

**GLOBAL FEMINISMS PROJECT
PODCAST SERIES:
CONTEXTUALIZING FEMINIST VOICES**

SITE: NICARAGUA

**Transcript of Shelly Grabe
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Intro: This podcast series, Contextualizing Feminist Voices, is designed to provide background information for people using the Global Feminisms Project website. The podcasts aim to provide users with a well-informed perspective on interesting aspects of the interviews from a particular country. For each episode one of the project staff interviews an expert on that country site.

Eimeel Castillo: Welcome to this episode of Contextualizing Feminist Voices. My name is Eimeel Castillo. In this episode, I am talking with University of California, Santa Cruz Professor Shelly Grabe, who will provide a perspective on the interviews from Nicaragua. Because we have limited time, we will get right to the point. What are one or two things that come up in the interviews that users should pay close attention to because those things are particularly important in Nicaragua's women's movement, scholarship, or activism.

Shelly Grabe: I think there are two important themes that come up in the Nicaragua interviews for interviewers, for students, teachers, researchers to pay attention to. And one of them is related to the emergence of rural feminism. In the 1980s throughout the world, the global economic policies had implications for women that either exacerbated or introduced several structural factors that led to increased gender inequities or marginalization for women. And one that was especially visible was in the area of property rights with pervasive gender inequities and rights being noticed and addressed as a structural problem in Nicaragua. And although at the time, in the mid 80s, many of the male-dominated socialist parties or labor unions recognized that this was a problem, and had the narrative that women deserve those rights: they weren't doing anything to actualize those rights. In the early 1990s, among peasant movements, several women leaders emerged, and they created organizations that were centered on women's rights with the strategic aim to bring value to women as agricultural producers, recognize their labor on the land, as well as to consider routes by which women could become landowners. They did this in the context of a women's social movement that recognized structural inequities and the consequences those held for women. The activist women were specifically trying to change those structural conditions in which women were living their lives, as a way for them to challenge traditional gender roles, and exercise agency in ways that they could confront subordination in their lives. One concrete example of this is that one of the things they demonstrated is that when women could come into land ownership it altered their status in the household. And as a result of that altered status many of those women reported fewer experiences with domestic violence from their male partners, so very concrete changes were being observed. The awareness around this, the mobilization around the issues in rural spaces, and the social changes and policy and legal changes that were enacted were part of this emergence in rural feminism. So I think that folks interested in learning more about rural feminism, in particular in the context of globalization could learn a great deal from reading the interviews in the Nicaragua site. The second main theme, I think, that is very well articulated in the Nicaragua sample is one that I would label transnational intersectionality. In the US, we tend to talk about intersectionality in what I think are relatively narrow terms by invoking social locations such as race, gender, sexual orientation, class. And we tend not to think about our social locations in a global perspective in the United States. The COVID pandemic was perhaps an opportunity for us

to do this differently and have an awareness of being global citizens, but it, it still seems that in the United States, we're hard pressed to do that. In contrast, many women from Nicaragua, fully understood their social location in these terms of intersections that involved global issues. And in fact, the testimonios or the interviews that were conducted in Nicaragua, reflected that activists recognized that women's human rights violations often came as a result of intersectional problems. And the intersections that they spoke of most frequently involved, of course abuses of patriarchal power, but they also included abuses in the context of globalization or capital or economic abuses, as well as the abuse of global powers, which could come in the form of an imposed war, or occupation in certain areas for resource extraction and those sorts of things.

EC: We have learned about some topics that would be illuminating about the women's movement in a particular setting do not get covered in interviews for a variety of reasons. Are there any topics that you would like to point out for users to notice that are actually missing from the interviews?

SG: Well, maybe the thing that is missing is more of an update. The interviews were conducted in 2011. So it's been 10 years, and the interviews were conducted months prior to the reelection of Daniel Ortega, the President. He prohibited any poll observers from coming into the country for that election, and then used the Supreme Court and the media to gain near control and prohibited any opposition for the 2016 election. By then many people in the country were exasperated and it led to mass protests, and in 2018 there were mass protests leading to the deaths of hundreds of people in the street, and hundreds of people being jailed. In addition, Ortega took many steps to further limit the press and opposition. And in the context of that time period I had published a book using the women's interviews from the Global Feminism's Project, and translated that material into Spanish so that it could be accessible to women in Nicaragua. And the presses that I had contacted let me know that it was too politically risky for them to actually print the material in the country. And they'd also suggested that Ortega had gone to such lengths to block the importation of paper for journalistic purposes so that these issues could not be printed and circulated. And in addition, many organizations that were active at the time of the interviews, non-governmental organizations or activist organizations, were taken over by the government. So many of the women that I was in contact with, either their organizations were dismantled, they left the country or otherwise became non communicative, so it's a very different setting than when those interviews were conducted 10 years ago. And, and then we layer on COVID, which was handled very poorly. I think it's not a stretch to say the country's been in crisis for a decade, and that there's not much promise that it's going to be turning quickly. For example, the Congress just passed a law that's basically banning any opposition from running against Ortega in the 2021 election, so he secured a decade of authoritarian rule, without much promise of it changing, so the situation since the time of the interviews has been crippling, and it's ongoing.

EC: Thank you, Shelley, this has been a pleasure.

Outro: Thank you for listening to this episode of Contextualizing Feminist Voices created by the Global Feminisms Project. The entire podcast team hopes it will help you understand

and enjoy the materials on the website. If you liked this episode, check out the other podcasts in this series, as well as materials about countries, teaching resources, and interviews.