

## **Potters for Peace Brigade**

### **Orientation Packet**



### **Welcome to the PFP Brigade to Nicaragua!**

Potters for Peace Brigades are different from standard tours. We base our brigades on the educationally-oriented "travel seminar" model that provides exposure to other cultures and acquaints brigadistas with the realities of the developing world. We try to immerse participants in the culture of our host country through visits with social and cultural spokespeople and through meeting ordinary people. We hope this approach will help participants to broaden their views on global relationships.

PFP is primarily a support organization. Our journey is focused on a specific topic—ceramics—but our operating principles are rooted in solidarity with our Nica friends. We hope this orientation packet will help you to understand these principles and give you enough information to make your trip with us to Nicaragua a successful and meaningful one.

Translation will be provided at all times by PFP bi-lingual staff, but previous participants have recommended that visitors try to study as much Spanish as possible before coming to Nicaragua, so as to facilitate your own communication. There are several intensive Spanish language schools in Nicaragua and elsewhere in Central America. Enrollment in one of these programs is strongly recommended, (preferably before the journey begins), for those seeking college credit for the experience.

You will get more out of your brigade experience if you do some reading and studying beforehand. We suggest you read as much as you can, talk with people who have visited Nicaragua, and note down questions that you hope to have answered during your stay. If you have thought in advance about what you want to get out of the journey,

you will be better prepared to respond when opportunities come up to ask questions and make suggestions. Visiting this country and meeting with rural potters is going to be unlike almost any other travel experience. For this reason, we want to stress the importance of reading through the pre-trip materials carefully. **KNOW BEFORE YOU GO.** In addition to instructions that are specific to this brigade, this packet contains the following reference material at the end of this document:

- 1) Our own statement of [Rights and Responsibilities](#) for pottery tour participants. It is very important that you read and understand your rights and responsibilities. Our work in Nicaragua depends on building strong relationships with our Nica friends and you, as a brigadista, are being invited into, and will be building onto, the relationships developing between us. As such, your influence will extend far beyond your two-week stay.
- 2) [A brief overview of Nicaraguan history](#) that will give you a minimum context in which to place the contemporary situation. Keep in mind that the effect of the "low intensity war" that was waged there has touched every aspect of life, right down to the marketing of simple cooking pots
- 3) [A bibliography](#) for those interested in further research. The bibliography is by no means exhaustive, and we encourage you to expand this list with discoveries of your own. Keep in mind that most books on Nicaragua were published during or shortly after the Sandinista Revolution (1979-90). And the country has changed considerably since that time.
- 4) [A list of pottery terms](#) in both Spanish and English (some are usages found only in Central America, or Nicaragua). The list is by no means complete and slang terms will vary from region to region.

It isn't our intention to promote any particular political orientation and the politics of modern Nicaragua are complex. To understand even the lives of simple campesina potters, we must often confront difficult and unpleasant realities concerning the

historical role of the US in Central America. With this in mind, please understand that the suggestions and material presented here come from our experience in Nicaragua over the past several years, and the experiences of other groups running similar programs in Nicaragua.

**One final note:** while the material presented here can be quite serious, we (and our Nica friends) do know how to have laugh and have fun. A good sense of humor is one of the best things a visitor can bring to Nicaragua. It helps us in our work, and we hope the laughter we will share in Nicaragua will remain with you long afterwards.

## **TRAVEL INFORMATION**

### **Documentation**

You will need a valid passport. **Nicaragua requires that visitors' passports be valid for at least 6 months past the scheduled date of departure from Nicaragua.** If you do not have a passport, it is imperative that you apply for one immediately. Recent security measures have resulted in a crush of passport applications and longer processing times. You can apply at a major post office, a county government building, or a passport office. It is best to put a rush on your passport application (paying extra for express mail) or the process can take months. We ask that you make a photocopy of the first pages of your passport and pages with any pertinent visas, along with any other important documents (driver's license, etc.) in case these documents are lost or stolen. Bring these photocopies with you to Nicaragua. For added security, leave at home an additional photocopy of important documents you will bring with you to Nicaragua.

### **Arrival in Managua**

You will receive a tourist card on the airplane, and present this with your passport upon arrival. At the port of entry you will be given a 90-day tourist visa. You will also be charged an entrance fee of less than \$10 at customs. It will be easier if you have exact change, i.e. a five-dollar bill and five ones. There is no exit fee when you leave Nicaragua.

If you plan to stay longer than 90 days in Nicaragua, you will have to obtain a visa renewal. There is a fee and the visa can only be extended twice. Once the brigade ends you will have to take care of this yourself, though PFP can inform you of the current procedures. If you are planning to visit other Central American countries while on this trip, contact the appropriate embassies for special information which may be applicable.

Non-US citizens should consult the nearest Nicaraguan Embassy or consulate for information on obtaining a visa. **There is no guarantee for re-entry into the US upon return for foreign tourists who decide to join the brigade from the US.** Consult the US Immigration Service about this.

**You will be met at the Managua airport by a PFP staff person with an identifying sign.** If you are traveling overland, please contact us well in advance of your departure date to coordinate appropriate reception in Managua.

### **Health Issues**

Typhoid, cholera, measles and malaria are all present in Nicaragua, but mostly in the poorest slum areas of Managua and other large cities, and in the remote countryside.

Visitors should drink bottled water, which is widely available, or other bottled drinks.

**The group will always travel with purified water.** Halazone tablets will purify doubtful water sources, but the unpleasant taste is a deterrent except when dehydration threatens. If you don't drink Pepsi, Coke, or coffee you may want to travel with tea bags. You will receive more information on safe eating/drinking habits after you arrive in Nicaragua.

The most common health-related problem on brigades will **diarrhea** caused by bacteria. For minor cases, Pepto-Bismol is recommended, supplemented with bananas. Some people have found that Bactrim is helpful for diarrhea, but check with your doctor. The use of Lomotil, Paregoric and Kaopectate is discouraged, as they can be dangerous in infectious diarrheas.

