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# Nicaragua: Surviving The Legacy Of U.S. Policy (English And Spanish Edition)



## Synopsis

Photographer Paul Dix worked in Nicaragua with Witness for Peace from 1985 to 1990 documenting the impacts of US foreign policy on the citizens of Nicaragua. In 2002 he and Pam Fitzpatrick began returning to Nicaragua, searching for a particular 100 of those photographed by Paul in the 1980s. This bilingual book focuses on 30 of those individuals. It includes photographs of each from both the 80s and the present, short background information for each person, segments of their testimonies, and in five cases, color drawings made by these individuals as children, depicting their memories of the attacks they survived. The book includes a short overview of the Contra War in general as well as a more indepth overview of the long history of US involvement in the affairs of Nicaragua.

Prologues by Gioconda Belli and Richard Boren and history of US involvement by Mark Lester.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

A photograph freezes time in two dimensions, but good photographs take the viewer beyond those limits to tell a story, evoke emotions, provoke a response. When Paul Dix lived in Nicaragua in the 1980s, photographing the Contra war for the U.S.-based Witness for Peace, his images often conveyed the pathos of a nation whose revolutionary hopes were turned to ashes by an empire that struck back with brutal efficiency. Dix's images mothers at funerals, children without limbs, school-age youth with guns instead of books faithfully recorded the effects of war on a small country. You can't view the images without feeling anger or pity or even wonder. Yet his work was more than the conflict pornography we've come to expect from war zones. He also captured the beauty of Nicaragua's rugged countryside and the dignity of its hardy peasants. His collection of images remains a remarkable contribution to understanding, at an intimately personal level, a very

painful period in Central America's political history. And now he has done more. Along with Pam Fitzpatrick, an activist who spent those years organizing in the United States to stop the war, Dix has taken some of his more iconic images and allowed us to meet their subjects again, two decades later, in a new book. *Nicaragua: Surviving the Legacy of U.S. Policy* is a monumental contribution that fleshes out those people we've seen in just two dimensions, providing us a unique window onto the country, helping us understand what happened in the 1980s, and what has happened since. Dix and Fitzpatrick made four trips to Central America over seven years, spending 18 months tracking down people for whom they often didn't even have a name, just a grainy black-and-white image from a fleeting moment years before. Determined detective work eventually led them to almost everyone they were looking for. During these reencounters, Dix would photograph them again, and he and Fitzpatrick would record their stories of what had happened in the intervening years.

Sometimes these are powerful narratives of how people overcame both personal obstacles and social strictures. Other times they are stories with no happy ending, of people left irreparably damaged by the violence. There is no common thread to their stories except that they are all victims in one way or another of a war organized and financed by the U.S. government. The book includes photos of 30 people. Possessing wounds both visible and invisible, they represent Nicaragua's complicated demographics, including those who are still loyal Sandinistas and others who blame the Sandinistas for everything. Still others, consumed with daily survival, long ago grew tired of ascribing political responsibility for their plight. The bilingual text summarizes their stories, and their testimonies appear in the back of the book. Some of the stories remind us of the feistiness of Nicaraguans, of the revolutionary spirit that has outlasted the political compromises and corruption of the revolutionary party. Dix photographed Jamileth Chavarría in 1987 as she leaned on a cross at the burial of her mother, who was killed by the Contras on the muddy road into the remote jungle outpost of Bocana de Paiwas. A 2002 photograph shows Chavarría at the microphone in a women's radio station in Paiwas. Her accompanying testimony tells of how she's creatively combating the violence against women embodied in Nicaraguan culture as well as in the policies of both government and church. --North American Congress on Latin America's extraordinary book of stunning black and white images of the men and boys, women and girls, who lost limbs and loved ones and managed to pick up the pieces of their lives and move on after 10 years of devastating conflict. . . . unique and riveting . . . Seldom do world-class war photographers get a chance to go back years later to follow up on what happened to the people in their dramatic images. Paul Dix, a staff photographer for the organization Witness for Peace from 1985 to 1990, documented the suffering caused by the U.S. foreign policy decision to arm and train counterrevolutionaries fighting

