

A Critique of Fair Trade

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the complex relationship of Fair Trade with society: connecting feminism, coffee, land rights, neoliberalism, and neomarxism. Through the dual-perspective provided by the texts of the Latin American Philosopher, Enrique Dussel, the *fairness* of Fair Trade is analyzed.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to broaden the discussion of the *fairness* of Fair Trade, creating space for a more complex analysis of the issue. I will examine Fair Trade through the lens provided by the writings of the Latin American Philosopher, Enrique Dussel, as well as reference my undergraduate research that was performed in January 2008. I stayed in the community of Los Llanos, located in the province of Estelí, Nicaragua, with the vice-president of the women's coffee cooperative, COPEMUJER. During my brief research, I interviewed half of the 36 members, and helped with the coffee harvest. The women and I worked side by side, talking, as we picked, measured, de-pulped, washed, dried, and sorted coffee beans. I will examine Fair Trade within this particular cooperative in Nicaragua in relation to the two perspectives of communal political life established by Dussel: Late Capitalism and Resistance. As Fair Trade has grown in recent years, researchers and scholars have started studying the effectiveness of Fair Trade, through the perspective of Late capitalism. They have been examining Fair Trade as an avenue for making the global market more accessible to those in poverty, with the goal of spanning the divide between the rich and the poor. In addition to analyzing Fair Trade through this perspective provided by Late Capitalism, I will expand this study to include an analysis of Fair Trade through the perspective of the Resistance, examining the effectiveness of Fair Trade as a form of economic empowerment, which is an integral aspect to establishing a voice for those in the periphery.

In order to begin this discussion, it is imperative that the reality of these two dual-existing ways of political communal life is established. In order to do this, I will refer to Dussel's *Theology and Economy: The Theological Paradigm of Communicative Action and the Paradigm of the Community of Life as a Theology of Liberation*. Within this essay, he uses the theory of communicative action to establish that presently there are two parallel types of political communal life. He labels them as Late Capitalism and Resistance.

The theory of communicative action is that language is seen not only as a conceptual system, but that it becomes action and creates realities. Similar to the Social Action Theory, which is the view that "persons' moral and/or political obligations are dependent upon a contract or agreement between them to form society" (Friend, 2006). The view is that societies, or communities, are formed by these contracts, these agreements. For example, a system of laws is a set of written agreements by which all persons in a given society agree to live by in order to maintain order.

When one evaluates the capitalist system, it is evident that it is a regime of contracts and legal relations among people. It is a society based on the theory of communicative action. There are contracts made, supposedly by all persons in a society (including those in the periphery of the capitalist system), that regulate the on-goings of the society. However, Dussel argues that not all persons are actually involved in the communicative action; and therefore, these contracts act as a mechanism of further exploitation of those in the capitalist periphery. This occurs in the way that simply the act of following the guidelines of the contract (regardless of the ramifications it may have to someone in the periphery) becomes the "right thing" to do. The contracts create blindness to the conditions under which the society runs, (i.e. the necessity of poverty for the economic success of the capital center.) This phenomenon is the reality of Late Capitalism, which Marx thought to be the fate of the capitalist system. Inasmuch, the difference between the poor and the wealthy would be to such a great degree of disparity (as it is presently), that the only result would be the uprising of the poor (or proletariat).

Dussel argues that communities can be, and have been, created outside of these communities of communicative

action. He identifies the popular organization of Latin America as an example of these communities, which he will refer to as base communities, and later as, communities of life. He states,

These isolated individuals are able to constitute a community by arriving at an agreement based on their own arguments. It is a unique experience, because the members of the base communities are found outside of all of the hegemonic communities of communication in which they have not had any right to express their own voice (Dussel, 1992).

These individuals were isolated from the communities of communication. The hegemonic nature of these communities was such that, those exploited were never given an opportunity to use their voice, to communicate their ideas, opinions, or desires. Instead, the current society was formed through the communication of the elites, those in the capital center. This resulted in the hegemony of the elites in all aspects of life: economy, culture, knowledge, etc. It is the imposition of the ramifications of these agreements made by those in the center to those in the periphery. However, this does not negate the possibility of the creation of community.

