAG, the union of small and medium size cattle farmers, coffee farmers, sesame seed, poultry and seafood producers. CLUSA is also trying to help organize the Central American region's farmers so they can join together to attract large scale markets: China, US. And they've started a BUY NICARAGUAN campaign. The slogan is "Don't Kill Your Mama." This is similar to our campaign, "Buy Local." This saves transport costs, which increase almost daily here and there, and keeps the local farmers working.

CLUSA spends more money sending their Nica techs to help coops than they pay them in salaries! That's how \$4 a gallon of gas translates.



Both CLUSA and CANTERA agree genetically modified crops coming in through the CAFTA agreement must be restrained. They all feel this is vital. CLUSA's Steve Kuehn is adamant.

Mathilde Sheffield works with fifteen rural projects of CANTERA, mostly with women because when women are involved in income generating, the family, especially the children will benefit. This involves raising consciousness, building gender equality in a very macho society. Before women will take the four week course on

Gender/Spirituality/Sexuality they must move from acting as a woman in a macho world to developing enough self esteem to be able to go to women's gatherings in their own communities. To not feel it necessary to get their husband's permission.

These are some of the questions that are the basis for all CANTERA's work with communities:

What has happened in the past 50 years?

Where and with whom do we work on what?

How do we work for human equality?

How do we work toward commercialization of some products?

How do we promote the use of natural medicine?

How do we better municipal planning? farm planning?

How do we improve our homes, our water? How do we conserve our water, our environment?

How do we, in our locality, farms and families become less vulnerable?

How do we analyze our needs, our lack, our progress?

Always questions are asked. The people make the decisions.

This process has lead to much change and toward some of the same goals as CLUSA.

WTO Disaster Is Poor People's Joy!

The World Trade Organization (WTO) Doha Meeting in June ended without an agreement. That means that no more restraints will be put on poor countries right now. The sticking point in negotiations disagreement over the subsidizing of farms. WTO is pushing to stop subsidies while the US and other affluent nations who do subsidize farmers, mostly agribusiness, don't want to stop. Another one of the pressure points on poor countries to accept genetically modified seeds. Indigenous plants that have been used for centuries are now being patented by multinational corporations and the people who have been using those plants for medicinal use are prohibited from doing so.

Privatization is pushed by WTO and CAFTA

In the Dominican Republic, the Spanish owned company providing electricity was actually thrown out of the country for poor service. Things aren't much better in Nicaragua where the water is pumped by electricity. Electricity is rationed but without notifying when it will be on, which means that access to water is sporadic. Some nights it went off around nine and came back on in the morning. It was on all Saturday and all night. We suspect it was because the next door owner of all the Esso stations was having a party with the sound system blasting away for the whole world to hear!!

There is danger of epidemics because of this shortage of water. Public hospitals are considered the places to go to die because they don't have water or electricity enough to be run properly and they lack medicine and supplies. Yet a consultation with a doctor in a private clinic cost is simply out of reach for the average worker; at 200 Cordobas it equals about 2 1/2 months worth of minimum wage. But CAFTA encourages privatization and the IMF says the interest on the debt is first priority for use of government spending, not public services like education or health care.

Maquilas will only multiply with the free trade agreement, paying so little that it barely puts food on the table. Students can't work there and go to school so they must find other ways to raise money for school fees. In addition, women are harassed and sometimes beaten or sexually abused in these factories

CANTERA OPENS DOORS

Thanks to CANTERA so many doors were opened to us to learn more realities of this beautiful people and country. Our orientation was by Maria Zuniga who first came to Nicaragua in 1968 as the first woman Peace Corps director of the first team in the country. She originally questioned why the Peace Corps should be working in Nicaragua, then a dictatorship. Public health is her field so the history of Nicaragua was with that perspective. Two years was all she could take, for she couldn't find any cooperation

on the part of the government to be serious about public health, especially in such a macho society. She met a Capuchin priest, Father Smutco, who urged her to come to the Atlantic Coast, specifically, the Rio Coco where she worked with the Miskito Indian people under OXFAM. She married a Miskito and had two children and continued to work in a highly politicized area where US troops were being trained just across the river for the Bay of Pigs invasion.

In 1975 her visa wasn't renewed so she went to Guatemala to continue work in public health while her husband studied veterinary medicine there.

