



# “Left on the web: The digital afterlives and connective memories of 1980s US Nicaragua solidarity”

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**Abstract** This article examines the digital afterlives of 1980s US Nicaragua activism through the online platform and blog *NicaNotes*, arguing that remembering past activism online is not only inherently political but also creates new *digital memoryscapes* that forge particular understandings of the past. Drawing on (digital) narratology and Andrew Hoskins’ concept of connective memory, this study demonstrates how *NicaNotes* mobilizes traditions of autobiographical storytelling and uses digital affordances to produce a digital memoryscape: A multimodal environment where past experiences are recalibrated across time and space, linking dispersed activist communities and shaping collective identity. The analysis finds that by intertwining digitized life narrative conventions with born-digital affordances a distinct digital activist genre emerges. This grants access to a formerly vocal generation of US leftists that has shifted from letter writing to keyboard activism; hence, a “Nicaragua activism 2.0,” with Nicaragua serving as both a mnemonic anchor and a synecdoche for broader anti-imperialist debates. *NicaNotes* not only preserves historical memory but actively repurposes it to engage contemporary political concerns, mobilizing support for Nicaragua’s current authoritarian regime and ultimately illuminating the enduring legacies and complexities of US–Nicaragua relations.

**Keywords** US left · Nicaraguan Revolution · Campism · Digital memoryscapes · Digital life narratives · Connective memory · Memory and activism

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# 1 “Nicaragua won’t be stopped!”<sup>1</sup> Nicaragua activism over time

## 1.1 A short history of US Nicaragua solidarity

“The Revolution won’t be stopped,” reads a poster on the US-American activist blog *NicaNotes*, “Nicaragua advances despite U.S. unconventional warfare” (*NicaNotes* “Homepage”). Several things are striking about this provocative poster retaining the red and black—the colors of the Nicaraguan Sandinistas. On the one hand, both its colors and content reference Nicaragua’s past, including the 1979–1990 Revolution and US interference that intensified the Contra War. On the other hand, the poster calls for future resistance, depicting an ultimately victorious struggle through the image of a woman waving the FSLN flag.<sup>2</sup> This article argues that *NicaNotes*’ call for resistance is inseparable from a call to remember, making the platform a *digital memoryscape* rather than a neutral repository.

The blog mostly evokes a time when, after the 1979 Sandinista Revolution, Nicaragua had become both a beacon of hope and a site of ideological struggle for many in the USA. The Nicaraguan Revolution and the ensuing Contra War mobilized a Nicaragua Peace and Solidarity Movement among left-leaning Americans, whereas the Reagan administration’s backing of the Contra counterrevolution ignited right-wing actors ranging from mercenaries to Christian Right missionaries. The former arose from broader peace and anti-imperialist currents, while forming a distinct identity centered on Nicaragua (Baier 2025b).<sup>3</sup>

During this period, US activists used letters and autobiographical accounts to provide firsthand perspectives on the Nicaraguan Revolution, among others to highlight Sandinista achievements while exposing the atrocities of the Contra War and the Reagan administration’s role. Through these personal life writings, they aimed not only to document events but also to mobilize support. Thus, a movement emerged that, from its very beginnings, was strongly shaped by and in turn produced through its mediality a phenomenon that continues to characterize the remaining scattered groups of former Nicaraguan activists, as the analysis shows.

More than 40 years later, the hot phase of the Nicaraguan Revolution and the Contra War are long considered over; when the Sandinistas were defeated in the general elections in February 1990, interest in Nicaragua faded (Hedges 1990; Martin 2012, p. 44). However, since April 2018, when protests against social reforms escalated into deadly clashes with Nicaraguan government forces, and former Sandinista hero Daniel Ortega turned into an increasingly authoritarian president, long-standing US solidarity networks reactivated (Baier 2025b). The once unified solidarity movement

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<sup>1</sup> The quote originates from a post published on the blog *NicaNotes*; discussed further below.

<sup>2</sup> The Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) is a leftist political movement and party in Nicaragua, founded in 1961, originally as a revolutionary guerrilla organization opposing Nicaragua’s Somoza dictatorship.