On the contrary, these persons create communities, formed not on the basis of agreement achieved through communicative action, but instead through a similar position of resistance (that is, to capitalism). Dussel explains that, "What happens is that the community of communication in the base is found in a world of daily life that seeks to be colonized by the economic system and by the state in a completely different way than in late capitalism: central, developed, and repressive" (Dussel, 1992). It is these communities that show the illusion of the finality of Late Capitalism, because they are finding their existence outside of capital and outside of government. Neither their purpose nor their motivation is capital. In fact, Dussel argues that, "There is no economic compensation that could make citizens the accomplices of a veiled but bearable system of oppression" (Dussel, 1992). It is because of their political consciousness that they will not tolerate further exploitation.

Just as Late Capitalism and Resistance exist in a parallel reality, Fair Trade does as well. Fair Trade is stretched by unique definitions and particular purposes as it spans the divide of Late Capitalism and the Resistance.

To begin the discussion of Fair Trade, and its dual existence, it is important to look at some of the key aspects of this issue: the definition, origin, and purpose. Fair Trade is most commonly defined by the umbrella Fair Trade organization FINE as:

A trading partnership, based on dialogue, transparency and respect, that seeks greater equity in international trade. It contributes to sustainable development by offering better trading conditions to, and securing the rights of, marginalized producers and workers, especially in the South. Fair Trade organizations are engaged actively in supporting producers, awareness raising and in campaigning for changes in the rules and practices of conventional international trade (IFAT, 2006).

Based upon this definition, according to the Fair Trade Labeling Organization (FLO), fair trade is not a charity based idea; instead it helps lessen the gap between the producer and the consumer, cutting out as many intermediate steps as possible, and in turn, giving the producer the greatest available profit (*Explanatory Document*, 2006). The two main components of Fair Trade are: a stable and just market price, and a long-lasting trade partnership. This long-lasting trade partnership is to ensure economic stability for the producers. The purpose of the long-lasting trade partnership is to provide the producers with stability by knowing where they will sell their coffee from year to year. It provides them with a stable market for their coffee. Through this partnership, it also means that there will be fewer links in the chain from producer to consumer. This will result in a higher percentage of the final price in the hands of the producer. (*Explanatory Document*, 2006). The purpose of this trading partnership is primarily for the economic advantages that it brings both in the stable market provided and also in the extra capital that the producers receive.

Fair Trade originated, and continues to be seen, as an alternative way of trading. According to the Fair Trade Foundation, Fair Trade "provides a genuine alternate, a means of ensuring that growers benefit as they should from their crops" (Fairtrade Foundation, 2002). Oxfam America, in their resource action guide, compares Fair Trade to the "conventional trading system," which assumes that Fair Trade is an alternative system (Oxfam, 2004).

As previously stated, one of the primary purposes of this alternative trading system is to cut out as many intermediate steps as possible in the path from the producer to the consumer. In this way, TransFair USA explains that, "Fair Trade certification is not a handout. It helps farmers understand and access international markets and bootstrap their way out of poverty. By cutting out middlemen and brokers, Fair Trade gets growers their fair share of the final market value of their products" (TransFair USA, *Background*). Fair Trade is a "responsible consuming" market niche that provides a means for those in the Third World or periphery living in poverty to compete on the world market. In fact, this market niche for "responsible consuming" is ever increasing. A study done by the market research journal *Lifestyles of health and Sustainability* shows that sixty-three million American adults base their purchasing decisions on how the products they consume affect the world (TransFair USA,

Background). This market niche can be seen as the pathway from the periphery to the center: this is the primary purpose of Fair Trade.

With the definition, origin, and purpose of Fair Trade established, as defined through the perspective of the political communal life of Late Capitalism, I will now analyze these ideas using the ideas of Enrique Dussel.

Through this lens of Late Capitalism, Fair Trade is seen as an alternative to the prevalent Free Trade Agreements. Some have seen that Free Trade is not the right contract mandating trade stipulations, so the idea of Fair Trade has been introduced. As a result, Fair Trade is an attempt at rewriting the contractual trade agreement between the North and the South. This phenomenon is the realization of Habermas' ideas of communicative action. It follows the ideology that some level of utopia can be achieved by constructing the proper social contract. Fair Trade is meant to be the correct contractual paradigm.

