

Rights Action – December 15, 2011

HONDURAS: GARIFUNA COMMUNITIES TAKE LEGAL ACTION AGAINST RANDY JORGENSEN, THE CANADIAN “PORN KING”, FOR FORCED FRAUDULENT LAND SALES

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Randy Jorgensen, the Canadian “Porn King” – as stated by the Canadian Maclean's magazine in a 1994 article - is contributing to the violation of the rights of indigenous Garifuna communities along the Caribbean coast, as he pushes ahead with a number of tourism projects aimed at the North American and European tourism markets.

THIS IS HOW THE UNJUST GLOBAL ECONOMIC-POLITICAL ORDER WORKS

BELOW: Communiqué from OFRANEH (Black Fraternal Organization of Honduras) about these law suits. Since 1979, OFRANEH is the leading indigenous Garifuna organization in Honduras. Since 1998, Rights Action has funded and worked with OFRANEH on a number of key struggles they are involved with, including this one related to the global tourism industry.

BACKGROUND:

- “‘Porn King’ Developer of Projects in Trujillo”, La Prensa (March 7, 2011): http://www.rightsaction.org/articles/Honduras_Canadian_porn_kings_031011.html
- Article by Dawn Paley, “Snowbirds Gone Wild! Canadian retirees and locals clash in Honduras”, <http://this.org/magazine/2010/11/04/canada-snowbirds-honduras/>
- Article by Karen Spring, “Canadian porn kings, tourism “development” projects, repression & the violation of indigenous-Garifuna rights in Honduras”, http://rightsaction.org/articles/Garifuna_repression_021711.htm

WHAT TO DO: see below

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- OFRANEH, T: [011] 504-2443-2492, garifuna@ofraneh.org, ofraneh@yahoo.com
- Rights Action, Grahame Russell, 1-860-751-4285, info@rightsaction.org
 - Please re-post this
 - Get on-off Rights Action's listserv: www.rightsaction.org
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(Translated for Rights Action by Rosalind Gil)

Yesterday, leaders from the communities of Barrio Cristales and Río Negro, Trujillo, accompanied by The Honduran Black People's Fraternal Organization (OFRANEH), filed a formal request for absolute nullity of a number of fraudulent sale contracts involving community lands, to the benefit of a Canadian developer, Randy Roy Jorgensen, known as the “Porn King”.

A large number of these transactions were completed under pressure, offering ludicrously low amounts of money to local residents in exchange for their property in the village known as Río Negro, where the Canadian developer plans to build a docking facility for Panamex cruise ships. The project is known as the “Banana Coast.”

The scam involved not only land owned by residents of Río Negro but also lands in the Garífuna community of Cristales, which is located south west of Trujillo, in a place called Campamento, where Randy Jorgensen's representatives transacted fraudulent land sales.

PRESENCE OF THE GARÍFUNA PEOPLE IN THE BAY OF TRUJILLO

The Garífuna people arrived on Roatán Island, Honduras, on April 12, 1797, after being forcibly expelled by the British from the island of St. Vincent after they (Kalinagu and Garinagu) had engaged in two consecutive wars to defend their last bastion in the Caribbean, in the Lesser Antilles.

Trujillo was founded in 1524 but was uninhabited during the period from 1643 until a few years before the arrival of our people in Honduras.

In 1901, the contemporary President of Honduras, Manuel Bonilla, conceded to the “morenos”, the communities of Cristales and Río Negro, located within the perimeter of Trujillo, five thousand hectares of land to the south east of Cristales and two thousand hectares in the vicinity of the Laguna de Guaimoreto.

ILLEGAL PURCHASES AND IMPUNITY

In 2007, local intermediaries took part in illegal purchases of property on behalf of the Porn King. By doing so, they initiated the expulsion of the Garífunas from the Bay of Trujillo. This is the same type of treatment that our people have had to endure in most of the territory that we have lived on permanently and peacefully for the last two centuries.

The Porn King has also acquired land in the Garífuna communities of Santa Fe, San Antonio and Guadalupe. We made formal complaints about these fraudulent purchases

to the Public Ministry before the coup d'etat in 2009, but government authorities did not intervene to stop these illegal purchases.

THE "PORN KING" AND HIS "BANANA COAST"

In 1904, American writer O'Henry spent some time in Trujillo, where he wrote his book *Cabbages and Kings*, set in the fictional port of Coralio, the fictitious name he gave Trujillo. In his book, O'Henry coined the term "banana republic", which he used to describe Honduras.

A century later, the Porn King turns up in Trujillo and starts buying up lands from the Garífuna people to construct a large development known as the Banana Coast. The methods he uses to make these acquisitions and the political context in the country are the same as the colonial techniques used by the banana companies and the political situation in Honduras in the early twentieth century.