<sup>3</sup> This argument is developed in greater detail in the author’s PhD dissertation *Bookshelf Battlegrounds: Life Writing and the Left-Right Divide of 1980s US Nicaragua Activism* (Baier 2025a), which examines the 1980s US Nicaragua Peace and Solidarity Movement through activists’ life-writing practices, alongside an analysis of how US New Right factions, such as mercenaries and Christian Right missionaries, recall their involvement with the Nicaraguan Contras.

fractured into two opposing camps: One breaking with Nicaragua's Ortega/Murillo regime and calling for an end to authoritarian rule, and another continuing to support the regime by framing the protests as US-orchestrated destabilization attempts and largely dismissing reports of human rights abuses (Baier 2025b; Goett 2018).

## 1.2 *NicaNotes* and digital life narratives

The latter group is particularly prominent online: Despite the significant 2018 rupture, twenty-first century blogs still cover 1980s Nicaragua-related topics. A key hub is *NicaNotes*, whose contributors call it "a blog for Nicaragua activists and those interested in Nicaragua" (*NicaNotes* "Homepage"). The activist blog and newsletter is published by the Alliance for Global Justice (AfGJ), a US-based nonprofit activist organization focusing on solidarity with Nicaragua and other global justice issues,<sup>4</sup> and offers news on and analysis of Nicaragua solidarity. Even though *NicaNotes* has existed since 2012, the blog, which is operated by activist Nan McCurdy, has become particularly active since the 2018 protests.<sup>5</sup> It covers five main themes: Sandinista achievements, critiques of leftists, US imperialism, the 2018 so-called "coup," and memories of 1980s Nicaragua, alongside materials such as posters and open-access books (*NicaNotes* "Publications").

*NicaNotes* started its specific 1980s memory project in October 2024 with a call for memories, and regularly publishes memory-related stories, in which individual activists recall their experiences in 1980s Sandinista Nicaragua. From a present perspective, they write about their daily life back then, the generosity of the Nicaraguans they encountered, the hardships of living in a war-torn country; they condemn the Reagan government and praise the courage of the Sandinistas. Those can be considered *digital activist life narratives*, that is, "acts of self-representation" that organize around an activist cause and thereby produce snippets of lives that "are created and consumed within [a medium] framed by digital data" (Smith and Watson 2014, p. 70, 71; Hardey 2004, p. 185). Selected examples from these sources constitute the core sample for the following analysis.

## 1.3 The narrativity and materiality of digital memoryscapes

"Many of us are getting old and some of us have died! Leave a legacy!" reads *NicaNotes'* call for memories (Hoyt). What is sought, however, is not just legacy but the active production of activist memory. As I argue in the following, remembering Nicaragua activism is thus not neutral. Rather *NicaNotes* reconstructs and mobilizes memory for contemporary political purposes and thus engages in digital activism (Merrill et al. 2020, p. 14).

<sup>4</sup> The AfGJ originated from the Nicaragua Network, founded in 1979 to support the Sandinista Revolution. After expanding its activism beyond the 1980s, it was renamed AfGJ. (AfGJ "Our Mission"). The organization is critically monitored by groups such as InfluenceWatch (linked to the Capital Research Center) and the Union of International Associations (UIA) (Influence Watch; Union of International Associations).

<sup>5</sup> As its first article published on 4 December 2012 shows (*NicaNotes* "Nicaragua News Bulletin"); see also the mobilization of renewed activism and the considerable increase in Nicaragua-related articles since April 2018 (Kaufmann).

For its analysis, this article employs both (digital) narratology as well as Andrew Hoskins' concept of connective memory linked to broader theories of platform materiality. While drawing on mnemonic traditions prevalent in the former 1980s Nicaragua activism community, *NicaNotes*' digital realm then recalibrates time and space: Its online architecture layers multiple historical temporalities while linking dispersed communities (Hoskins 2011, p. 29). Thus, a specific mode of digital autobiographical storytelling emerges in which both conventional, yet *digitized*, life narrative techniques intertwine with specific *born-digital* architectures and thus produces particular mediated representations of past events linked to present issues.<sup>6</sup> This observation thus also makes a contribution to the ongoing theorization of digital life narrative studies and the oftentimes surprising afterlives of activist memories in the digital realm that, as this article reveals, can become *digital memoryscapes*.<sup>7</sup> Digital memoryscapes are understood here to be multimodal environments whose form and content actively shape remembrance and collective identity by facilitating connection, interaction, and memory work around a shared historical reference point.<sup>8</sup>

