

Olympia/Santo Tomás Update

US/Nicaragua Solidarity—Since 1989

December 2019

An update
from the
Thurston–Santo Tomás
Sister County
Association

Dear friends of Santo Tomás,

It's been a long time since those of us active in the TSTSCA have created and sent out a newsletter. Increasing economic injustice and violence across the planet is overwhelming but global resistance continues to grow and inspire action. From the climate crisis to the crisis at the Southern border of the US, from Hong Kong to Chile to Colombia, Northern Syria to Yemen and Palestine, to the coup d'état in Bolivia, let us each find where we can take a role in creating the change we desperately need to enact. In Nicaragua, the situation is still complicated and, frankly, hard to really grasp.

Our friends there are exhausted from weathering the challenges of the political unrest and economic impact of the crisis from April 2018 forward. After cancelling three delegations from Olympia that were lined up to visit our sister town over the last 18 months, we are launching a “listening and learning” delegation of two longtime members. Grace

Cox and Jean Eberhardt will travel to our sister town of Santo Tomás in early December for a jam-packed three-week visit with people with differing perspectives on the current state and future of Nicaragua.

Grace and Jean will report back to our community on Tuesday, February 25th at Equal Latin in downtown Olympia at 520 4th Ave East. Enjoy the no host dinner at 6:30pm, followed by the 7pm presentation “Solidarity in Tough Times: a 30+ year relationship with Santo Tomás, Ch. Nicaragua”

In this newsletter, **meet three new first-year university students from Santo Tomás** who receive partial scholarships from the TSTSCA in close collaboration with the Comité para Desarrollo Comunal. We are now committed to 16 scholars' education, with a promise of a better future for them, their families and their community. This is such an inspiring group of “firsts” in their families to pursue higher education and professional aspirations. Please help them succeed!

Our last newsletter had personal reflections from Santo Tomás about the crisis from two very distinct perspectives in support of, and against, the Nicaraguan government. You can find and reread it on our infrequently updated webpage <https://oly-wa.us/TSTSCA/>. This December 2019 newsletter has a locally written critique of the role of some Non-Governmental Organizations on the global south and their financing by interested, controlling parties such as the US government. There is also an article drawn from a monthly Nicaraguan publication that analyses the state repression in their country. The TST-

SCA continues to hold firm in

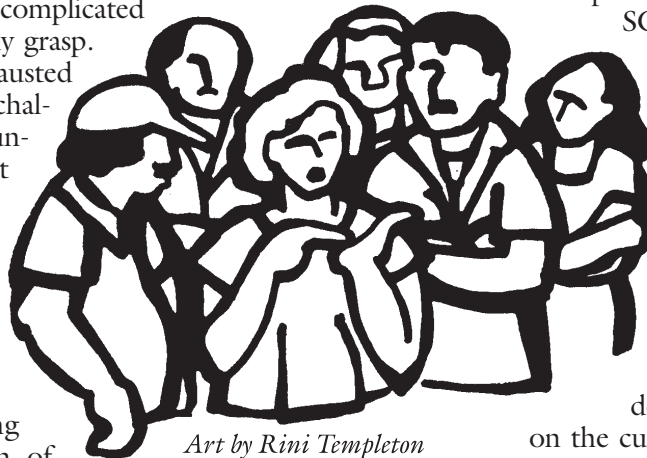
our belief that Nicaragua is a sovereign state in which our government has no right to intervene, but which has done so for over 150 years. When have we seen US interventions lead to good outcomes for the people of that or other countries? This does not mean we are impervious to witnessing and decrying injustice perpetrated

on the current opposition in Nicaragua or against Sandinistas and their government institutions.

We ask that you continue to engage in critical reflection with us, and that you continue to support the life-affirming work we support through the university scholarships, the children's free lunch program, a modest public library project, the sewing school and entrepreneurial trades programs in Santo Tomás. We've included a return envelope with this mailed newsletter; please give generously as you are able and know that this all-volunteer group is very thoughtful about getting donations right to where they'll have a tremendous, positive impact on tomasinos' lives.

Thank you so much for engaging in this ongoing relationship!

Jean Eberhardt, Grace Cox, Maureen Hill, Emily and Seamus Petrie, Bill Zachmann, Audrey Levine and Nels Johnson, Barbara Keyt, Lee Miller, Diane Dakin, Stephen Bray, Wyatt Warner, Diego López



Art by Rini Templeton

Upcoming Events

Saturday, Feb. 1st: TSTSCA's Giant Annual Rummage Sale at Lincoln Elementary at 21st and Washington in Olympia! Collect and bring your donations of gently used, clean items (see back panel for details) to the school gym on Friday, 1/30 from 4 to 7pm, then return on Saturday to buy really cool and useful stuff from 9am to 2pm. Call Maureen at (360) 464-5264 or email tstsca@gmail.com to volunteer. Please help us get the word out to support Santo Tomás.