However, Dussel argues that communicative action falls short and has limitations in the Third World. He says, "A mere theology inspired in the theory of communicative action is not sufficient" (Dussel, 1992). One of the limitations, as I understand, is that not all people are in the communities of communication. This is because not all people, namely those in the capital periphery, are actually participating in the creation of these communities. In other words, those in the periphery have not been given a voice, but instead their role has been decided for them based upon the constructs of capitalism. So that signifies that some sort of society that is free of poverty will not result from re-writing these trading agreements. Nor will it provide an alternative to Neoliberalism, because the re-written contracts (Fair Trade) are written within these communities of communication and on their terms.

I will continue to argue that Fair Trade is not an alternative to Neoliberalism, but just an adaptation of it, by analyzing the two major components of Fair Trade: a stable and just market price and a long-lasting trade partnership. In turn, I will conclude that Fair Trade within the context of Late Capitalism cannot accomplish its set out goal: to be a means for the producers to move from the periphery into the capital center.

The first component of Fair Trade is that it provides a stable and just market price for the producers. Oxfam America explains that, "The world market price often falls below a farmer's cost of production and leaves farm families in a struggle for survival" (Oxfam, 2004). It is obvious that on the regular market (Free Trade), there is a large discrepancy between the cost of coffee production and the price paid to the producers. In the system of Free Trade, the producers are pushed into the periphery by the pursuit of profit that is achieved from the transfer of surplus value. However I would argue that not the "cost of production," but value needs to be a component in the discussion in order for Fair Trade to be a justifiable alternative to Neoliberalism.

I will expand on this idea of value versus cost of production. In Fair Trade, the minimum price paid to the producers is \$1.26 per pound. If the coffee is certified organic, the minimum price is \$1.41 per pound. Just Coffee, the roaster of the coffee produced by COPEMUJER, pays the producers above the minimum price; they are paid between \$1.50 and \$2.20 per pound. This price covers, but is not limited to the cost of: planting, pruning, fertilizing, weeding, picking, measuring, bagging, de-pulping, washing, drying, and sorting. In a breakdown by Just Coffee of total cost per pound of coffee, the labor cost of roasting and packaging is \$1.90 (Just Coffee, 2006). It is to say that the labor cost of roasting and packing is equal to that of all of the above mentioned steps completed by the producers. This equality in labor cost is only possibly through the objectification of producers, who are a part of the exteriority (the periphery), as living labor. Dussel explains that,

'Living labour,' as human labour, actualization of subjectivity, as person, and as manifestation of his dignity, is placed as such outside, beyond, transcending, or as we have named it in other works in the exteriority of capital. 'Living labour' is not 'objectified labour'. The former is a human being him-/herself, the activity, the subjectivity, the 'creating source of value'; the latter is the thing, the product, the produced entity (Dussel, 2001).

This price for coffee is seen as "just" and as an acceptable alternative because the producers are seen as living labor. It is clear that growing the coffee requires much more work than roasting and packaging (not to mention the difference in technological assistance). So, much more than \$1.50 would be assigned to the 'cost' of production if the labor of these producers was valued the same as the labor of those in the capital center (for example those doing the roasting and packaging). Even on the terms of Fair Trade, human labor is not equally valued from the periphery to the center. This "just" price is not really all that just, but rather it is calculated by using the unjust subjectivity of human labor of capitalistic thought. Fair Trade is not an alternative to Neoliberalism; but simply a variation of it. The only way a true alternative to Neoliberalism can exist is if it originates outside of the political communal life of Late Capitalism. A true alternative needs to come from a discussion that involves all people. This is possible within the other political communal life, the Resistance. The existence of Fair Trade within this community will be expanded upon later.

The second critical component of Fair Trade is the provision of a long-lasting trade partnership between producer and consumer. Even though Fair Trade originated as a person-to-person exchange, it has quickly been

subsumed into the Capitalistic pursuit of profit, hindering this partnership. It is important to point out that the term partnership assumes that both parties come to the table as equals, exchanging equal for equal. However, this is not entirely the case for Fair Trade, due to the imbalance in the measure of value from the periphery to the center. There is discrepancy within Late Capitalism's purpose and definitions of Fair Trade. The assumption is that Fair Trade is a way in which the periphery can arrive in the center. However, it is also being manipulated so that the center is gaining wealth from the periphery. In this way, although the purpose of Fair Trade is for wealth to go from the 'South' to the 'North,' those within the 'North' are now using it as a tool of further exploitation. (Meaning, the wealth continues to move from the 'South' to the 'North.')