The following then explores how *NicaNotes* combines life-writing practices rooted in 1980s Nicaragua activism with the affordances of an online blog, producing shared felt pasts that sustain and consolidate a Nicaragua activism community 2.0 that now exclusively operates online. Finally, the article situates *NicaNotes* within broader connective memory infrastructures, showing how its recollections contribute to the self-fashioning of a distinct activist generation centered on Nicaragua as both mnemonic anchor and synecdoche for anti-imperialist and peace related issues.<sup>9</sup> In doing so, the platform connects memories of 1980s activism to present-day political concerns, also mobilizing support for Nicaragua's current authoritarian regime.

## 2 Still feeling it, still feeling us: The felt pasts and digital connectivities of 1980s Nicaragua activism on *NicaNotes*

### 2.1 Dear Compas 2.0: Shared felt pasts and the making of digital audiences

"I've probably got those syllables wrong after all these years," writes activist Kathy Floerke about her 1980s experiences in Northern Nicaragua (Floerke 2025). Although factual details may fade, the emotions tied to these memories remain vivid.

<sup>6</sup> For the distinction between digitized archives and born-digital archives in the context of digital life narratives see Smith and Watson (2020); for a discussion of digital autobiographical storytelling see, among others, Kreknin (2019) and Poletti (2011).

<sup>7</sup> For a discussion of digital life narratives and digital activist archives see, among others, Smith and Watson (2020), as well as Rigney and Salerno (2024) and Merrill et al. (2020) respectively.

<sup>8</sup> *Memoryscape* combines "memory" with the suffix "-scape" (from landscape). Toby Butler defines it as "a landscape interpreted through others' memories," making it a metaphor for collective memories embedded in and tied to specific places (Butler 2008, p. 223).

<sup>9</sup> Generation is understood here in a double sense: As both a shared understanding of an age cohort based on imagined similarities of past experiences and the identification of a generation through as a structural, generationally coded framework for interpreting historical events (Jureit 2012, p. 20).

Another activist, Brian Willson, for instance, recalls feeling “electricity up and down my body” when witnessing the Contra War (Willson 2025).<sup>10</sup> Such accounts, which dominate *NicaNotes*’ walk down memory lane, suggest that the force of these narratives might lie less in historical accuracy and more in their affective intensity.

Ulrike Jureit describes how people adopt others’ past experiences as part of their own identity, driven by a desire to identify and an emotional overinvestment that leads to an appropriation of history (Jureit 2012, p. 17, 18). By transferring this idea of *felt pasts* to the Nicaragua activism context, similar mechanisms seem to prevail, although what is at stake here is rather the re-remembering of *own* past experiences that are seemingly threatened by new present circumstances. Still, felt pasts in this context mean the replacement of factual knowledge with a useful feeling of the past (Jureit 2012, p. 21). In the 2020s, as the Contra War and revolutionary optimism faded, emotional engagement appears to sustain US activists’ collective memory of Nicaragua. Therefore, the written recollections of 1980s Nicaragua produce meaning and shape belonging in two ways: Through affective narration that evokes nostalgia and anguish (Ahmed 2004), and through the reappropriation of 1980s life-writing techniques.

**Between nostalgia and fear** Activist Dorothy Granada recalls her 1980s Nicaragua experiences in glorious terms. “Managua was amazing,” she recalls and describes “[s]ong, dance, painting of murals, cultural centers springing up everywhere” (2024).<sup>11</sup> She also remembers meeting the then dashing Daniel Ortega and reminisces about his “beauty while fighting a war” mentioning “his big eyeglasses, curly head of hair and beard” (Granada 2024).

Her recollections of 1980s Nicaragua are profoundly nostalgic; despite a Civil War going on, Granada focuses on narrating about the humanity and the health care system, singing with children, the literacy campaign, and friendly soldiers with “parrot[s] on [their] shoulder[s]” (2024). Svetlana Boym describes nostalgia as “a sentiment of loss and displacement, but [...] also a romance with one’s own fantasy” (2001; p.xiii). Granada’s romance with her own fantasy then highlights the accomplishment and success of the Nicaraguan Revolution, a dream that has—in her opinion—become reality. “We’re living out the Sandinista dream now,” she still claims in 2022, hence connecting past and present in one common imagination (Renk 2022).

