

Poet Randall fights deportation; opens Women's Week events

By Charles Lieurance
Senior Reporter

In the late 1960s Margaret Randall — poet, essayist, photographer, editor, teacher and political/social activist — advocated radical change in U.S. domestic and foreign policy. Much of her written work has come into question recently as Randall seeks to reclaim the citizenship she relinquished in 1966.

Randall, who held a press conference yesterday morning and addressed the opening session of Women's Week at the University of Nebraska last night, has been openly critical of U.S. involvement in Vietnam and Central America, as well as openly supportive of the FSLN (Sandinista) in Nicaragua and the Cuban revolution.

Because of her alleged ties to countries that are considered enemies of the United States, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) denied her application for permanent status as a U.S. resident last October.

Since then Randall has appealed the decision and won the support of The Center for Constitutional Rights (who have filed a federal lawsuit on her behalf), the ACLU and a multitude of writers including Kurt Vonnegut, Adrienne Rich, Norman Mailer and Arthur Miller, who believe the denial infringes upon Randall's basic civil liberties.

The broader picture is that, once again, the controversial McCarren-Walter Act has been called into question. The act, which was passed in the '50s during the height of the red-scare and McCarthyism, allows the U.S. to bar from immigration anyone who may be ideologically opposed to this country's government.

Others who have not been allowed to immigrate into the U.S. because of McCarren-Walter include Graham Greene, Pablo Neruda and Gabriel Marquez.

At her press conference, Randall criticized those in the INS and other branches of the government for making her past writings or her "progressive" political stance an issue in the debate.

"Much of what they quoted to me was part of the rhetoric of the '60s," Randall said, "or was taken completely out of context."

Randall left the United States in 1966 not for political reasons, she insists, but because her husband was a Mexican citizen and her lawyers misled her to believe that she needed to relinquish her citizenship here to further her economic security in Mexico. She said she was never made aware that her decision would be irrevocable.

According to Randall, the lawyers and members of the INS continually declare that the issue is not free speech but then consistently arm themselves with her politics and writings in their efforts to have her deported.

Randall returned to America after 23 years in Latin America (Mexico, Cuba and Nicaragua) and began teaching in the Women's- and American Studies programs at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque.

Randall's current husband, one of her children and both of her elderly parents are United States Citizens.

Randall said that one reason she wanted to return was to be near her parents in their last years.

"Mostly I just want to come home," she said.

At the keynote address in the Union Centennial Room, Randall discussed the history and current status of women in Cuba and Nicaragua.

She charted the advances in feminism from the inception of the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolution, the tumultuous road to women's economical and social recovery in those countries and the relationship between these two countries and the international women's community.

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