Amoebae, worms and other intestinal problems can be avoided by a good dose of common sense. There are several professional laboratories in Managua that test for the presence of such pesky critters in your system. Stool sample tests are cheap, and results are usually known overnight at the latest. Medicines for eradicating these unwanted guests from your body are readily and cheaply available in Nicaragua.

**Please take the heat and sun very seriously!** This isn't the appropriate place for working on that ideal golden tan. The heat can suck all energy out of you before you know it, leaving you wide open for some of the above mentioned illnesses. So bring a hat and sunscreen for those days out in the sun. Coppertone Sport has been found to hold up well in the Central American climate.

One final note: make sure your health insurance will cover you outside the US.

**No shots of any kind are required.** However, the Center for Disease Control and the World Health Organization recommend that you be up-to-date on your diphtheria-tetanus (10 years) and polio inoculations. **Also recommended is a gamma globulin shot for protection against Hepatitis A** (2cc gives protection for a month). Check with your doctor about possible side effects.

Some people receive a **typhoid series**; this is your decision. Cases of typhoid have been reported in the region but typhoid immunization does not guarantee against getting the virus. For healthy people typhoid is treatable with antibiotics and rest.

**Cholera** has appeared in Nicaragua. It exists now in most Latin American countries, after reappearing in Peru some years ago; however, no Latin American country has travel restrictions because of it. It is a disease which cannot be inoculated against, but common sense is a very good defense. Wash hands before eating, don't drink suspicious water, don't chew your fingernails, etc. If contracted, it can be treated with antibiotics, rest, and lots of liquids.

**Measles** outbreaks have occurred in several areas of rural Nicaragua. Most North Americans have been sufficiently vaccinated against this disease but, if you were born before 1953, or are not sure of your measles vaccination, check with your doctor.

**Malaria** has been largely eradicated from the country. It can be prevented by taking Chloroquine, a malaria preventative available through prescription, is recommended for travel outside cities. Chloroquine does have some possible side effects (headaches, nausea, etc.). You may not donate blood for three years after taking chloroquine. As with the typhoid series, chloroquine is not a 100% guarantee against malaria, but it is standard protection. Keep in mind the series must begin two weeks before travel time, and continue for two weeks after returning home for it to be effective.

We realize that many of the above-mentioned vaccinations and medications are quite pricey. Keep in mind that none of them is required. As PFP is not a medical institution, we cannot say which ones are really necessary. **Generally speaking, a healthy person, visiting the country for only a couple of weeks and who uses common sense when eating and drinking, will have a problem-free trip without immunizations.** Clean health habits and common sense are the best prevention against infections. We will have up-to-date information on health issues before venturing out of Managua and will not visit an area if a serious health risk is present.

## **Safety**

Many people worry about personal security when traveling for the first time in Latin America. Much of this fear is based on pre-conceived notions of the people they will encounter. PFP has had staff living full-time in Nicaragua for many years and based on our experience, security concerns should not interfere with your visit to Nicaragua. PFP and many other individuals and organizations have found that State Department Travel Warnings concerning Nicaragua have generally been based on political motivations rather than real appraisals of the situation in the field. If serious threats to your personal security existed in the country, we would not hesitate to call off the trip. However, in order to stay safe while on the brigade, here are some safety rules:

- **In Managua, do not use city buses** (taxi rides will be dealt with at the orientation meeting in Managua)
- **Do not walk outside alone at night alone in Managua or any of the towns we will be visiting.**
- If you wish to move around on your own during the brigade, you need to discuss this with the brigade leader beforehand.

To keep things in perspective, at the current time **the crime rate in is similar to an average US city** and the same common sense safety precautions should be taken here as in any large city. PFP discourages Brigade participants from traveling alone in the country if they have not been there before and do not speak Spanish.

In general, common sense goes a long way to prevent unfortunate incidents: don't wear flashy clothes and don't display your money, women should always wear bras in public, don't leave valuables in hotel rooms, leave expensive jewelry and electronics at home. We will discuss safety-related topics during the orientation meeting in Managua at the beginning of the trip.

### **Baggage**

**The first rule is to pack lightly!** Your personal belongings should fit into one carry-on sized suitcase so that everyone's gear will fit on top of the van. Do not bring valuables that you can't carry on your person as security in overnight lodgings may not be tight.

Try to think about what you will realistically use, and what can enrich the experience of the whole group. Overloading is inconvenient, and can lead to friction. Imagine the moment when a truck full of "fabulously wealthy" gringos arrives at a poor, rural area.

If asked by airline personnel at your US port of departure, or in Managua, describe all your baggage as "personal," even if you are bringing material aid or donations as "personal luggage" is given priority over "freight" for cargo space.

Hard suitcases might be handy on your return flight for carrying the pottery you have purchased. Another option is to pack your pottery purchases in a cardboard box that you carry onto the plane while your original suitcase is checked through.

### **Cell phones**

Cell phones are popular targets for thieves so keep your cell phone on your person at all times. Don't leave it lying around unattended.

### **Clothing**

In general, the weather will be warm to hot (70-90 ° F) in the daytime, cooling a bit in the evenings and at higher elevations. Lightweight, wash-and-wear, informal clothing is advised. Things that dry overnight are best as you will be able to wash out some clothing at some of the overnight stops on the trip.

