



PRONiCA

News from Nicaragua

September 2015
Vol 28 , No 3

Published quarterly by the ProNica Committee of the Southeastern Yearly Meeting since 1987

Quakers in Solidarity with Nicaraguans for 28 Years

La Belleza: Merari's Story **Behind the Scenes**

A new video sheds light on the vibrant, nurturing community inside the Acahualinca Women's Center. *La Belleza: Merari's Story*, which is now accessible on the ProNica YouTube page, features Merari, a single mother of three in Managua.

"At 1:30 I'm done with work, so I freshen up and go to class at 2:00," Merari says as she slaps one last mound of dough into a tortilla before departing for class. It's a typical long day, but Merari feels especially encouraged knowing that it is almost graduation day, and her 10 month journey will soon yield a diploma and the chance for a new life. Her hope is palpable.

The 4-minute video, a generous gift to ProNica from directors & producers, Peter Baryshnikov, Robert Baldrige & Jyotsna Du Ciel, captures the entangled hardship and beauty of life in Managua, while spotlighting the life-affirming community of women at Acahualinca.

Visit the ProNica YouTube page to view and share Merari's Story today. □

Pictured:

Top: Producer Jyotsna Du Ciel interviews Acahualinca staff

Center: Merari laughs with cosmetology classmates

Bottom: Merari prays during Sunday morning church service



News from Nicaragua

September 2015, Vol 28 No 3

ProNica Board

Herb Haigh, President	Pam Haigh, Treasurer
Johannes Werner, Secretary	Doug McCown, Director
Carl Hersh, Director	Irene King, Director
Brad Stocker, Director	
Executive Director:	Melissa Ajabshir
Co-Program Directors:	Ada López Rivera & Ramón Sepulveda Velez
Program Assistant:	Milton García
Executive Assistant:	Barbara Wright
Financial Specialist:	Caroline Lanker
Quaker House Caretaker	Francisca "Panchita" Fletes
Quaker House Watchman	Jose Antonio Fletes

Other Contributors:

Jessica Rubio	Nahara L. Saballos
Norma Villalta	Peter Baryshnikov
Robert Baldrige	Jyotsna Du Ciel

ProNica's Vision is solidarity that empowers and educates Nicaraguans and North Americans.

ProNica's Mission is building sustainable cross-cultural relationships between the peoples of Nicaragua and North America using Quaker values.

ProNica assists in creating and sustaining programs by and for the Nicaraguan people. These projects hold promise for grassroots growth, arise from Nicaraguan needs and tradition, and provide not only survival but also empowerment.

ProNica's priorities are community cohesiveness and economic development, non-violence training, health, education, sustainable agriculture and women's empowerment. We seek to link Nicaraguan people with concerned individuals internationally to promote understanding and mutual action. We educate those who seek information or wish to serve.

Our work is accomplished by an international core of dedicated volunteers and staff who seek to embody Quaker principles of consensual decision making and action and respect for that of God in everyone. This service project arose from a deep concern over the international exploitation of the Nicaraguan people and resources and a wish to respond in practical and constructive ways.

ProNica, Incorporated is a 501(c)(3) tax exempt corporation under the spiritual care of the Southeastern Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) with offices in St. Petersburg, Florida and Managua, Nicaragua. ProNica is a registered Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) in Nicaragua.

ProNica Stateside Office

130 Nineteenth Avenue Southeast
St Petersburg, Florida 33705-2810
stateside@pronica.org
727.821.2428

El Centro de los Amigos

managua@pronica.org, 011.505.2266.0984

Quaker House Managua

managua@pronica.org, 011.505.2266.3216

For your Friendship of Peace, We Thank You, Nancy Taylor

It was during the mid-1990s when Sociology professor Nancy Taylor first joined her dear friend, Margaret "Peg" Rigg at a ProNica planning meeting in Florida. Nancy's curiosity had long been piqued by Peg's stories upon return from trips to Nicaragua. Sitting among the other activists and listening to reports of the latest challenges and triumphs of the grassroots partners in Nicaragua, Nancy's curiosity quickly deepened into a steadfast resolve to join the efforts.