Tuesday, Feb. 25th at 7pm at Equal Latin, 520 4th Ave. E. in Olympia. Solidarity in Tough Times: A 30+ year relationship with Santo Tomás, Ch, Nicaragua. Grace Cox and Jean Eberhardt to present reflections about their "listening" trip in December. Enjoy the no host dinner at 6:30pm



Saturday, May 2nd is our 8th annual plant sale to support the scholars in Santo Tomás! Help grow or pot up vegetable, perennial and ornamental plant starts for this super fun fundraising event at 117 Thomas ST NW on Olympia's Westside. This has become a signature spring community happening in Olympia that you'll want to attend and bring friends. Contact Jean Eberhardt at tstsca@gmail.com to get on board throughout the late winter/early spring weekend planting parties in anticipation of the sale.

What we do...

Projects in Santo Tomás

Since 1989, The TSTSCA, an all-volunteer non-profit org. in Olympia, WA, works with a sister organization in Santo Tomás, the *Comité para Desarrollo Comunal* (Committee for Community Development or CDC) on projects that support basic needs, education, and human dignity. TSTSCA provides ongoing financial and other support for these CDC projects:

- ▶ **Comedor Infantil:** Children's Free Lunch Program
- ▶ **Biblioteca:** Public Library (small but mighty!)
- ▶ **Becas:** 16 University Scholarships

Sister School Relationship:

TSTSCA helps facilitate a sister school relationship between Lincoln Elementary School in Olympia and Escuela Rubén Darío in Santo Tomás. Students and faculty from both schools correspond and families, teachers, and administrators have been part of exchange delegations. The Lincoln Site Council sends periodic financial support and materials.

Delegations

Thurston-Santo Tomás Sister County Association has led self-supporting Olympia area student and community delegations to learn, volunteer, and build mutually supportive friendships in Santo Tomás—over 150 people from the Olympia area have personally visited Santo Tomás. We have also supported and welcomed twelve delegations of 40 *Tomásinos/as* to learn, educate, and build mutually supportive relationships in the Olympia area. For more information, see our website at <http://www.oly-wa.us/tstsca/> or email tstsca@gmail.com



I support the TSTSCA in strengthening our sister ties with Santo Tomás.

I'll send my tax-deductible donation right away in the return envelope provided.

- I want to support the College Scholarship Project in Santo Tomás (\$40 monthly, \$480 yearly for each of the current 16 scholars)
- I want to support the Children's Free Lunch Center and Library in Santo Tomás (approximately \$350 monthly for each of the three staff members)
- I will make a monthly donation through the WA State Combined Fund Drive—code 0315175. This will help sustain the organization year-round!
- I would like to be contacted about making a bequest to TSTSCA in my will
- I would like to know more about visiting Santo Tomás with a delegation from Olympia
- I'll send a note with my email address and phone number.



University Scholarship program for youth from Santo Tomás, Chontales, Nicaragua

According to the February 2017 issue of Revista Envio, only 6 out of every 10 Nicaraguan children complete elementary education. Half of that number graduate from high school, a much smaller group goes on to university, and an even tinier group can stay enrolled and earn their diplomas. There are a lot of demands on young people's lives to work to support their families.

Our 12th community delegation from Santo Tomas in the Spring of 2018 was composed of four professionals from working-poor families. **Marily and Elvis, the two youth on the delegation, were able to complete their university studies with modest, yet critical, financial support from the sister county association (TSTSCA) and secure employment.** They know how important education is for their families and community. It was the way out of poverty for not only them but is also essential to rebuilding their country.

The Thurston-Santo Tomás Sister County Association with the Comité para Desarrollo Comunal began this project in 2010 to support very low-income, aspiring students in accessing higher education with the dual goals of becoming professionals and staying to serve in their community. Nicaraguans face a challenging economy, and hundreds of thousands of nicas have left their homes to find work in Costa Rica where they perform most of the hard labor that has helped build that country's wealth and a large middle class. There, many nicas become the bulk of the labor force as mostly undocumented agricultural and construction workers, retail, restaurant and domestic workers.

The scholarship selection committee in Santo Tomás chooses promising applicants who present themselves as committed to their community and country. The committee does not want to contribute to the "brain drain" of professionals who leave to find lucrative em-

ployment elsewhere. These youth want to see Nicaragua, a resource rich country, develop and better serve its people.

