

# The Sandinista Revolution as Ignition for Social Movements

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Identification card belonging to author's mother.

## Introduction

*“Before the Fatherland and before history, I swear that my sword will defend the national honor and redeem the oppressed. I accept the challenge of the dastardly invader and the nation’s traitors. Our breasts will be ramparts against which their hordes will shatter themselves, because I am firmly convinced that when they have killed the last of my soldiers, more than a battalion of their own men will have died in my wild mountains.”<sup>[1]</sup>*

*-Augusto César Sandino, San Albino Manifesto, July 1, 1927*

Augusto César Sandino, who would give his name to the Sandinista Revolution, was a patriot who inspired Nicaraguans almost a half century later to rise up in unity against their oppressors. This quote from his 1927 address provides insight on what his future, fellow citizens would also face. He was an important figure and symbol for the Sandinista Revolution that Nicaragua experienced for over ten years because he fought for the people against oppression. Beginning in 1979, this revolution had roots planted by the Nicaraguan Revolution that took place in the 1920s.<sup>[2]</sup> The spirit of a failed revolution years before had planted the seed for another to take its place, and possibly, succeed. The insurrection against the Somoza dictatorship united the country and sparked the revolution, but toppling the dictator was not all they needed to accomplish.<sup>[3]</sup> The oncoming years would prove bloody and difficult, but the Sandinista National Liberation Front would not stand idle and allow their revolution to fail. This paper will examine the interplay and important roles that the nationalist, women's, and anti-imperialist movements had in the Sandinista Revolution. These movements were not only integral, but I believe, vital to the success of the Sandinista Revolution and its new government, the Sandinista National Liberation Front. The goal of this paper is to illustrate how these social movements were produced and shaped by the revolution in order to serve specific purposes crafted by the Sandinista National Liberation Front.

## **Historiography**

Historians have approached the topic of the Sandinista Revolution using different lenses, which include looking at the national culture, women, and oppositional sentiment. Dr. John A. Booth, a political scientist, examines the FSLN's (Sandinista National Liberation Front) structure and their implementation of policies.<sup>[4]</sup> Booth focuses on how the new revolutionary government sought to balance and operate within their newly acquired power. Booth's work examines how the use of national culture through the nationalism movement was an important factor of the revolution by looking at how it manifested itself through separate platforms, including reforms. This author allows me to look at how the nationalist movement was a FSLN constructed campaign. He illustrates how "the FSLN as the vanguard, arbiter, and main agent of social change within an environment of political liberty and ideological pluralism" was able to function through the social movement.<sup>[5]</sup> Harry E. Vanden also examines the use of nationalism by the FSLN. Vanden explains what aided in making the nationalist and anti-

imperialist movements strong were their connections to Sandino's struggle decades before.<sup>[6]</sup> He discusses how the Revolution had struggles reminiscent of the national struggle from Sandino's time, thus making them stronger.<sup>[7]</sup> He describes this as the Nicaraguans having "rediscovered their own popular history."<sup>[8]</sup> This strong tie to the past makes these movements gain more momentum; whilst other movements, like the women's movement, are born. Helen Collinson studies the important roles women had in the revolution. This study covers many topics such as the home front, rural and urban women, education, revolution, and reform. Collinson notes how the Association of Nicaraguan Women 'Luisa Amanda Espinosa,' or AMNLAE, was able to mobilize due to the revolution.<sup>[9]</sup> She notes how its predecessor, AMPRONAC (Association of Women Confronting the National Problem) was founded by FSLN members in order to draw more women into the national struggle in 1977.<sup>[10]</sup> AMPRONAC was aimed at overthrowing the regime, which paved the way for the AMNLAE and its primary role of including women in revolutionary tasks.<sup>[11]</sup> The AMNLAE also offered a stronger platform on rights and reforms for women. Her analysis focuses on the extent of women's participation and their important role in the revolution. She examines how the FSLN utilized this participation. For the new revolutionary government unity was an important factor in order to maintain a strong country, which is why shaping a national Nicaraguan character and its opposition would have been a strategy.