### **Other recommended items**

- Bring photos or videos of your shop and work: brigade members and Nica potters are always curious to see what others do and it's a nice way to get to know each other at the start of the trip
- Camera (and film, if you are among the few that still use it!)
- Good walking shoes are a **must!**
- A hat: the sun is **very** intense
- Light jacket or sweater for the evenings or at higher altitudes
- A swimsuit: we try to hit the beach at least once during the trip. Water shoes are helpful but not required
- Sunscreen, sunglasses
- Insect repellent or a bottle of concentrated peppermint oil
- Hand sanitizer
- Canteen/water bottle
- Money belt, **highly recommended**, see the section on Currency.
- A plastic bag for wet clothes
- Towel, washcloth and soap
- Wipes for hot days

- A small bag for personal belongings during day trips.
- Packing tape and bubble wrap if you plan on buying a lot of Nicaraguan pottery or other crafts (or you can use your clothes as padding).
- Light, long-sleeved shirts, if you burn easily.
- Notebook & pen(s).
- Small flashlight as electricity can be sporadic (or if you like to read late at night.)
- Disposable earplugs: some locations are noisy at night with chickens, dogs, and church bells.
- Sheet or other **very** light sleeping sack: in general you will only need the linens that are provided by all hotels, but sometimes it's a bit cool at night

### **Optional items**

The following items are available in Managua (but generally at slightly higher prices than in the US). Bringing them is optional, but things might go faster for the brigade if less time is spent shopping for these things during the trip.

- Antihistamines if you suffer from allergies or hay fever
- Medications, in their original containers (to avoid hassles at customs)
- Eyewash or contact lens fluid
- Basic toiletries
- Pepto-Bismol
- Extra camera battery
- Band-aids & pads for blisters
- Aspirin/tylenol
- Spanish-English dictionary.
- Tweezers
- Zip-lock plastic bags 5 or 6 (for use in collecting things,).
- One of those horseshoe shaped neck pillows, useful for comfortable travel on the many unpaved roads

### **Currency**

Paying with cash is fast and easy and we will advise you of the current exchange rate

and change money for you as we travel. **Don't bring bills marked for counterfeit detection or bills that are torn in any way as they are difficult to change.** Credit cards can be used in certain (more expensive) places and there are ATM machines in Managua and a few other locations but these can be a hassle to find. A money belt or under-shirt wallet is highly recommended as it is best to keep your money with you at all times. Travellers checks are not accepted in Nicaragua.

Food, transportation and lodging are covered by your fee, but you will want to bring some money for personal purchases like snacks or drinks and to buy pottery from the potters we visit.

The unit of currency in Nicaragua is the **cordoba**. Because it is a minor currency, the cordoba cannot be obtained or exchanged outside the country. The cordoba has been relatively stable for a while now, but it can fluctuate wildly. Between June 1989 and May 1991 the rate went from 5,000 cords to the dollar to 25 million to the dollar. In 1991 the Nicaraguan economy hit a global all-time record inflation rate of 55,000% (compared to the US recession rate of 7%) and shortly thereafter the central government instituted an overhaul of the monetary system and issued a new type of currency, the "cordoba oro," which depreciates against the dollar at a fixed rate of 5% per year. As of December 2017, it trades at about 30.73 cordobas to \$1.

## **Photography**

Although most participants will undoubtedly be using digital cameras there are fully stocked photo stores in Managua. Kodak and Fuji color print and slide film is easily obtainable but it's more expensive than in the US. Professional developing comparable to the US is available overnight, also at higher rates. For slides, only E6 type film can be

developed in Nicaragua. Black and white film is hard to find and even harder to get developed.

**Photographing any military installation or any building with a military guard is prohibited by Nicaraguan law.**

Nicaraguans of all ages are generally happy to be photographed, but common courtesies apply. If you start taking photos of a family, be prepared to be continuously asked to take photos of everyone in the general vicinity, in any number of combinations for a photo. **PLEASE KEEP ANY PROMISES TO SEND BACK COPIES OF THE PICTURES YOU TAKE!** Nicaraguans have long memories of such promises.

**Bear in mind that sending an envelope to Nicaragua which obviously contains something lessens its chances of arriving at its destination. PFP STAFF WILL NOT BE RESPONSIBLE FOR DELIVERING PHOTOS AFTER YOU LEAVE.** For this reason, we encourage you to write down the mailing address of any person to whom you promise photos.

### **Early Arrivals**

If you arrive in Managua earlier than the scheduled for the beginning of the brigade we may not be able to spend much time with you, as we will be in the final stages of preparation for the trip. PFP staff will be able to pick you up at the airport, take you to a hotel and perhaps give you some ideas on things to do until the orientation meeting. Let us know in advance of your travel plans so we can foresee any problems. **Also, if you arrive early, you will be responsible for your lodging fees for any nights not scheduled for the journey.**

### **Communication**

Thanks to cell phones, calling the U.S. is inexpensive and internet access is available at cyber cafes. We will usually spend no more than two days away from telephone or internet communication. We will advise you of the latest ways to contact people at home.

In case of emergency, before you travel to Nicaragua please notify us of the names and phone numbers or emails addresses of two contact people in the your home country and carry this information with you while traveling.

### **Time, Electrical current**

The time in Nicaragua is the same as US Central Standard Time. The electrical current is the same as in the US.

### **Gift-Giving**

Some brigade participants like to bring something to give/share with our Nicaraguan counterparts. Gifts of ceramic materials, books or posters are best. Personal gifts to individual Nica potters are not a good idea as the potter may feel obligated to give a gift in return and this is not something that they can afford to do.

Please discuss any donations (cones, colorants, tools, posters, magazines, reading glasses, etc.) with PFP staff in Nicaragua, as they will make sure that these donations go to places in the quantity and the timing most appropriate for a particular shop. If you have a donation in mind, or if you want to donate to a particular *taller*, check with us.

No money should be given as a personal gift at any time during the trip or after participants have returned to the US.

Here are some donation ideas:

- 1) Bring along your old reading glasses! Many of the potters we work with do not have access to prescription glasses and they could really use something that boosts their vision.
- 2) A valuable thing to donate is old ceramic publications or posters. There is a serious lack of affordable books in Nicaragua, and educational books for potters are virtually unknown. Donated publications (in Spanish preferably, but at least with a lot of

photographs) could give them the chance you had to learn from the wealth of ceramic art history. We would like to add, however, that you keep in mind cultural and economic sensitivity. Publications with lots of photos of ceramic art from Latin America, indigenous groups, or at least good functional pottery are most appropriate. These are, of course, recommendations only. Also keep in mind Nicaraguan potters don't have access to the wild colorants, equipment and firing styles you do.