However, recollections of the 1980s also include other emotions. In her account, activist Kathy Floerke remembers the fear and panic she felt amid the constant threat by Contra attacks. She narrates that even though “[t]he Witness for Peace house<sup>12</sup> was considered to be safe,” when “[one] night the sirens went off,” she got scared,

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<sup>10</sup> Brian Willson is a famous US Vietnam Veteran and peace activist who received martyr status in the Nicaragua Peace and Solidarity Movement after he got run over by a train and survived while protesting the Contra War in 1987 (Willson 2001).

<sup>11</sup> Granada is a famous figure in the remaining US Nicaragua Peaces and Solidarity Movement (MacFarquhar 2015).

<sup>12</sup> Witness for Peace (WfP) was one of the main US peace and solidarity organizations during the 1980s, which sent its members to Nicaragua to serve as human shields in the war zones.

and that “[her] fear crescendoed when [she] heard gunfire” (Floerke 2025). Despite her fear, she tells her imagined audience that “if I was killed [...] it would be a death I could feel good about, in solidarity with the Nicaraguan Revolution,” to convey the sincerity of her feelings (Floerke 2025). She uses affective narration, the fear and panic she felt, not only to convince her readers of the dangers of the situation that she and others were in, but to create closeness through affect. The imagined readers of 2025 are supposed to share a similar amount of sadness and outrage as Floerke experienced during the 1980s.

In accounts from the 1980s, personal stories of fear and despair of activists “[w]allow[ing] in [their] pain” (Polletta et al. 2021) fulfilled a distinct function, as they encouraged solidarity with Nicaraguans threatened by the Contras and their US allies, while also serving to demonstrate the narrators’ sincerity and exceptional activist commitment. As one activist put it rather cynically in a 1987 letter from Nicaragua, “[i]t seems to me that the US left is traditionally quicker and more willing to suffer horribly for its beliefs” (Francis 1987). In her view, a willingness to suffer is deeply ingrained in leftist thinking—and seemingly necessary for activism to be convincing. In 2025, Brian Willson also remembers his confrontation with the Contra War’s victims through the anguish he experiences: “I could see the faces of the dead. [...] I started crying, and Alejandra, [whom] I came to call my Nicaraguan mother[], held and comforted me” (Willson 2025). Thus, the written recollections are inherently non-neutral, capable of inspiring either sympathy or resentment, of creating a shared feeling of past times. Yet, felt pasts are produced not only through affective narration but also through distinct modes of communication.

**Dear (former) friends: Life writing 2.0** The created intimacy as a basis for affective responses is further enhanced by *NicaNotes*’ intimate narrative techniques that draw on the tradition of Nicaragua-related life writing that dominated US peace and solidarity circles during the 1980s. *NicaNotes*, for instance, uses intimate blog entries that mimic journal-writing, to create an effect of close temporal proximity of the time of writing and the experiences written about (Depkat 2019, p. 142; Smith and Watson 2010, p. 267). Thus, even though Floerke or Willson look back at their past experiences and their past selves, the testimonial-esque feature of the diary entries connects their memories of the Contra War to the time of writing. Moreover, as a diary suggests privacy and intimacy, using a diary in a publicly available blog serves as a device to create a sense of intimacy with the implied readers. The perceived closeness is also fostered by the content and language of the blog entries. Activists Kathy Floerke and Susan Lagos, for instance, add color and familiarity to their reports through informal chit-chat about the weather and other everyday details, as well as expressions such as “Wow!” (Floerke 2025) or “Oh my gosh!” (Lagos 2024) to convey their excitement. On the content level, they also include stories from the daily life in revolutionary Nicaragua, for instance, missing toilet seats or baby kittens that survived a bombing (Floerke 2025; Lagos 2024). Such everyday details and vivid anecdotes humanize the revolutionary context, enhance authenticity, and foster emotional closeness with the audience. Thus, the simulacrum diaries (Stanley and Dampier 2006) of the *NicaNotes* blog suggest an intimate introspection and give a sense of inviting the implied readers to a secret conversation with the activists.