Anti-imperialism is emphasized in Edward A. Lynch's work. The book is written by an individual who was part of the Reagan administration, thus giving the paper U.S. inside knowledge and access to documents that were sealed. Lynch's argument in the book is that Reagan sought to combat what he perceived was a communist/Soviet threat in Central America and implement policies that were different than past administrations.<sup>[12]</sup> Lynch observes that Reagan saw both crisis and opportunity in Nicaragua. This manifested itself in the aggressive policies Reagan took toward Nicaragua, which included embargos and arming the Contras. The role of the Contra war waged in Nicaragua played an important part in the Sandinista Revolution and is noted in this work, which paints a picture of how this added ignition to already well-established anti-American sentiments. Lynch's book allows this paper to look at the American side of the anti-imperialism movement. Primary sources will illustrate the purpose and reaction of the anti-imperialism movement, but Lynch grants this paper the view of how this movement became larger due to the Reagan administration. The movement found its basis on the way the United States acted toward them, Reagan made it worse and added fuel to the

fire by how he violently handled Nicaragua. Lynch's book is essentially a justification of the U.S.-led proxy war fought in Nicaragua.

## **Thesis**

Primary sources that I will analyze in this paper include speeches by leaders and important figures in the revolution, published interviews of individuals who experienced the revolution firsthand, and official government documents and pamphlets from Nicaragua as well as the United States. These primary sources were constructed by individuals who experienced and were apart of the Sandinista Revolution, allowing the reader a glimpse into their reality. The primary sources that will be presented in this paper exemplify the movements that were strengthened and maintained by the revolution. The research done in this paper will build on previous research by demonstrating how these movements aided the Revolution and were, essentially, created and supported in relation to the revolution. These movements were platforms for the FSLN to function through and served as pillars to the new government. Through social, political, and economic analysis, I will focus on the new revolutionary government's approach of promoting a socialist-democratic framework and maintaining society through social movements. The Sandinista National Liberation Front used the nationalist movement, women's movement, and anti-imperialist movement as conduits to support and promote democratic socialism and the new revolutionary government. All three movements were vital in order to unify the country as well as ensure the nation's participation and the survival of a new Nicaragua because they each targeted groups that would support their platform.

## **Background**

An understanding of the failed Nicaraguan Revolution in the 1920s is necessary in examining the Sandinista Revolution because it laid the foundation of revolutionary spirit. Through the past, we can see what inspired the future and guided certain movements to form and gain momentum. After this groundwork is laid, the remaining paragraphs will focus on providing evidence to my thesis. First nationalism will be examined, how it was presented to the public as propaganda and through reforms and policies such as economic programs and the literacy crusade. Next I will illustrate the role the women's movement had in the revolution and how it promoted participation in the community. This movement was used by the FSLN in order to integrate women into the revolution. After this section, the anti-imperialist movement will be analyzed through documents and aggressive

behavior of the United States during the Reagan administration. Speeches made by important figures will be presented and anti-revolutionaries backed by the United States, the Contras, will be looked at. These different sections will explore the movements and their interplay, as well as how they were used by the government as cohesive programs of support and identity. In order to better understand the Sandinista Revolution, one must look 50 years earlier. The 1920s in Nicaragua provides important contextual information for the Sandinista Revolution during the 1970s to the 1990s.

The history of the early 1900s in Nicaragua is vital in examining the passed down social framework that the Nicaraguans of the 1970s inherited.

Conservative hegemony saw its

end in 1893 when Liberal José Santos Zelaya rose to the presidency.<sup>[13]</sup> He was a dictator-president and by no means a champion of social justice, but he did reorganize the military, fostered public education, made a separation between church and state, and championed nationalism.<sup>[14]</sup> It was this nationalism that drew the unwanted attention from the United States.