- 3) Bring along a few of your favourite tools and give a demonstration to show the Nica potters how to use them.

We don't want our relationship with our Nicaraguan counterparts to be based on the potential of receiving hand-outs. We want to show our solidarity by helping them make real changes in their lives that can give them the ability to cope over the long run.

The behavior of past brigades has helped PFP achieve and maintain its reputation as a technical assistance organization, not a charity. Your actions during and after the brigade will help uphold the quality of the relationship PFP enjoys with the potters of Nicaragua. Nicaragua's needs and the needs of individual families are very large and no amount of gifts can eliminate these problems. On the other hand, material aid that is either raised before the trip or donated while in Nicaragua and is given to appropriate institutions and organizations will benefit the country as a whole.

The most significant gift that brigadistas can give is to be a voice for our Nica friends in the US, to work for peace, and to maintain contact with the situation in Nicaragua.

### **General Courtesies**

When the brigade arrives at a location, we arrive into real situations—not stage shows. Most potters will give us a talk or tour of their shop, during which they may describe processes that can seem very basic to an experienced US potter. We ask that you be patient and attentive during this time as the Nica potters are proud of their achievements, and flattered to have us as guests. Remember that we are visitors to a

place that they have worked extremely hard to keep afloat. DO NOT wander off and start taking photos in the middle of a presentation. We try to plan every visit so that there will be plenty of time to wander, mix with the people and buy pots.

**Remember this is a pottery tour not a photo workshop.** Please exercise restraint with picture-taking as overuse of cameras can distance people from one another. You will want to describe your trip to the folks back home but perhaps your own well-chosen words and a **few** good pictures will do the job.

We hope that you learn a lot during the trip. Because we do not come as "missionaries" we need to approach dialogues with our Nicaraguan friends in a fraternal manner. Many visitors see situations that could easily be solved with simple technical improvements and, what for us, seem to be small amounts of money, but they often fail to see how social factors influence these situations. You can make the most of the trip by listening, asking the questions in a respectful manner and honoring the answers you receive. Similarly, participants who know more about Nicaragua need to have patience with those who know less.

Visitors are often surprised by the warm welcome given them by Nicaraguans. However, some visitors make themselves so comfortable they fail to see how Nicaraguan hospitality to us is a special act of courage and generosity. It merits not just your gratitude, but at times a little deference.

### **Bargaining**

In some Latin American countries, haggling is standard practice, but it was not a strong tradition in Sandinista Nicaragua. Please be aware that the low prices that already exist for crafts and other items in Nicaragua are possible only because of the severe economic hardships forcing people to sell their goods for whatever price they can get in order to feed the family. Potters for Peace does not haggle with potters or other craftspeople when making purchases for benefit sales in the US and we do not haggle over prices for personal purchases.

## **Food**

Nicaragua cuisine revolves around rice, beans, chicken and tortillas. Meals in rural areas can be monotonous to visitors so be prepared. Vegetarians and vegans will survive but small restaurants and potter hosts have limited resources and at times special diets can be mean meal after meal of the same thing. Cheese and eggs are common and vegetables and fruits are often available at markets, so we try to vary the diet of the brigade and may be able to cook our own meals from time to time. Generally, don't expect a lot of variety (minus the occasional surprise meal that makes it all worthwhile).

Everyone should be prepared for food with a lot more oil and salt than you may be used to. Water is included in the journey fees and at rest stops you will be able to buy soft drinks. We encourage you to drink plenty of liquids as the heat can cause dehydration.

## **Accommodation**

Brigadistas stay in study centers and local hotels, with 2 – 6 beds to a room and shared bathrooms, as well as in the homes of the potters we are visiting.

Homestays will only be for one or two **non-consecutive** nights and sleeping may be in a hammock or on metal springs, with the family walking through the room at any time. Homestay bathrooms are usually outhouses. While this may be a little uncomfortable, this is a rare opportunity to experience campesino life.

## **Bathing**

Hot water is not generally available in Nicaragua so showers will always be cold or cool but the weather is hot enough that this is not a great hardship.

## **Washing Clothes**

We may go several days without a time or place to wash clothes but when spending more than one day at a location you will have time to wash clothes and

dry them overnight. Sometimes hotel staff will provide this service (for a fee).

### **Group Meetings**

There will be an orientation meeting in Managua on the first full day of the trip. At this time the final itinerary will be presented, health, safety and other issues will be discussed and we will provide you with a "Coyuntura"--an update on the current situation in Nicaragua regarding all aspects of life in this embroiled country. During the trip we hold informal discussions of how things are going, and at the end of the journey we will go through an overall evaluation of the experience. We also like to receive feedback after your return home. This will help to clarify the experience for you, and to help us plan future brigades.

### **PFP CONTACT IN THE US:**

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## **RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF BRIGADE PARTICIPANTS**

### **Rights of PFP Brigade Participants**

- To expect staff help when needed
- To express your feelings, opinions, etc. freely
- To request adjustments to the pace and scope of the schedule to fit your needs
- To expect staff to be honest and open regarding health and safety during the brigade.
- To realistically fulfill your objectives for the trip
- To exercise in a meaningful way your desires to contribute to the lives of our Nica hosts, and to establish long-lasting personal relationships.