Starbucks, for example, saw the unique market niche that Fair Trade filled. By targeting the 'conscious consumer,' it has quickly turned the role of Fair Trade as an alternative to the Neoliberal/Capitalist system to further exploit producers in the periphery. Starbucks is the largest purchaser of Fair Trade coffee in North America, although only about 6% of their coffee is certified as Fair Trade (Starbucks, 2006). Starbucks, along with many other corporations in the capital center are gaining wealth from the transfer of surplus value from the South to the North. This displays that when one examines the nature of Fair Trade, at principle and practical level, within this context of Late Capitalism, it is not an alternative to Neoliberalism. The 'problem of poverty' cannot be solved simply through the re-writing of contractual trade agreements.

Does this mean, then, that Fair Trade should be completely disregarded and discounted? I do not think so, but rather I would suggest continuing the conversation of Fair Trade through the lens of those in the communities of Resistance, from the perspective of the producers.

The dual-perspective through which one can analyze Fair Trade is recognized in the following:

An escalating tension is developing between two visions: one is the vision of Southern producers, where Fair Trade is an inseparable part of a broader development strategy. In this vision, Fair Trade is a North/South partnership based on solidarity, equality, and transparency. The other vision is based on the dynamics of Fair Trade in the North and the pressures to increase sales volume which is driving integration with the conventional market, the new economic standards such as quality controls; new actors such as large distributors and transnational corporations seeking to establish their "ethical" image (Murray, Reynolds, Wilkinson, 2007).

This is a clear display of the different view of Fair Trade; one as a tool for developmental strategy, and the other as a tool for profit strategy. However, this developmental strategy is not a means by which the "underdeveloped" Third World can mature to arrive at the developed First World. That is not the idea of development acknowledged in the realm of Resistance. Instead,

Since 1492, the periphery is not a "before," but an "underneath": the exploited, the dominated, the origin of stolen wealth, accumulated in the dominating, exploiting "center." We repeat: the developmentalist fallacy thinks that the "slave" is a "free lord" in his youthful stage, and like a child. It does not understand that the slave is the dialectical "other face" of domination: the as-always, the "other-part" of the exploitative relation. The peripheral world will never be able to be "developed," nor "center," nor "late." Its path is another. Its alternative is different (Dussel, 1996).

I will again look at the origin, definition and purpose of Fair Trade, this time through the perspective of the Resistance. It will be an analysis based on the notion that for those in the communities of Resistance, Fair Trade is a modern expression of Marxism. This assumption was drawn from examining the origin of Fair Trade in Nicaragua, which stems from the creation of cooperatives as a product of the Sandinista Revolution.

The Sandinistas triumphed and overthrew the 42-year Somoza dictatorship on July 19th, 1979. With origins in Marxist ideals, the new government implemented many social programs. One of which was a land reform policy. The 1981 Agrarian Reform Law "provided for the expropriation of unused, underutilized, and rented land on farms greater than 350 hectares in the Pacific and central interior regions and on farms greater than 700 hectares in the rest of the country" (Deere, 1983). Because of this law, there was a dramatic increase in the number of cooperatives throughout the country. In fact, 68% of the land distributed under the agrarian reform had gone to production cooperatives, 22% to individual producers organized in credit and service cooperatives, and 10% to other forms of cooperative groups (Deere, 1983). The cooperatives were formed because of the Marxist-based Sandinista Revolution, which emphasized the need and desire for popular organization. It was an opportunity for the campesinos, the proletariat, to join together in a form of Resistance against the powerful elites, the capital center.

Nicaragua today reflects this history. Jacqueline DeCarlo, in her book *Beginner's Guide to Fair Trade*, writes, "Fair Trade coffee cooperatives in Nicaragua are uniquely vibrant in part due to commitments the Sandinistas made to cooperative structures during Nicaragua's civil struggles" (DeCarlo, 2007). The Marxist ideals that inspired the formation of these cooperatives are also reflected in the reality of rural Nicaragua today. When I asked one member what her motivations were for joining the coffee cooperative, she said, "To be organized. There isn't help unless

you organize with other women” (COPEMUJER member, personal communication, January 15, 2008). The president of CECOCAFEN, Blanca Rosa Molina, explains that Fair Trade “means better opportunities above all for women, opportunities to organize and make decisions” (Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign, 2006). Since one of the requirements to gain the certification of Fair Trade is cooperative organization, the Marxist principles rooted in the cooperatives also extend to Fair Trade. Because of this, I would argue that Fair Trade is a modern manifestation of Marxism.

