

**GLOBAL FEMINISMS
COMPARATIVE CASE STUDIES OF
WOMEN'S AND GENDER ACTIVISM
AND SCHOLARSHIP**

SITE: NICARAGUA

Transcript of Dora María Téllez

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Dora María Téllez Argüello is a Nicaraguan historian, politician, and social rights activist. She was a prominent Sandinista guerrilla commander in the popular struggle against the Somoza military dictatorship in Nicaragua in the 1970s. She served as representative, vice president of the Council of State, and as Minister of Health during Nicaragua's revolutionary government (1979-1990). In 1995, she parted ways with the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) due to its authoritarian drift and co-founded the Sandinista Renovation Movement (MRS), now UNAMOS.

Téllez has since been a vocal opponent to the consolidation of a new dictatorship in Nicaragua led by President Daniel Ortega. She was imprisoned for twenty months, held in isolation, and total deprivation of rights for denouncing the authoritarian nature of the government and its human rights violations. In February 2023, she was banished and expatriated from Nicaragua to the United States as part of a group of 222 political prisoners who were also illegally stripped of their Nicaraguan nationality.

Her struggle for democracy, social justice, and defense of human rights has been internationally recognized. She has been awarded numerous accolades, including the 2022 René Cassin Prize in Human Rights awarded by the Government of the Basque Country, Spain.

Téllez has also developed an academic career as a historian. She is the author of books and academic publications, including *¡Muera La Gobierna!* (1999), which documents the internal colonization of indigenous lands by the Nicaraguan state in Matagalpa and Jinotega between 1820 and 1890. She was co-author of the monograph *El Café de Nicaragua* (2014) on the impact of the development of coffee production in Nicaragua in the 19th and 20th centuries. She has also published various essays on the challenges of democracy and democratic governance, citizen security and the criminal justice system, the role and evolution of social movements, the social and political exclusion of indigenous and other minoritized communities, and the evolution of Sandinismo.

Téllez was incorporated into Nicaragua's and Guatemala's Academies of Geography and History. She has also received two honorary doctorates from the University of Helsinki (2011) and from the Sorbonne-Nouvelle (2022). In the summer of 2023, she was a Visiting Research Scholar in the Program in Latin American Studies at Princeton University. Currently, she is a visiting professor and holds the Richard E. Greenleaf Distinguished Chair in Latin American Studies at Tulane University in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Keywords: Academia and Women's Studies, Activism During the COVID-19 Pandemic, Imprisonment, and Military Work in Nicaragua

Interviewer¹: Thank you so much, Dora María, for accepting to participate in the Global Feminisms Project. We will be speaking for about an hour about various topics. We will begin by talking about your life and how you got involved in the work you are doing now, your thoughts and points of view about your work in the context of the women’s movement and the connections that you see between your work and that of activists around you.

To begin, we would like to ask about your personal history. Tell us about your childhood, what brought you to where you are at this moment and what are the principal commitments in your life.

Dora María Téllez: I think that one does not have a predetermined path, but rather you choose it. There is a moment where you choose a path, and that path can be different from another and you could have chosen it based on your own antecedents.

I am from a middle-class family, relatively well-off. My mother was a very committed woman from a Christian point of view, with Christian values that were not common at that time, because the theme of Liberation Theology² hadn’t emerged yet, but she was still a traditional Catholic, but her point of departure was that her principal religious commitment had to be expressed to the people, in solidarity with people in worse conditions, poorer people, people who did not have access to education or who did not have access to a certain condition of life.

My father was more political. He had a political life until about the beginning of the 60s when he left politics because he weighed his options of continuing in politics or taking care of his children, he cared more about the condition of his children and withdrew completely. He had belonged to the Liberal Independent Party [*Partido Liberal Independiente*]³, that was let’s say the opposing liberalism to the reelection of Somoza García⁴, that emerged in

¹ The interviewer’s name has been redacted throughout this transcript for privacy purposes.

² Liberation Theology, a 1960s movement in Latin American Catholicism, emphasizes social justice and the emancipation of the oppressed. (“Liberation Theology.” Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberation_theology. Accessed August 9, 2024.)

³ The Independent Liberal Party (PLI) is a Nicaraguan political party that split from the Nationalist Liberal Party in 1944. It was pivotal in the 1990 elections, contributing to the defeat of the Sandinista regime. However, internal conflicts, including a 2016 leadership dispute, have weakened the party’s influence in recent elections.

(“Independent Liberal Party.” Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Independent_Liberal_Party_\(Nicaragua\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Independent_Liberal_Party_(Nicaragua)). Accessed August 9, 2024.)

⁴ Anastasio Somoza García ruled Nicaragua as a dictator from 1936 until his 1956 assassination, establishing a family dynasty that controlled the country for over 40 years. Backed by the U.S. Marine Corps, he rose to power as head of the National Guard and later became president. His rule was marked by authoritarianism and personal wealth accumulation, with his sons maintaining the family’s grip on power until 1979. (“Anastasio Somoza García.” Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anastasio_Somoza_García. Accessed August 9, 2024.)

opposition to the reelection of Somoza García, and from which came people like Rigoberto⁵ later on.

I remember episodes of persecution in my home. My father during the events of the execution of Somoza García by Rigoberto. Memories of having to leave the house quickly to go hide at my godmother's house, because they were coming to capture my father. After that he withdrew, but always continued talking to us about the political reality of the country.

He was a man that had his radio, he lived connected to Radio Havana⁶. He would listen to baseball, listen to the news on Radio Havana, the speeches of Fidel Castro⁷, and read, he was a great reader. He was a Sandinista⁸ in relation to Sandino⁹. My grandmother had been, they said, a coworker of Sandino's in that time period. Basically, we grew up in that environment. A mixed environment of the political path that my father took and the path of social commitment, taking as a point of departure her religion, that my mother practiced.

With that, both my brother and I, were in religious schools. In that time there were not mixed schools, I was in a school for girls, he was in a school for boys. My school was run by very conservative nuns, but you could still do any type of thing. That mix could take you in any direction.

I, early on in high school, started to get involved in two types of activities. One activity had to do with the changes that were happening in the Catholic church after the Second Vatican

⁵ Rigoberto López Pérez (1929–1956) was a Nicaraguan poet and composer who assassinated dictator Anastasio Somoza García, a pivotal act in the fight against oppression. ("Rigoberto López Pérez." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rigoberto_López_Pérez. Accessed August 9, 2024.)

⁶ Radio Havana Cuba (RHC) is Cuba's government-run international broadcaster, reaching global audiences via shortwave, satellite, and internet streaming. ("Radio Havana Cuba." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radio_Havana_Cuba. Accessed August 9, 2024.)

⁷ Fidel Castro (1926–2016) was a Cuban revolutionary who ruled from 1959 to 2008, transforming Cuba into a one-party communist state with strong Soviet ties. His leadership brought social reforms and global influence, but also human rights abuses and economic challenges. ("Fidel Castro." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fidel_Castro. Accessed August 9, 2024.)

⁸ The Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) is a Christian socialist political party in Nicaragua, named after Augusto César Sandino, the leader of the 1930s resistance against U.S. occupation. Party members are referred to as Sandinistas. ("Sandinista National Liberation Front." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sandinista_National_Liberation_Front#:~:text=The%20Sandinista%20National%20Liberation%20Front,in%20both%20English%20and%20Spanish.. Accessed August 9, 2024.)

⁹ Augusto César Sandino (1895–1934) was a Nicaraguan revolutionary who led a rebellion against U.S. occupation from 1927 to 1933, becoming a symbol of anti-imperialist resistance in Latin America. Assassinated in 1934 by Somoza's forces, his legacy later inspired the Sandinista movement that overthrew the Somoza regime in 1979. ("Augusto César Sandino." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Augusto_César_Sandino. Accessed August 9, 2024.)

Council¹⁰ and after the Episcopal Conference of bishops¹¹ in Medellín.¹² Basically, the Medellín conference emphasized that the church had to be a church committed to the poorest and that the church had to be the face of the community.

Before that, it was a church that was not very attractive to young people because there were the priests with their back turned to you at Mass¹³ and all the rituals were in Latin, and you didn't really know what they were saying. Even the songs were in Latin. The change that came from the Second Vatican Council was a really radical change, it started to make the Catholic Church more attractive, then around the country they developed some things, and they called them joint pastoral ministry [*pastorales de conjunto*].¹⁴

In Matagalpa¹⁵ they organize these ministries, and they choose a few groups of people as higher leaders from different generations. They invited me to come to these ministries. So, I start entering that vein of the model of the socially committed church, with a specific mission for the poor, that was still not Liberation Theology, but rather a strong discussion that came out of the conference at Medellín. Later it all developed into Liberation Theology.

Then, the other thing is that during high school I enter the student movement. It was a high school student movement, it was very belligerent, and in 1969 and 1970, especially in 1970, it produced a huge student rebellion that is not very well documented. Roughly 30-40,000 high school students paralyze all the institutions and high schools of the country practically. Along with that there is the taking over of temples, of churches asking for the liberation of political prisoners and various other demands as well.