Returning to Nicaragua in 1981 she volunteered for the Ministry of Health and then began CISAS, a health education NGO which includes a Child to Child program in good health practices. Since often in poor families children take care of younger children they learned how to avoid accidents, do rehydration, and the like. Their way of demonstrating how diarrhea works to dehydrate is the best we've seen! (*odw* has some of their puppets.) In the 1990's the program grew to have an adolescent component, including an AIDS prevention program. Most of the program today is helping young people lobby and get adults to listen to young people to make change in the community.

Health and education were the major concerns of the Sandinista government in the '80's. The strength of OPUS DEI is felt all over Latin America in Health and Education Ministries. Now CISAS gets some funding for projects but not programs with longer goals. The International Peoples' Health Movement which she heads helps.

Many banana workers are suffering from the use of Nemagon, but get no help from the government. There is a lawsuit going forward against the US company that manufactures it and those companies who used the spray. Fortunately, the UN ruled that indigenous land may not be taken from them to exploit natural resources: ie. for an open pit mine which would destroy a fragile environment. A wealth of knowledge and commitment, Maria highly recommends *The Constant Gardener* and Tom Melville's *Through a Glass Darkly*.

Seniors in Nicaragua

Maria also talked with us about the status of the elderly in Nicaragua. Though they are respected there are no senior benefits as there are in Honduras where seniors get a discount on all forms of transport, restaurant, movies, medicine. 65% of Nicas are under the age of twenty-five, while in the US and other “developed” countries the inverse is true. There as in Africa grandparents are often raising the children due to the necessity of both parents working or one parent being a migrant worker or suffering from AIDS.

Disaster planning is very limited for a country so frequently struck with earthquakes, floods and volcanoes; disaster planning with the special needs of the elderly in mind is non-existent. And sadly, as in the US, elder abuse is also found.

The Nica Urban Struggle

Most Nicas are farmers, but many live in cities and towns. CANTERA has programs in Ciudad Sandino, now a city of over 100,000. The city began as a dumping ground of natural disasters: earthquakes, flooding of Lake Managua, hurricanes. In each case, if families received a black plastic and four posts they were lucky. In the past six years, after Mitch, those plastic shelters became tin roofed shanties and then cement block homes.

CANTERA, working with their popular education methods found the people wanted a place to gather, then a pre-school, then an after school place, music and art, a study library with text books they can't afford and schools don't have.

Together the community built all this. Thanks to FRIENDS OF CANTERA* scholarships have been given to some primary school kids whose families are active in community development. The older students volunteer to tutor the younger ones. And also volunteer in sports or other activities. There is now a second pre-school. Both use Montessori methods. The Education Ministry has asked them not to teach so much because their students enter school ahead of the others!!!!



Preschool teachers & Diane Fanguy from CANTERA



*Some of the preschoolers at the new school...
Wonderful spirit, almost no materials*

The young people just need a place to be nurtured and have creative opportunities. Then they're not interested in joining gangs. They can choose dance, musical instruments, art, sports and can tutor younger children. They also maintain the bulletin boards.

Mateare, Bluefields and other communities have followed the same pattern. Julie Krug's kids have helped build the study libraries. (Walnut Creek, CA)



Mateare's CANTERA urban youth center is vibrant with dance, art, and guitar classes plus the textbook lending library with the ramada and tables and stools the Walnut Creek kids built. The dance teacher first learned from Christian who is now the coordinator. He belongs to the Municipal Council of Youth that has representatives from all youth groups in the district: religious, political, worker, boy scouts. They discuss what the issues are for youth, take these ideas back to their groups and get them to sign on to those they wish to bring before the City Council and the candidates for political offices. They get the elected and the candidates to sign on

to what they'll support!

The Batahola Cultural Center also grew from a need for a community center. When Padre Angel and Sr. Margarita came to Batahola the community was very new and it was given a bare plot of land. A cement slab was laid and the foot high wall was covered with a mural with the help of international muralists. Then a big wall for the mural "a new dawn" to make an image of Margarita's theme that every day is a new dawn, a new beginning.



Students before one of the Batahola murals

That then got walls. Whenever another wall went up a new mural appeared. The youth who were first involved now teach young kids. There are depictions of all the courses that are offered and actually accredited: sewing, tailoring, cooking, cake making and decorating, natural medicine, typing, computers, accounting, art, music, and theater for adults as well as youth..