Fair Trade originated in Nicaragua as a protest to the U.S.-imposed trade embargo. It was a means of showing solidarity with the Nicaraguan people (DeCarlo, 2007). From the beginning, Fair Trade has been a tool to assist the exploited in the pursuit for something more than simply capital gain. From this origin, the fundamental principles of Fair Trade are equality, social and economic justice, and respect for the environment and humanity as a whole (Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign, 2006).

Unlike Fair Trade through the perspective of Late Capitalism, it is not a way in which those in the periphery can make their way to the capital center by means of participation in the world market through a market niche. Rather, it is a means of financial empowerment that will enable those in the communities of life, of Resistance, to accomplish a greater goal. The Nicaraguan Solidarity Campaign explains that, “Fair Trade isn’t an end in itself, but an integral part of a global political struggle for social and economic justice that challenges power relations within countries and between the North and the South” (Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign, 2006). It seems clear that Fair Trade plays an important role as a part of an entire movement.

To continue the conversation about Fair Trade within the communities of Resistance, I will examine Fair Trade’s two main components: a stable and just market price and long-lasting trade partnership. I will explain how these two components play a different role in the Fair Trade of Resistance than they do in Late Capitalism.

To begin, as previously suggested, the stable market price provides economic empowerment to the producers. A coffee producer of Matagalpa, Nicaragua explains: “For the first time in our lives, we have moved beyond a day-to-day struggle for survival to being able to plan for the future for ourselves and our families” (Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign, 2006). Another producer says that, “The price of coffee has helped us and our families in every way...” (Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign, 2006). This economic empowerment, however, is not a means for the producers to ‘bootstrap’ their way into the capital center. That is not the purpose of the Fair Trade in the Resistance. The economic empowerment achieved through the stable and fair prices provided by Fair Trade will become an ingredient of an empowerment that encompasses multiple aspects.

The other element of Fair Trade is the creation of a long-lasting trade partnership between the producers of the South and the consumers of the North. Again, the purpose of this trading partnership is not like that of the Fair Trade in the political communal life of Late Capitalism, where it is for economic-gain. This trading partnership, instead, is all about solidarity and the relationships created between people. Fair Trade originated out of a solidarity movement, and continues to be seen as an act of solidarity. When talking to her trading partners, one producer said, “I hope that you go on working hand-in-hand with us, so we can live better and support our children better in their studies because that’s an important thing for us to aim for” (Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign, 2006). In the Resistance, there is a focus on the worth of relationships themselves, not the economic gain that those relationships produce.

The purpose of Fair Trade, through the stable prices and long-lasting trade partnerships (as defined by the Resistance), is to be a force that transforms society alongside labor and solidarity movements, civil rights movements, and peace and justice movements (DeCarlo, 2007). Fair Trade is a tool of the Resistance. I will turn to Dussel’s Liberation Philosophy to discuss how Fair Trade can be used by the Resistance, and what its purpose can be.

Enrique Dussel establishes the need for another philosophy, stemming from limitations of the philosophy of communicative action. The gaps created by the philosophy of communicative action can be filled by Liberation Philosophy.

Liberation Philosophy is the creation of a new order, which is established through the passage of liberation. Much like Liberation Theology, it focuses on creating a place for the testimony of “the Other.” Dussel explains that Liberation Philosophy “will not depart from the “Other of Reason” but instead from “the Other” of the *dominating*, oppressing and totalitarian totalizing reason.” Furthermore, it is “beyond the mere negative dialectics we have called the “analectical moment” of the dialectical movement—essential and belonging to liberation as affirmative of a “new” order, and not merely as negation of the old (Dussel, 1996). Liberation Philosophy is the context in which those in the communities of Resistance can have a voice. It is from those in the periphery, those in the Resistance, that Liberation Philosophy is embodied.

As such, the passage of liberation, which is how the ‘new order’ is established, involves creating an opportunity for testimony for “the Other,” for all of those exploited and within the community of Resistance. Dussel categorizes

those upon whom the title of “the Other” can be placed into four horizons: politics, erotics, pedagogy, and anti-fetishism. Each horizon encompasses a dimension of society that is overlooked. He explains the oppression of classes and peoples exploited by capitalism, of the women oppressed by machismo, of the dominated youth and popular culture (Dussel, 1996).