When Zelaya began negotiations with foreign powers about a Nicaraguan canal, which would have been competition to the United States' waterway, the Americans encouraged Conservatives to rebel and sent a military force in 1909 to make sure the rebellion would not be put down.<sup>[15]</sup> This would be an example of the United States using the Monroe Doctrine as an excuse to insert itself in other country's affairs.<sup>[16]</sup> It is noted that "throughout the twentieth century, the United States exercised unchallenged hegemony in the region and monopolized foreign intervention," which normally resulted in military dictatorships.<sup>[17]</sup> From 1912 to 1925, the United States ran Nicaragua through Conservative presidents that ran the country according to how the American administration wanted it.<sup>[18]</sup>

This American occupation would have its opponents in Nicaragua that would not stand to be taken advantage of. A notable figure who would be the namesake of the revolution later in the century was Augusto César Sandino. Sandino waged an unsuccessful guerrilla war against the American occupation in Nicaragua and had to face the Nicaraguan National Guard, which was created, equipped, and trained by the United States.<sup>[19]</sup> Sandino, the child of a mestiza raised in the rural countryside, led an organized force against their oppressors.<sup>[20]</sup> Foreign troops finally left in 1933 and the first native commander of the National Guard was a man named Anastasio Somoza García.<sup>[21]</sup> He would consolidate his power and orchestrate the assassination of Sandino, who had signed a peace agreement for his and his men's safety.<sup>[22]</sup> Somoza would then stage a coup and seize power, creating a

tyrannical dynasty and oppressively rule Nicaragua through his family and puppet presidents, all the while keeping close ties with the United States.<sup>[23]</sup> It would be under his sons, Luis Somoza Debayle and Anastasio Somoza Debayle, that the revolution would begin. The twenty five years preceding the revolution, the Somoza dynasty stirred unrest and set the path toward their downfall. It was in this time that there was unequal economic growth, landless peasants alongside a new industrial proletariat, and an earthquake that leveled the main city of Managua.<sup>[24]</sup> Somoza kept funds meant as national relief from the natural catastrophe and took land from the rising bourgeoisie, which set many against him.<sup>[25]</sup> What would be the spark of the liberation struggle for the Nicaraguan people was the murder of the editor of *La Prensa* on January 10, 1978.<sup>[26]</sup> The editor, Pedro Joaquín Chamorro, was beloved by many for his outspokenness against the oppression of the Somozas. It is during this turbulent period that the FSLN would rise and take the reins in steering the revolution.

The Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional, or Sandinista National Liberation Front, would be in the forefront and active in the Nicaraguan Revolution. Taking its name from Augusto César Sandino, this was founded as a socialist group by Carlos Fonseca Amador, Silvio Mayorga, and Tomás Borge Martínez.<sup>[27]</sup> They had been active in the years before the revolution and gained momentum. The FSLN orchestrated a hostage-ransom operation in 1974, which resulted in Somoza censoring the press and allowing the National Guard to terrorize rural areas where they believed guerilla members were located. Hundreds were raped, tortured, killed, and kidnapped.<sup>[28]</sup> Fonseca and Mayorga would not see the end of the Somoza dynasty, but under Daniel and Humberto Ortega Saavedra's leadership in the FSLN, they would overthrow Somoza in July of 1979.<sup>[29]</sup> Now with the FSLN politically in charge, they created a nine-person Directorate, Governing Junta of Reconstruction, and Council of State.<sup>[30]</sup> They sought to rule from the people, since it was the people who rose and took their country back. Their ideologies in policies and reform would reflect a Marxist and progressive Catholic feel.<sup>[31]</sup> The taking back of their country had cost about 50,000 lives and this only marked the beginning of their revolution.<sup>[32]</sup> The Sandinista National Liberation Front would need to be ready in order to keep the country they won back; through social movements they sought to unify and consolidate Nicaragua.

## **Body**

The Nationalist movement promoted national identity and unity in support of the new

government in power, the FSLN. Just because the Somoza dynasty was overthrown, it did not mean the battle for independence was won. Realizing this, the FSLN ignited national pride and support for the new government. Tomás Borge, aware of this, gave a speech to ignite this very pride in solidarity with the FSLN in 1984. In his speech “The FSLN and the Nicaraguan Revolution,” Borge explains that “Sandino’s cause had indeed gone on living, and the Sandinista front did no more than take it up again under different material conditions and with the guidance of revolutionary theory.”<sup>[33]</sup> The Sandinistas used the legacy of Sandino as a way to imbue national pride not only in the country, but in the FSLN movement; it wished to present itself as a native movement and assert that “to be a Nicaraguan meant to be a Sandinista.”<sup>[34]</sup>

Giving strength to the nationalist movement meant also giving strength to the Sandinista movement as well. Borge mentions the use of Sandinista propaganda and training schools in order to organize the masses.<sup>[35]</sup> The FSLN wanted to “forge a new national ethos” and did so through the promotion of national goals in the form of propaganda through media and publications.<sup>[36]</sup> Another source of propaganda, and of training as well, was music.