This movement was a successful movement. The Somozas had to show the political prisoners and had to prosecute those who had delayed cases, they released those who had

¹⁰ The Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) modernized the Catholic Church by allowing Mass in local languages, emphasizing scripture, and promoting ecumenism, reshaping its global practices. ("Second Vatican Council." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Vatican_Council. Accessed August 9, 2024.)

¹¹ The 1968 Medellín Conference in Colombia adapted Vatican II's teachings for Latin America, emphasizing a "preferential option for the poor;" supporting Christian base communities, and urging the Church to address systemic poverty and oppression. ("Second Episcopal Conference of Latin America." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Episcopal_Conference_of_Latin_America#:~:text=The%20Medellin%20Conference%20in%201968,and%20propensity%20toward%20violent%20confrontation.. Accessed August 9, 2024.)

¹² Medellín, Colombia's second-largest city and the capital of Antioquia, is a key economic center in the Aburrá Valley. ("Medellín." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medellín>. Accessed August 9, 2024.)

¹³ Mass is the main Eucharistic service in Western Christianity, particularly in the Catholic Church, and also in some Lutheran and Anglican churches. ("Mass." Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mass_\(liturgy\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mass_(liturgy)). Accessed August 9, 2024.)

¹⁴ Pastoral de conjunto, common in Hispanic ministry in the U.S. and Latin America, refers to a collaborative approach to ministry, focusing on teamwork and shared responsibilities within the church. ("Pastoral de Conjunto: Some considerations toward a spirituality." Robert Dueweke. O.S.A. https://www.dueweke.net/uploads/6/8/1/2/6812583/pc_article_final.pdf. Accessed August 9, 2024.)

¹⁵ Matagalpa is a city in Nicaragua, the capital of Matagalpa Department, and the largest in the country's interior. ("Matagalpa." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matagalpa>. Accessed August 9, 2024.)

been found innocent in those cases and also set in motion a solution to a problem, a conflict with students they had at UCA [*Universidad Centroamericana de los Jesuitas*]¹⁶, between the Somoza rector and the student leadership of the university but this major mobilization of high school students, we are talking about young people of 13, 14, 15 years old, we all got involved.

Some in a major way, others in a minor way. I was involved in it as a student director in my high school. Then we organized the Association of High School Students of Matagalpa. That student rebellion¹⁷ is one of the most important mass movements there has been in the 20th century, and it remained hidden among all the discourse and lectures about the history of Nicaragua, from the perspective of the armed fight.

All those major episodes of civil struggle that are in a way hidden or simply discarded, outside of collective memory, which also makes it difficult in the current positioning, because the model of reading has been a model of reading that privileges this reading of the armed fight but there was also all that vein too.

There I have my first political experience, with repression, with mobilization, with the student organization, with collaboration from teachers' unions, collaboration from groups of nurses and that, who had also entered a strike and some connection with the people of Managua.¹⁸ Then I get to the end of high school, I mean, when I finish high school I have one track of student activism and political activism, and still from a certain perspective I have the Christian commitment, you know, they are converging.

At that point we arrive at the earthquake that takes place just when we finish high school.

Interviewer: What are the principal commitments of your life? You have already given us some background and context. Maybe now, what would you say you are committed to?

DMT: I feel that maybe deep down I have always taken on defending or promoting better conditions for people who are in worse conditions, people in marginal conditions, in

¹⁶ The Central American University (UCA), Nicaragua's first private university founded by Jesuits in 1960, was shut down and confiscated by the Ortega government on August 16, 2023, accused of supporting terrorism. It was replaced by the National University Casimiro Sotelo Montenegro. ("Universidad Centroamericana." Wikipedia. https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universidad_Centroamericana. Accessed August 9, 2024.)

¹⁷ The 1976 student strikes in Nicaragua, initially about school reforms, grew into a broader anti-Somoza movement, politicizing a generation and fueling nationwide resistance that led to the later revolution. ("¡A LA HUELGA! Secondary Students, School Strikes, and the Power of Educational Activism in 1970s Nicaragua." Claudia Rueda. *Cambridge University Press*. 2020. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/americas/article/la-huelga-secondary-students-school-strikes-and-the-power-of-educational-activism-in-1970s-nicaragua/A4AF4E0C7EA6204546C622DA765F73AB>. Accessed August 10, 2024.)

¹⁸ Managua is Nicaragua's capital and largest city. ("Managua." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Managua>. Accessed August 10, 2024.)

discriminatory conditions, who are in a condition of oppression, who are immersed in total poverty.

Nicaragua was a country that had an extreme, elevated rate of poverty. The level of education was very low. The level of illiteracy was so high, more than half of the population did not know how to read or write. The health system was limited to heads of departments, and it was almost running like a charity. The condition of the immense majority of the people was total precarity.

There was a small group that had most of the resources, an elite and a growing middle class, that was undoubtedly growing, since the time of the 60s but that had an enormous cap of major poverty. I am from Matagalpa. Matagalpa is a rural region, where contact with poor people is very frequent and common.

The other day I was remembering when we would go to the market with my mom and we would see the indigenous of Matagalpa, who would come to do their shopping at the market and they were speaking their language, but you can see them, unlike Managua, where you can be in a type of bubble, in Matagalpa your connection with workers, with farm workers, with poor farmers was much more common.

My mother cultivated friendships among poor and marginalized people. They were her friends, they would come to see each other and stay there together during the day and spend time together, then would do their errands in Matagalpa and then return to their homes in the mountains. That also helps contextualize another reality, the Nicaraguan reality, that was not what we saw in our school, it wasn't a school for poor children. It was a tuition school, relatively expensive, but where daughters of the local elites went in Matagalpa.

I feel that my essential commitment has always been to people in worse conditions, those who face discrimination, those on the margins. People that are marginalized because of economic, social, political or whatever ridiculous reason. Maybe that is why, or maybe being from Matagalpa, where you had this connection with the whole issue of the indigenous. I feel that has been a dominant theme.

The other dominant theme has to do with liberty, with democracy, in which I have evolved a lot in the sense of thinking and rethinking what has happened in the Nicaraguan political system that brought us to where we are, to have the results that we have. That is to say, where is the crux of our political conflict that makes us reproduce authoritarian models in a society that never seems to end up evolving to more democratic models?

And that time is not now, 2024 is not the best time in the world to propose democratic models, because authoritarian models are in style. Basically, those would be the two lines I feel are dominant for me.

Interviewer: What are the most significant achievements of your professional life, and also of your life in general?

DMT: I don't know, really. I feel that the most important thing is to try to keep who you are consequential in your thinking. In jail, I valued myself and finally said, "I will not betray who I am, I have not betrayed who I am, or I will make an effort not to betray who I am," I think that is for me a fundamental achievement. All the rest are accessories, they are professional achievements, or what do I know?

You do things, to do things, instead of "being," but in the end, life is about who you are, not just what you have done. If you "are not," you can't "do," sometimes you "do" and you "are not." That always comes to light and is not necessarily lasting nor is it necessarily a way to live. Ultimately, life is a temporal category, completely limited.

I feel that I didn't, at least how I saw myself in prison and I see myself now well, I see the young person I was, and I see myself now and I say, "I try, I make an effort not to betray who I am," because I think the worst that you could let happen to you is to get to the point decades later in your life, look back and think, "Hey, here are two completely different people, complete opposites. That younger person maybe was the opposite of who I am now."

I feel that I have a line of continuity, more mature now, with more experience, but there is a continuity. I would say that maybe that is the most important achievement. All the rest, like I tell you, are professional achievements and things like that are not as relevant. Your perspective and everything changes.

Interviewer: What types of activities or interests have you focused on lately and why? What have been your areas of interest, be it work, or activism, or research?

DMT: For me, 2006 was a turning point, when the Ortega Murillo¹⁹ regime came to power. It was a turning point because until then the country was navigating conflict and problematic things, but in a certain way the air could still circulate, I mean there were deficient conditions, but there was a debate about economic policy in a regime that was fairly obtuse, the government of president Bolaño²⁰, but air could circulate, you could have that debate.

¹⁹ The Ortega-Murillo regime in Nicaragua, led by President Daniel Ortega and Vice President Rosario Murillo, has ruled since 2007, shifting from early socialist ideals to authoritarianism. They have suppressed opposition, imprisoned rivals, and curtailed civil liberties, leading to significant political and social unrest. ("Daniel Ortega." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniel_Ortega; "Rosario Murillo." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosario_Murillo. Accessed August 10, 2024.)

²⁰ Enrique José Bolaños Geyer (1928–2021) was President of Nicaragua from 2002 to 2007, known for his anti-corruption efforts. He defeated Daniel Ortega in 2001 and co-founded the Alliance for the Republic after serving as Vice President under Arnoldo Alemán. ("Enrique Bolaños." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enrique_Bolaños. Accessed August 10, 2024.)

In 2006, those of us from the party, from *Unamos*²¹, clearly saw what was coming and we had to get in front of it. That caused me at a certain point to return, let's say, to much more intense political activity, that was getting more intense as the situation was getting worse because the big problem regarding the conditions we have in Nicaragua or that we have had and that we have, is confronting this type of authoritarian model is not what everyone wants to do, because it implies the risk of loss, because you have a family, because you could lose your property, because it could cause you harm.