1990s ProNica planning meeting in St. Petersburg, Florida

During a 1998 meeting, a particular challenge caught Nancy's attention: the high turnover rate among talented Program Coordinators only compensated with basic living stipends. ProNica had just hired Lillian Hall as the new Coordinator, a Quaker with a Cornell agronomy degree who had been in Nicaragua from 1984 volunteering with peasant farmers. Hoping to retain Lillian, and knowing the time and sensitivity required to build genuine trust and mutual respect among the partners, Nancy pledged monthly donations that would increase the Coordinator stipend into a modest salary. Indeed, Lillian would stay on for the next 14 years, fortifying long-term partnerships, doggedly raising awareness among North Americans, and designing high quality solidarity-based educational immersion programs. Nancy tends to heap credit on Peg, Lillian and others, but it's hard to imagine how many saved lives are linked directly to Nancy's incredible spirit of generosity. Now in her 80s and simplifying her life, Nancy must pass the salary-funding torch on to other ProNica supporters.

It's impossible to adequately express gratitude to Nancy for her shared dreams with Nicaraguans over all these years. Muchas gracias, Nancy Taylor. Please accept our sincerest appreciation. We cherish you! □

Nicaragua Addressing Drought and Climate Change

Two Taiwanese experts, Ju Jia-jeng and Shinne Chen, arrived in Nicaragua on Aug. 16 to evaluate the topography, soils, climate, and principal crops of the country's so-called "dry corridor" with the goal of preparing an irrigation project for the region.

In July, President Daniel Ortega asked Taiwanese President Ma Ying-jeou to send experts who could work with Nicaraguan counterparts to prepare a plan to present to international financial institutions for funding to improve Nicaraguan crop yields and food security. Ju Jia-jeng said that in each region that they will visit the conditions are different and some will be able to use gravity based irrigation and in others another system will have to be used. Bosco Castillo of the National System of Production, Consumption, and Commerce, said the experts will visit areas in the departments of Leon, Chinandega, Managua, Boaco, Matagalpa, Esteli, Madriz and Nueva Segovia.

Peasant farmers in the dry corridor are losing crops and cattle because of the lack of rain. Reyes Aguilar of Pantasma said that the grass in his two pastures has dried up and his 30 head of cattle have nothing to eat. "This is the first time this has happened," he insisted, remembering that back in the 1960s there were droughts but there was still pasture and the streams and wells did not dry up. Jorge Rodriguez, who raises cattle near the Honduran border, said many of his neighbors plan to sell their cattle if the rains do not return by the end of August because "they are dying." He added that harvests of beans and corn are also being lost to the drought.

Large and small coffee farmers are saying that climate change and the El Niño phenomenon are affecting the

flowering of the coffee plants in northern Nicaragua. Joaquin Solorzano, a member of the Matagalpa Coffee Growers Association said that, due to the lack of water, the flowering of the coffee is not the best this year which means that coffee beans will be affected

with an impact on the harvest of the 2015-16 cycle.

CECOCAFEN, a union of coffee cooperatives of northern Nicaragua with 2,500 members, also has stated that its members are affected by climate change and drought just at the point when many were beginning to recover from the coffee rust plague. The Department of Jinotega

produces 35% of Nicaragua's coffee, Matagalpa 28%, Nueva Segovia 24%, and the rest of the country 13%.

Meanwhile, the government announced that it is organizing a training program on climate change for more than 1,200 farmers in the Department of Nueva Segovia. Supported by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the training will cover topics such as environmental education, best practices, communication and capacity building to mitigate the effects of climate change.

And, last week the government presented a study on Achievements and Challenges of Climate Change Adaptation. The document states that Nicaragua has incorporated issues of

climate change as a component

of the National Human Development Plan. Among the efforts, the Ministry

of the Environment is investing US\$60 million in a watershed management project in the dry corridor and the country's 153 municipal governments are implementing steps to deal with climate change in their territories. (*El Nuevo Diario*, Aug. 16, 17; *Nicaragua News*, Aug. 12, 17) □

"CECOCAFEN, a union of coffee cooperatives of northern Nicaragua with 2,500 members, also has stated that its members are affected by climate change and drought just at the point when many were beginning to recover from the coffee rust plague."