The second horizon of the passage of liberation is the erotics. This has two aspects to it: the first is abortion and the second is homosexuality. In the aspect of abortion, the importance surrounding abortion is not whether it is moral or immoral to do so; but rather, it exemplifies the greater need for a space in which the woman can make that decision for herself. In Latin America, the woman has always been oppressed by machismo and what I will call ‘Virgin Mary’ ideals. She has been subordinate, without having the right or responsibility for herself or her body, to male figures be it her father, brother, husband, or the pope himself. This question, then of abortion demonstrates giving the woman the right and responsibility she should have concerning her body. For this reason, not only in Latin America, but as well all over the world, abortion and reproductive rights frequently are front-line issues in feminist movements. Therefore, it is plain to see that establishing the second horizon of the erotics is embedded within feminist movements. Due to the relevance to this particular discussion, I will outline a brief history of the feminist movement in Nicaragua, which will lead us to a more acute vision of how Fair Trade can be used in the passage of liberation, thus arriving at the second horizon of the erotics.

The feminist movement in Nicaragua, like many throughout the world, is one fighting for women’s empowerment. In her article, *Women in Nicaragua: Empowerment through Revolutionary Struggles*, Rose-Marie Avin defines this empowerment. She says, “Women’s empowerment is a process that contains several components: the collective awareness of gender issues; the ability to make decisions, organize and carry out activities; the ability to participate in decision making in the home, community and society; and the ability to take action to foster equality (Avin). This multidimensional approach is quite different from the strictly economic approaches to empowerment that was commonplace before the 1980s. Although economic empowerment is an essential aspect to the total empowerment of a woman, alone, it is not sufficient (Avin).

The feminist movement in Nicaragua can be categorized into two critical periods: the Sandinista period between 1977 and 1990 and the post-Sandinista period, which starts in 1990 and continues progressing today. Through both of these periods, the women have been on a journey towards empowerment, finding their voice and respect in society. The women have struggled to create space for their voice that is free from the influences and controls of outside parties, whether it be, the hierarchy of the FSLN or the conservative Catholic Church.

The founding the Association of Nicaraguan Women Confronting the National Problem (AMPRONAC) was the conception of the feminist movement, and was directly related to the Frente Sandinista Liberación Nacional (FSLN). It was created with a dual identity. In one perspective it was a genuine outlet for women to empower themselves,

Within this socio-economic and political context [oppression], including the constant violation of our human rights, it is not hard to understand why as activists, mothers, wives, and sisters we felt the need to make our needs and demands heard in the midst of so much pain and injustice. Thus, for the first time in our history as Nicaraguan women, we began to organize (Isbester, 2001).

However, the creation of AMPRONAC was initiated by one of the key players of the FSLN. Jamie Wheelock understood the importance of women’s participation in the revolutionary struggle. Wheelock understood, by comparing the Sandinista revolution to others in Latin America, that the defeat of the Somoza dynasty was dependant on having the support from everyone in the country, including women (Isbester, 2001). However, this FSLN initiated conception did not stop the women from organizing for their own purposes. The first public act of AMPRONAC was an assembly that gave women a place and an opportunity to use their voices (Isbester, 2001).

Throughout the Sandinista years, the women fought for an equal place in society. Even though they faced constant oppression from the machismo FSLN elite, they made many strides. After the Sandinistas gained power in 1979, some key laws were passed that opened up legal space for women. Some of the most important were: the 1981 Agrarian Reform Decree and Cooperative Decree. These changed the laws so that women were allowed to own land, join cooperatives, and receive equal pay for equal work (Isbester, 2001). Although the legal advancements were important in creating opportunities for women, the path taken to arrive there was arguably more important in the greater scheme of empowerment. Through their participation in the Sandinista Revolution, the women learned how to organize, make decisions, and take action, in order to create better homes, better communities, and a better society. These are all essential components in becoming empowered.

The challenges that the women’s movement faced during the years of the Sandinistas were nothing compared to those they faced during the Neoliberal and conservative years of Violeta Chamorro. In many regards, it wasn’t until after the defeat of the Sandinistas, that the women were forced to create an identity that was autonomous from the FSLN. The identity of the movement had to be re-established. It was a difficult process finding balance between all

of the different ideologies within the movement, but it was essential in order to achieve true empowerment.