In a similar fashion, *NicaNotes* alludes to the 1980s letter-writing practices in activist circles. Similar to the 1980s letter-writing campaigns, in which US Nicaragua solidarity organizations motivated volunteers to go to Nicaragua and write about it (Friends of Nicaraguan Culture; TecNICA 1987), *NicaNotes* has issued a call for memories, with which they address their readers, asking “[i]f you have memories of your involvement with Nicaragua from years ago, write them down and send them to us!” (Hoyt). Yet, although during the 1980s, the many letters sent back home to the USA resulted in an implicit dialogue with an imagined audience, typically addressed as “Dear friends” or “Dear compas” (Francis 1987; Yih 1982), an online blog “lack[s] [...] defined audiences” (Hardey 2004, p. 189), as, owing to the openness of the internet, anyone can visit them at any time. Still, more than 40 years later, an inclusive “You” is used in the blog that addresses an imagined readership equating to fellow former Nicaragua activists and allies. Thus, *NicaNotes*, in mimicking 1980s forms of activist life writing and suggesting a close interaction with their assumed audience, constructs a collective of Nicaragua allies and thus creates a Nicaragua activist community 2.0.

Although *NicaNotes* is presented as a blog for Nicaragua activists, contributors not only address but actively produce this audience by articulating a collective “We.” Audience-making through interaction is central to movement dynamics (Taylor 2022; Sobieraj 2019; Stewart et al. 2012). These “discursive constructions” (Blee and McDowell 2012, p. 45) balance internal cohesion with outreach to a broader public (Jolly 2010, p. 17, 18). In digital contexts, especially since the 2010s, online spaces likewise presuppose and actively create their audiences (Smith and Watson 2014, p. 74). However, recognizing the limited attention given to Nicaragua in the twenty-first century (Alterman 2021), the contributors to *NicaNotes* do not seem to attempt to reach the masses. The blog writers instead seek to strengthen the core community by fostering a sense of closeness with the audience through posts that evoke shared felt pasts; this is also visible in the blog’s dated aesthetics.

## 2.2 The Nicaraguan Revolution 2.0: (Re)Connecting a leftist (online) generation

Whereas the previous section considered the mode of narration, the discussion now turns to the architectures of narration for which the affordances of the digital are key. Drawing on Andrew Hoskins’ concept of connective memory, the following analysis shows how *NicaNotes* forges both temporal continuities and interpersonal connections while embedding activist memories within wider digital infrastructures. Although online blogs do not meet Hoskins’s criterion of “real-time or near-instantaneous communication” (2011, p. 20), *NicaNotes* nonetheless participates in what he terms a “re-calibration of time, space, and memory” (2011, p. 29).

To achieve this, the blog links different temporalities and contexts of oppression. First, it constructs a continuous success narrative of the Nicaraguan Revolution; second, it embeds the story of the injustices of the Contra War into a broader story of historical global oppression. In line with Hoskins’ approach, this reflects how the once marginal “long tail” of Nicaragua solidarity activism “is increasingly networked

through a convergence of communication and the archive” and thus becomes more visible (2011, p. 26).

**Memories and briefs: Temporal cohesion** Some *NicaNotes* writers already bridge the past and the present within their personal accounts. Activist Susan Lagos, for instance, invites her readership on a journey from her first stay in Nicaragua in 1987 to the current situation of her life in Nicaragua in November 2024. In particular, she frames the 2018 protests as a coup staged by the US government, constructing a linear historical development from US filibuster William Walker’s invasion in Nicaragua in the 1850s, subsequent US imperialist ventures throughout the twentieth century, the 1980s Contra War, and what she refers to as “the coup attempt of 2018” (Lagos, 2024). The 2018 protests, initiated by Nicaraguan students protesting an increasingly authoritarian regime, in her take on Nicaraguan history becomes part of a simplified equation, thereby foreclosing and ignoring the Nicaraguan government human rights abuses and state coercion.

