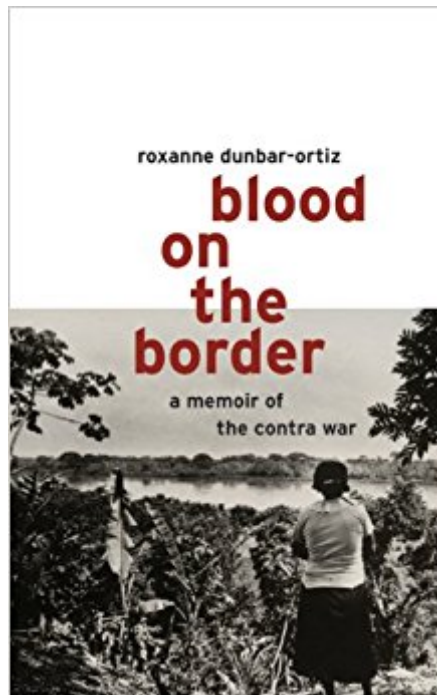




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# Blood On The Border : A Memoir Of The Contra War



## Synopsis

With *Blood on the Border: A Memoir of the Contra War*, Dunbar-Ortiz presents the third volume in her critically acclaimed memoir. In this long-awaited book, she vividly recounts on-the-ground memories of the contra war in Nicaragua, chronicling the US-sponsored terror inflicted on the people of Nicaragua following their 1981 election of the socialist Sandinistas, ousting Reagan darling and vicious dictator Somoza. The war's opening salvo was the bombing of a Nicaraguan plane in Mexico City by US-backed contras, the plane Dunbar-Ortiz would have been on were it not for a delay. This disarming closeness to the fraught history of the US/Nicaraguan relationship shapes Dunbar-Ortiz's narrative, bringing uncomfortably present the decade-long dirty war that the Reagan administration pursued in Nicaragua against civilian and soldier alike. As with her first two memoirs, in *Blood on the Border*, Dunbar-Ortiz seamlessly connects the dots not only between the personal and the political, but between recent history and our present moment. Unlike the many commentators who view the September 11, 2001, attacks as the start of the so-called "war on terror," Dunbar-Ortiz offers firsthand testimony on battles waged much earlier. While her rich political analysis of this history bears the mark of a trained historian, she also writes from her perspective as an intrepid activist who spent months at a time throughout the 1980s in the war-torn country, especially in the remote Mosquitia region, where the indigenous Miskitu people were viciously assailed and nearly wiped out by CIA-trained contra mercenaries. She makes painfully clear the connections between what many US Americans only remember vaguely as the Iran-Contra affair and current US aggression in the Americas, the Middle East, and around the world. Clearly, this will be a book valuable not only for students of Latin American history, but also for anyone who is interested in better understanding the violent turmoil of our world today.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"...a memoirist of great skills and even greater heart. She's a force of nature on the page and off." -- Dave Eggers, author of "...foreign policy today is being shaped by veterans of the savage Washington-backed Contra war...the secret history of that intervention." -- Mike Davis, author of *City of Quartz* and *Ecology of Fear*"Dunbar Ortiz's story is an exciting and sobering read which holds valuable lessons for today's ongoing struggles for justice." -- Margaret Randall, Author of *When I Look Into the Mirror and See You: Women, Terror & Resistance*"This is an impressive, astounding and truthful historical document." -- Gioconda Belli, author of *The Country Under My Skin*"exploration of the gray zones between the indigenous Miskitos in Nicaragua and Sandinistas. An important book, and a gripping one." -- Rebecca Solnit, author of *Hope in the Dark* and *Rivers of Shadows*

Unlike the many commentators who view the September 11, 2001 attacks as the start of the "War on Terror," in *Blood on the Border* legendary human rights activist and historian Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz offers firsthand testimony on battles waged much earlier. The long-awaited third volume in her critically-acclaimed memoir is a disarming account of the decade-long dirty war pursued by US-backed Contras against the people of Nicaragua. While her rich political analysis bears the mark of a trained historian, she also writes from her perspective as a committed activist who spent months at a time throughout the 1980s in Nicaragua, especially in the remote Mosquitia region where the indigenous Miskitu people were viciously assailed and nearly wiped out by CIA-trained Contra mercenaries.

Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz has a remarkable ability to tell her personal story in a broader historical context--the mark, I suppose, of a good memoir. This is her third such volume. The first, *RED DIRT: GROWING UP OKIE*, is still my favorite, but that may just be in part because I have the experience of trying to be a radical in Oklahoma. That book traces her life from poor, part Native American roots to 60s radicalism (including wonderful stories about her Wobbly--IWW, International Workers of the World--grandfather. The second volume, *OUTLAW WOMAN: A MEMOIR OF THE WAR YEARS, 1960-1975*, focused on Dunbar-Ortiz's involvement in the anti-Vietnam War movement and the

feminist movement. Now, she has completed the series (but not, hopefully, the peace and justice work she so obviously passionately believes in) with **BLOOD ON THE BORDER: A MEMOIR OF THE CONTRA WAR**. Dunbar-Ortiz is brutally honest about the problems in her life, including relationships and alcoholism. She is also brutally honest about the role of US imperialism in Latin America. Just one of the revelations for me was the recycling of figures from this era such as Negroponte by the current Bush. This is a very interesting, even important book. Read it. And weep? For Dunbar-Ortiz sounds a bit pessimistic at the end, one might say. "Nicaragua was the last great hope for national liberation movements to succeed in breaking free from imperialism," she writes. But she continues (and concludes the book): "The historical process of nation building that occurred with the rise of capitalism in Western Europe has reached its limits. Had the West, particularly the United States, nourished the struggles of peoples for the development of authentically independent nations out of the ruins of colonialism in Africa and imperialism in Asia, the Pacific, Latin America, and the Caribbean, perhaps the dream of a United Nations could have become a reality. Today, that dream does not appear possible, making indigenous movements ever more fundamental to humanity in reaching a different conclusion than a nuclear war or environmental disaster." Is there hope there? I hope so....

"US officials railed against the Sandinistas for nationalizing property, but they had never criticized the dictator Somoza for personally owning much of the country..." *Blood on the Border* is Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz's maddening search for identity amidst the life-or-death Sandinista Revolution and collapsing social movements in the U.S. during the Ronald Reagan '80s. As a witness to many great crimes against humanity, the author deftly balances between her own struggles with alcohol, humanizing the Nicaraguan people (especially the misunderstood and maligned indigenous Miskitu people) and recounting harrowing run-ins with "the other side" in the form of CIA agents, State Department officials, mercenary guns-for-hire, Christian fundamentalists and Somozistas. This is a well-written, important contribution to the history of the Sandinista Revolution and the U.S. Left in the 1980s. Specifically, its unique focus on the role of indigenous people in a wider social revolution is invaluable. The misunderstandings with the Sandinistas and manipulation of the Miskitu and other Atlantic Coast Indians by the U.S./Contras is telling of the present war on Iraq's ethnic conflict. The author's post-Maoist politics shine through her actions--including her obsession with the United Nations--and leads one to wonder if her tremendous knowledge, talents and convictions might have been more helpful had they not brought her to UN conference after conference? The better we understand Nicaragua and the United States' dirty war against the Sandinistas, the better

we will be poised to confront today's imperialism. After all, the author observes, from then-U.S. Ambassador to Honduras John Negroponte to then-Reagan advisor Donald Rumsfeld, it's a lot of the same cretins running the show today.

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