Harvesting coffee beans

Interview with Norma Villalta of the Acahualt Women's Center

By Ada Lopez, ProNica Co-Program Director

Name: Norma Villalta

Age: 61

Role: Administrator of Acahualt Women's Center

Q: How did you first learn about the Acahualt and how long ago?

A: We founded the organization in the 90s. We (Norma Villalta and Maria Elena Bonilla) founded it due to the needs we saw in our community such as the deaths of many women. We also saw that a lot of women and their children suffered abuse inside the nuclear family. This led to the creation of our first project to investigate the large numbers of deaths of women--which turned out to be cervical cancer--and then to offer them support.

Q: What have you learned from participating in this organization?

A: We learned that with solidarity and organizing, we could analyze the context in which we lived. This is the only way to achieve our goals to help each other as women. It was helpful to get to know each other and to analyze how peace and tranquility can be achieved by defending our human rights. Respecting ourselves for others to respect our decisions, body, and mind --and this is how we were able to develop ourselves in life.

Q: Could you describe an ideal activity in your day as an example of your work?

A: When we sit to brainstorm problems and we see the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats--the development of the first outline of our work and the first project we set out to do.

Q: Can you tell us about an important thing you have done while working for the organization that has been lodged in your memory?

A: When we had our first campaign for the prevention of cervical cancer. This activity allowed us to reach out to many sectors, saving the lives of many women who were diagnosed early.

Q: How would you picture the organization in 10 to 20 years?

A: We would like to see the organization here in 20 years with the human and economic resources needed to provide holistic services to women who are in need in so many of the communities; an organization committed to defending women's rights.

Q: What is the biggest obstacle for the organization?

A: Lack of economic resources to cover the salaries and maintenance of our infrastructure.

Q: What are the biggest needs that the organization has right now?

A: Our most pressing needs include supporting youth, adolescents and women in general, finding the funds for salaries, maintaining the infrastructure, and maintaining our basic services offered.

Q: Have you had a spiritual experience which you would like to share?

A: Quaker House has brought people who work with spirituality. We have participated in these events. We have developed and gained knowledge of our origins, the afterlife, and Earth as a journey in which we can learn and develop spiritually before returning to God.

Q: What is an example of work the organization does for peace and justice?

A: We empowered ourselves through the Alternatives to Violence workshops with the facilitators from ProNica, and then we led the workshops with various groups.

Q: What advice would you give someone who wants to make a change in the world?

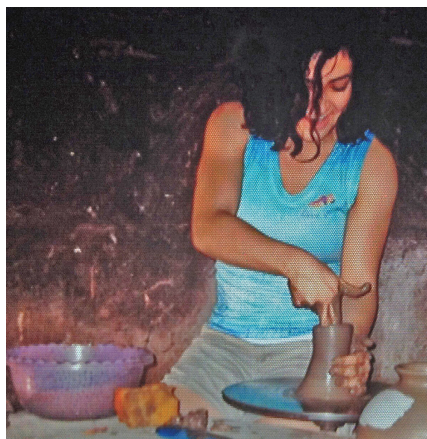
A: To work for the change in human behavior for equality, peace, justice and the love of God. □



Visionary women's health activist, Norma Villalta

Washburn University Students Visit Fair Trade Potter

By Jessica Rubio, Washburn University delegate



Jessica is guided by a local potter

What a day we had in Masaya! We visited several places, and my favorite was the home and studio of a pottery artisan named Darwin. It was a real learning experience as he explained the history of the artisan crafts and the big role they played in his life.

Darwin showed and explained how to form the clay on a spinning wheel. After the presentation, he asked if we would like to try!

Having done some work in high school with pottery, I thought this would be a good opportunity to put into practice my New Year's resolution to become a bolder person. I volunteered, and my hands and feet went to work. I was trying to focus on what he had just shown us and what I had previously learned in class. He made it look so easy! It took me so much

longer to make a pretty basic object out of clay. After I washed my hands, another member of our group, Hayley, gave it a try and also quickly learned how hard it was. After that, Darwin showed us the last steps of pottery making, and we bought some of his beautiful pieces.