Music was an important tool for the nationalist propaganda, but instruction as well. Music would also play a role in the women’s movement. The Mejía Godoy brothers released an album the year of the Revolution called *Guitarra Armada* or in English, *Armed Guitar*.<sup>[37]</sup> This work notes how the songs served the same purpose as old epic poems because they informed the listener as well as inspired them.<sup>[38]</sup> One of the songs released by the Mejía Godoy brothers provided military instruction; their song “El Garand” taught the listener how to arm and disarm an M1 Garand.<sup>[39]</sup> But this was not the only music used by the government to gain and inspire support. A duo of Nicaraguan siblings called Guardabarranco, after a bird found in the cliffsides in Nicaragua, released songs commemorating the victory of the Sandinistas.<sup>[40]</sup> After the Sandinista victory, the Minister of Culture also released songs that the Somoza regime had censored and not disseminated.<sup>[41]</sup> The nationalist movement was strongly intertwined with the Sandinista identity, as seen by the influence it had on music.

Through the Nationalist Movement, the Sandinista National Liberation Front was able to consolidate power. First presented in 1969 and then re-released in June of 1981, the FSLN reprinted “The Historic Program of the FSLN.” This document asserts that the FSLN arose out of the people’s need to have a vanguard that would overthrow

the dictatorship and politically stabilize the country.<sup>[42]</sup> This program outlines the structure that the revolutionary government was going to take. It claimed that “it will endow revolutionary power with a structure that allows the full participation of the entire people, on the national level as well as the local level.”<sup>[43]</sup> Thus, the revolutionary government was able to structure the country’s politics through their new position at the local level by including the people. The FSLN National Directorate worked through the Governing Junta of National Reconstruction (JGRN), a chief executive council that included major rebel leaders, the Ministry of Planning coordinated plans for the public sector and committees, the new court system chose jurors based on honesty and competence, and the Council of State was the consultative representative assembly that issued reform and legislation.<sup>[44]</sup> Locally, mass organizations were autonomous institutions where people could express their power and aspirations.<sup>[45]</sup> The Sandinist Defense Committee provided relief supplies and public services, The Association of Rural Workers wanted to defend agrarian reform and organize rural workers, and the July 19th Sandinist Youth developed a revolutionary vanguard and had a hand in the literacy crusade.<sup>[46]</sup> This allowed the FSLN to shape revolutionary policy and promote public political participation. The FSLN consolidated power in the government through the form of nationalism being developed, which was socialist-democratic, and that required this vanguard to exist and garner support and participation from the people.

The Nationalist movement paved the path for the revolutionary government to shape the country through reforms and policies, which were aimed at labor, economic, and social changes. The Sandinista National Liberation Front massively distributed their “Plan of Struggle” and it served as a major step in carrying out their revolutionary socialist-democratic program.<sup>[47]</sup> Released on the 4th of November in 1984, this document outlined plans that the FSLN had for the country. The document asserted that the “Sandinista Front will guarantee that the inexhaustible source of revolutionary power will always be the trade unions of the workers and agricultural laborers; the neighborhood, women’s, and youth organizations...”<sup>[48]</sup> Human rights and public liberties were promised and Tomás Borge, the Interior Minister and also a Somoza torture victim, tried to keep human rights violations low.<sup>[49]</sup> Therefore, the Ministry of the Interior did not allow torture or cruelty against prisoners and law-violators.<sup>[50]</sup> The rights of the people were an important platform that the FSLN used to gain the trust and support of the country.

