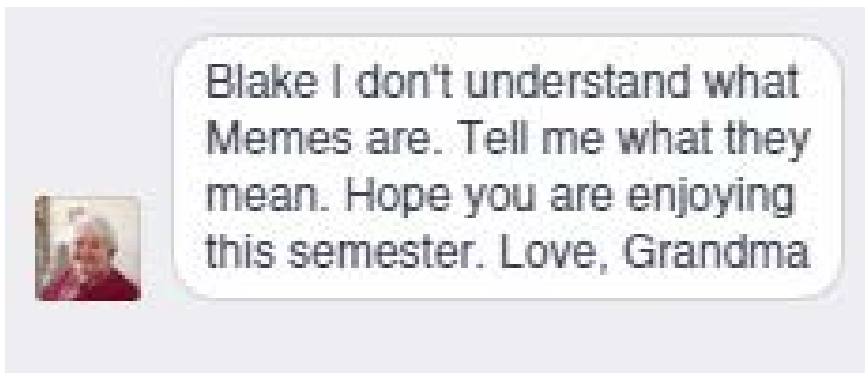




by Erica Raines



"please help" by blake buthod

Ecuador's First Female Congressional Deputy

by Marc Becker

Presented at the 2016 Women and Gender Studies Conference

Nela Martínez realized a historic milestone in the South American country of Ecuador when in 1945 she became the first woman to be seated as a deputy in the national assembly. In 1929, Ecuador was the first country in Latin America—and only the second in the Americas after the United States—to grant women the right to vote. Nevertheless, Martínez's possibilities for political participation were circumscribed simply because she was a woman.

Even though Martínez was a leading political activist, feminist, intellectual, and author, her male counterparts kept shunting her aside when selecting candidates to run for political office. Martínez provides an excellent example of what Elizabeth M. King and Andrew D. Mason assert in *Engendering Development*, "Like race, ethnicity, and class, gender is a social category that largely establishes one's life chances, shaping one's participation in society and the economy."

The immediate context for Martínez's participation in the assembly was a May 28, 1944 revolution that ushered in a time of euphoric optimism that seemed to signal the emergence of new social relations. Activists took advantage of this political opening to draft a new progressive constitution that represented an end to exclusionary state structures. Leftist domination of the assembly was assured with the inclusion of "functional" deputies to represent special interest groups such as workers, students, and Indigenous peoples.

The leftist Confederation of Ecuadorian Workers (CTE) controlled six of the seats in the assembly. Originally Martínez was to be named the second (after CTE secretary-general Pedro Saad) of these six deputies, but

other interests and a certain amount of intrigue denied her a place on the list. In an autobiography, Martínez pointed to her political disagreements with Saad, as well as a certain amount of sexism, as removing her from the original list.

In the end, Martínez was named as a second alternate who could take a seat in case a primary deputy was not able to attend. Finally on December 7, 1945, with only four days remaining in the legislative term, that historic event finally occurred. Martínez later noted that having women play a role in political power was so far removed from the consciousness of the dominant society that there were no restrooms for women in the congressional building, only urinals for men. "Never had they thought that a woman could go to the legislative palace," Martínez observed, "that she could be there discussing political issues with men."

Liberals, conservatives, socialists, and communists all welcomed Martínez to the assembly. The deputy Gustavo Becerra welcomed Martínez on behalf of the communist party. "The comrade Nela Martínez's merits are indisputable," he said. "Her excellent performance in literature as well as in politics and her struggle on behalf of the people, have led her deservedly to come to occupy a position among us." Becerra declared, "the communist party is proud to have in congress for the first time in the politics of Ecuador, a woman who honors the working class of the country that she represents."

The socialist deputy Juan Isaac Lovato similarly applauded their party's "satisfaction to see that Miss Nela Martínez, an activist who has worked enthusiastically for the betterment of the working class has come with all legitimate pride and relevant merits to fill this seat."

Martínez responded to the accolades with her own statement, and what in the end was her only spoken contribution to the assembly. “My presence here represents the voice of Ecuadorian women,” she said. “It is precisely the voice of Ecuadorian women throughout history: the women who fought for the independence of Ecuador; those who lived through the colonial period trying to raise the culture of the Ecuadorian people; those who later fought for Ecuadorian women to have the same standard of living as men, the same culture, and they were able to achieve a creative work for the benefit of the country.”