## **Responsibilities of PFP Brigade Participants**

- To ask for help when you need it
- To inform staff if you are not feeling well. This is very IMPORTANT!
- To exhibit patience with what has to be, or cannot be, changed in the schedule (due to external factors such as geography, cost, safety, etc.)
- To be attentive to the needs/situations of our Nica hosts, and of the other participants
- To discuss with staff and desire on the part of a brigadists to contribute to, or connect with individual Nica hosts that might conflict with PFP gift-giving and courtesy policies prior to any action, in order that the best course of action can be decided

## **BRIEF HISTORICAL OVERVIEW**

### **Nicaragua, Central America, and the United States.**

Humans inhabited the Central American isthmus 5,000 years ago as evidenced by the footprints of nomadic tribes that were "frozen" in lava and are still visible in the Acahualinca Barrio of Managua. The Mayan Empire reached down through Nicaragua into the Guyacuil province of Costa Rica.

Columbus landed on Nicaraguan soil during his last voyage to the New World in 1502, but the local inhabitants drove his fleet away. The conquistador Francisco Fernandez de Cordóba eventually conquered for Spain what is now Nicaragua. During the conquest, de Cordóba defeated armies of the famous indigenous kings, Diriangén and Nicarao. Nicaragua was named after Nicarao, who converted to Christianity and ceded his rule to the Spanish and the national currency, the Cordóba, was named after the conquistador. The name of Diriangén, who resisted the invasion until he fell in combat, was left out of the naming process.

In the mid-1600s, Great Britain began raiding Spanish colonies in the region. The British set up fortresses and alliances with the Misquito Indians of Nicaragua's Atlantic (Caribbean) Coast. With British backing, the Misquitos were able to subjugate and control almost all the other ethnic populations of the Coast.

In 1797 an agreement allowed "neutral countries" to trade in Central America, as Britain, Spain, and France were too busy fighting each other to prevent it. Favor was given to the newly formed United States of America, and this marked the beginning of a long and conflict-filled relationship between the US and Central America. A few years earlier, Thomas Jefferson foresaw that it was "just a matter of time before the USA becomes involved in Central America." He said it was best "that the Spaniards hold it till our own population can be sufficiently advanced to take it from them piece by piece."

Various colonial wars and successive droughts in the region brought on economic

stress and local uprisings. Eventually groups banded together and on September 15, 1821 they declared the region independent from Spain. The original union was called Guatemala Grande and comprised all five current Central American countries: Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica, but the union fell apart within a few years. On July 7, 1833, Nicaragua declared itself an independent state, but September 15, 1821 date is still considered to be the national day of independence.

For the next century the political debate in Nicaragua was confined to two parties, the Conservatives with their power base in Granada, and the Liberals with their power base in Leon. As the leadership of the country was wrested from one party to the other, the "national capitol" changed back and forth also.

In 1823 the US declared the Monroe Doctrine, signaling to Europe that Latin America was now officially the American Back Yard.

During the 1850s, talk of an inter-oceanic canal through Nicaragua or the Columbian province of Panama was common. This was a time when US industrial giants, backed by the US Government, sent "filibusters" (private mercenaries) to Central America to make the area safe for investments. The most well-known filibuster was William Walker, who, in 1856, became so zealous in his job that he formed an alliance with Nicaragua's Liberal Party and declared himself President, much to the ire of the US shipping and rail magnate, Cornelius Vanderbilt, his erstwhile boss.

Walker established Managua, which is halfway between Leon and Granada, as Nicaragua's permanent capitol. He also re-legalized slavery in Nicaragua. Walker's presidency lasted only two years before the Nicaraguans threw him out.

As coffee and banana companies, mostly US-owned, expanded their plantations into the prime growing region of western Nicaragua, what remained of the native population dwindled and was pushed toward the Atlantic Coast. This created divisions between the people of the Pacific and Atlantic Coasts that have endured to this day. Today,

indigenous communities make up only about 10% of Nicaragua's population, and are located primarily along the Atlantic Coast.

In the 1880s the US granted itself the "right to discourage" any local movement that would upset the balance of power in the area. This was in response to several uprisings of angry locals protesting the growing power of US companies in the region.

In 1893 a conservative administration was overthrown, and the liberal José Santos Zelaya became president of Nicaragua. During Zelaya's tenure, the British were finally driven out of the Atlantic Coast region and their proxy Misquito Kingdom was dismantled. Zelaya instituted land reforms, separated church and state, canceled several US trade concessions, and began taxing US businesses in Nicaragua. As a result, US marines invaded Nicaragua, and in 1909 they executed Zelaya. One of Zelaya's generals, Benjamin Zeladon, continued to oppose the invasion, fighting the marines until his death in battle in 1912.

By 1923 full-scale civil war broke out between the supporters of the US puppet government and its opponents. It was during this time that Augusto Cesar Sandino rose to prominence as a popular leader in the struggle against intervention. The US was eventually able to re-establish a friendly government and officially end the war but Sandino and his army refused to demobilize until all the invading US marines had withdrawn from Nicaragua and they conducted a "guerilla-style" war against the occupation. In 1933 Sandino succeeded in forcing the US to withdraw, but only after US warplanes had experimented for the first time with aerial bombardment on Nicaraguan towns.

Before leaving Nicaragua, the US marines had trained and equipped the "Guardia Nacional"—the National Guard—with Anastasio Somoza (who was trained at West Point) as its commanding officer. When Sandino formally surrendered his weapons and demobilized his army, Somoza invited him to dinner, then had him assassinated on the trip home. Somoza then took full control of Nicaragua, and began Latin America's

longest and most brutal dictatorship. In 1956 a student named Rigoberto Lopez Perez murdered Somoza in a suicide attack at a dinner party. Luis Somoza, Anastasio's eldest son, took over but soon after he died from a heart attack and Anastasio Jr. assumed power. During Anastasio Jr.'s time, opposition to the Somoza dynasty grew and underground political parties were formed, but attacks on anyone thought to be an enemy of the Somoza clan increased as well.

In 1963 Carlos Fonseca, Silvio Mayorga, and Tomás Borge founded the Sandinista National Liberation Front, known by its Spanish acronym, FSLN and named after General Sandino. The FSLN began a guerilla war to rid Nicaragua of the Somoza dictatorship. Borge, the longest surviving founder, died a few months ago.