The “Plan of Struggle” also committed itself to “deepen the social and economic revolution... by consolidating our model of independent economic development.”<sup>[51]</sup>The



Sandinistas wanted to transform the country and its economy, and did so through different economic programs intended to uplift and assure the citizen. The Sandinistas were national figures and used this image to pass programs. Nationalizations made by the revolutionary government made the public sector's share increase and the Ministry of Planning organized public planning alongside other ministries.<sup>[52]</sup> The Sandinistas also promised "to consolidate the Uniform Health-Care System and improve the quality of services..."<sup>[53]</sup> The government ministry then began reconstruction on hospitals, training health personnel, and health planning.<sup>[54]</sup> Using the nationalist movement, the FSLN was able to pass policies and reforms that would shape the political and economic landscape of the country. The literacy crusade was integral to strengthening the nationalist movement and the FSLN working through it. The literacy campaign was an important educational policy that served as an outlet of strong influence for the Sandinista Liberation Front. Tomás Borge's speech given the 4th of February, 1983, was on "The New Education in the New Nicaragua." This speech explained that they fought for the education of all and the revolutionary process would ensure people had the right to learn and grow. Borge explains "through education we must promote revolutionary strength...loyalty to the revolutionary principles that sustain our vanguard, the FSLN, and open the floodgates of science so that man's beliefs in fantasies and superstitions, accumulated over centuries, can be washed away."<sup>[55]</sup> Borge claimed that the path toward further liberation gained by revolution was the campaign of literacy.<sup>[56]</sup> But this movement toward literacy was not only to teach, but to mold. A Literacy Campaign textbook from 1980 included an anthem of the FSLN that promoted participation and had a quote stating that "Under the banner of black and red protection/ Do or die for our country's redemption."<sup>[57]</sup> Red and black are the colors of the FSLN flag. This forged national solidarity and served as a "nucleus of the new national ethos sought by the Sandinistas."<sup>[58]</sup> Goals of the campaign were to encourage political awareness and support national cohesion, which it seemed to accomplish.<sup>[59]</sup> This was essentially used as a developmental strategy by the FSLN in order to prove to the nation it had its best interests at heart and gain support.<sup>[60]</sup> This was not the only strategy used in order to obtain participation.

The women's movement was utilized by the FSLN in order to attain women's support and participation for the Revolution. The revolutionaries realized early on that if they wanted the Revolution to be successful, they would need women's support. Collinson notes how the predecessor of the AMNLAE (Association of Nicaraguan Women 'Luisa Amanda Espinosa) was AMPRONAC (Association of Women Confronting the National Problem), which was founded by the FSLN in 1977 to draw in women in the struggle against Somoza.<sup>[61]</sup> Women founded the AMNLAE shortly after the Revolution

was won since AMPRONAC's aim was to merely oppose Somoza.<sup>[62]</sup> Since the AMNLAE had strong participation and support for the Revolution, it received the FSLN's blessing. Tomás Borge gave a speech on September 29, 1982, commemorating the fifth anniversary of the women's movement. Borge asserts the way women have risen to the challenge and fought alongside men in their struggle for independence, congratulating specific women who had large parts in the fighting.<sup>[63]</sup> In giving their support to the movement and recognizing specific women, the FSLN would be in good standing with the female population that wanted to be apart of the national struggle. Magda Enriquez gave a speech in California in 1984 explaining to her audience how women became aware of what they were capable of achieving. Enriquez makes it known to the audience that the Revolution gave women the opportunity to organize and lead.<sup>[64]</sup> This speech illustrates how the FSLN made sure to align themselves with the women's movement to guarantee their support. The AMNLAE worked in conjunction with the revolutionary government in order to ensure women's voices were heard, allowing the FSLN direct power with the women's movement.<sup>[65]</sup> This partnership with the women's movement would prove a good move for the FSLN because women were directly involved in the Revolution.

Women were integral to Revolution because they had important roles in the fighting and were therefore working alongside and with the FSLN. About one-third of the people that made up the fighting force of the FSLN were, in fact, women.<sup>[66]</sup> These women formed the foundations and basis of support networks, messaging systems, and provided relief in the form of medicine and food.<sup>[67]</sup> Dora Maria Tellez, who was known as "Commander Two" and was responsible for taking the major city of Leon in early 1979, was interviewed in early 1980 to discuss her experience in the Revolution.<sup>[68]</sup> Dora Maria felt she needed to participate not necessarily because she was a woman, but because she was a citizen: "That's what Sandinism is to the Nicaraguan people. It is our history, our heroes and heroines, and our people's struggle and victory."<sup>[69]</sup> She was a prominent figure for women and revolutionaries alike because of her accomplishments as a guerrilla commander. These female guerilla fighters would form their own battalions to fight in the struggle.<sup>[70]</sup> This interview is meant to illustrate how women not only had an important role in the Revolution, but did so out of duty. Due to the high participation of women in the Sandinista Revolution, many of them attained major positions in the new framework: Dora Maria Tellez would become Minister of Health, Doris Tijerino would gain the position of head of the Sandinista Police, and Leticia Herrera would become the vice-deputy of the National Assembly.<sup>[71]</sup> Women proved they could serve their country well, which earned them places in the