The final four days of the legislative session was a period of weighty and historically significant debates regarding Ecuador’s incorporation into the United Nations. The assembly also debated support for the Bretton Woods agreements, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Despite the symbolic significance of the first women in the country’s assembly, the mainstream newspapers ignored the historic event. This omission was despite Martínez’s intellectual engagement with the pressing political issues of the day. From her position in congress, Martínez signed a letter along with other deputies asking Ecuador’s president José María Velasco Ibarra to break diplomatic relations with Francisco Franco’s falangist government in Spain.

Interestingly and equally significant was the failure of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) that was investigating communist militants such as Martínez in Ecuador to

take note of her presence in the assembly. In fact, an FBI agent indicated in a confidential memo that she did *not* take part in the assembly. The memo noted that Martínez was a substitute member of the assembly, and had returned to Quito on December 3 to be on hand for the legislative session. “Martínez did not take part in the Assembly as the Deputy for whom she was a substitute was present throughout the session,” the report stated.

The FBI’s failure to acknowledge Martínez’s participation in the assembly is stunning and reveals both the reach and limits of political surveillance. Many political developments that the FBI reported as a result of their “investigations” were little more than what one could learn by reading the daily newspapers, a method of gathering information that foreign intelligence agents commonly employ. Since the daily newspapers did not report on Martínez’s presence in the assembly, the FBI was not aware of that historic first. Even so, they did know her travel dates to and from Quito, probably provided by a mole they employed in a travel agency. The FBI was more apt at picking up mundane information rather than politically significant activities. As a political police that otherwise provided a documentary record of leftist actions, in relying on sexist newspaper reporting for their information they failed in their mission to document a milestone in Ecuador’s history.

The only candidate the Good-Ole Boy Elites are scared of is supposedly “Little” Betty.

by Larry and Betty McClain-Isles

Write-in Betty McLane-Isles for sole woman Kirksville Town Council Election this April NOW! It’s real civil rights fairness.

1) Why It Matters?

Here, Kirksville, is where you live; be you a full-time resident or temporary student or other category. The multi-thousand dollar decisions town council makes can not, in sexist neglect 34 its 5 presently disgracefully all-male body affects you, and elections are nominally, openly [neon-partisan]. Yet turn-out is shockingly alienated on low, even by nearby rural counties comparison!! Why? Because the Good Ole’ Boys prefer to exclude we folk.

2) Betty’s got the experience and the calmest, effective questioning punch, is liked but not, ever, at all intimidated by others, especially otherwise [neon-resident] [un-quieted] town hall bureaucrats! She has long sat cast half-decade on 3 town governance commissions (more than any other educator). Last april as a non-writ-in candidate she secured her highest-ever vote, over a quarter of a thousand! And in her 3 such campaigns is the only candidate to time-wise (when allowed by paternalistic administrations) to try to have [met] you! This time we are “write-in” to enhance her freedom to see you, not the frothy elites.

3) She’s, also, the sole candidate with real firmly detailed policies, such as weekly recycle van give cow-[reconers] like yourself a chance and small realtors a start-up viability; a new full gay and women’s rights ordinance (no more negotiations only!) and expanded town tourism and housing; planning departments. All so to promote [TOSS] more real businesses [inoled] support like Kirksville’s multi-ethnic [oreos] support her in the past

than any other evasive male candidate. Her posters are you, real people’s dwellings displayed, not end-of-the-street posters sites in wealth.

4) She can win if you help us now and on the actual day. And will herself work with the one good, activist councilman already on council against the quiet do-what bureaucrats- want-only types, in a one 3 year-only term! She 2016 envisions a modern multi-school town youthfully of growth and conservation alike, and she is already more effective as a commissioner in publicity for your causes than much boastful self-only [vaunted] male mayors. She’s a former TSU [oreo] [scneron] officer and is approachable, friendly by her [canine] nature is globally, economically experiences, as well by travel.

So join us and vote advance (if you are absentia likely) at court house, write/contact me: Larry Isles, 503 S. Stanford St, Kirksville 63501. Women and minorities, educated folk; we cannot afford 3 years more exclusion, undemocratically can you laze away this one? Really? Shame on you if you do.

Paid for by candidate Betty McLane-Isles.

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