The original recorder students of Angel are teachers both at Batahola and other centers they have founded. The theater teacher is the sister of Javier Guido who went on to the conservatory to study flute and inherited our daughter's flute. He's gone on to be a teacher and very talented musician. His nephew Juan is the recorder/chorus teacher now. Both founders have died but the community carries on with Jennifer Marshall and Friends of Batahola*

CANTERA and Natural Medicine (Green Medicine)

Years ago CANTERA trained women to grow and

process herbs to treat common illnesses. Now there are about 25 such clinic and many more throughout the country. Julie Marciacq, a Panamanian is overseeing all of them. She trains in Managua and near by and the paid Health promoters train in the remote areas and other cities. All the professionals who take courses from CANTERA give back by donating one day a week in a clinic. These may be western trained MD's, chiropractors, homeopaths, acupuncturists, etc. They often have many specialties. We saw volcanic stone therapy, kinesiology, met a masseuse and acupuncturist, reflexology and more. They work with the universities in research, the Health Ministry sends both professionals and medical students. These clinics are widely used and respected. Many doctors and some pharmacies practice integrative medicine. Noni juice, from a local fruit, as an antidote for many problems and ocean water therapy are used by many.

Free Trade in Nicaragua, Not Fair Trade

Visiting with the Center for Women Workers and Unemployed Maria Cuadra we gained perspective of how free trade is adversely affecting workers.

There are 68 maquilas, or sweat shops (mostly clothing factories): a great percent of the workers are women who work eleven or twelve hours a day, six days a week. Because the work is mostly piece work, it's impossible for most to earn the new minimum wage of \$70 per month. US firms including Gap and Walmart hire women from 18-35. Sometimes the companies give the workers something for each year they've worked when they're retired because of age. On the other hand, companies leaving the country for a cheaper place to do business without paying the workers is not uncommon. One of the new free trade zone maquilas isn't allowing bathroom breaks so in response the women don't drink water so they won't need a break except for lunch. They've developed kidney problems. Despite the conditions at these sweatshops, people continue to work there; with rampant unemployment women often have only two choices: prostitution or sweatshops.

Since the Center isn't a union, they've had access to the factories since since 1995, now unannounced access. This is vital because if two women are found even talking about unions they are automatically fired. The Center accompanies women to get paid, to report harassment, and they have lawyers when necessary. They offer psychological as well as other medical help. They know how to use the media to advantage.

The center has undergone amazing growth, from 50 women they've grown to 80,000. They're now operating in many parts of the country and are networking throughout Central America. Their slogan is "Employment with Dignity." In 1998 the Center campaigned for worker protection laws including no molesting, better salaries, justice for pregnant women, and overall treatment for workers as dignified people. 70,000 signed this petition, which the Minister of Labor has enacted. They're still pushing for this.



WHAT CAN WE DO? Write to Congress to add/include fair labor and environmental standards in every trade agreement.

Everyone Has A Story!

Each life story we heard made us appreciate what a difference each person makes and how many stories we are fortunate to hear, thanks to CANTERA'S Mary Hartman.

Julie Busatmante was born in Bluefields, but living in Managua during the time of Somoza's rule. Conditions at her first job, with a loan agency, were so miserable that she started to organize a union. Soon she got word not to go home after work. Somoza's National Guard was looking for her. If they found her she probably would be "disappeared." She didn't go home that

night, and in fact the National Guard did go to her home. The next day a lawyer got a cease and desist order and she went to the Dominican Republic for a number of years. She actually had a ticket to Costa Rica through Managua when she wanted to return. Lucky, the Immigration official turned out to be the husband of a friend so he let her back in to her native land.

She worked for Sandinistas in various offices until she had to go to Cuba for three years to be treated for cancer, working for the Nica Ambassador there. When she returned she worked for the mayor of Managua, until she felt "he had begun to work for himself rather than the people."

She built a house and a couple of apartments whose income supports her while she works as a full time volunteer in the Hemophiliac program of the Red Cross every weekday without fail! This is where we went to give blood, but Nicaraguan law says no one over 65 is allowed to. A graphic demonstration of the status of health in a poor country. They don't expect people over 65 to be in good enough health to be able to give blood.

Mary Tells Her Story



Mary Hartman, born in Pennsylvania, came to Nicaragua in 1962 teaching in Managua for a year and then in the northeast in Puerto Cabezas and Waspam with Miskito Indians where many Sisters of Agnes work.

When she returned to Managua she worked in the parish of Uriel Molino, a well-known and beloved liberation theology priest who spoke the language of the people.

She helped young people with transport to carry on underground. She came to know many young people who wanted to make a better Nicaragua but could find no way besides training with the guerrillas.