revolutionary government. There were many ways that promoted and commemorated women's participation, but the most important medium to do so was music. Music was an important medium in promoting and commemorating women who were apart of the Sandinista Revolution. Music was not only used to raise support for the Sandinista cause, but remember those who had died for it. Carlos Mejía Godoy was an important nationalist singer and composer who wrote many famous songs during this time. His song called "Las campesinas del Cuá" (The Peasant Women from Cuá) was about the 1968 massacre and torture of women in this region by the Somoza regime.<sup>[72]</sup> It would be songs like these that would lead women to have active roles in the revolution. An important figure to women and revolutionaries alike was Arlen Siu. Arlen was a Chinese-Nicaraguan songwriter who would join the FSLN in 1970, but she would die fighting two years later against Somoza's forces at the age of eighteen.<sup>[73]</sup> In Godoy's song "El zenzontle pregunta por Arlen" (The zenzontle asks for Arlen), there is a dialogue between two birds that discuss the great revolutionary Arlen Siu, as well as inform its audience about the war.<sup>[74]</sup> Arlen was a young woman who died for the Sandinista cause, an image that would portray her as a martyr for the revolutionary cause. Music inspired women to take up arms and fight, and the FSLN used this to their advantage. Women organizing to fight in the war meant more soldiers for the cause.

The women's movement was a way for women to gain involvement in the revolution, and was crafted to incorporate them into the national struggle. The AMNLAE released a document about the organization expressing "it grew out of the historical need for Nicaraguan women to take full and active part in the revolutionary process of national liberation which the *Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional* was furthering."<sup>[75]</sup> The women's movement was strongly connected to the FSLN as well because in this document, it explains how the namesake of the organization, Luisa Amanda Espinoza, was the first female member of the FSLN to die in the national struggle.<sup>[76]</sup> Glenda Monterrey, a leader in the AMNLAE, expresses in an interview in 1981 that the "Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) opened the door for us, made it possible for women to participate."<sup>[77]</sup> What these sources illustrate is that the women's movement was able to flourish and mobilize thanks to the FSLN. This point therefore ties the women's movement closely to the revolution and the Sandinistas. Aside from furthering women's reforms and roles, the primary goal of the AMNLAE was to "incorporate women into general revolutionary tasks."<sup>[78]</sup> The women's movement would be an important pillar in supporting the FSLN because its foundations were laid by the FSLN itself, thus making it a vital part of the

revolution's success. Another important pillar to the FSLN would be the anti-imperialism movement.

The anti-imperialism movement was used as a pillar to unite the country against U.S. intervention and protect the socialist-democratic platform in revolutionary Nicaragua. Victor Tirado, a dedicated FSLN member, gave a speech on March 14<sup>th</sup>, 1983, commemorating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Karl Marx's death. Tirado expressed that "Marx demonstrated scientifically, socialism is the future of humanity because, in spite of its errors and imperfections, it is the best answer... It is the best solution to the sharp conflicts that capitalism poses."<sup>[79]</sup> Tirado wanted the audience to know that capitalism was obsolete and that socialism, which was apart of the FSLN's platform, was the future. He also mentions how the United States, a capitalist country, was still ripe with imperialist spirit. He wanted the people to see that the FSLN's form of government was for the people, while the capitalism of countries like the United States was against them. Tirado would also go a step further and connect socialism to the people: "Through Marxism, we came to know Sandino, our history, and our roots."<sup>[80]</sup> The anti-imperialism movement would be reminiscent of Sandino's struggle in the 1920s and add Marxism to the mix to ensure it supported the FSLN's type of government. By connecting it to Sandino, Tirado made it seem that this type of government was ingrained with their history. The Carter Administration would still try to maintain semi-cordial relations with Nicaragua because they were unsure on what to do about the change in leaders since they were friendly with the Somoza dictatorship.<sup>[81]</sup> This approach would change with the Reagan administration.

