

Volunteer harvester says women have made progress in Nicaragua

By Eric Dodds
Staff Reporter

Waking up at 4 a.m., putting on damp clothes and working under the threat of guerrilla attack isn't what most people would consider fun, but Penny Rosenwasser volunteered for exactly that when she spent a month in Nicaragua harvesting coffee.

Rosenwasser, a producer of women's cultural events from Oakland, Calif., spoke Tuesday night at UNL for the Women's Resource Center's Women's Week. She and hundreds of other people from around the world went to Nicaragua to build solidarity with the Nicaraguan people and to increase their own understanding of them.

Even though the United States sup-

ports the Contra rebellion against the Nicaraguan government, most Nicaraguans like and admire U.S. citizens, she said.

Because of a perceived threat of a U.S. invasion of their country, Nicaraguan students who usually help harvest coffee had to undergo militia training, Rosenwasser said.

Coffee provides 25 percent of Nicaragua's export income. But last year, only 30 percent to 60 percent of the coffee crop was harvested, partly because of rebel attacks, she said.

While she was in Nicaragua, Rosenwasser said, armed guards protected the workers, which made her feel "safer than I do walking the streets" of her hometown.

Women are more respected in Nicaragua than in the United States, Rosenwasser said. Women have made tremendous gains in Nicaragua since the Sandanista revolution five years ago, she said. Women now earn as much money as men and those wages go directly to the women, not their husbands as was the previous custom, she said.

Literacy has improved among all people and many diseases have been erased because of mass inoculations, she said.

Rosenwasser said the revolution "is not at all perfect and they're the first ones to admit it." But, she said, the quality of life has increased during the past five years. Many Nicaraguans she spoke to are pleased with the results of the revolution, she said.

Foreign students discuss U.S. education

By Martha Miller
Staff Reporter

American students need to reach out more to foreign students and treat them as equals, members of a panel discussion said Tuesday.

Born in the U.S.A. — A Foreign Perspective, a presentation of International Educational Services, gave foreign and American students the opportunity to discuss their opinions of life in the United States.

Friendships, racial equality, and better communication are three things that both foreign and American students need to improve on, the panelists said.

Nick Ng, a marketing senior from Malaysia, said "a major problem on campus is that foreign students are seen as a group and not as individuals." He said this makes it harder for foreigners to make friends.

Ricardo Perez, a freshman construction management major from Venezuela, said the education system in U.S. colleges and universities makes it hard to develop friendships in the classroom.

"There is a lot of competition in classes that sets up barriers between people, especially foreigners," Perez said.

The foreign panelists agreed that their views of the U.S. were not all

negative. The fact that they are in this country studying is proof that they prefer an American education over one in their homeland. Yet, the adjustments were difficult, the panelists agreed.

Azfar Kahn, a computer science sophomore from Pakistan, said American students are often "very cold" to foreign students just because their skin is a different color or they talk differently.

"The silence from the other side is what is scary," Kahn said.

Bashil Rashid, a civil engineering graduate student from Iran, said students need to remember that they are here to seek knowledge and not to represent their governments.

The panelists also said American society is too ethnocentric. "Americans have a tendency to view themselves as the center of the universe," said Derrick Montgomery, a senior speech major and resident of the International House in Neihardt Residence Hall. He said students should try to bridge the gap between foreigners and Americans and treat foreign students with "a little more kindness."

In order to increase communication, ASUN President Gerard Keating said ASUN is encouraging foreign students to run for offices in student organizations. He said foreign students, espe-

cially those new to UNL, should investigate the opportunities open to them.

"Student government at UNL needs the perspectives and insights of foreign students," Keating said.

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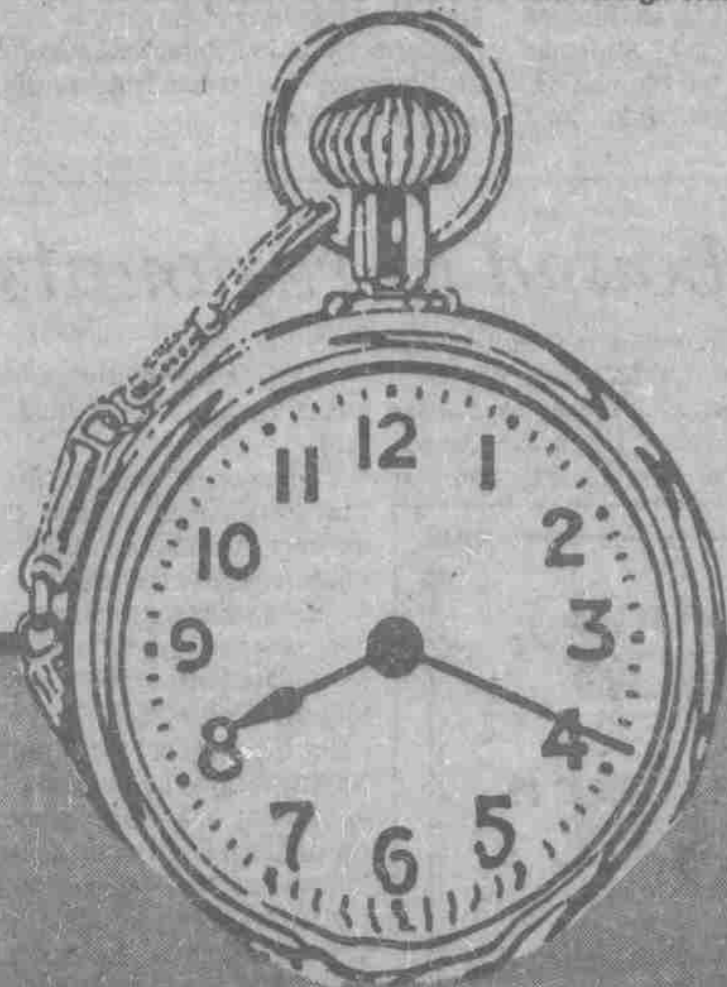
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