The war to overthrow Somoza was only five weeks because the Sandinistas were so well organized. They took over every town and city and then rolled into Managua after Somoza had been advised by the US to leave. His National Guard fled across the border to Honduras or Costa Rica where the US armed and trained them to carry out the Contra War.

Mary worked in the Office of Human Rights that was under the Sandinista government. She helped design a prison system that offered training in various skills for former torturers. An open prison system for the last year or so of the prisoner's term allowed for more visitations, freedom to go out to dentist or doctor, to sell the produce the prison farm raised. This accustomed both the prisoner and their former community to accept them back. Mary arranged for our reality tour members to visit prisoners there in years past. Perhaps this is the reform California needs. Unfortunately, these prisons have been torn down.

In 1990 the US promised a peace accord if Violetta Chamomile was elected.-a continuation of the US policy of intervening in the elections of Nicaragua. Ten years of war, 50,000 dead on both sides, people were tired. The new government defunded the Human Rights Commission, Mary joined Anabel Torres, also a Sister of St. Agnes, in working with CANTERA which she founded.

CANTERA, an NGO, uses Paulo Freire's popular education methods, trains community people in skills their community needs.....that's what we've been observing...people helping people build a better Nicaragua even without a sympathetic government.

And then Mary became a grandmother! When Julie Krug adopted a darling little Nicaraguan girl with much help from Mary. Julie declared Mary was the grandmother!

Election Time in November.

Nicaragua also has an election in November and through the International Republican Institute (IRI) -which also spends money in Iraqi elections and elsewhere in the world -between \$10 and \$16 million will be spent to ensure that Sandinista Daniel Ortega is not elected. Even though he's in league with the previous president Aleman who's been convicted for fraud and embezzlement of

government funds and has promised if elected to pardon Aleman!

There is a party committed to rescue Sandinismo: MRS whose Presidential candidate was the most recent former mayor of Managua. Herty was a man who made promises he kept when elected. Sadly, he died suddenly of a heart attack the day before we arrived. So his Vice President is the Presidential candidate and Carlos Mejia Godoy is the new Vice President. Carlos is the composer of Nicaragua Nicaraguita, the love song of the revolution.

Since Nicaragua has proportionate elections the hope is that the MRS will get enough seats in the National Assembly to break the odious cronyism that exists now.

But on the Fair Trade coffee Finca Magdalena where we stayed, Elio represented what we had heard about the strength of the Sandinistas: The farmers. Elio said they were the only ones who ever helped the farmers. And he was loyal!



Action! What we can do:

Tell the State Department not to interfere with the Nica Election: 202 -647-3559 and the Bureau of Western Hemispheric Affairs: 212-647-5780. No tax dollars used that way.

- **Parallels between Nicaragua and the US??***
 - Underfunded Health and Education systems
- Internal and external debt and privatization
- Cronyism and corruption in government

Bring Our Troops Home Now

South Bay United for Peace And Justice has been on the treadmill to get the County Board of Supervisors to pass such a resolution. It was about to get on their agenda when they came up with new guidelines so we went back to the Human Relations Commission where it passed. Now it will be before the Legislative Committee in September and hopefully will pass the Full Board in October, making it an entire year entire process. But some minds have been educated in the process.

Mark your calendars!

odw's Annual International Handcraft Sale

Saturday November 18 11-4

Sunday November 19 1-4

Unique Fair Trade Gifts from Nicaragua, Guatemala, Africa, Southeast Asia. Fair Trade means the artists can continue their crafts because they earn a fair price That their families can live on. Beautiful, often one of a kind . Every piece has a story.

Many thanks for the generous donations toward replacement of ailing electronic equipment! And to Mike Cook who spent days and hours installing and teaching us how to use it! We couldn't do this without you!

We are now asking \$10 per year from our readers to support publishing and broader circulation of this newsletter. This is volume 12. Have you sent your donation for this new year to the address below?



our developing world

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Co-Directors: Barby and Vic Ulmer
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voices layout editor: Wynne Hegarty

Join Us!

Nicaragua, Microcosm of the Effects of Globalization & US Policy, But the People Continue the Struggle

Wed. Sept 13 for Tres Americas, potluck at Muhly's 6pm

Sunday Sept 17 Pot luck 6PM, Program 7 PM here at *odw* Donations appreciated

Preschool Conference, Santa Clara County Office of Education 8:30-3pm .

All year long.....

You may also give the gift of giving by becoming a sponsor of a Naledi Doll so a South African child with AIDS can get his or her first doll & the doll maker can get income. \$20 for one. \$35 for two.

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