As a party we had a commitment to face this, then of looking for, let's say, a model of oppositional unity that would allow us to confront all of this, incredibly difficult things. So as time has gone on, my political activity fighting the dictatorship has been consuming me. More and more strong, active politics, of mobilization or organization to fight against the dictatorship and moreover speaking, saying what people don't always want to say or what they can't say.

So that has made me leave everything else to the side, various other things, because that takes up a lot of time, a lot of energy and I couldn't work anymore. The government has issued prohibitions all over, in all the institutions, in all the organizations, in all the embassies, so that they will not hire me to do any type of consultation, which is what I was doing in public policy.

So much so that very early on, in 2008, I already had nothing to do, I couldn't even work. That made me dedicate a lot more time to political activity, which is what has taken up most of my time, in reality, as it got worse and worse because the situation has gotten worse. I completed a hunger strike in 2008 and that had a physical cost, a rehabilitation cost, and the cost of confrontation with the regime, until finally we ended up arrested.

Interviewer: Related to your work or career working with organizations, in political parties, was it difficult for you as a woman? Did you observe or experience any prejudice, or some type of discrimination by colleagues or the community?

DMT: There is always a level, women always have a position that from the beginning you have to take that on, you will have discriminatory conditions. To say it another way, more difficult, I mean, it is more difficult for us, there are bigger obstacles that we have than men normally. That is the reality. My experience in the war there was, not exactly implicit, expressed discrimination, but there was always the tendency that women would remain reduced to traditional offices of women: the kitchen, service.

Interviewer: Domestic work.

²¹ UNAMOS, formerly the Sandinista Renovation Movement (MRS), is a Nicaraguan political party founded in 1995 by ex-Sandinista leaders opposing Daniel Ortega. (Sandinista Renovation Movement." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sandinista_Renovation_Movement. Accessed August 10, 2024.)

DMT: Domestic work for the undercover men or for the fighting men, but I always resisted that.

Interviewer: What strategies did you use to resist that?

DMT: To be demanding that I wanted to fight, “No, I will not stay here. I want to fight,” but you have to be pushing and pushing constantly that you want to fight, that I want to fight, because if not, if you give a little, you will only make it so far.

That is how it worked for me, but that also means that it takes a lot of effort, that I had to make an effort to carry loads, you have to make the effort to walk far enough, you have to make an effort in every way not to have any disadvantage when it comes to comparison between my physical condition versus the physical condition of the men. That always will demand a major effort.

Meanwhile in politics, politics is mainly masculine, mainly masculine and it was even more than it is now. I was pretty young, in reality, very young then, there is always a tendency to marginalize opinions, values and that, but then after the war I had a big advantage, I had a distinguished role as a commander of the warfront, so I had a much stronger position, but not invulnerable. Much stronger by society’s terms.

When they named me Minister of Health, I was 30 years old. The first commentary in the press was that I arrived with a broom, it was a preconceived thing. There always was, “Who is this person? They are not a doctor,” “Yes, well I studied medicine, but I was not a doctor.” I mean, everyone from my generation had graduated, had been doing their specialty. “She is not an administrator either,” but these are things you have to be fighting against every day.

I mean, the issue of facing discrimination I think is something you have to be working on every day. There is a moment when it gets more difficult. Within the Sandinista Front²² the issue became a big problem, to begin with, the direction had been configured by nine men. Toward that direction we conceded enormous power in favor of a political model of centralization within the party, unlike what had been happening before during the undercover phase.

That also made a big mark in them applying criteria from a chauvinist perspective, about conditions, about work, about what we could do. You know, if you analyze the appointments in the Sandinista government you will realize that men are in the arenas of men and women in the arenas of women. Women are in health, social wellbeing, in the things that have to do

²² The Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) is a Christian socialist party in Nicaragua that led the 1979 revolution and ruled until 1990. They returned to power in 2006 under Daniel Ortega, facing criticism for human rights abuses and controversial re-elections, but remain the country's leading party. (“Sandinista National Liberation Front.” Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sandinista_National_Liberation_Front. Accessed August 10, 2024.)

with kids or education. Men are involved with things that have to do with the economy, with construction, with engineering.

Interviewer: Defense.

DMT: With defense, right? They removed me from the army quickly, I was the commander of the Second Military Region after the triumph of the Revolution²³ until the end of '79.

Interviewer: What was the reasoning?

DMT: There was none!, that we needed to be in Managua, the political work of Managua. Basically, in the background there was a perspective of organizing a regular completely masculine army, which was traditional in those times. You know, then, in the following decades you were seeing regular armies in all the world having more distinguished participation from women. Currently, the commander of the Southern Command²⁴ is a woman, she is the commander of the Southern Command, but it was not the norm then.

I think this commander of the Southern Command is the first women to exercise command of the Southern Command in the United States. The first, but it wasn't common. Of course, if I had remained in that career within the army, I would have been able to have the option to be the Commander of the Army, but was that model ready? Probably not, so I left and they sent me to the political organization in Managua. A lot of fun.

I went through a process of deprogramming because I was used to a life of disciplinary regimen and politics is pretty relaxed. So, I went along adapting, I started organizing myself to go to talk to people I got along with. Within the army there remained a few women who were in lower positions, who weren't as in the way. Later on, the highest position a woman advanced to was colonel, not one arrived to general.

You were seeing a pretty masculine perspective. Then later the war against the Contra²⁵ starts, the masculine perspective got stronger because war is let's say pretty acutely chauvinist. Modern war less so, because in modern war you can be sitting there and leave

²³ The Nicaraguan Revolution began in the 1960s against the Somoza dictatorship, leading to its overthrow in 1978-79. The subsequent Contra War, driven by Cold War tensions, devastated Nicaragua until a peace process in 1988, with anti-Sandinista parties winning the 1990 elections, ending the revolution. ("Nicaraguan Revolution."

Wikipedia.[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicaraguan_Revolution#:~:text=The%20Nicaraguan%20Revolutio n%20\(Spanish%3A%20Revoluci3n,Contras%20from%201981%20to%201990](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicaraguan_Revolution#:~:text=The%20Nicaraguan%20Revolutio n%20(Spanish%3A%20Revoluci3n,Contras%20from%201981%20to%201990). Accessed August 10, 2024.)

²⁴ General Laura J. Richardson is the 32nd and first female Commander of U.S. Southern Command, overseeing military operations in Latin America and the Caribbean. ("Bio Article View." SOUTHCOM. <https://www.southcom.mil/About/Leadership/Bio-Article-View/Article/2821915/gen-laura-j-richardson/>. Accessed August 10, 2024.

²⁵ The Contras were U.S.-backed rebels who fought the Marxist Sandinista government in Nicaragua from 1979 to 1990. Despite a U.S. aid ban, support continued covertly and what unfurled was later referred to as the Iran-Contra affair. ("Contras." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Contras>. Accessed August 10, 2024.)

after 2:00pm, to go deploy some drones from where you are to any part of the world. As in, it doesn't require—

Interviewer: It has become more impersonal.

DMT: Completely! More than impersonal, technological! You don't even move. You don't need strength; you don't even need much resistance. You need some training.

Interviewer: Technological knowledge.

DMT: Basics, technological skills. War, the differentiation between men and women that had been based on strength and resistance, what characterizes a soldier, making them do difficult exercises, I don't know what, that differentiation has been lessening, because of technology. You do not need a soldier necessarily, but rather there is more technology of all types.

In the army there was a resistance, and it was also in the Sandinista Front, like I tell you, the model of decisions about who could occupy what positions. There were not women in the Ministry of Agricultural Development, and Agrarian Reform²⁶, not even as a minister. There were some as director, maybe, of agrarian reform, in some place—

Interviewer: In a small position.

DMT: --but as a minister, no, or maybe as a director of some department, but not as a minister. Then appeared a woman chief of police, but then that completely lost relevance. That is to say there was pretty established model that had a certain change, had a certain ventilation, had differences compared to the previous, but the questioning of a chauvinist society, that was not the issue at hand for the Sandinistas, it came up as an issue, all the issues of positioning regarding women.

The most interesting thing is that there is a positioning when it comes to women. What that tells you is that there was a problem that somebody brought up from the outside, because there was an early dynamic of movements that later became the feminist movement, debating about all these things, about issues of abortion, about issues of violence, about sexual and reproductive rights, that were not established as such.

But, yeah, there are many barriers, I mean, wherever you go there are barriers, right? Then in political life there are the barriers from men that want to treat you like you are in a subordinate role. The other day I was telling some women, I don't know if it was you, that in

²⁶ Agrarian reform in Sandinista-era Nicaragua aimed to redistribute land to support socialism but often resulted in beneficiaries embracing capitalism. The Los Patios project improved economic conditions but led participants to favor capitalist policies, rather than fostering socialist ideals. ("Back to the Land: The Political Dilemmas of Agrarian Reform in Nicaragua." Laura J. Enriquez, Marlen I. Llanes. *Social Problems*. 1993. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3096925>. Accessed August 10, 2024.)

a meeting of politicians I was in, there were maybe two women, there was an old politician there that told me, not that old, but every time he spoke, he would say, “Look, daughter. See here, daughter.”