Note: Darwin sells his work from his studio and through a fair trade organization. They've trained him in calculating prices that are fair to both his family and his customers. □

Tucked between a beautiful crater lake to the west and the colonial city of Granada to the east, Masaya is home to the *Mercado Artesanias* (Artisan Market).

Overflowing with beautiful flowers and hand crafted treasures, the visit by students represents an important point of departure from urban Managua and their rural homestays. As the trip progresses, delegates shake loose simplistic notions of Nicaragua, and emerge with a more nuanced sense of our global interconnectedness—of our common humanity in its beauty, struggles, and triumphs.

AVP Workshops are Restorative for Volunteer Health Promoters

ProNica partner and AVP (Alternatives to Violence Project) facilitator Harold Urbina adapts his approach depending on the participants. Through experience he knows that working with former streetchildren from Los Quinchos requires a slightly different approach than working with a group of volunteer rural health promoters.



Alternatives to Violence Project workshop in rural Nicaragua

This past August, Harold collaborated with ProNica staff member, Milton Garcia, *Fundación Somos Así Por La Paz Y La Vida* founder Dorothy Granada, and ProNica long-term volunteer, Nahara Saballos. Together they organized

the Level I workshops for health promoters from the regions of La Dalia, Rancho Grande, and Waslala.

Volunteer Nahara noted that, "The workshops emphasized using the 'poder transformador,' a power that not only comes from within, but is also used to empower health promoters to feel sure of their own decisions made under the

pressure of a violent situation. One promoter mentioned to us at the end of the workshop that this 'poder

transformador' was helpful in reassuring him and his colleagues of the valuable work they are doing for their communities, work that is not compensated by us nor the Ministry of Health." □

Welcome Back Doug McCown to the ProNica Board of Directors



Doug with Ruth Hyde Paine in 2006

I'm unclear of the year, let alone a date, as to when I joined the ProNica community. It was in large part due to a friend's encouragement. How could I, how could any of us, resist the gentle

urging of Ruth Hyde Paine? Like now, back in those days, the mid- 1990s, the ProNica community consisted of a Board, a few employees, and some supporters. Among these were Lillian Hall and Ken Kinzel. Am I shaking the memory tree for you long-term supporters?

I loved this community: how dedicated folks were to assisting Nicaraguans' grass-roots needs! It helped that our decisions were embedded of Quaker process, under the stewardship of Ruth, Herb and Pam Haigh, Lillian, and the many others who have given of themselves over the years.

I just had to go to Nicaragua, and returned believing that everyone should go. There's so much to learn, to see; the people are wonderful. Hard-scrabble lives are led ardently and earnestly. It's humbling. The experience blurred into the profound on my flight back to Miami. My 10 year old daughter, Molly, went with me. She returned a few years later for a second time.

I have to tell you this story. We stayed in the home of a village. There were chickens and a rooster in the yard. The people drew their water from a well. Back then, no one knew if the water was safe. It can be hard to guess villagers' ages, since poverty, work, education, and health are major issues. We were served black beans and rice along with fresh chicken... so delicious. I slept fitfully. Sometime before dawn our rooster crowed.

"I just had to go to Nicaragua, and returned believing that everyone should go. There's so much to learn, to see; the people are wonderful. Hard-scrabble lives are led ardently and earnestly. It's humbling. The experience blurred into the profound on my flight back to Miami."



2003 Friends Witness Tour with Program Director, Lillian Hall (center), and Doug with daughter Molly in the back

The neighbors' roosters crowed. Their neighbors' roosters crowed. I listened to concentric circles of rooster calls multiplying and fading into the distance. Falling asleep, in the distance I heard... you guessed it... roosters crowing, far away. The next set of crowing was closer. Still closer, until finally it was our neighbors' roosters crowing again, and then ours. Molly and I had been hosted by the town's alpha rooster!