The feminist movement in Nicaragua has continued to progress and grow. It has taken shape in many different forms, yet it continues to address the foundational issues that are relevant to women's lives: the economy, violence and sexuality. La Fundación Entre Mujeres (the FEM) is one of the many different forms of the feminist movement in Nicaragua. Founded in 1995, it is a non-profit organization that works to empower rural women of Estelí, Nicaragua through programs related to: education, reproductive rights, domestic violence awareness and defense, sustainable agriculture, and the organization of cooperatives.

The majority of the rural women in these communities are participating in the workshops and adult education administered by the FEM. These workshops are giving women a place to express themselves, and talk with other women to learn about their bodies and about *being women*. This workshop-type setting has historically been a large part of the feminist movement in Nicaragua. This coincides with the adult education program, which is the equivalent of Kindergarten through 6th grade, beginning with teaching women arithmetic and how to read and write. Other women in the community, making it a very non-oppressive and open atmosphere, teach the adult education classes. These classes also create a place for dialogue and discussion. Allowing the women to question societal norms, the textbooks and supplemental material that are used in the classroom are gender-neutral, and display images of women breaking out of the traditional role of simply mother and homemaker. Through these programs, the women not only learn to express their opinions, but learn that their opinions are important. As one member of COPEMUJER states, "Before, we didn't know that we had the right to an opinion. We didn't know that we were important, but because of the FEM, now we do" (COPEMUJER member, personal communication, January 16, 2008). It was evident in speaking with the women of Los Llanos that all of these projects initiated and directed by the FEM play a critical part in the empowerment of women.

As these women continue to be empowered, finding their voice and understanding the responsibility they have over their bodies, they found the need for economic empowerment in addition to the other aspects of empowerment. This economic empowerment would give them more legitimacy and more opportunities to use their voice. This is especially important considering that in most households the man of the house manages the finances. It was from this need for economic empowerment expressed by the women that cooperatives started forming. The FEM has assisted in the formation of four women's coffee cooperatives. The coffee from all four cooperatives has been certified as Fair Trade, and is roasted and sold under the brand Las Diosas through Just Coffee, of Madison, Wisconsin.

Due to the Fair Trade certification of their coffee, the women are able to sell it at a stable price. Coinciding with one of the main purposes of Fair Trade through the perspective of the Resistance, it is this stable price that provides these women with the economic empowerment they need. It is important to understand that the women were first empowered by participating in the FEM, which then prepared the place in which economic empowerment would be beneficial. This is important to clarify because research has shown that strictly economic based initiatives towards women's empowerment have actually resulted in a greater gender inequity (Avin). This stresses the importance of the presence of the FEM and this economic empowerment provided by Fair Trade within the greater context of the feminist movement in Nicaragua.

In this small community in the north of Nicaragua, empowerment, as defined by Rose-Marie Avin, is being achieved. The women in Los Llanos and surrounding areas are able to make decisions, organize and carry out activities in all aspects of their lives. The feminist movement has manipulated Fair Trade from being a way by which the periphery can enter the capital center, instead, to be a means of economic empowerment. This is an essential aspect in creating a space in which women ("the Other") can have a voice and use it.

This purpose of Fair Trade opens up a unique discussion of the possibility of Fair Trade being used in the process of liberation, as defined by Dussel, in order to achieve the horizons of Liberation Philosophy. As previously mentioned, the horizon of the erotics is the most pertinent. In the empowerment of women, confidence and self-esteem is established through both economic and non-economic ways. The women's confidence and self-esteem creates the space for them to discuss and opionate. It will provide them with the vigor and determination to continue fighting for their voice to be heard. Alongside this process is the realization of the right and responsibility that women have over their bodies, including but not limited to, the right to abortion. This is the creation of the second horizon, the erotics, of Liberation Philosophy. In this way, the purpose of Fair Trade in the Resistance, which is to provide economic empowerment to those in the periphery so that the space for the testimony of "the Other" to be heard is created, is being fulfilled.

This introduction of the analysis of Fair Trade through the dual perspectives provided by Late Capitalism and Resistance is pertinent to the on-going research of the *fairness* of Fair Trade. It opens up the discussion of Fair Trade to include those who it is most personally affecting, the producers. A non-hegemonic study that takes into

account the various perspectives of Fair Trade, not solely the perspective provided by Late Capitalism, is essential if one wants to arrive at an accurate conclusion of the effectiveness of Fair Trade.

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