Until I got more and more furious. I told him, “Look, I am not your daughter. My name is Dora María Téllez, you will call me Dora María. I am not your daughter.” The topic ended immediately, but you always have that condescending attitude, of seeing you as less, of seeing you as a subordinate, of seeing you as marginal, you have to be continually fighting against that. That model of society that there is now and then, obviously, it was there in the time of the revolution, it has been there since then and still is in current politics.

I mean, that is not something that can change easily, society needs a profound and twofold critique. First, of our position as women and the other of the positioning of women. What has changed is legislation about paternity, about kids, about marriage. Legislation about violence, you saw how that ended up, right?

Interviewer: The 779 Law?²⁷

DMT: Yes, it ended up without any teeth, they removed the fangs, the molars, the teeth, it ended up not being helpful at all and submitted to a model of mediation that is completely nefarious.

Interviewer: Yes, it is a model that reinforces the idea of family unity, of sacrifice for family unity.

DMT: Of sacrifice by the woman.

Interviewer: Of the woman’s sacrifice. Exactly.

DMT: The sacrifice of the woman. Put up with it, put up with it, put up with it, if they hit you, put up with it, if he asks for forgiveness, forgive him, until they kill you, because that is the story, they end up killing women. I mean, once violence is unleashed in a relationship, there is no way out, there is no solution. That is a strong current of discrimination that one has to navigate.

Interviewer: These experiences of discrimination, you have mentioned, had a cost, we could say physically. That is, for example, you were saying how you needed to carry something very heavy and that was the strategy of resistance. I was wondering,

²⁷ Law 779, enacted in Nicaragua in 2012, offers vital protections for women against violence but faces criticism for allegedly disrupting family unity. Implementation is hampered by limited resources and societal stigma, prompting activists to urge stronger government support for the law. (“Law 779: Addressing Violence against Women in Nicaragua.” Christina Sudduth, MaraD’Amico. *The Arkansas Journal of Social Change and Public Service*. 2014. <https://ualr.edu/socialchange/2014/02/16/law-779-addressing-violence-against-women-in-nicaragua/>. Accessed August 11, 2024.)

what other costs were there to have to be always fighting, for example, so that you would not be considered in a position of subordination.

Independently of a woman being in a position where she could make decisions, of decision-making, because, for example, you have spoken about the fact that there was feminine representation in positions of the government, but at the same time, there was a glass ceiling that prevented a woman to go further, there were some established limits that no one spoke of. I was wondering, what would you say are other costs that someone has to endure to be constantly fighting?

DMT: This has major emotional costs. Look, between 1990 and 1995 when there was the First Congress of the Front,²⁸ part of the democratization movement started to demand to integrate a woman into the national direction. That demand came with a name, which was mine. In reality, I had not started the campaign, and I wasn't behind it. I, it even surprised me, but the campaign got stronger.

Then came a violent reaction, really violent. That is to say, there was a brutal campaign against me, reactionary. Congress person by congress person. I mean, when I tell you it was brutal, they were using anything, saying that maybe I was an agent of the CIA²⁹, or I was someone from the International Social Democracy³⁰, that I was a lesbian, or that I was suspected of that, I mean they threw out absolutely everything, congress person by congress person. They shut down, the Direction shut itself down in winter, the employees, I don't know how many, finally they made a concession to diversify the Direction, but with whom? With two men, Sergio Ramírez³¹ and René Núñez³², which wasn't diversifying anything! One of them came to me and said, "How old are you?", "35," "You are so young! Stay calm, don't worry. You have time." He was right, but he wasn't right. They come to say

²⁸ The First Congress for the Sandinista National Liberation Front took place in Managua. It was the party's National Convention in which all members gathered to discuss and elect new party representatives.

²⁹ The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) is a U.S. civilian agency focused on gathering and analyzing national security information, primarily through human intelligence. ("Central Intelligence Agency." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_Intelligence_Agency. Accessed August 10, 2024.)

³⁰ Dora María refers here to the Socialist International, a worldwide organization of political parties and labor organizations seeking to establish democratic socialism. ("Socialist International" Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socialist_International. Accessed October 13, 2024)

³¹ Sergio Ramírez Mercado, a renowned Nicaraguan writer and former vice president (1985-1990), was a key figure in the 1979 revolution. He later became a critic of the government, leading to his exile in 2021 and loss of nationality in 2023. ("Sergio Ramírez." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sergio_Ramírez. Accessed August 10, 2024.)

³² René Núñez Téllez (1946-2016) was a Nicaraguan politician and Sandinista revolutionary who served as National Assembly President from 2005 and then from 2007 until his death. A key figure in the Sandinista movement, he was imprisoned for guerrilla activities before holding significant government roles after the 1979 revolution. ("René Núñez Téllez." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/René_Núñez_Téllez. Accessed August 10, 2024.)

that to console you, that it was only reasonable, but it wasn't reasonable. They sealed your fate.

In the next congress that they had to create years later, there was no way to keep it closed off anymore. But they created a model that opened up congress in such a way that the Direction would lose its pull, right?

Interviewer: Right. As long as they could avoid a woman entering.

DMT: You opened the structure in such a way that the direction would lose its pull. I entered, Mónica³³ entered, Mirna Cunningham³⁴ entered and a bunch of other people, but it was designed that we wouldn't have the power that they had before and so of course, Daniel started the process of authoritarian concentration of power within the Sandinista Front quickly, trying to marginalize towards one direction that was noticeably weaker, that he thought he could marginalize easier than the previous one, which he couldn't marginalize so easily.

So then that war started, or rather, that war continued. It is a mechanism, how can I put it, the emotional costs are high. I started to get death threats at my house, because of an internal political debate, or even people would call me on the phone, every day on my phone to threaten me with setting a bomb on me. I decided to set up an answering machine, because nobody will threaten an answering machine, it's not as exciting! [laughs]

Interviewer: You get tired of that fast.

DMT: It is not as fun, the fun comes from talking to someone and threatening them, but when you have an answering machine, it is not as fun. They stopped threatening me! [laughs] But, what can I say, yes, the emotional costs, maybe, are the worst, because at the end of the day you start leaving behind pieces of yourself, you tear off pieces of yourself or others tear them off you. You try to reconstruct yourself in a situation, a dynamic that is extremely costly, let's say, emotionally, with a very high cost, and with deep fractures.

At the end of it all, we end up breaking up the Sandinista Front and we went another way. All that was also fracture after fracture, I mean, the emotional costs of staying on your path are always high. That is, one has to know that the only way not to pay the highest price is to go along being comfortable in life.

³³ Mónica Baltodano was a commander in the Sandinista National Liberation Front for several decades. As the group took an authoritarian turn, she left to join the Sandinista Renovation Movement. ("Mónica Baltodano." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M%C3%B3nica_Baltodano. Accessed 4 October 2024.)

³⁴ Myrna Kay Cunningham Kain is a Nicaraguan Miskito feminist and indigenous rights activist. She has chaired the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, led the Association for Women's Rights in Development, and currently heads the Center for Autonomy and Development of Indigenous People. ("Myrna Cunningham." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Myrna_Cunningham. Accessed August 10, 2024.)

Interviewer: Or not to do anything, stay where you are.

DMT: Stay where you are or go along with the current and there you go, but all the rest has a high cost, yes.

Interviewer: What does feminism mean to you, Dora María? How would you define it? What has it meant for your work?

DMT: For me, feminism is an attitude towards life, towards the system, towards political reality, social economics. It is a perspective. Now, there are many types of feminism, right? Mine, is my own, it is personal. I have never gotten involved in any specific movement organically and, very few times have I defined myself as feminist.

I am a feminist, but it is not my principal definition, because one of my biggest problems in countries like Nicaragua is that when you define yourself, people start to think of what they have in their head, not necessarily what you really are, but rather the prejudice they have in their mind.

Interviewer: The word feminist has a—

DMT: It is already associated with a prejudice! With these women who do not want men, or I don't know what else, or whatever. That is something to do with being behind culturally. I define myself very little as a feminist and I see it as a perspective towards life. I think it is a political perspective of systemic focus that appreciates that society is constructed in certain molds. Sometimes there are extremist positions, sometimes less so.

The way I apply it-- because I think that one of the biggest problems that we have as women is how to position ourselves as women, integrally speaking, because what happens is that they teach us that we are surrogates, so we internalize that surrogacy, right?

Feminism, I feel makes you reposition yourself, stand on your own two feet facing the world, facing others, setting limits. I think that is very important to notice things that maybe you didn't notice, that are slight, models of very slight discrimination that are so incorporated into the life of society that they are not visible. One might even have them so incorporated into our lives that they are not visible to us.

Interviewer: Very subtle.

DMT: Yes, they are very subtle. I think that the feminist perspective helps you to get your feet set, it also helps to see society in another way and notice the conditions we have as women, but moreover, that women have in certain points, because it is not the same for a woman who has a higher economic and social condition of power, compared to an indigenous woman. They are not even close, right?! Not even close, that is to say, an indigenous woman has an enormous amount of discrimination, layers and layers. Yes.

Interviewer: We would like to know, what has your work experience been like since the last interview we had, since 2011? What have been the issues or arenas that you have focused on? And to hear, what is your current work? What are you doing now? What are your perspectives about the future of your work?