College in Nicaragua is a five-year proposition, after eleven years of elementary and secondary education. The public national universities have free tuition but are very competitive to get into. Even for those who get accepted, the books, supplies and travel expenses can be prohibitive costs that keep promising students out of higher education. Private, tuition-charging, universities now abound in Nicaragua, including a small one in Santo Tomás. Students studying there do not have transportation expenses but do have tuition to pay.

The TSTSCA has funded modest scholarships for almost 40 university students since 2010. 16 are currently enrolled and moving towards their graduation dates. Their majors are in fields as diverse as engineering, finance and accounting, medicine, nursing, physical therapy, architecture, law, and teaching.

For \$40 per month for five years, you could make it possible for these and other students to continue their studies and become professionals in their fields. Elvis and Marily had a lot to share about how education has changed their lives and how they enjoy

being mentors to the current group of scholars. Read the interviews with Eduardo, Maribel and Dany in this newsletter.

Will you pitch in and give up a few lattes or a nice meal out on the town every month to make an enormous difference in someone's life in our sister town in Nicaragua?

Please go to our website <http://oly-wa.us/tstsc/> and push the secure Paypal button. You can also use the convenient return envelope and send your donation to our PO Box. Thank you!



Elvis and Marily, Santo Tomás scholars, in Olympia



Scholars preparing packets of school supplies and books for children of Barrio Las Lajitas on the edge of Santo Tomás

Meet Scholars from Santo Tomás

Dany Yuliesquis Lazo Lazo

Hello! I'm Dany and I'm studying to be a high school social science teacher. I'm 17 years old and in my first year at the Martin Luther Jr. University in Juigalpa, about 40 minutes away from Santo Tomás (ST).

Our academic year starts in February, so I am in my second semester and, so far, have really enjoyed my classes in philosophy, sociology, English, geography and history. I read a lot about what's going on in Nicaragua and around the world, and I think critically about the complexity of our situations. Pedagogy has been the most difficult of the subjects for me as I've not been exposed previously to theories about how young people learn. I am confident that I will grow into a good teacher, one who uses thoughtful strategies that take into consideration students' distinct backgrounds and their individual and group needs.

I am from El Alto, a rural community outside of ST, where my father Wildanis Lazo Jirón is a hardworking

campesino who works on the farm of his patrón. Our family has access to a plot of land we do not own to grow our annual subsistence crops of corn and beans, as well as root crops of yuca and quequisque, vines of ayote and other fruits and vegetables. My industrious



mom Arcely de Carmen Lazo Morales buys fresh milk to make cuajada and bake roquillas for sale in the Mercado Campesino in Santo Tomás every week. I help her bring these products to town on the local bus and then help her with sales.

I love to sing and am part of the 35 member municipal

chorus. We practice once a week and perform at different community events. I hope Grace and

Jean will see us perform when they visit in

December! I also volunteer with the

Catholic Church, supporting the formation of children and youth

through dynamic activities and games.