It's exciting to be joining the ProNica community again. I look forward to this opportunity of service, to join with you all in fostering peace, health and opportunity for our fellow travelers in life, the people of Nicaragua. Thank you. □

PLANNED GIVING

Deferred giving offers you a lasting and meaningful bond with ProNica. Through your humanitarianism, Nicaraguan organizations address both urgent needs and the roots of social injustice. With a few simple arrangements, your life will impact this crucial form of peacebuilding well into the future. Bequests, endowments and other forms of planned giving can be wise benevolent investments. Contact us today: info@pronica.org

What People are Saying about the Canal two years after Nicaraguan President Ortega and HKND CEO Jing first Shook Hands over the Deal

“Economists say that Nicaragua needs more than its current 5% yearly growth, something more like 10% to pull the country out of poverty. Ortega insists that the canal project would enable Nicaragua to end poverty in the country by increasing the number of formal sector jobs from the current 640,000 to 1.9 million while he promises to continue supporting small farmers and preserve the agricultural sector.”

~Katherine Hoyt Nicaragua Network & Alliance for Global Justice, July 31, 2015

“We believe in development, but we don’t see how this is going to bring benefits to Nicaragua. We are a country based on the agrarian movement, and this project will violate that.”

~Silvia Gutiérrez, Sandinista Renovation Movement, 2015

“The canal isn’t going to help any of the poor people at all. The benefits will all go to the rich... To build yourself a home here, it is hard. To build up a farm here, it takes a lifetime. ~José Franciso Espinoza, 43-year-old Nicaraguan farmer

“HKND Group, led by billionaire Wang Jing, said it would avoid the town of El Tule... In December protesters from El Tule blocked the Managua-San

Carlos Highway over concerns that they may be evicted from their land as a result of the gargantuan civil engineering project.”

~Staff writer, Global Construction Review, August 28, 2015

“Many of these ports cannot accommodate the largest container ships anyway, so the demand for taking them

through the canal is not there. If the demand materializes in the future, Panama has the option of building a fourth, wider set of locks at a fraction of the cost of Nicaragua’s canal.”

~Mary Anastasia O’Grady, The Wall Street Journal, August 9th 2015

“According to Article 97 of Nicaragua’s General National Waters Law (Law 620), passed in 2010, Lake Nicaragua ‘should be considered as a natural

reservoir of drinking water, being of highest interest and national priority for national security.” ~ Kate Kilpatrick, Al Jazeera, April 8, 2014

“Silty sediments would be dredged in Lake Nicaragua for large shipping channels and water from the lake would be used to operate the canal’s locks.”

~Joann C. Adkins, Phys.org, June 19, 2015 □



☐ Yes, I support solutions at the grassroots level!

Donation amount: ☐\$25 ☐\$50 ☐\$75 ☐\$100

☐\$250 ☐\$500 ☐ Other _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip code _____

Email _____ Phone _____

Mail check or money order to:

ProNica, Inc.
130 19th Ave SE
St. Petersburg, FL 33705

Make secure online credit card donations:

www.ProNica.org

I would like to designate my gift:

- ☐ Where Most Needed
- ☐ Acahualt Women's Center
- ☐ Los Quinchos/Las Yahoskas
- ☐ Casa del Niño
- ☐ Casa Materna
- ☐ Libraries & Literacy
- ☐ Oficina de la Mujer (Rio Blanco Coop)
- ☐ Martin Centeno Community
- ☐ Other _____

I'd like to become a sustaining donor:

Thank you! Monthly gifts provide a predictable source of income to ProNica. To set up secure recurring donations, please visit: www.ProNica.org/donate/



PRONiCA

Saint Petersburg Meeting of the
Religious Society of Friends
130 Nineteenth Avenue Southeast
Saint Petersburg, Florida 33705-2810

Return Service Requested

Non-Profit Org.
US Postage
PAID
Permit No. 69
St. Petersburg, FL

Director Peter Baryshnikov
filming at Acahualinca. Read
full story inside this issue.

Casa Cuáquera

Contact us to make reservations at
Casa Cuáquera, ProNica's guest
house in Managua.

Email: managua@pronica.org
Phone: 011-505-2266-3261

Join the Friends Witness Tour 2015



December 2-12, 2015

Visit Casa del Niño, Casa
Materna Mary Ann Jackman,
a crater lagoon and more!

Reservations are required by
October 2nd

For More information, contact
us at info@pronica.org or
727-821-2428

Be a part of what Quakers are doing in Nicaragua!