By this time, the Somoza clan had gained control of almost every productive business, or was signatory to every lucrative US concession in the country. While Anastasio Somoza Jr. was one of Latin America's richest people, Nicaragua was one of its poorest countries, much like the Philippines under Ferdinand Marcos. The 1972 Managua earthquake, which leveled the nation's capital and killed over 20,000 people overnight, became an opportunity for Somoza to hoard international relief aid. National Guardsmen looted what remained of the downtown area, and sold relief aid for their own profit.

During the 1970s the FSLN grew in strength and after several failed insurrections, it FSLN divided its forces into three separate armed factions: the "Prolonged People's War" (of armed resistance in the countryside), the "Proletariat" (of socialist orientation, operating mainly in the cities), and the "Terceristas" or "Third Force" (believing in a broad coalition of sectors in Nicaraguan society). In the late 1970s opposition to the Somoza dictatorship reached a fever pitch after the assassination of popular newspaperman Pedro Joaquim Chamorro (husband of future president Violeta Chamorro de Barrios). The FSLN united and was able to bring together a wide base of opposition to the dictatorship and on July 19, 1979 Somoza was forced to leave Nicaragua for good.

After the "Triumph of the Revolution" the country was in ruins. Two and a half years of civil war had destroyed the economic infrastructure and what remained of the National Treasury was looted by Somoza on his way out the door (he was killed in Paraguay in 1980). Nonetheless, progressive reconstruction campaigns made great strides forward. Literacy and health care, especially in the countryside, improved dramatically and won awards from the U.N. Under the new "Mixed Economy" (state-owned basic life support industries, and everything else privately-owned), a land reform program was begun and unions and self-help cooperatives were encouraged, as was profit-sharing and worker participation in decision-making.

During 1980 and 1981, the CIA re-grouped former National Guardsmen into a new mercenary army called the "Contra" (short for *Contrarevolucionario*--counter-revolutionary). Meanwhile, on the Atlantic Coast, the new Sandinista government's inexperience in cultural matters pertaining to the ethnic populations led to a series of confrontations and eventually broiled into armed conflict. The CIA fueled this fire by supplying the mostly-Misquito rebels with guns and logistical support. The indigenous armed resistance was fighting for a return to Misquito "traditional" hegemonic but they were soon incorporated into the counterrevolution. By 1982 the Contra War was in full swing and Nicaragua was the "threat of a good example" for other Central American countries, each confronting its own revolutionary movement.

Contra targets were not military bases. They were health care and literacy workers, who were systematically murdered, and schools, hospitals, potable water projects, rural electrification projects, which were blown up, and farm cooperatives--especially coffee farms since coffee was the country's main export—were burned.

In 1984, amidst all this destruction, the first free and open elections were held in Nicaragua and the FSLN won a landslide victory. International observers acclaimed the elections and immediately recognized their results but President Reagan obscured election day news with the announcement that Nicaragua had just received Soviet MIG

attack warplanes capable of mounting air strikes against the US. In a low-key news conference some months later, Reagan administration officials admitted that the MIG acquisition comment was a flat-out lie but that didn't stop Congress from imposing a total economic and financial embargo against Nicaragua in May 1985. The country was now in the midst of a life-draining war, its economy was a shambles, and some of the economic decisions by Sandinista officials further exacerbated problems.

However, in 1986 Nicaragua won a \$17 billion ruling by the World Court against the US for damages caused by the Contra War and the internationally illegal embargo. This historic ruling was the first-ever World Court decision in favor of a small, underdeveloped nation over an overdeveloped world superpower—even though it has never been paid! As well, negotiations for a "Separate Peace" on the Atlantic Coast brought about the creation of an Autonomy Law for the ethnic groups living there. This law was globally unique in issues relating to indigenous cultures.

In 1987 all five Central American countries signed the Arias Peace Plan and by 1988 the Contra Army was no longer a major military force and now had to maintain itself in smaller units operating in Nicaragua's interior. As well, international pressure for the US to abandon its war of attrition against Nicaragua was mounting.

By the mid-1980s a burgeoning new International Solidarity Movement that was made up of non-governmental and grassroots organizations from around the world was working in Nicaragua in support of the revolution's project of self-determination. Hundreds of thousands of individuals have demonstrated their sympathies to the Nicaraguan cause by working and living with the Nicaraguan people and some paid for this solidarity with their lives: Ben Linder was one and he was assassinated by the Contras in April, 1987. Ben was the only US citizen killed by the Contras during the war. At a news conference some time later, Vice-President Bush responded to a question about seeking justice for Linder's murder by saying "Frankly, he was supporting the wrong side."

In March, 1989, in an effort to stop a spiraling hyper-inflation and unable to get help from the international financial sector, the Nicaraguan government carried out a program of "Compactación" whereby half of its civil servants were laid off and government spending was slashed by 40%. At the same time, the US shifted its focus to "civic resistance" in preparation for the elections coming up in 1990 and, with great difficulty, the US Embassy managed to form the UNO Alliance (Union of National Opposition) which was comprised of 14 out of Nicaragua's 24 political parties. The political orientations of these parties ranged from extreme right wing, ultra-conservative, and Atlantic coast indigenous, to the extreme left wing Marxist-Leninists.

The 1990 elections were hailed throughout the world as an exemplary exercise in democratic voting, at least on the technical side. Former US President Jimmy Carter and former US Attorney General Elliot Richardson (during the Nixon Administration) were both quoted as saying how they wished elections in the US could be so open and fair. But while the structure of the elections was honest, the campaign was dirty. In the end, the US threat of a continued blockade and funding for the Contras gave the UNO Coalition a 54% to 49% electoral victory over the Sandinistas.