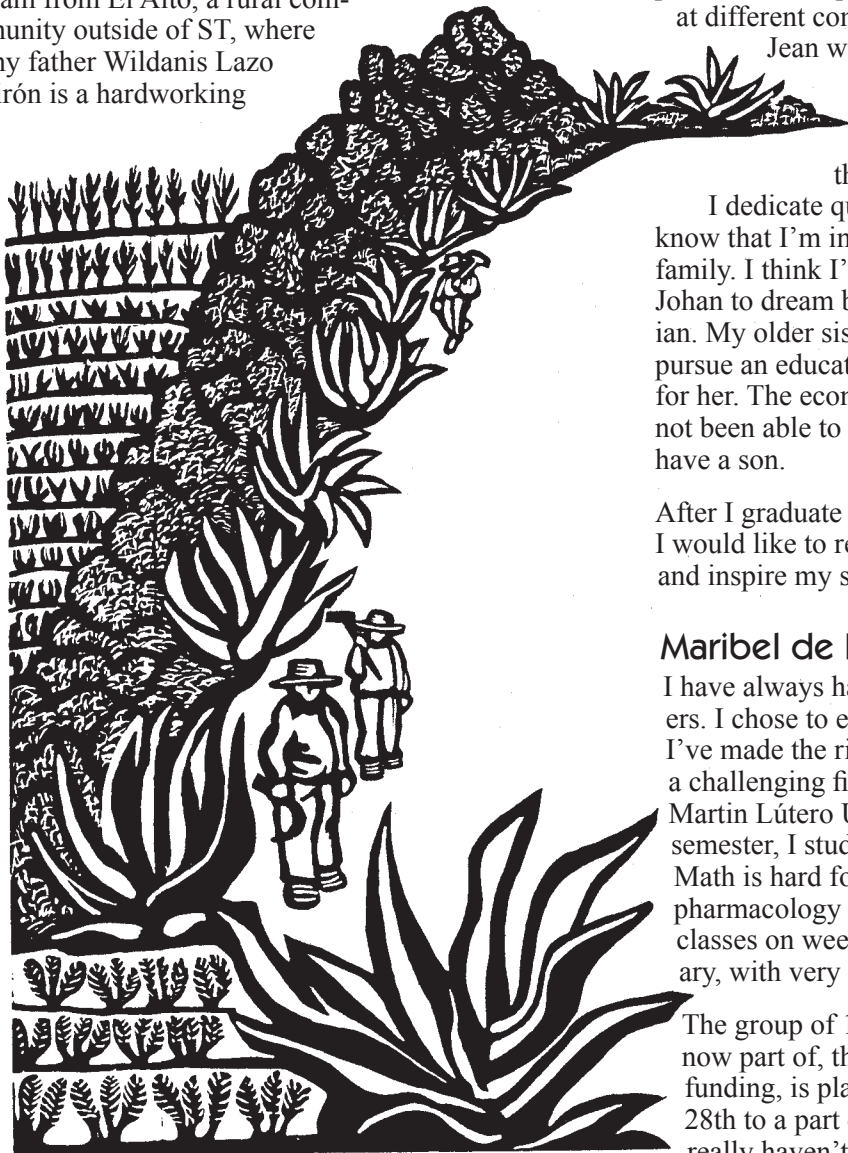
I dedicate quality time to my homework and know that I'm investing in my future and that of my family. I think I've inspired my little brother Wilson Johan to dream big too. He wants to be a veterinarian. My older sister Reyna Margarita wasn't able to pursue an education. There just weren't those options for her. The economy is not good and her husband has not been able to get steady work on local farms. They have a son.

After I graduate with my degree in another four years, I would like to return to my rural community to teach and inspire my students to reach for their dreams.

Maribel de Rosario Oporta Gaitan

I have always had the desire to be of service to others. I chose to enter the field of nursing and believe I've made the right decision! I am in my first year of a challenging five-year undergraduate program at the Martin Lútero University in Santo Tomás. In my first semester, I studied math, Spanish and philosophy. Math is hard for me. I am now taking biochemistry, pharmacology and psychology. I attend year 'round classes on weekends from February through January, with very few short breaks over holidays.

The group of 16 scholarship recipients that I am now part of, that the sister association in Olympia is funding, is planning a special day trip on December 28th to a part of the country I've never seen. Well, I really haven't had the opportunity to travel even to



Art by Rini Templeton

Managua, the capitol city. The CDC has rented a bus for us to go visit Catarina, which overlooks the Laguna de Apoyo in a volcanic crater, and the national park at Volcán Masaya. We will visit Managua too. I am very excited and grateful to be part of this group and to share an experience like this.

I'd like to share how I got here. I am 20 years old and one of six siblings. My mom Ignacia Sequede Gaitan lives with the youngest ones outside of San Carlos, which is south near the Río San Juan, a big river that separates Costa Rica from Nicaragua. Growing up, I moved around to different small towns as my mother and father looked for work. By the middle of high school, I knew I needed to be in one place and complete my studies, so I began to search for where to live in Santo Tomas, which has a good high school. A friend of my family knew someone who might be willing to give me a place to stay in exchange for caring for their children and keeping the house in order. After a couple of meetings with the family and satisfying my mom's need to know I would be safe there, I made the big move. I cook, clean, wash the laundry [by hand] and care for two children. I finished my last two years of high school while working and decided to try to figure out how to continue into college. Then some people in our country began big protests and made terrible roadblocks that stopped traffic and food distribution, and harmed the economy. Many people were



killed and many people lost their jobs and went hungry. I was fortunate to have a good place to stay and enough to eat.

When I learned of this scholarship, I applied and was accepted. I am so thankful for this chance to become a professional and serve my community.



Art by Rini Templeton

Support the Scholars!

\$40 per month/\$480 per year for five years
 Selected by a committee in Santo Tomás for their commitment to their community.

Eduardo José Juárez

I've always been good at mathematics and a strong student in school.