against the Sandinista government, which overthrew Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza in 1979. In 2002 he and Pam Fitzpatrick, a Witness for Peace colleague, returned to Nicaragua in search of 100 people who were subjects of Mr. Dix's photographs, people whose lives had been irrevocably changed by war. The result of their 17-month odyssey is an extraordinary book of stunning black and white images of the men and boys, women and girls, who lost limbs and loved ones and managed to pick up the pieces of their lives and move on after 10 years of devastating conflict. The book documents the follow-up with 30 people whose stories had particularly moved Mr. Dix. The then and now shots are displayed alongside brief quotes from the survivors, very personal reflections on how they managed to live through the violence and somehow find the courage and resilience to heal and hope for a better future. Not only do the images burn into the reader's consciousness, but the simple words of the victims also make powerful statements about the very real horrors of war. The testimonies and the brief explanatory text are in English and Spanish. One of the people Mr. Dix and Ms. Fitzpatrick searched for and found was Felix Pedro Espinales Mendoza, whom Mr. Dix had photographed in 1987. The memories of a nighttime contra attack on his village still haunt him. And there, my brother and I walk on top of the dead. I touch the hands, I touch the blown-apart bodies, everything. . . . And only I, my brother, and a little girl, very young, survived the attack. (Bocana de Paiwas, March 1, 2005). Dispersed throughout the black and white imagery are children's drawings, sporadic bursts of color of houses on fire, bodies lying on the ground, and tears running down simple oval faces. This unique and riveting book belongs in every library across the Americas, on all the desks of foreign policy decisionmakers in Washington, and in the hands of human rights activists everywhere. An eloquent introduction by internationally renowned Nicaraguan poet Giacinda Belli underscores the book's importance: Let us open this book, let our eyes wander over the luminous black and white of these photographs, over the tenderness yet also the iron will to live expressed by these people whom the war damaged but could not destroy. And let us reflect on the need to forever put an end to a violence which belittles us all. Reviewer Kathy Barber Hersh is a 30-year veteran of television and documentary production, including five years as a foreign correspondent for ABC News in Latin America. She devotes substantial time to youth advocacy and chaired a coalition that succeeded in introducing mandatory bullying prevention training in Florida public schools. She is also the author of the book, *Protect Yourself From Crime*, and has published widely in both magazines and newspapers. She covered the war in Nicaragua in 1978-1979 as a correspondent for ABC News; she also lived in Mexico for five years as a correspondent for ABC News. --New York Journal of Books

Paul Dix is a professional photographer and has been published in major newspapers, magazines, books, and educational media. Documenting social justice and U.S. foreign policy issues are his primary interests, but he has also worked as an extreme sports photographer and spent years mountain climbing in Latin America. Paul divides his time between Montana and Oregon. Pamela Fitzpatrick worked as the North Pacific regional coordinator of Witness for Peace from 1985 to 1993. She has also worked as director of the Lane County W.I.C. program and had a business representing people being denied Social Security disability benefits. She also divides her time between Oregon and Montana.

Very well done! Large format to appreciate the images better, the text puts a story behind each image (and is available in Spanish and English dual versions as well). The "before and after" comparison brings out the "human cost of suffering - as governments' political bickering uses real lives as pawns" in their chess game! It is a REAL eye-opener for all of us to consider! I was in Nicaragua and met some of the books' subjects that lost family members! It grabs you by "the short hairs" - so one will get down off the political ride and look at victims IN the eyes!

The authors initially went to Nicaragua in 1983 with the group Witness for Peace in order to document the lives of rural people whose lives and villages were caught-up in the Contras War against their government. The attacks on these powerless rural folk by the U.S.-backed Contras army of ex-Somoza Dictatorship supporters were cruel and unjust, as they attempted to return to the 40+ years of oligarchy authoritarian rule. The photos of Paul Dix and the stories of their time with these people are a major part of the book, as are their stories and photographs of many of the same people nearly 20 years later. It is a book of exceptionally outstanding documentary photos and stories that contrast the changes that had taken place among these common people over that time span. I very strongly recommend this book, both for its visual aesthetics and its moving stories.

I would suggest getting to know the photographer's work before buying the book. Personally, I loved the angle the author has used to compose this book. Using pictures from the past and relatively recent ones while telling the story of the people during that period. However, some pictures are a little bit crude, and definitely reflect the violence of the conflict. If you are interested in that particular period of Nicaragua's history, the book is great. If you want to know more about the country today, or looking for beautiful pictures of this amazing country, other books might be better suited for that purpose.

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