

MARY'S PENCE (www.maryspence.org)

Interview with **Zoraida Sosa Sanchez**, Managua, Nicaragua

My name is Zoraida Sosa Sanchez. I am fifty years old and I work with an organization called Women and Community, which was founded ten years ago. The organization works with women to provide support in situations of domestic violence. However, the organization does more than just comfort the women—rather, we tell them their rights and what they can do for themselves, and we support them in those endeavors. Here in Nicaragua the rate of domestic abuse is very high, and on top of this there is also the issue of sexual abuse. A lot of this has to do with the patriarchal culture and the norms of our society in regards to gender roles. These roles are reinforced by the schools, government, and church, and because of them women are eager to enter into and then preserve their marriages, regardless of violence. Women are concerned with their families, but do not take care of themselves. Also, they do not have a voice in their own homes, and often have to wait for their husbands to make decisions. Therefore, our work is to awaken the consciousness of the women so that they recognize themselves as a person, and begin to demand the respect and space that they need. As a theologian, I believe that men and women were created by God, and because of this we have our responsibilities and tasks, but also we have the opportunity to work together to create something beautiful in this world, where we all should be equal without following the orders of anyone. Because of this, we are disseminating knowledge about women's rights. Here, violence is a real problem, and as a mother, daughter, and grandmother, I have experience violence and sexual abuse since I was a child. Because of this, I am convinced that if a woman does not try to change, nothing else will change. On the other hand, if a woman begins to change, she demands a change in others and teaches them to respect and include her. Women need to learn to demand respect and visibility, and from this they will affect change in their sons, brothers, husbands, and families. For me, this is very important, and I feel that the women of the world are being more vocal. It is evident that the patriarchal system is feeling threatened, and in Nicaragua the men are responding the only way they know how: violence. There has been an increase of the killing of women recently, and it is only increasing. I hope that my words help—I speak them from my own experience and from my heart.

For more information:

Katherine Wojtan
Executive Director
Mary's Pence
1000 Richmond Terrace, Suite G-304
Staten Island, NY 10301
Katherine@maryspence.org
718-720-8040