My mother María de los Angeles Juárez Altamirano buys fresh breads wholesale from a local bakery every day and then sells it along the highway that goes through Santo Tomás. I have two younger sisters. I went to work for my uncle who fixes cars, learning how to repair and replace parts, weld and paint. My mother's hard work and mine is how we supported our little family. But things got hard with the crisis in the last two years and my uncle doesn't get much work these days so he can't hire me anymore.

I attended the primary school Rubén Darío [sister school with Lincoln Elementary in Olympia] and graduated at the top of my class. Yessenia Solís [two-time visitor to Olympia, in 1998 and 2018] was one of my favorite teachers. I was sponsored by the sister committee in Mol, Belgium, as one of 100 students who annually receive school supplies and a backpack all the way through high school. This annual gift really made a difference



in my life. I also frequently visited the library to study at the comedor infantil. Because of my good grades, I received a scholarship to attend Cristo Rey, the private Catholic High School in Santo Tomás. It was there that I was introduced to accounting and I liked it, which has now become the career I am working towards. Through the CDC/Olympia university scholarship project, I've launched into Public Accounting and Finance at the branch of the National Autonomous University of Nicaragua in Juigalpa. I'm 18 years old and in my first year of studies. I take the bus back and forth to the university.

I am part of a youth group of the local Lions Club. We call ourselves Club Leo and meet every Saturday to participate in community service. For instance, on November 2nd, which is *Día de los Muertos*, we sold food and drinks at the town cemetery all day long to people who came to visit the tombs of deceased family members. We made *atól* (a hot thick porridge drink) and *arroz a la valenzuela* (a flavorful rice dish). With the money we raised, we had a special party for children in the poorest neighborhood in Santo Tomás and gave them toys and food. I like being part of something larger than myself. I like participating in my community.

Thank you, Olympia and the CDC!

“If you have come here to help me/you are wasting your time,/but if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine,/then let us work together.”

Lilla Watson, Australian Indigenous academic, activist and artist

NGOs in Nicaragua

By Lawrence Mosqueda, Faculty Emeritus and Political Economist, The Evergreen State College, Olympia

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) have a long and varied history in many parts of the world and have a wide range of interests and purposes that can either be benign or helpful, depending on who is defining the terms and who is getting the benefits of its actions. I have been a long time (almost 40 years) activist member of CISPES, the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador and I have been proud that we take direction and guidance (not orders) from the people of that Central American nation as it has struggled against US intervention, war and genocide since the 1980s (let alone the history before that). It is my view that if an NGO or other organization is not working for and with the local population then it is engaged in “missionary” work that can have elitist, dominant or even imperialist overtones, if not intentions.

Since the Sandinista revolution of the late 1970s to the present there have been numerous NGOs that have been involved in Nicaragua on many sides (despite many Americans’ desire for simplicity, there are usually more than two sides of a complex issue) of the country’s revolutionary process. In recent years especially since the Sandinistas have taken power both through armed struggle and elections there have been many NGOs that have impacted Nicaraguan society.

A first rule for NGOs is that they should be truly free from government funding and direction; otherwise they are not really non-governmental. The United States has a long history of interfering with Nicaragua, through NGOs, Government interference and direct military invasions. The US should always be suspected of nefarious motives when it attempts to intervene in the affairs of that country. Any NGOs that have connections with the US government, including the

more modern version of interference such as the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), which was founded in 1983 by the Reagan administration and at one time headed up by Iran-Contra operative Oliver North, is still around trying to impose its Orwellian Project Democracy around the world and especially in Nicaragua, whose major purpose is to make sure that local people have as little say as possible in the governing of their own affairs. Journalist Max Blumenthal has noted that the NED has distributed money to “the International Republican Institute (IRI), the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), the American Center for International Labor Solidarity of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), and the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE), affiliated with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, which in turn distribute monetary and material resources to other organizations in the U.S. and around the world, and disburse money and materials for opposition organizations in countries whose governments are not to the liking of the U.S. government...Aside from NED, USAID has been the most active promoter of regime change against socialist-oriented governments in Latin America. In Nicaragua, USAID’s budget topped \$5.2 million in 2018, with most of the funding directed towards training civil society and media organizations.” <https://mronline.org/2018/07/17/nicaragua-is-now-the-target/>. Also see Brian Willson’s article on “The Obsession With and Lies about Nicaragua”, <https://www.mintpressnews.com/the-trump-administrations-obsession-with-and-lies-about-nicaragua/253105/> December 21, 2108.

Another group that needs careful watching are religious organizations. Since the conquest by Spain of Latin American, the Catholic Church has been the dominant settler religion to aid in the conquering of the people of the region. While Catholicism is non-indigenous, it is now the dominant religious ideology of the area. There have been a few (very few) priests who have fought for justice. The emergence of Liberation Theology in the 20th Century brought some religious advocacy to the side of the poor, but the dominant narrative has been with the historically power elite.