DMT: In 2011 nobody would give me work, [Interviewer]. Fear, first of all, the prohibition of the regime and then fear of organizations that put my name on a contract and that contract they saw as an audit. That got worse quickly. I don't like to say it much, but it is the truth. Finally, I was left without any option for work. The Central American Memory project³⁵ had finished, all that was over.

Interviewer: The Academic Link.³⁶

DMT: Yes, I don't remember what year it was that it ended, but that had already finished.

Interviewer: Like in 2012, 2013. Yes.

DMT: That was the last one, Academic Link and Memory which was wonderful, that was a great project.

Interviewer: With FLACSO³⁷ Guatemala.

Dora: With FLACSO Guatemala and Costa Rica, which was a good project, because it had the theme of historical memory which is important. It is a shame that now all that has totally collapsed, but the rest of the public policy consultation, which is now, yes, it is dead. The work that I did also with children's organizations for educational material, health, there is none of that left.

Once we finished the Academic Link and Central American Memory, it was a great experience for me, really, Central American Memory, I loved that project because it was a project about memory, you know, converting historical information into accessible information for people in any part of the country, for kids, young people or adults in any

³⁵ The Central American Memory Project (Memoria Centroamericana) was a digitization project with headquarters at the Central American University (UCA) in Managua and sponsored by the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences in Guatemala (FLACSO-Guatemala). Its goal was to digitally preserve and provide free access to historical sources for high school and university students, as well as their instructors. Dora María Téllez was its executive director until early 2013 when the project ended due to a lack of funds.

³⁶ Academic Link (Enlace Académico) was a news portal supported by the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO-Guatemala) in the early 2010s that promoted professionalization opportunities, calls for research funding, and events among social scientists in the region. There were representatives in each Central American country, and Dora María Téllez was Nicaragua's. In 2013, the project ended due to lack of funds.

³⁷ The Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO), founded in 1957 and headquartered in Costa Rica, is a graduate university focused on social sciences in Latin America. Josette Altmann Borbón has been Secretary General since 2016. ("Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latin_American_Faculty_of_Social_Sciences. Accessed August 11, 2024.)

part of Nicaragua, using internet resources, which at that time was a lot less common and now they are completely universal things.

That continues to be a current project, how to make a historical base of documentation available for young people in Nicaragua to have at their fingertips, that is exciting, that is visually appealing, that can be interactive, I don't know.

Interviewer: Easy to—

DMT: Easy to access. Now there are so many technological mechanisms to make some type of historical memory something exciting and attention-grabbing. That type of project always stays in my head, but then I didn't have any work, so, the only thing I dedicated myself to was politics, writing and working on my farm. Reading a bit and working on my farm. Basically, politics was dominating everything because it was an all-encompassing fight against the Canal³⁸ and that also required a lot of energy.

First, people didn't understand what the Canal was. It looked like a good idea, then having to convince and play an important role in the women's movement, going to talk with women in rural areas, explaining to them what the law was, what the risks were, what type of threats it carried, untangling all the angles of the law of Canal concession. It required a lot of work, to organize, establish contacts. All that required a lot of time.

Then we fell in 2018, which was a huge maelstrom. In 2018, I ended up going underground, again in December, in November or October, really, when they captured Ana Margarita³⁹, I think it was October 13th, so I had to go underground again because they started to have drones above my house and sitting patrol cars. I had to leave and didn't return until May of 2019.

³⁸ The Canal Project (Proyecto canalero) refers to President Daniel Ortega's initiative to build an interoceanic canal connecting Nicaragua's Caribbean Coast with the Pacific. In 2013, he signed an onerous agreement with a Chinese firm (HKND), which granted the company a 50-year right to build the canal and other privileges for exploiting resources and land. Compromising Nicaragua's sovereignty with a private-run enterprise that would generate environmental damages alongside the seizure of communal lands, some of which were under the jurisdiction of indigenous communities, Ortega manipulated the National Assembly to get approval of the agreement. A broad oppositional movement composed of rural farmers at risk of displacement, indigenous communities, lawyers, environmentalists, and politicians formed the Anti-Canal Movement. They held teach-ins to inform the citizenry of the devastating social and ecological consequences and held weekly protests to oppose the project, among other actions. In 2024, after more than ten years of publicity without any work carried out, Nicaragua canceled the concession granted to HKND. ("The rival to the Panama Canal that was never built." BBC. <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20230825-the-rival-to-the-panama-canal-that-was-never-built>. Accessed October 13, 2024; "Nicaragua cancels Chinese plan for controversial canal 10 years on." <https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/may/08/nicaragua-cancel-china-canal>. Accessed October 13, 2024)

³⁹ Ana Margarita Vijil is a Nicaraguan lawyer, politician, and human rights activist. She is also an interviewee for the Global Feminisms Project.

Being there basically jailed, going out very little and only working on politics, because we were already in a completely critical situation until 2021 when they captured us.

Interviewer: Your current work, could you tell us a little about what you are doing?

DMT: Now, I am basically in the University of Tulane⁴⁰, finishing a special professorship in which they allowed me to write. Basically, I am doing research into the archives that Tulane has. I had already researched in the Princeton⁴¹ archives, the archive of Sergio Ramírez⁴² is complete there and it is wonderful.

That archive is so good, the documentation is so well-conserved, well-organized, the Archive of the Chamorro Barrios⁴³ is pretty well-organized, that the Chamorro family just gave to Tulane, a year ago, that archive is recent, they are cataloguing it and it has an enormous amount of very important documentation. I am also looking at that archive. Now I have to do more intensive work in the next few months and writing.

I am writing my memoirs, a reflection of my life, but basically, a reflection about the country, apart from a telling of my life, with some choices that are choices that I thought of in jail like choices to write some memories, such as putting in a lot of emotion and talking about things that I have never talked about.

I said, fine, “We will talk about those themes and I will touch on them, because I think they are important, and they also have to do with the Nicaraguan society,” and all that. Also sort of constructing an intergenerational tale that connects Nicaraguan political reality, what happened with my grandfather, with the other ones, with those before? What were the lives of those generations like, finally, did they always end up intersecting with this Nicaraguan political reality that is so complex?

⁴⁰ Tulane University, a private research institution in New Orleans founded in 1834, is known for its historic law and medical schools and high research activity. (“Tulane University.” Wikipedia.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tulane_University. Accessed August 11, 2024.)

⁴¹ Princeton University, an Ivy League school founded in 1746 in New Jersey, is the fourth-oldest U.S. university and is known for its strong research focus and extensive endowment. (“Princeton University.” Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Princeton_University. Accessed August 11, 2024.)

⁴² The Sergio Ramírez Papers at Princeton University Library document the literary and political life of the Nicaraguan writer and former Vice President. The archive includes manuscripts, correspondence, and documents from his role in the Sandinista Revolution. Ramírez, now a Visiting Professor at Princeton, is a key critic of the Ortega regime. (“Sergio Ramírez at Princeton.” Latin American Collections. <https://latinamericana.princeton.edu/sergio-ramirez-at-princeton/>. Accessed August 11, 2024.)

⁴³ The Chamorro Barrios Family Papers at Tulane University's Latin American Library document the influential Nicaraguan family's impact from 1767 to 1997. The collection includes papers from key figures like Pedro Joaquín Chamorro and Violeta Chamorro, covering their roles in Nicaraguan politics and media. (“The Latin American Library Acquires Chamorro-Barrios Family Papers.” Tulane University Libraries. <https://library.tulane.edu/news/latin-american-library-acquires-chamorro-barrios-family-papers>. Accessed August 11, 2024.)

How the civil war continues sweeping up generation after generation, it takes possession of this generation sweeping it up, because the conflict has not been resolved and then the next generation gets swept up and has to act on extremely high costs. That is the project I have. I have two other projects, one was before jail, which is a memorial.

One of my points is that the cycle of civil war has to do with a certain way that there are cycles of forgetting, that there is a pattern of forgetting. You cannot know in detail who the people were who they killed in the rebellion of April 1954⁴⁴, we do not know who the dead are from the 22nd of January⁴⁵, there are no lists of the dead.

Interviewer: I think the names are still—

[cross conversation]

DMT: There is no list! The names? They are not anywhere. The dead of the revolution were some tiny monuments in the street, those have been erased, they get rid of them or they take them down, they are being lost. Some accounts of the dead of the revolution reconstructed by people in the Front are misrepresented, contradictory, lost, have false information, because it is like an advertising machine that doesn't care about detail and precision.

Interviewer: A cut here, and paste.

DMT: Exactly! It is a whole messy mix, they mix up one person with another, they mix in people from places they never were—

Interviewer: Anachronism.⁴⁶

DMT: It is outrageous! Then you have all the fallen soldiers, those that have disappeared almost completely.

Maybe the Nicaraguan Star [*La Estrella de Nicaragua*]⁴⁷, which is a completely Somozan newspaper, suddenly comes out with, "Such and such sergeant died," "The head of I don't

⁴⁴ The April 4, 1954 rebellion in Nicaragua was a failed attempt to overthrow the Somoza dictatorship. The captured conspirators were tortured, killed, and secretly buried. ("Monument to the Heroes of April 4, 1954." HMdb.org. <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=93464>. Accessed August 11, 2024.)