The Reagan administration claimed that the new Nicaraguan government was a Communist threat and adopted aggressive policies toward Nicaragua, which fueled the anti-imperialist movement in Nicaragua. In 1985 during a Nicaragua Refugee fundraiser, President Reagan expressed his concern over the "Communist threat" poisoning Nicaragua. Reagan claimed that the Sandinistas were a "Communist threat" that needed to be addressed and that they "cannot have the United States walk away from one of the greatest moral challenges in postwar history. I pledge to you that we will do everything we can to win this great struggle."<sup>[82]</sup> Reagan made his position clear on the FSLN: they were a problem that needed to be dealt with. He felt this threat justified American interference, just as the American government had thought in the 1920s. Sandinista leaders would use this comparison to demonize Reagan, as seen in a section in Tirado's speech. Tirado would mention Reagan and express that imperialism was alive and well with him and was being used to justify intervention and perpetuate the old framework.<sup>[83]</sup> This image of anti-

imperialism would only gain strength and push more Nicaraguans into supporting the FSLN with the United States' covert support of the Contras.

Anti-U.S. sentiments were on the rise in Nicaragua due to U.S. opposition to the FSLN and support of the Contras. The U.S.'s role in the revolution was noted by Sandinista leaders. Daniel Ortega was an important FSLN leader and gave his views on American intervention in a speech on May 4, 1984. Ortega claimed that a "dirty war, directed and controlled by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, is being carried out against Nicaragua."<sup>[84]</sup> Ortega would give statistics of damage inflicted by the United States by economic means and outline their aggressions. He would close this speech by recalling how Sandino did not bow nor surrender in the face of American aggression, so neither should they.<sup>[85]</sup> Nationalism would help back anti-imperialist sentiment. Ortega was not necessarily wrong about the aggressions and the United States' role, as exemplified by the Contras. The Contras, the counter-revolutionaries to the Sandinista Revolution, were mainly active between 1981 and 1990, and in this time frame were almost completely funded by the United States.<sup>[86]</sup> The Reagan administration gave the green light to aid the Contras, it was seen as a way of bringing democracy to Nicaragua.<sup>[87]</sup> But this was not how it was seen by the Nicaraguan people who experienced their "democracy." It is this 'Cold War' atmosphere that would lead to aggressive relations between Nicaragua and the United States.<sup>[88]</sup> This aggression would be manifested in the Contras. The Contras became known for their terrorism and brutality, targeting anything or anyone remotely connected to the FSLN; this included schools, clinics, nurses, and teachers.<sup>[89]</sup> Lynch notes in his work how Reagan believed that these violent means were meant to alleviate a threat he perceived. A combination of the aggressive stance of the United States and historical opposition to American intervention would consolidate the anti-imperialist movement as an asset to the Sandinista government.

## **Conclusion**

The nationalist, women's, and anti-imperialist movements were vital to the success of the Sandinista Revolution because they each provided support for the socialist-democratic platform of the FSLN. They utilized and ignited these social movements in order to create a national image: "to be a Nicaraguan meant to be a Sandinista."<sup>[90]</sup> Through this image, the FSLN was able to use these movements as sources of support and participation. Nationalist sentiment drew in people who wanted to serve their country, the women's movement provided an outlet for female participation, and the anti-imperialist movement highlighted the violence supported by the United States and thus gained more Nicaraguan

support. FSLN ideology was smart because it applied Sandino's beliefs and Marxist concepts, which drew in the Nicaraguan people because it was compatible with Nicaraguan realities.<sup>[91]</sup> Through their socialist framework and ideals, the FSLN was able to draw the support of the masses and work through these social movements. The FSLN provided the ignition, and these social movements used that ignition to combust and grow like a fire.

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## Photograph

Lara, Aurora. Personal collection. Identification card belong to the author’s mother. Unknown date. JPEG.