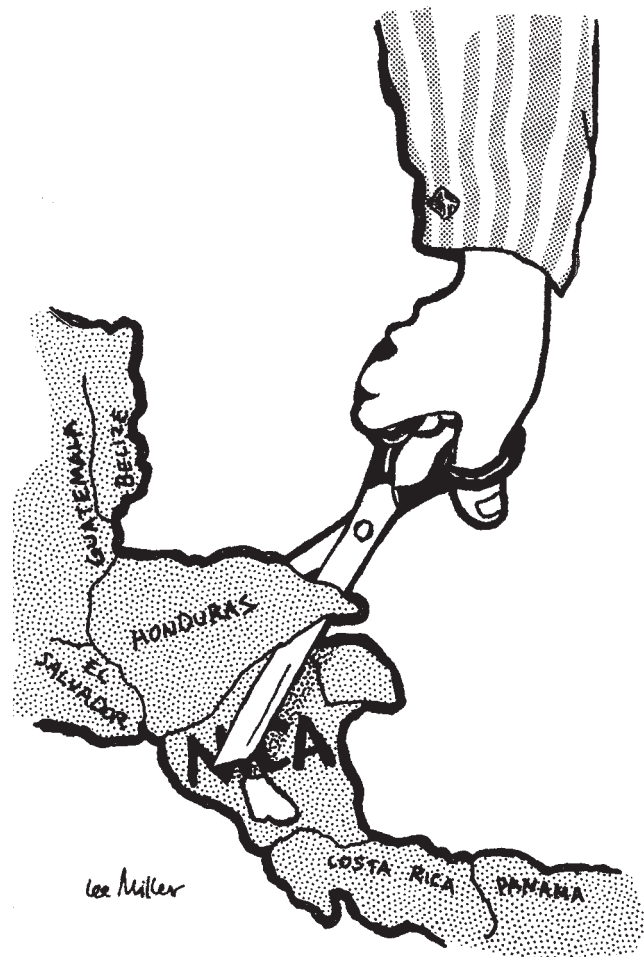
In the late 20th century there was also the growth of Protestant evangelicalism that was, and is, even more conservative than the Catholic Church. These were often funded by outside forces to quell any thoughts of not waiting for the afterlife for justice. The issue of church and religion is complex in Nicaragua (as elsewhere) as it can often define one's perception of one's existence, but the political implications of the impact of religion in a revolutionary situation is not lost on various political actors within the churches, within the governments, both the imperialist powers and those who claim to speak for the revolution. Some missionary groups have not been allowed to continue in Nicaragua because of their counterrevolutionary activity. See articles in Covert Action Information Bulletin in <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP90-00845R000100180004-4.pdf> and Gerard Colby, *Thy Will Be Done: The Conquest of the Amazon: Nelson Rockefeller and Evangelism in the Age of Oil*, for a larger picture.

Left groups should also be closely examined for the use of NGOs. Even groups that have international reputations have had questionable actions on Nicaragua. Ann Wright and Collen Rowley have written how Amnesty International (AI) has advocated for so-called "humanitarian Intervention" even to the point of supporting US efforts in Afghanistan supposedly in the name of "women's rights." When Amnesty was called out on this, they tried to defend themselves by working with former US Secretary of State Madeline Albright, as if she was a human rights activist. For Wright and Rowley, analysis and a photo of a large poster of Amnesty's support for NATO in Afghanistan see <https://consortiumnews.com/2012/06/18/amnestys-shilling-for-us-wars/>. For a detailed report on the irresponsible and "careless" AI report on Nicaragua in 1986—at the height of the illegal terrorist war against the people of Nicaragua see *Revista Envío* at <https://www.envio.org.ni/articulo/3506>. According to Aryeh Neier, Amnesty's report helped to contribute to Congress reversing a vote taken three months earlier and help to appropriate \$27 million in "humanitarian" aid to the Contras. In the 2018 crisis in Nicaragua, Amnesty has again heavily criticized Nicaragua. For a detailed rebuttal of the Amnesty report see *Dismissing the Truth: Why Amnesty International is Wrong about Nicaragua*—an Evaluation of, and response to, Amnesty International's report of October 2018, with a forward by former AI Prisoner of Conscience Camilo Mejía. [Mejía is a Nicaraguan who joined the US Military in 2003, served in Iraq in active combat and served in Jordan, examined his experiences and the lies about the war, went AWOL as a Conscientious Objector, was sentenced and served time in Fort Sill Military Prison, and is now an outspo-

ken Veteran for Peace.] <https://secureservercdn.net/198.71.2nec33.161/jwp.e46.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Dismissing-the-Truth-Executive-Summary.pdf>