⁴⁵ On January 22, 1967, the Nicaraguan National Guard violently suppressed an anti-Somocista protest in Managua, killing dozens to hundreds of demonstrators. This brutal crackdown intensified resistance against the Somoza dictatorship, fueling the revolutionary movement. ("To Lead as Equals: Rural Protest and Political Consciousness in Chinadega, Nicaragua, 1912-1979." Jeffrey L. Gould. UNC Press Books. 1990. <https://books.google.com/books?id=pZFtARmSY6kC&pg=PA271#v=onepage&q&f=false>. Accessed August 11, 2024.)

⁴⁶ An anachronism is a time mismatch where something is placed in the wrong historical period. ("Anachronism." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anachronism>. Accessed August 11, 2024.)

⁴⁷ La Estrella de Nicaragua, founded in Miami in 1986, became a vital platform for Nicaraguan political discourse, covering key events like the Somoza dictatorship. It influenced public opinion among the

know what died,” “Some colonel died,” those don’t interest me so much, but what interests me are the soldiers that died in the war, because at the end of the day, those have been totally disappeared, that is a memory that is completely gone and the families, they can barely make any claim. There had been some thought about making a memorial, but it is a super complicated design.

Maybe with more technological mechanisms, now it could be easier. A memorial that could recover the information about the dead from the wars in Nicaragua, all of them! Of all the memory that exists, of what do I know, of San Jacinto⁴⁸ or wherever and that it be—

Interviewer: The wars during the time of Zelaya.⁴⁹

DMT: All of them! The period of Sandino, all of them, to be able to recover information from people, photographs, those who died in the Battle of Ocotal⁵⁰ or those who died in any battle, those who died in another battle, that maybe the families know, maybe they have that information, maybe they have the data, maybe they have photos, to reconstruct and make this memorial of wars.

“The Civil War of this time,” “The war of this other time,” or “The Campaign of Zeledón against the United States [*gringos*].” Who died in that campaign besides Zeledón? ⁵¹ You have no idea about the rest, but to help reconstruct what has been the revolution.

Interviewer: The Battle of Coyotepe⁵², right?

DMT: El Coyotepe, after the Revolution. Who were they all?, because there is not a whole list, there isn’t one of the soldiers either. If I want to know who were the guards we killed in

Nicaraguan diaspora and the broader political landscape. (“Contact Us.” La Estrella de Nicaragua. <https://estrelladenicaragua.net>. Accessed August 12, 2024.)

⁴⁸ The Battle of San Jacinto on September 14, 1856, was an armed conflict fought between members of the Legitimist Septentrion Army and Nicaraguan filibusters led by American William Walker. The date is now celebrated as a national holiday to celebrate the victory of the Legitimist Septentrion Army with the help of the Matagalpa people. (“Battle of San Jacinto.” Wikipedia.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_San_Jacinto_\(1856\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_San_Jacinto_(1856)). Accessed August 12, 2024.)

⁴⁹ José Santos Zelaya López, President of Nicaragua from 1893 to 1909, implemented liberal reforms and modernized the country. His presidency ended when he was overthrown by a U.S.-backed rebellion, significantly increasing U.S. influence in Nicaraguan politics. (“José Santos Zelaya.” Wikipedia.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/José_Santos_Zelaya. Accessed August 12, 2024.)

⁵⁰ In July 1927, during the U.S. occupation of Nicaragua, Sandino’s rebels attacked Ocotal but were repelled by U.S. Marines and Nicaraguan National Guards, suffering heavy losses. (“Battle of Ocotal.” Wikipedia.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Ocotal. Accessed August 12, 2024.)

⁵¹ Benjamín Francisco Zeledón Rodríguez (1879–1912) was a Nicaraguan lawyer, politician, and soldier, honored as a “National Hero of Nicaragua” for his patriotism and military service. (“⁵¹ Benjamín Zeledón.” Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benjamín_Zeledón. Accessed August 12, 2024.)

⁵² The Battle of Coyotepe Hill in 1912 was a key conflict during the U.S. occupation of Nicaragua, where General Luis Mena’s forces rebelled against President Adolfo Díaz. The battle centered on the strategic Coyotepe fortress, crucial in quelling the rebellion. (“Battle of Coyotepe Hill.” Wikipedia.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Coyotepe_Hill. Accessed August 12, 2024.)

the Palace, who knows? Seems like I have that one recorded somewhere, that someone told me about one time, or maybe “my dad,” or maybe “my uncle,” those types of things.

I wanted to make a memorial, basically with the idea that we could see it as a whole. There are so many, thousands and thousands. That would serve as a counting, also, as a statistic, but also to see a bit, I mean, damn, that happened.

Interviewer: Like a reflection of the great magnitude.

DMT: That could induce a reflection, because of course, if you can't see them—What one doesn't see, doesn't exist and what you don't name, doesn't exist so, this doesn't exist, there are some of us who don't exist. Now, with the Sandinistas, anti-Sandinista polarization stimulated by the Ortegas, in that polarization the fallen of the Revolution do not exist, they have already stopped existing. I mean, there are people who talk badly about Casimiro Sotelo.⁵³ Casimiro was a guy—It has to do with using Casimiro Sotelo's last name at UCA. So, all that changes if there is a perversion.

Interviewer: It all gets mixed up.

DMT: Yes, a perversion is what there is. There is a perversion of memory, of history, all of that, of the dead.

Interviewer: And the other project?

DMT: The other is for women, that I want to do—If it was physical, it would be amazing, but we don't have a way to do it physically, we have to do it virtually. It is like a web page where there are, I don't know, some 100, 200 relevant women from Nicaragua's history, because we return to the point, the theme of visibility, that is, if they are not made visible, they do not exist.

It could be the role they played in science or in—For example, this woman who studies the Nicaraguan language, I just forgot her name, this woman is incredible, an academic of the highest category, she has done a tremendous work of recuperation of the structure of the Nicaraguan language, of studies. She has a whole bible!, but it's been ignored. It is just there, ignored.

⁵³ Casimiro Sotelo, a Nicaraguan lawyer and soldier, was executed by the Somoza regime's National Guard in 1967, falsely accused of a Sandinista crime. Posthumously recognized as a "National Hero," his death symbolizes Somoza's repression. ("Nicaragua Investigates." <https://nicaraguainvestiga.com/memoria/129148-muerte-casimiro-sotelo-culpa-ortega/>. Accessed August 12, 2024.)

Then there are Rafaela Herrera⁵⁴ and Doña Paula, maybe people don't even know who Doña Paula is, who think she hasn't done anything major, but these are all the women who fought for women's right to vote, from different parties—

Interviewer: Yes, the suffragists.⁵⁵

DMT: The suffragists from different political parties. They are also in some books, but not necessarily visible, you don't even see their faces and I think that now the graphic aspect is fundamental. Doctor Concepción Palacios⁵⁶ or who knows. We don't even know.

Interviewer: Chepita Toledo.⁵⁷

DMT: Chepita Toledo. We don't even know the others.

Interviewer: Or even their ideas.

DMT: Exactly.

Interviewer: Not just knowing who they were.

DMT: What they did, who they were.

Interviewer: What they said, what they thought.

DMT: What was it they set out to do? What was their purpose? Starting something with some 100, to recover 100, looking at different time periods, different moments, to do this work, put it on a web page. It is a beautiful thing to affirm their identity and the role that these women have had in the country from different fields.

⁵⁴ Rafaela de Herrera y Torreynosa (1742–1805), a Spanish criolla and Nicaraguan national heroine, famously defended the Fortress of the Immaculate Conception against British forces in 1762. (“Rafaela Herrera.” Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rafaela_Herrera. Accessed August 12, 2024.)

⁵⁵ The women's suffrage movement in Nicaragua began in the 1920s, with leaders like María Amanda de Castillo advocating for voting rights. Despite facing strong resistance, their persistent efforts led to the achievement of women's suffrage in 1955. (“Exploring the History of Women's Suffrage in Nicaragua.” WeChronicle. <https://wechronicle.com/womens-suffrage/exploring-the-history-of-womens-suffrage-in-nicaragua/>. Accessed August 12, 2024.)

⁵⁶ Dr. Concepción Palacios Herrera (1893–1981) was the first female doctor in Nicaragua and Central America, renowned for her significant contributions to medicine in the region. (“Concepción Palacios Herrera.” Wikipedia. https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Concepción_Palacios. Accessed August 12, 2024.)

⁵⁷ Josefa Toledo de Aguerri (1866–1962) was a pioneering Nicaraguan feminist and educator, known for advancing women's rights. She was Nicaragua's first female general director of education and founded feminist publications like *Revista Femenina Ilustrada*. (“Josefa Toledo de Aguerri.” Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Josefa_Toledo_de_Aguerri. Accessed August 12, 2024.)

We even have women who played sports. A woman who won the gold medal in taekwondo, amazing, she is living outside Nicaragua. There is another one who maybe was the best sportswriter since Tijerino⁵⁸, who is also living outside of Nicaragua, outside somewhere.

Interviewer: She had to leave.

DMT: Yes, I follow her. I subscribed to some of her things because she writes really well. Illustrative, great, but all that is a memory that doesn't exist. It isn't just that we forgot it, but rather that it doesn't exist, it stays at the level of the people. That is another project I have in mind, but we will see.