In the middle of the political tragedy in Honduras, after the military coup of 2009, Jorgenson managed to quickly obtain environmental permits to construct villas on the iron-rich hillsides over-looking the Caribbean in a declared protected area of the Capiro y Calentura National Park.

PORN KING CONNECTIONS TO THE POST-COUP REGIME LEADER PEPE LOBO

The Porn King received very strong support from Ramon Lobo Sosa, brother of the leader Porfirio Lobo, thus guaranteeing that everything went smoothly and obliterating any opposition to the pressure and sacking of their lands on the part of the Garífunas.

On June 21 of this year (2011), Jorgenson received "special recognition" from Lobo in a cabinet session that was held in Trujillo.

The Canadian developer receives financing from the Canadian Shield Fund (including funds from the controversial mining company, Barrick Gold and the Canadian Oil and Gas Company). The Canadian Shield Fund has provided financing to "Life Vision", a company whose name provides cover for The King of Porn's business enterprises.

FROM THE BANANA COAST TO THE CHARTER CITY

The military coup has allowed for the passing of a series of neo-liberal laws that have had the effect of destroying major social achievements obtained in the last half century. These laws include the creation of a more flexible labour market, the overprotection of foreign investment and the most denigrating form of neo-colonialism, the Charter City.

American economist, Paul Romer, with his Charter City model, led to the fall of the government of Ravalomanana at the beginning of 2009. When it was announced that Charter Cities would be constructed on the island of Madagascar, the Malagase people rose up and Ravalomanana was driven out.

In Honduras, the opposite happened. The military coup paved the way for a neo-liberal offensive, culminating in the constitutional reform that cedes part of our territory to foreign capital.

PEDOPHILE CHARGES AGAINST PORN KING, AS WELL

In an atmosphere in which the people of this country are unable to defend themselves, this shrewd Canadian developer, who has been accused of pedophilia in Honduras, has become one of the biggest supporters of the Charter City. The Lobo administration has kept a lid on information regarding the supposed location of the Charter City, which will definitely include Trujillo and will apparently extend along the coast from the Bay of Trujillo to Rio Sico - the exact location of the Garífuna cultural centre.

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE COMMUNITY OF RIO NEGRO (TRUJILLO) AND THE EXPULSION OF THE GARIFUNA PEOPLE FROM HONDURAS

The Canadians seem determined to drive our people out of Honduras. - a case in point being the sad story of what happened in the Bay of Trujillo, a tragedy that will be repeated all along the coast.

A CANADIAN SENATOR

When the post-military coup National Congress held a special session in the city of Gracias, Lempira, with the agenda to approve a statute on Special Development Zones (RED – or Charter Cities), it was attended by the Canadian Senator, Gerry St. Germain, accompanied by a number of possible investors from Canada.

* * *

The fact that it was so easy for Jorgenson to achieve his objective in Rio Negro – a community that has been disappeared almost completely – and the fact that the present government has given over to foreign capital are consequences of the military coup. The loss of human rights also indicates that we are living in a failed state in Honduras.

Unfortunately, the history of our country is plagued with leaders and politicians who have gotten rich by ceding our national independence. It is no coincidence that exactly one century after Honduras was invaded by Sam Zemurray and his subordinate Manuel Bonilla, (January, 1911), the National Congress approved the statute on Charter Cities (January, 2011).

With their requests for absolute nullity of contracts secured by the Porn King and his local representatives, Garífuna leaders from Barrio Cristales and Río Negro are taking a step towards recovering what their communities have lost. We will have to wait and see if there is any justice in Honduras or if, as usually happens, the requests will simply disappear.

La Ceiba Atlantida, December 14, 2011

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WHAT TO DO

TO MAKE TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS

for indigenous and campesino organizations working for justice, and a return to the rule of law and real democracy in Honduras, make check payable to "Rights Action" and mail to:

- UNITED STATES: Box 50887, Washington DC, 20091-0887
- CANADA: 552 - 351 Queen St. E, Toronto ON, M5A-1T8

CREDIT-CARD DONATIONS can be made (also, anonymously): www.rightsaction.org

- Canada: <https://www.canadahelps.org/DonationDetails.aspx?cookieCheck=true>
- USA: <https://npo.networkforgood.org/Donate/Donate.aspx?npoSubscriptionId=488>

FOR DONATION OF STOCK that can be made (also, anonymously): info@rightsaction.org

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- OFRANEH, tel: [011] 504-2443-2492, garifuna@ofraneh.org, ofraneh@yahoo.com
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