

Williams, Alicia

Alicia Williams
Simulation Paper
Ethnic Identities in Latin America
Mirna Cunningham

Mirna Cunningham is a Miskito doctor that was captured and raped by "Nicaraguan contra rebels" (The Guardian, 10/20/1998) who sang hymns while committing these crimes. She described this incident, as "...the people who participated in that were religious fanatics, praying and singing. It made me understand in which way my people were being manipulated." (The Guardian, 10/20/1998). By experiencing the violence first hand along with her family and many others, she has become a prominent figure in the FSLN. As an educated Miskito woman, Cunningham strived to improve the conditions of the Miskitos. She acted as a sort of mediator between the Miskitos and the Nicaraguan government. She longed to see the education and healthcare of the Miskito civilization improved. As a Sadinista and a Miskito, I, along with my family and others of the community, have endured the violence that has been at the hands of certain agencies claiming to act on the behalf of the Nicaraguan government. I feel that in order for the Sadinista civilization and the Nicaraguan government to coincide on this sacred land, the violence and selfishness must stop. Nothing is being accomplished by the violence except adding gasoline to an already burning fire. I think that by improving the education of the citizens of the Sadinista community, the Nicaraguan government will in turn observe less hostile feelings towards them. This can also be accomplished by improving the healthcare that is provided as well. By obtaining autonomy, the Sadinistas will be able to fix problems while also continuing to contribute to the economy. With these things said, I have read the proposed Draft Law on Autonomy proposed by the government of Nicaragua. First, I would like to say how pleased I am to see the Nicaraguan government making the effort to improve the conditions that the Sadinistas are presently living in. After reading the proposal, however, I do have some concerns as to the implementation and protection of the actions that are presented. I will just list them as they appear on the draft. II. Principles and Objectives of the Regional Autonomy 2. I also agree that these things should be fought against as a country as well. However, I do feel that it should also be brought to the attention of all that my people are rebelling against the racism that we believe has been instilled by representatives of the Nicaraguan government. The question that I have is that unless we are able to cease the fighting how will any of these very important programs be implemented. 5. While it is important for a country to have unity, the unity cannot be obtained until the citizens of that country are appeased in their concerns. In the case of the Sadinistas, these concerns are violence, education, healthcare, equal rights, and autonomy. 6. We also agree that we should have the right to practice our beliefs, we have however run into opposition that has claimed to be fulfilling the judgment of the Nicaraguan government. We see this as a concern, how to ensure that everyone is able to conduct their lives in the way that they choose without fearing some type of repercussion that ultimately ends in violence. 7 and 8. As a Miskito, land is extremely important, when discussing the land "that they have traditionally occupied", I am concerned as to what this land appears to be. My people have in some instances been forcefully removed from their land so that the land can be used to benefit the economy. When this happens, we have found that there are resources being taken from the land, but there is nothing that is being put back in. How may a civilization survive on land that is unable to feed it? As in the case of #8 in the proposal, "these rights will be guaranteed effectively and legally by the corresponding authorities". This is an option that I support, however I feel that there will be conflicts in trusting the authorities to be in the best interest of my people. 9. Once again, By giving the people the right to the use of their resources is a step in the right direction for peace, however I ask again how a community can survive on the land that has already benefited others and has nothing else to give. 10. With the unity of the country, I am certain that the national economy will begin to be prosperous as it once was. I am concerned though as to whether it will benefit each person of whatever background in the same way. By this I mean, in the past the economy has benefited, but the community has not. I ask that the reinvestment in the region will include the Miskitos who are heavily involved with the

community. 11 and 12. Equal rights have been a concern of my people for many years. In these trying times, it has been evident that my people have not been happy with their rights. By having equal rights, we ask what does that include? We are glad that #12 has been stated, as this is a concern of ours. We feel that everyone should be treated equal regardless of his or her ancestry. 13. As equality is our goal, a concern arises in what or rather should I say who is considered popular interest. In the past, my people, the Sadinistas, have not been considered in the popular interests. As citizens of this country who have been contributing to the national economy we ask that our interest also be considered as the popular interest. As for section III, I will make a general statement. While we are glad to see that the government is considering the Sadinista community and autonomy, we ask that you keep in mind that as an autonomous government we feel that we are able to establish the positions that will best fulfill the needs of this community. With the governments support in the fact that we can do this, we are sure that many of the problem will be fixed in due time, with due patience. As we are glad to see these first steps being taken by the Nicaraguan government, we only hope that we will be able to obtain decisions that will benefit both parties including improvement in education, improvement in healthcare, a cease to the violence conducted by both parties. We also are concerned as to the protection of these laws. We hope that both parties are able to ensure honest cooperation at all times. With these things accomplished along with many more including the acceptance of the Sadinista community, we are hopeful that Nicaragua as a country will grow and improve in the eyes of others. We hope that "the dreams and ideals of the Sadinistas that have motivated a generation are not betrayed" (BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 2/6/1995).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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