For many articles on NGOs in Nicaragua see the website for Alliance for Global Justice at <https://afgj.org/> and type in NGOs in Nicaragua in the internal search engine. Many relevant articles will be presented. In conclusion, many NGOs can be highly problematic, especially American based ones, especially when People's lives are at stake, and especially when the dominant nation putting people in harm's way is the US. <https://afgj.org/nicanotes-live-from-nicaragua-uprising-or-coup>

[Newsletter editor addendum: The TSTSCA has never sought nor received any financing from the US Government and has always been based in a relationship of solidarity, seeking direction from our sister organization for their assessment of priority needs in their community. Thank you dear reader for joining us in that work]



The six phases of state repression against the civic uprising

August 2019 issue of Revista Envío <https://www.envio.org.ni/articulo/5670>

Elvira Cuadra Lira, Nicaraguan sociologist and journalist

Ever since the civic insurrection kicked off in April 2018, the government of Daniel Ortega has responded to the massive peaceful protests [this newsletter editor's note: the protests were certainly not always peaceful] with repressive actions involving the police force, shock groups of pro-government youths, and paramilitary bands made up of former army and police personnel and fanatic historical FSLN militants and sympathizers. At least six different phases of repression can be identified between April 2018 and July 2019, each characterized by how the repressive forces acted and the consequences of those actions. In each phase the overall objective has been the same: to eliminate the protests and block the civic movement. But as it proved impossible to put a definitive stop to the civic movement's protests and other actions, each phase has also had its own specific objective, even in the strongest moments of the repression.

First phase

The first phase occurred in the first weeks of April 2018 and the main participants were regular police forces and pro-government shock groups made up of young undercover police officers or at-risk youths attracted by the violence. At that time the objective was to dissuade the protestors. The repressive actions were similar to the bully-stick tactics previously used against other mobilizations and protests. This time, however, the demonstrations continued mounting all over the country, quickly outstripping the capacity of the police to break them up, even when they began employing lethal force as of April 19. The first mass march was called by private enterprise and held in Managua on April 23. The second, also in Managua five days later, was called by the Catholic Church. The fact that they brought out hundreds of thousands of people led the government to redefine its strategy of repression and reorganize its forces.

Second phase

The second phase began with the National Police in crisis due to the intensity of the protests. It began acting erratically in a useless attempt to halt the marches and other forms of protest occurring all over the country.

This phase was very brief, as the police and shock groups were overwhelmed by the level of social mobilization, even though they were now aided by highly trained anti-riot police armed with assault weapons.

At this point the government decided to call up and deploy paramilitary groups, including skilled snipers, who took to the streets in mid-May and began to employ a much higher level of force and lethal violence than in previous weeks. The May 30

Mother's March in Managua was the culminating point of the repressive actions of this second phase and marked a turning point toward the next one.

Third phase

The third phase of state repression consisted of what the government dubbed "Operation Clean-up," implemented by the regular and special police forces and paramilitary groups. It included quasi-military armed attacks against the highway roadblocks in the different parts of the country and the elimination of the barricades and focal points of civic resistance in various cities, particularly in Masaya, but also in other departments including Carazo and Jinotega. It also included an attack on the UNAN-Managua university campus, which was occupied by students and other youths. Operation Clean-up also included armed attacks on several marches in Managua and other cities, none as large as the estimated half a million in the Mother's March. This third phase lasted from July to September 2018.

Fourth phase

In the fourth phase, the selective imprisonment of civic movement leaders intensified, as did the persecution of journalists and the closing, searching and arbitrary confiscation of media and nongovernmental organizations and their equipment. Marches and other forms of protest were totally prohibited. The main objective of this phase, which lasted from October 2018 to January 2019, was to decapitate the civic movement



Art by Rini Templeton

by jailing its most recognized leaders and silencing the voices of denunciation. These repressive actions were implemented by police forces and paramilitaries.

Fifth phase

The characteristics of the fifth phase of repression were hounding, surveillance, harassment and intimidation against any expression of protest. There were also selective kidnappings, mainly conducted by the police. This phase covered the months of February to early June of this year, a period in which negotiations resumed between the government and the Civic Alliance and various groups of political prisoners were released from prison.