Besides narrative cohesion, historical continuities that shift blame away from the Ortega/Murillo regime are also produced by a phenomenon rooted in digital media affordances. Each of the Nicaragua memories is followed by a “Briefs” section by the blog’s operator Nan McCurdy. This section includes a mix of curated news from Nicaragua, mostly focusing on the supposed accomplishments of the Ortega/Murillo regime, such as “US\$500Mio. Earmarked for New Housing in Managua” (Lagos 2024) or “Sandinista Government Has Strengthened Cancer Care” (Floerke 2025). *NicaNotes* thus disseminates state propaganda and fails to provide a rigorous analysis of the regime (Goett 2018).

Moreover, by placing the blog entry in close spatial proximity to the “Briefs” section, the site implicitly suggests a broader connection between revolutionary Nicaragua in the 1980s and the current Sandinista regime. As readers scroll through the page, this layout encourages an interpretation of temporal continuity, framing the Ortega-led Sandinista government as the chronological successor to the revolutionary period and presenting its current actions as a direct continuation and enduring legacy of the 1980s. Yet, *NicaNotes*’ making of connective memories does not stop at the digital borders of the blog’s surface but goes deeper.

**Shared felt oppressions and campism** “Our vision [...] is to preserve and promote the spirit that led Nicaraguans and international solidarity workers to become a part of the Revolution” (Casa Benjamin Linder) and “we work to counter misinformation about the country disseminated by the media, public events, and other sources” (Nicaragua Solidarity Coalition). Although those statements about preserving the memory of 1980s Nicaraguan and actively mobilizing for the Ortega/Murillo regime’s narratives would easily fit in the scope of *NicaNotes*, they come from different sources; respectively the websites *Nicaragua Solidarity Coalition* and *Casa Benjamin Linder*. Both are also operated by former US activists, and both are linked

to and interact with *NicaNotes*.<sup>13</sup> Hence, *NicaNotes* not only invites its own imagined readership to participate actively in Nicaragua memory work but also extends its reach across the broader digital landscape of Nicaragua-related activism. The blog thus contributes to a digital memoryscape of activist remembrance, acting as a 'node in connective memory' (Hoskins 2011, p. 25) that connects individual and collective actors across digital spaces.

From a digital-architecture perspective, this connective memory emerges primarily through hyperlinks and the frequent naming of activists and organizations. By invoking figures such as Dolores Granada or Brian Willson, *NicaNotes* is situated within a shared network of Nicaragua solidarity memory. Organizations are also referenced, from the *Nicaragua Solidarity Coalition* and the *Casa Benjamin Linder* community to Nicaraguan platforms such as *Tortilla con Sal*, creating a dense web of pro-Orteguismo activism. Links appear both at the start of posts and in dedicated "allies" sections, as well as shared content, such as a 2025 Nicaragua trip report by *Veterans for Peace*<sup>14</sup>, which is reposted on *NicaNotes* (Condon 2025). It blends recent experiences with memories from the 1980s, echoing the digital life narratives discussed earlier. Through these connections, *NicaNotes* is aligned with broader anti-imperialist discourses and activist networks under the umbrella of its parent organization, the AfGJ, a well-connected yet controversial actor within the US solidarity landscape.<sup>15</sup>

From a narrative perspective, the blog connects shared experiences of oppression with personal memory, with felt pasts remaining central. Activist Brian Willson, for example, recalls violence during his 1986 experience of the Contra War alongside earlier trauma in Vietnam, reflecting that "Viet Nam and Nicaragua came together as the face of my country" and that "the only real enemy was us [...] US Americans" (2025). Such narratives inscribe Nicaragua in a leftist history of resistance, foregrounding anti-imperialism and revolutionary solidarity, and forging a generation of leftists united by their Nicaragua stance.

Hence, in *NicaNotes*' digital space, Nicaragua becomes a symbol of shared struggle within a broader anti-imperialist imaginary, connected to other conflicts, such as Ukraine, where the blog takes a pro-Putin stance (McCurdy 2025), and the Israel–Palestine conflict, where it is firmly anti-Israel (Littlejohn 2024). This peculiar logic reflects *campism*, the post-Cold War tendency among some leftists to support authoritarian, anti-Western regimes purely to oppose US imperialism, a stance

<sup>13</sup> *NicaNotes* blog posts also include hyperlinks to the Casa Benjamin Linder website, e.g., <https://afgj.org/nicanotes-ben-linder-at-37-years-presente>; or hyperlinks to the Nicaragua Solidarity Coalition's website, e.g., <https://afgj.org/nicanotes-sharing-the-bounty-cultural-celebrations-in-nicaragua-give-back>.