The UNO's presidential candidate, Violeta Chamorro, soon realized how difficult it was to run a country so divided. While the new administration dismantled practically everything the Sandinista Revolution stood for, especially respect for the poor majority of the country, it also alienated itself from its own power base in the UNO. On some issues the Chamorro government found it both expedient and productive to side with the Sandinistas while on other issues it sided with the conservative right on. This led to charges of treason by both the right and the left.

However, there are some bright spots. As Nicaragua has stepped away from the international political limelight, many development organizations and local groups have found a more effective space to work in. The growth of a middle and upper class has also increased the circulation of goods and services and this, to some extent, has increased in-country marketing possibilities for Nicaragua's craftspeople.

In the late 90s Nicaragua endured the extremely corrupt administration of Arnaldo Aleman, who has been put under “house arrest” by his successor Enrique Bolanos. However, Aleman’s house” is a mansion and Aleman regularly appears in public.

In 2006 the Sandanista leader, Daniel Ortega, was elected president, due mainly to a split in the opposition Liberal party, though Ortega still maintained much support in rural areas. Since then he has formed strong ties with other leftist Latin American leaders while remaining friendly to other foreign investors. Nicaragua has recently been touted as the next Costa Rica: a warm, safe place for bargain real estate and inexpensive domestic help.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

We encourage you to read more on the history of the Sandinista Revolution and all that has followed, as well as on development issues in the developing world. The following is a brief list of websites, magazines and newsletters are best):

### **Websites**

The Nicaragua network: [www.nicanet.org](http://www.nicanet.org)

ENVIO: <http://www.envio.org.ni/index.en>. ENVIO is a social, political and economic analysis publication from the Jesuit Univerisity

### **Books**

*Nicaragua, The land of Sandino* by Thomas Walker. Walker is an expert academician on Nicaragua and this book is short and very readable.

*Rosa of the Wild Grass: The Story of a Nicaraguan Family* by Fiona MacIntosh

*Faith & Joy: Memoirs of a Revolutionary Priest* by Fernando Cardenal, by S.J. and Kathy McBride

*After The Fire's Gone Out* by Robert Stone. A look at both sides of the revolution and Contra war

*In Focus* by Hazel Plunkett. A good overview of Nicaragua

*The Death of Ben Linder* by Joan Kruckewit . Good documentation of US foreign policy.

*Sandino's Daughter Revisited* by Margaret Randall. Testimonies of Nicaraguan women involved in the Revolution,

*What Difference Could a Revolution Make?* by Joseph Collins

*And Also Teach Them to Read* by Judy Butler & Sheryl Hirson

*The Nicaraguan Reader* by Peter Rosset & John Vandermeer

*Bearing Witness, Building Bridges* by Melissa Evans

*With the Contras* by Christopher Dickey

*The Gospel in Solentiname* by Ernesto Cardenal

*Open Veins of Latin America* by Eduardo Galeano

*War Against the Poor* by Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer

*Bridging the Global Gap* by Medea Benjamin & Andrea Freedman

**INGLES\ESPANOL VOCABULARIO DE CERAMICA**  
**ENGLISH\SPANISH CERAMIC VOCABULARY**

**Hello and Goodbye                      Saludos y Despedidas**

|  |                      |
|--|----------------------|
| Hello  | Buenas               |
| Greeting when passing<br>on the street but not<br>stopping to talk | Adios                |
| Good, thanks to God  | Bien, gracias a Dios |
| Nice to meet you   | Mucho gusto          |
| Come in  | Pase Adelante        |
| Sit down   | Sientense            |
| Goodbye  | Va Pues              |
| Have a good trip   | Que le vaya bien     |
| Do it!   | Dale                 |

**General Phrases**

I have a question...  
 Can I take your photo?  
 This piece is very beautiful  
 How much does this cost?  
 Right now (is used instead of ahora)  
 “thing” when cannot remember  
     something specific.the name of  
 Cool  
 cat calls  
 “cheers”, a drinking toast

**Phrases en General**

Tengo una pregunta...  
 ¿Puedo tomar su foto?  
 Esta pieza esta bien bonita  
 ¿Cuanto vale esto/a?  
 Ahorrita  
 chunche/cuestion  
 twani  
 piropos  
 Para arriba, para abajo,  
 para al centro, para al dentro

**People**

potter  
thrower

**La Persona**

un artesano  
un tornero

**Raw Materials**

ashes  
borax  
clay  
cement  
chrome  
clay  
cobalt  
concrete  
colorant  
copper  
earth, dirt  
feldspar  
flux  
frit  
glass  
grog  
iron  
kaolin  
lead  
manganese  
plaster  
quartz  
silica  
sand  
talc

**Materia Prima**

las cenizas  
el boraxo  
el adobe  
el cemento  
el cromo  
el barro  
el cobalto  
el concreto  
el colorante  
el cobre  
la tierra  
el feldespató  
el fundente  
la frita  
el vidrio  
el chamote  
el hierro  
el caolín  
el plomo  
el manganeso  
el yeso  
el cuarzo  
el sílice  
la arena  
el talco

|       |         |
|-------|---------|
| water | el agua |
| zinc  | el zinc |

### **Processing**

|            |             |
|------------|-------------|
| to dig     | cavar       |
| drying bin | el tenedero |
| dust       | el polvo    |
| to grind   | triturar    |
| grinder    | el esmeríl  |
| mill       | el molino   |
| to mill    | (moler)     |
| to process | procesar    |
| storage    | almacenar   |
| store room | bodega      |

### **Procesamiento**

### **Making Pots**

|             |              |
|-------------|--------------|
| to burnish  | alujar       |
| to center   | centrar      |
| chemistry   | el químico   |
| coil        | la cola      |
| composition | el compuesto |
| to cut      | cortar       |
| design      | el diseño    |
| dry         | seco         |
| to dry      | secar        |
| fine        | fino         |
| handmade    | hecho a mano |
| heavy       | pesado       |
| hole        | el hueco     |
| jigger      | la tarreja   |
| leatherhard | camagua      |