Sixth phase

We are now in a sixth phase of repression, the purpose of which is to prevent any marches, mobilizations or other protest actions given that the civic movement is showing signs of renewed energy following the release of most political prisoners. The objective is to keep the movement's leaders, mainly those recently let out of prison, inactive and under siege. The most notable actions are:

- Extensive police deployment in cities and important urban centers to keep any civic protest activity such as marches or what have come to be known as “express pickets” from even gathering at the assigned point.
- Police kidnappings of released prisoners and other citizens suspected of participating in civic activities. Those picked up are interrogated and threatened, but generally released the same day or a few of days later.
- Constant surveillance, harassment and threats against former political prisoners and their families by police and paramilitary groups.
- Reorganization of paramilitary groups in various cities. The newly organized structures mainly include former army and police personnel and fanaticized militants carefully chosen for their level of loyalty to the regime. These groups have focused on kidnapping and forcibly disappearing social leaders, using weapons of war as a form of intimidation and keeping social leaders under vigilance.
- Actions by paramilitary groups in rural zones, with police consent and the guarantee of impunity. These groups conduct the kidnappings and selective executions of local social leaders.

- Participation of paramilitary groups in simulated robberies, assaults and other criminal actions that appear to be common crimes but in reality are aimed at generating insecurity and fear among the population.

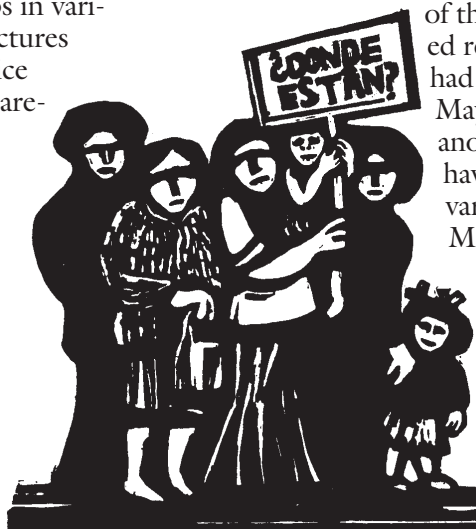
Conclusion:

There is no doubt that the increase in violence and insecurity throughout the country is a direct consequence of the crisis Nicaragua has been living through since April 2018. One of the main reasons is that the National Police has stopped its ordinary functions and missions to dedicate itself to repressive activities. Secondly, the government has encouraged and facilitated the creation, actions and impunity of the paramilitary groups of fanaticized sympathizers. And thirdly there is a clear policy of criminalization, persecution, surveillance and aggression against social leaders, especially released political prisoners and those living in rural zones, who historically have tended to be more anti-Sandinista.

Nicas Seek Refuge

September 2019 issue of *Revista Envío*
<https://www.envio.org.ni/articulo/5685>

According to the Arias Foundation for Peace and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 88,000 Nicaraguans have gone into exile abroad due to Nicaragua's 17-month crisis, 68,000 of them in Costa Rica. Of the latter, 25.7% say they did so because of death threats, 38.3% due to repression and harassment, 18.9% out of fear, 13.2% due to the economic situation and 3.8% because of their political militancy. The UNHCR released a statement counseling Nicaraguans in Costa Rica to seek “reliable” information if they are thinking of returning because “an uninformed return could be very dangerous if the factors that made them flee still exist.” Only 34 of the 34,287 Nicas who requested refugee status in Costa Rica had received it as of the end of May. According to the UNHCR, another 20,000 Nicaraguans have sought refuge in Panama, various European countries, Mexico and the United States, in that order.



Art by Rini Templeton



Thurston–Santo Tomás Sister County Association

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Inside:

- 2/01/20 Giant Rummage Sale
- 2/25/20 Solidarity in Tough Times: 30+ Years...
- 5/02/20 Awesome Plant Sale
- New Scholarship Students!
- Non-Governmental Organizations in Nicaragua
- State Repression and Nicaraguans in Exile

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Giant Annual Rummage Sale

Saturday, February 1st • 9am – 2pm • Lincoln School gym
21st and Washington, Olympia

to benefit education and nutrition
programs in Santo Tomás

We'll accept your gently used, clean donations on **Friday, Jan. 30th from 4 to 7pm** (to the gym please) and then encourage you to come back the next morning to buy other people's cool gear. We especially seek art, jewelry, collectibles, vintage clothing, great kitchen stuff, books and music, tools, toys, bikes, sports and clean camping equipment, wood furniture (no upholstered anything or large appliances)

Can you volunteer to help with the sale?

Call or text (360) 464-5264 or e-mail tstsca@gmail.com and our volunteer coordinator will find a shift for you!

Grace Cox, volunteer cashier, sporting a fabulous rummage sale wig.

