Agenda

Role of women:

I. Before the Nicaraguan Revolution

I. During the Nicaraguan Revolution

I. After the Nicaraguan Revolution

I. Organizations
Before the Revolution
Role of Women

- Stayed at home

- Shaped by traditional Hispanic values
  - High fertility
  - Raise the children

- Attributes of women
  - Dependence
  - Devotion
The law favored men over women

Family Code of 1904

Women could not vote until 1955

Marriage: essentially just a contract that forced woman to follow and obey the man’s every decision.

Divorce: only allowed under extremely dangerous/cruel conditions

Remarriage was frowned upon

A mother was denied the right to her child if the child was conceived outside of marriage (not the case for men)

No protection for a sexually/domestically abused woman who was married
During the Revolution
Women’s Involvement in the Nicaraguan Revolution (1961-1990)

- 1987
  - 67% active members in popular militia
  - 80% of guards
  - 50,000 women nationwide

- Served as:
  - Messengers
  - Ran safe houses
  - Organized demonstrations for political prisoners and against the dictatorship
Women’s Involvement in the Nicaraguan Revolution (1961-1990)

Women recorded testimonies

As guerrilla soldiers

Produced testimonial literature

Roads of the Polar Star

"Everything that we did was for our children so that they could learn to read, so they could have a better life, then we, with this idea, participated in the Revolution. With the idea that they were going to learn to read, that they were going to learn many things that they didn’t know, with this we integrated in the process of the Revolution," Ser madre en Nicaragua (Being a Mother in Nicaragua) 22.
Joining the Revolution

Nicaragua suffered from severe economic crisis

government overspending

foreign debt

worldwide hike in interest rates.

Pressuring of the Nicaraguan government to cut social programs

Hyperinflation, rising food prices, and a devalued currency made it increasingly difficult for women to provide for their families and perform their domestic duties.
Support for the Revolution

Supported the Sandinista Revolution because of their role as mothers

frequented the public jails, demanding that their children to be released

Wished to protect and defend an immediate family member.

In desire to give their lives to the revolution after losing a child in battle

Peter Rosset and John Vandermeer argue:

"the political activities of these women now are completely bound up with their identity as mothers" (161).

"In conditions of war and in the situation that our country lives, I as a mother cannot watch over one child, there are millions of children in the country...the interests of the entire people should come first" (ibid., 86).
Women in the Revolution

Women were fighting for 2 reasons

Gender equality

overthrow Somoza

Leadership positions

headed units and battalions

sometimes entire commands were composed of solely women.

Safehouses

provided food, clothes and shelter for fighters and political workers.

“There was never any lack of respect on the part of our male comrades. On the contrary there was incredible solidarity” - Ana Julio Guido

Collinson, 154
Awakening

By joining the formal workforce - many women developed a feminist conscience and fought in the revolution for women's emancipation

Gloria Carrión

"women weren't aware of anything: they only washed, ironed, cooked, had children and that was it. But now, I tell you, we're awakened... participation brought a sense of self-respect to many women" (Flynn 418).
Awakening continued

By 1984, an estimated 50% of Nicaraguan households were female-headed.

Women mobilized, build their own self-help and community service organizations.

Ex. Association of Women Confronting the National Problem (AMPRONAC)

- professional development and educational training
- created day care centers for working mothers
- led hunger strikes and demonstrations, demanding an end to gender discrimination and unequal pay for female workers.
Luisa Amanda Espinosa and AMNLAE

“It is necessary that as women, we meet under the guidance of an organization in order to discover and understand our specific situation and organize ourselves to change our reality...move forward in the elimination of ideological chains, that tie us to a form of behavior that is dependent, submissive and that underestimates our capacities.”
(Collinson, pg 140-141)

Espinosa was the first woman to die in the war.

AMNLAE was named after her

AMNLAE is a Sandinista organization under the wing of the FSLN.

to help women participating in the revolution.
1983: Managua was the first city in Nicaragua to open the AMNLAE Women’s Legal Office -- soon followed by Esteli, Leon, Granada and Masaya.

Helped women facing domestic violence and child custody.

“minimum programme”

helped unemployed women, housewives

Helped women in a practical way

- training centers
- poultry rearing
- sex-education
After the Revolution
Right after the Triumph

Many women took advantage of their advancements in the war to take on non-traditional responsibilities

Head of Sandinista Police

Minister of Health

Vice-deputy of the National Assembly
President Violetta Chamorro (1990-1997)

Received early education in the U.S

Husband’s death sparked the Sandinista Revolution

   Anti-government journalist

Ended the contra war and brought peace and stability to Nicaragua

Changes:

   Reversed a number of Sandinista policies

   state-owned industries were privatized, censorship was lifted, and the size of the army was reduced

Credited for her conciliatory policies

   retained a number of Sandinistas in the government
Rosario Murillo

Born June 22, 1951 in Managua, Nicaragua.

Married to President Daniel Ortega compostador.

Was educated outside of Nicaragua

Poet

Sandinista

La Prensa

Source: LA Times, Nuevaya
- 2nd straight year to finish in the top 10
- ranks fifth among all countries on political empowerment
- Mechanism

![Global Gender Gap Rankings](image)

Struggles still continued...

It was hard for most women to be viewed as equal to men outside of the revolutionary context

Many women went back to their traditional roles

Educated women were recruited for administrative positions
“There are no men left at home, just three generations of women”

40% of households are sustained by women alone

34%, 60%

The father is absent in 34% of urban homes and 60% in Managua
## Women in the Workforce

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At home</th>
<th>Labor Force</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women are still in charge of the household’s necessary duties</td>
<td>● 47% of women play a role in Nicaragua’s economic activities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>carry water</td>
<td>● 74% of women have an informal job</td>
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<tr>
<td>grow crops (small fields)</td>
<td>○ tailoring, laundry service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>work in markets</td>
<td>○ 41.5% work “propia cuenta”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>collect fuel wood</td>
<td>■ 20.8% don’t receive pay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>care for children</td>
<td>● Women’s work contributed to 80% of national exports</td>
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<tr>
<td>10+ hrs/day taking care of house duties</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>All their efforts/jobs go unrecognized and are seen as insignificant</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8 hrs/day dedicated to any outside job</td>
<td>by the rest of society</td>
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<tr>
<td>There is no law that favors women and acknowledges the work that they</td>
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<td>do as valid</td>
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Organizations
Organizations

Movimiento Autónomo de Mujeres de Nicaragua
Social and political movement for autonomous character
Advocates equality, freedom, and solidarity for a joint democracy
Fight against patriarchal authoritarianism

Friends of Batahola
Priority given to women and children
bear the weight of social and economic inequity
Empower and transform its students and community through access to
Education and training programs

increase economic independence and individual dignities by helping students develop their skills and talents

Over 900 students participate each year in courses that are organized into three categories:

**Basic adult education:** gives opportunity to finish grades 1-6 in 3 years; get diploma from the national Ministry of Education

**Job training:** career oriented

- Baking and pastry making
- Communicative English
- Computer Operator
- Cosmetology and Hairstyling
- Handicrafts
- Natural medicine
- Sewing/tailoring

**Arts education**

- drawing and painting
Sources


http://friendsofbatahola.org/

https://bataholavolunteers.wordpress.com/

http://web.stanford.edu/group/arts/nicaragua/discovery_eng/women/

http://countrystudies.us/nicaragua/29.htm

http://web.stanford.edu/group/arts/nicaragua/discovery_eng/women/images/Women3sm.jpg

http://www.margaretrandall.org/IMG/jpg/Girl_at_Carlos_Funeral_for_web.jpg

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