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Poetry from Solentiname, Nicaragua

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Ernesto Cardenal, former Minister of Culture of Nicaragua and recently nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, began painting, wood carving, and poetry workshops on Solentiname—an archipelago of 36 islands and 1,000 people—in the mid-1960s as part of his developing an artistic and contemplative community among sustenance farmers and fishing families. Forty years later, he continues to spend time on the islands and the church he built there, and holding poetry workshops as recently as January 2008.

These poems are from young people who participate in the community poetry workshops.

Martha Lorena Sandoval Obando, 21, Isla Mancarrón

The Madroño

Green leaves and strong branches.
 Come December it clothes itself
 in white flowers;
 black and yellow wasps gather honey
 from its combs.
 From the *madroño* we obtain firewood,
 wood for our houses,
 like the beams of the Church of
 Solentiname.

Alexander Carbonero, 11, Isla Mancarrón

[Untitled]

The beach
 the beach full of fish
 White, green, blue colored fish
 And the green mountains that reflect themselves
 On the shore line.

The church
 The church full of drawings and
 All around it trees that
 Rock when the wind passes.

The Oropéndolas:

Golden orioles build their nests
in the *jenízaros*, their yellow tails, coffee-colored bodies
and their orange beaks; they eat papayas,
mangos, and *pitallas*.

Johana De Los Ángeles Masis, 21, Isla Mancarrón

Solentiname

You're a treasure, of beautiful light
that shines with much love
and tenderness upon the lives of your inhabitants
with your beautiful natural riches,
filled with smiles
all our lives,
the songs of the birds
the heart beat of my heart renews itself
when I watch the immense blue sky
that covers beautiful Solentiname,
I fill with happiness
because I belong to you.
How beautiful is my Solentiname!

Poems translated from Spanish by Sandra M. Boschetto-Sandoval and Ciro A. Sandoval, Department of Humanities, Michigan Technological University. Spanish versions are available at <http://communityliteracy.org/authors/solentiname>.

Editorial note from Michael R. Moore, Co-Editor, *Community Literacy Journal*.