Interviewer: Dora María, you are a historian, you have experience with academic work. Speaking of these projects, how do you see the connection between academic contribution and the work of activism in general or in particular women's activism? How do you see the connection between what academics do and what is done in other areas, in other environments?

DMT: Academia, I think, has various facets as well. There is one facet that gets you closer to what could serve as a tool for social movements and political activism and there is another that doesn't, it keeps itself to more structural reflections, methodological or conceptual. I don't say that it isn't important, but yes, the other facet that can contribute to the positioning of activism at a superior level is more important.

The point of that is that in places like the United States academic work can be enormous. There are so many things that are not always totally accessible, that is to say, I think that archives like these of oral histories of women have the advantage of making certain fonts of information accessible that are useful for academic work and that can also serve for activism, but it depends on every academic, definitely, what their main tendency is.

Take a look at Tulane, it is interesting, because a lot of the work has a lot of connection with reality. At least a lot of the work from the Center of Latin American Studies, the Stone Center⁵⁹, has a lot of connection with reality. I was talking to a medical specialist in public health who works there at the Stone Center. Her work is in the Dominican Republic about issues of violence and maternal mortality.

They have some models that they are developing to diminish maternal mortality and all the causes of maternal mortality, and they are working with the government. This is great work that connects all the studies with the possibility to do something in real life. I saw the same

⁵⁸ Edgar Tijerino is a renowned Nicaraguan sports commentator, famous for his 40-year radio show *Doble Play*. ("Double Play: Edgar Tijerino's Blend of Sports & Politics. Havana Times. <https://havanatimes.org/interviews/double-play-edgar-tijerinos-blend-of-sports-politics/>. Accessed August 12, 2024.)

⁵⁹ The Stone Center at Tulane University is a leading academic center for Latin American studies. ("About." Tulane University. <https://stonecenter.tulane.edu/about>. Accessed August 13, 2024.)

thing the other day with a woman architect who is formulating a whole study on floodable cities, like New Orleans⁶⁰, and what the policies are for construction, urban policies that they have to work with.

I mean, there is a sector of academia that works on things that are very connected, not just to political activism, but to the reality of public policy, of the things that need to be done, of what people need, but there is another that doesn't do that. I think that what they do can be very rich.

Interviewer: In Nicaragua, how do you see that connection or that situation?

DMT: The situation is critical because they closed, practically, all the spaces of academic debate. The universities are reduced to the most mediocre role possible, which is to control the social base. The actual role of the universities is to control young students so that they do not go out on the street to protest, that is their role.

Interviewer: It is a return to the activism that you talked about in the '60s, in the '70s, in high schools and universities.

DMT: These university authorities, everything has been brought to a level of violent mediocrity, I mean, there is no one who can do serious research there, moderately serious. Research, in general, is critical. The role of academics is not to be scratching the back of those in power. The role of academics is to study reality, but the mandate there is that they have to scratch the back of those in power.

Everything turns mediocre, everything becomes panegyric⁶¹, part of a public apparatus or part of an apparatus of social control. Universities as social control, it's outrageous.

Interviewer: We'd like to hear what your analysis is about the development of feminism in Nicaragua and if now, especially in the current situation of the country, the connection between women's or feminist activism in Nicaragua in connection with what other women are doing in other places.

DMT: The feminist movement, the women's movement, let's say more broadly, developed with great force in the last few decades in the country. They have been the most dynamic, solid, broad, diverse movements and have had different currents, those that were dedicated more to the ideological apparatus, those that were dedicated more to politics, others dedicated themselves more to the theme of social and reproductive rights, those that

⁶⁰ New Orleans is the largest city in Louisiana and a key cultural and economic center along the Mississippi River. ("New Orleans." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Orleans. Accessed August 13, 2024.)

⁶¹ A panegyric is a formal speech or written piece that expresses enthusiastic praise for a person or thing. ("Panegyric." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panegyric>. Accessed August 13, 2024.)

dedicated themselves more to confronting violence against women. Others dedicated themselves more to legal and doctrinal issues in legal spaces—

Interviewer: And of defense.

DMT: Yes, of defense also, all of that. It was a very diverse movement, very broad, very solid, that also landed on things like homes, for example, for women that faced situations of violence, extremely important. I did a lot of work with an organization that was called Oyanka⁶² in Jalapa.⁶³ They had some homes there.

You would interview women from rural areas and realize the relevance of that home for these women and their kids when they had a condition of violence that was unlivable. They were protected there and also had means of communication, they had radio, they had written media. The women's movement had very distinguished researchers, publications in the media.

Interviewer: Very excellent publications.

DMT: Systematic, frequent publications, and a reflection about society. A very important thing is also the process of formation of young women. The other thing is that the women's movement is what opens the door for movements of sexual diversity, who started more embryonically in the '80s, but the women's movement really pushes the opening for those movements. So they were powerful, strong. Obviously, when Daniel Ortega gets to power, it changed to a focus of attacks on the regime, because of what Daniel was involved with regarding the rape of his daughter, the women's movement backed the daughter.⁶⁴

As of today, what do we have? There are no homes, there are no means of communication among women, there is no articulated, explicit women's movement in the country, there is not an office for women, they were all confiscated, all the movements were illegalized and all the leaders of the women's movement and the feminist movement were persecuted and are in exile, for the most part.

⁶² The Oyanka Association of Jalapa Women against Violence (OYANKA) is a Nicaraguan feminist group focused on women's rights in Jalapa, Nicaragua. In 2021, the government revoked its legal status, part of a broader crackdown on civil society, impacting support for women and girls. ("WHRD Alert." IM-DEFENSORAS. <https://im-defensoras.org/en/2021/08/whrd-alert-nicaragua-nicaraguan-government-cancels-legal-status-of-three-more-feminist-organizations/>. Accessed August 13, 2024.)

⁶³ Jalapa is a city and municipality in northern Nicaragua's Nueva Segovia Department, near the Honduras border. ("Jalapa, Nicaragua." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jalapa,_Nicaragua. Accessed August 13, 2024.)

⁶⁴ Zoilamérica Ortega Murillo, a former Nicaraguan National Assembly member, accused her stepfather, President Daniel Ortega, of childhood sexual abuse. Now in exile in Costa Rica, she continues to speak out against him, including during the 2021 election. ("Zoilamérica Ortega Murillo." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zoilamérica_Ortega_Murillo#:~:text=In%201998%2C%20she%20accused%20her,house%20during%20a%20nervous%20breakdown.. Accessed August 13, 2024.)

Interviewer: The legislation, for example, of 779, that is—

DMT: They reversed in the legislation, yes. They also gravely reversed abortion and the model is now a model, not to mention women's equality.⁶⁵ You see it in the assembly, because 50% men and 50% women, but neither the 50% of men nor the 50% of women have any opinions.

Interviewer: It is irrelevant.

DMT: Completely and absolutely! They are just there to respond to the necessity and the dynamic of those in power. What there is now is that this women's movement, this is very important, is in the process of reconstitution, of reestablishing the networks of the women's movement but it finds itself in a position of political survival.

That is, the struggles of women require democracy, because in a democratic model, you can propose your struggles and start to work with politicians, with them, with the media, with the people, with individuals, with social groups, with everyone, but if there isn't democracy, you can't do anything, which is what the situation is now.

I mean, that organization, Oyanka, that I told you about, that I worked with, they closed it, they confiscated it. They shut down their radio, which was called Women's Radio or something like that, rural. They closed the home and pursued the leader. They ended up in exile. So they are in a position of survival and when in a position of survival the only thing that remains is the political struggle, the reestablishment of your networks for the political fight.

And the reestablishment of the community for the political fight. For example, within a few days there will be a feminist convention, where everybody is gathering, everyone, without distinguishing by movement, from differentiating positions, it could help construct the resistance in a more cohesive way, because the first effect of repression of the regime, when the levels of repression increase so severely, is the effect like when someone steps on an anthill, all the ants leave in all directions.

That is how it went with everyone. Now is the time to regroup, now that everyone is returning again. This is the moment where it is, but it is a moment of survival, yes.

Interviewer: This movement that has been obligated to leave the country or to disperse, what connections do they have with other organizations, maybe other

⁶⁵ In 2006, Nicaragua banned all abortions, removing exceptions for life-saving procedures and rape. The 2008 law criminalizes all abortions, penalizing both women and providers. ("The Impact of the Complete Ban of Abortion in Nicaragua." Amnesty International. 2009. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/amr430052009en.pdf>. Accessed August 13, 2024.)

exiles? What will this articulation between all this activism be now that it has to change, now that it has to take a new form?

DMT: Yes. First, there is awareness, I feel that there is a need to reestablish the networks without and within. It is the work of threading a needle, a work to unite political positions, because, like I tell you, after the coup and the repression everyone left like a shot, finding a way to survive first of all. Now, it seems to me that it is the moment to achieve political unity.

And continuing to play a role that I had been playing since before the feminist movement, which was to mobilize international public opinion, through connections with other feminist movements of Latin America, which are extremely belligerent, that in general are located to the left of the political spectrum, they are more progressive and they have an influence in all those model groups, parties, or unifying fronts of the left that are rising to power in different parts of Latin America.