### **Haciendo Ceramica**

|                  |                 |
|------------------|-----------------|
| light (weight)   | liviano         |
| mould            | el molde        |
| to open          | abrir           |
| plaster          | el yeso         |
| potter           | el/la ceramista |
| kick (the wheel) | dar vuelta      |
| rough (surface)  | bronco          |
| shiny            | brillante       |
| smooth (surface) | lisa            |
| to smooth        | lisar           |
| sticky           | pegoso          |
| technique        | el técnico      |
| thick            | grueso          |
| thin             | delgado         |
| to throw         | tornear         |
| wheel (potter's) | el torno        |
| wedge            | amasar          |
| wet              | mojado          |
| to wet           | mojar           |
| wide             | ancho           |
| width            | el ancho        |
| weight           | el peso         |

### **Decoration**

|            |                     |
|------------|---------------------|
| black      | el negro            |
| brown      | el café             |
| to burnish | alujar, lustrar     |
| to draw    | dibujar             |
| engobe     | el tague, el engobe |
| glaze      | el esmalte          |
| gram       | el gramo            |

### **Decoracion**

|                |                    |
|----------------|--------------------|
| to grind       | moler              |
| flashing       | la mancha          |
| matte          | máte               |
| ounce          | la onza            |
| to paint       | pintar             |
| paint          | la pintura         |
| to polish      | abrillantar, polir |
| pound (weight) | la libra           |
| powder         | el polvo           |
| red            | el rojo            |
| to sand        | lujar              |
| shiny          | brillante          |

### **Kilns**

|                 |                 |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| arch            | el arco brickel |
| ladrillo burner | el quemador     |
| catenary        | el catenareo    |
| chamber         | la cámara       |
| chimney         | la chimenea     |
| door            | el puerto       |
| elements        | los elementos   |
| furniture       | los postes      |
| insulation      | el aisladore    |
| mortar          | el lodo         |
| plug            | el macho        |
| refractory      | el refractario  |
| shelf           | la plancha      |

### **Los Hornos**

### **Firing**

|       |             |
|-------|-------------|
| ashes | las cenizas |
|-------|-------------|

### **Quemada**

|                |                     |
|----------------|---------------------|
| ash pit        | el cenicero         |
| bisque         | biscocho            |
| centigrade     | el centígrado       |
| coals          | la grása            |
| coffee hulls   | la cáscara de café  |
| color          | el color            |
| combustion     | la combustión       |
| cone           | el cono             |
| corn husk      | la cascara          |
| crack          | la grieta           |
| crud           | la escoria          |
| current, draft | el corriente        |
| damp           | humedo              |
| electricity    | la electricidad     |
| fast           | rapido              |
| fire           | el fuego            |
| a firing       | la quemada          |
| flame          | la llama            |
| gas            | el gas              |
| heat           | el calor            |
| hot            | caliente            |
| red hot        | rojo vivo           |
| load, to load  | la cargada (cargar) |
| melt           | fundir oxygen       |
|                | el oxígeno          |
| piece of wood  | el palo             |
| reduction      | la reducción        |
| sawdust        | el aserrín          |
| smoke          | el humo             |
| temperature    | la temperatura      |
| withstand      | aguantar            |

|           |           |
|-----------|-----------|
| wood      | la madera |
| fire wood | la leña   |
| zero      | cero      |

### **Pottery**

### **Ceramica**

|                 |                                 |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| Artwork         | la artesanía                    |
| ash tray        | el cenicero                     |
| basket          | la canasta                      |
| base            | la base                         |
| beads           | las cuentas                     |
| bowl            | la escudilla                    |
| box             | la caja                         |
| brick           | el ladrillo                     |
| casserole       | la cazuela                      |
| coffee pot      | la cafetera                     |
| creamers        | la lechera                      |
| cup             | la tasa                         |
| doll            | la muñeca                       |
| dinnerware set  | la vajilla                      |
| glass (tumbler) | el vaso                         |
| ear rings       | las chapas                      |
| fruit bowl      | la frutera                      |
| goblet          | la copa                         |
| handle          | la asa, el oreja                |
| jar             | la jarra                        |
| lid             | la tapa, la tapadera, el tapone |
| mold            | el molde                        |
| mouth           | la boca                         |
| mug             | el tarro                        |
| beer mug        | el cervecero                    |
| nativity scene  | el nacimiento                   |

|                   |              |
|-------------------|--------------|
| piggy bank        | la alcáncia  |
| pitcher           | el pichél    |
| planter           | la masatera  |
| plate             | el plato     |
| piece             | la pieza     |
| cooking plate     | el comal     |
| pot               | la olla      |
| roof tile         | la téja      |
| round             | redondo      |
| sculpture         | la escultura |
| sugar pot         | la azucarera |
| tea pot           | la tetera    |
| tile              | el azulejo   |
| soup tureen       | la sopera    |
| vase              | el florero   |
| water jar (large) | el tinajon   |
| water jar (small) | la pichinga  |

### **Tools**

|              |                    |
|--------------|--------------------|
| ball bearing | el balinero        |
| ball mill    | la molina de balas |
| brush        | el pincel          |
| bucket       | el balde corn      |
| cob          | la olote           |
| grease       | la grasa           |
| wheel head   | la cabezuela       |
| knife        | el cuchillo        |
| leather      | el cuero           |
| machete      | el machete         |
| nail         | el clavo           |
| needle       | la aguja           |

### **Las Hierramientas**

|             |               |
|-------------|---------------|
| rib         | la media luna |
| rock        | la piedra     |
| scale       | la balanza    |
| screen      | el tamiz      |
| seed or nut | la semilla    |
| shelf       | el estante    |
| sponge      | la esponja    |
| stick       | el palo       |
| tube        | el tubo       |
| wash basin  | el lavabo     |
| wheel       | el torno      |
| wire        | el alambre    |