<sup>14</sup> Founded in 1985 at the height of the Contra War, Veterans for Peace is an organization of former Vietnam veterans that actively opposed the Contra War during the 1980s and continued to speak out against other wars (Genesio 1997).

<sup>15</sup> Critics accuse the AfGJ of backing radical groups, including sponsoring organizations linked to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), which led to its removal from platforms such as PayPal. Those in the AfGJ reject these claims, framing its work as support for grassroots movements (Kaminsky 2023).

in which anti-imperialism overrides concerns about democracy or human rights.<sup>16</sup> Thus, as the USA in the 2020s supports anti-government protests in Nicaragua and criticizes the Ortega/Murillo regime (Rubio 2025), contributors on *NicaNotes* continue to endorse the regime through the logic that “the enemy of my enemy is my friend,” justified by personal memory and activist tradition.

According to *NicaNotes* and its allies, Nicaragua is “a call for US citizens to recognize the shared struggles of people around the world” (Condon 2025). Yet, the collective “We” constructed through the blog’s references remains selective: By privileging pro-Orteguismo voices and selective name-dropping, the blog celebrates the regime as an anti-imperialist exemplar, while overlooking current opposition and repression.

Still, as a node within digital Nicaragua activism, *NicaNotes* demonstrates how connectivity, both in a temporal and in a interpersonal and spatial sense, shapes collective memory, fostering a form of digital monumentalization that actively remakes a generation of leftists and sustains their engagement through ongoing memory work.

### 3 Conclusion: Leaving which legacy?

Contributors to *NicaNotes* and their recalibration of the history of the Nicaraguan Revolution and former activist communities enrich our understanding of both the digital afterlives of activism and the remnants of a generation of US leftists that once dominated grassroots political debates.

On the one hand, the analysis furthers the theorization of digital life narrative studies and digital activist archives, as it has shown that an analysis needs to consider both *digitized* and *born-digital* archives and storytelling. Digital life narratives both draw on genre traditions and are historically loaded, yet they are also shaped by their specific digital affordances. In this, then, lies their specific productivity: They become *digital memoryscapes* that not only recalibrate time and space and thus link past and present issues but also forge their own role in history-writing, which in the case of Nicaragua seems to rely more on feelings, community engagement, and a mission than on recalling factual historical information.

On the other hand, this article revealed glimpses of a seemingly lost generation of US Nicaragua activists, who, although their original cause is long past, remain surprisingly vocal and outspoken online. For the afterlives of Nicaragua activism the medium is therefore integral to the message: Ardent letter writers of the 1980s have become keyboard activists. For one thing, these observations then raise questions about the emergence of a distinct digital activist genre. Central to this genre is the

<sup>16</sup> The term campism has gained increasing prominence in the context of the War against Ukraine, which saw some left-wing intellectuals and activists support Vladimir Putin and the Russian government, and blame US imperialism for the escalations. In the context of the New Left and leftist internationalism, the term was shaped by the Third Worldist and anti-imperialist nationalist movements of the very early Cold War (Striffler 2019, p. 78). In today’s meaning, which seeks to describe a division of leftism, it was first used by the academics and activists Alan Johnson and Dan La Botz in the context of the socialist journal *New Politics* (La Botz 2022; Johnson 1999).

claim to speak *as* a generation of activists, a move that can also be observed in other activist communities, such as the veteran-led branch of the anti-Vietnam War movement.<sup>17</sup>

Yet, this also becomes a micro-study of the present conditions of a specific generation of US leftists, now turned inward and strangely detached from contemporary Nicaraguan struggles. In the 2020s, long after the Reagan era, their "others" include not only Republicans and Trumpists but also fellow leftists, recast as adversaries who have betrayed the Sandinista Revolution. Amid renewed US involvement in the hemisphere, *NicaNotes* also serves as a cautionary reminder not to underestimate the complexities of US–Nicaragua relations or the layered sediments of their intertwined histories. The new present conditions have recalibrated historical stances, revealing that simplistic, black-and-white narratives cannot capture the subtleties of ongoing political and social dynamics.

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## Declarations

**Conflict of interest** V. Baier declares that she has no competing interests.

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