The Chilean, Argentinian, Uruguayan feminists that have had a big role, also in Brazil, in promoting a political positioning toward the dictatorship is much more effective. This is a very important role of the feminist movement, which is international mobilization and the other is in solidarity.

There are many women in extremely difficult conditions of survival in exile, that is another vein that they are working on. I feel that now things are headed on the right path, which is the path of reconstitution of networks, of repositioning, of reestablishing a bit the capacities for resistance, but in conditions in which the number one point is that we need democracy, if not, we cannot advance the rest.

Interviewer: The point of departure.

DMT: Yes. Without discarding the monitoring of conditions of violence against women, that is important, it is always important.

Interviewer: Dora María, my last questions has to do with COVID⁶⁶, with the pandemic, and a reflection on how the work of the feminist movement or the work in favor of women has changed because of the pandemic. And maybe also to hear, how do you think the pandemic has affected women in particular, the pandemic in Nicaragua?

Considering that Nicaragua was a special case, because there was no lockdown, there was no quarantine and the government had a pretty denying attitude, there were problems in knowing exactly the contagion statistics. In this framing of the

⁶⁶ COVID-19, caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, emerged in December 2019 and rapidly led to a global pandemic. ("COVID-19." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/COVID-19>. Accessed August 13, 2024.)

particularity of Nicaragua because of the political situation, how do you see the work that feminists undertook during COVID or how do you think that the pandemic especially affected the situation of women?

DMT: The women's movement, feminism, had an important role in the diffusion of information about the issues of family health, because, that is, in the conditions in which the government started denying that this could be a problem, that there was no need to pay attention and all of that, corresponded and moreover the Minister of Health was powerless.

In reality, it fell to civil society to talk about the issue, to publish about the issue and educate people about the issue, because on the other hand the government hadn't done anything, even the use of masks, which the government considered penalizable from the beginning, persecuted with repression since the beginning, and they were promoted by civil society. I think the work of the women's movement like the rest of civil society was very important in these circumstances.

Now, it is difficult to know how COVID affected Nicaraguan women, because the majority of the small and medium sized businesses are women, and they kept working, because everybody kept working, basically, working despite the costs.

Furthermore, we do not have statistics of what the real impact among women regarding mortality or morbidity, but what is clear to me, is that COVID fortified the practice of establishing connections and of congregating people virtually, the use of Zoom⁶⁷, for example, grew, or the use of social media grew for communication, for meetings, for communications, for, etcetera, that grew a lot during the pandemic, and now it has a super relevant importance in conditions of repression.

I mean, I can meet with women in Nicaragua, they preserve their anonymity, they appear with pseudonyms in the Zoom meeting, and they learned to navigate that in the context of the pandemic. That, I think the use of virtuality as a mechanism of communication has ended up helping with survival in networks working on political activism or actual resistance against the dictatorship, but we still don't have the figures, the registry figures.

Interviewer: The real numbers.

DMT: The true numbers, we had a—I had COVID very early, in May of 2020, very early.

Interviewer: Without vaccines.

DMT: Nothing! nonexistent! and the hospitals were overfilling, they were overflowing, they didn't know what to do, the treatments were minimal, your probability of mortality was extremely high. I had a moderate to grave case of COVID, took care of it at home, the

⁶⁷ Zoom is a video conferencing platform that gained popularity during the COVID-19 pandemic.

pulmonologist⁶⁸ decided that I should stay at home, and he ordered me to rest in bed because I had serious oxygenation problems, he ordered me to lay in bed upside down for six hours a day, we started two hours in the morning, two hours in the afternoon upside down.

Very enjoyable, because I will tell you again, what can be enjoyable is how you handle the difficulty you have, right? You have a bad situation, so what's enjoyable about that? I started listening to audiobooks, Agatha Christie⁶⁹ audiobooks, a lot of fun because there were some that had voices from the computer and others had human voices, but the computer voices are so funny because the computer cannot read in Spanish, it can't read the last name of Poirot in French, it was Monsieur Poirót, so I flew through all the Agatha Christie audiobooks that are free on the internet, so great, amazing!

Then I got hooked on listening to music, music from the 60s, one day I started with the 60s, another day, the 70s, another day, the 80s, the 90s, and that's how I went along, right? Because there I was, it took a long time, plenty. It lasted about a month and a half, finally, I got better, but the COVID I had, gave me two things, fatigue and lack of energy. If I walked to the door, I got tired, but even before walking to the door, I didn't have the energy to get up, it was horrible.

With that experience, we decided to buy an oxygen concentrator. You know that you plug in, you put your little fork and there you have your oxygen. We bought a ten-liter oxygen concentrator. The first one to use the oxygen concentrator was a woman from the countryside, she had the oxygen concentrator for one month, she would have died but for the concentrator.

The data I have is that, that concentrator that was used by 40 people, I only have that number up to when we ended up arrested, the majority of the people were women, or rather, I think all the people we loaned it to were, because they were loans with the condition of return, forced! Because you know in Nicaragua everything gets lost along the way, but no, it wouldn't have served other people then.

All of them were women! When we were imprisoned, my brother took control, the administration of the concentrator began with other people, but all the people that borrowed the concentrator were women, that is to say, how serious was the impact of the pandemic on women? It is difficult, we can't have that registry, because it doesn't exist, and

⁶⁸ A pulmonologist is a doctor who specializes in treating lung and respiratory system disorders. ("Pulmonology." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pulmonology>. Accessed August 13, 2024.)

⁶⁹ Dame Agatha Christie (1890–1976), the "Queen of Crime," wrote 66 detective novels, including *The Mousetrap*, and is the best-selling fiction writer ever, with over two billion copies sold. ("Agatha Christie." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agatha_Christie. Accessed August 13, 2024.)

when I am saying the concentrators were at home, they are women who are in their home, they never had a more useful thing.

So useful, it is still there, super useful, but the main thing, I think, is about virtuality, because all the rest is over, you figured it out, I think it was more of an experience of community life that helped Nicaragua, I mean, I always remember the images of the dead in Peru, in the streets, that is something that tells you something, it tells you something, that didn't happen in Nicaragua, there was a very high mortality rate, so high, but you never saw the dead in the streets.

Interviewer: No, you never saw that.

DMT: Never, but, how is it that Peru had that? I mean, but how did that happen? There is something there, yes, how could it be that you could not take that dead person and bury them? That is something that never happened in this country. I mean, that there is a standard of community or maybe of family, or who knows what? That in some way in the middle of a campaign of denial by the regime, we could navigate a pandemic with the weight, principally, on our shoulders for society, because the health system was not responding.

Interviewer: They weren't even allowed to respond.

DMT: Not even! That one was behind the reins because they were saying, "There wasn't anything to do, no, no need to be alarmed, it's nothing," but it's a disaster, I say, frankly.

Interviewer: Yes, because those deaths could have been prevented.

DMT: Completely.

You know what, one day, I already had COVID, one day we get a call by phone, someone desperate, that Dr. Cárdenas, who I knew from my time at the College of Medicine⁷⁰, needs an oxygen gauge and oxygen. We had a gauge since my mom had been ill and needed oxygen before she died, but we had lost the gauge, we didn't know who we had loaned it to, we didn't keep track of it and we couldn't find it, and you know a gauge costs \$250 USD, but it didn't matter.

The point is, in that moment, there wasn't a gauge in the country that you could buy. That man called by phone, the family starts to call, to say they need an oxygen gauge, we start looking for the gauge, it doesn't exist, we don't have the gauge.

Same thing, no gauge, nobody can find one, nobody sells one, there are none available. Not to make it a long story, that man arrives at the door of the *Monte España* Hospital⁷¹, a

⁷⁰ Téllez studied at the National Autonomous University of Nicaragua in the city of León.

⁷¹ Monte España Hospital is a leading healthcare facility in Managua, Nicaragua.

doctor, a specialist in diabetes, he arrives to the door of the *Monte España* Hospital, where there is a huge line, and simply and plainly, he dies right there.

Interviewer: He collapsed right there.

DMT: Because of a lack of oxygen! With an oxygen apparatus it could have been sorted out.

Interviewer: From a simple sale.

DMT: From a simple sale. Then a few journalists also called us, two journalists, in a dire situation. They needed oxygen. These were the only cases of men with the concentrator. That was when we decided to buy a concentrator that was really expensive. We said, "Nobody is responding. At least let's get this 10-liter concentrator. Those who ask, they can start getting in line, we will rent it out, we will get it back. When people finish, we will take it to the next one."

And we continued like that. As of today, we had around 40 something people use it. In a society that reacts because the State doesn't react. Damn, I tell you. Horrible. How awful those months were. All of that death is because of them, completely, because denial always has an impact. Now there are people who end up believing that nothing will happen, that they can't die, it's all really just exaggeration, and you end up dying because you didn't pay attention.

Interviewer: Dora María, is there anything you would like to add to our interview? Is there anything you would like to say before we finish?

DMT: My brain is fried.

[laughter]

Interviewer: Thank you so much for your lifelong work and for your time participating in today's interview. In the name of the Global Feminisms Project, we thank you.

DMT: Thank you to you all, because this is important, to have banks of oral history. Thank you very much, [Interviewer]. Thank you.