

October 11, 2012  
Rights Action

## **Return Of The Nightmare. Honduras: Now Open For Political Murder**

by NICK ALEXANDROV, October 9, 2012

<http://www.counterpunch.org/2012/10/09/honduras-now-open-for-political-murder/print>

Last Wednesday's presidential debate, and the flurry of fact-checking that followed, helped sustain the illusion that Republicans and Democrats are bitter rivals. Reporters and analysts obsessed over the accuracy of each candidate's claims, ignoring the two parties' broadly similar goals, which mainstream political scientists now take for granted.

"Government" — both parties are implicated — "has had a huge hand in nurturing America's winner-take-all economy," Jacob S. Hacker and Paul Pierson write in *Winner-Take-All Politics*, their study of the massive transfer of wealth to the richest Americans since the 1970s.

George Farah's research has shown how cross-party collaboration extends from economic issues to the debate's structure. The Commission on Presidential Debates, a private corporation both parties created, ensures independent candidates will be excluded, and more generally that the events will remain the sterile, predictable spectacles familiar to viewers.

No doubt the foreign policy debate in a few weeks will offer much of the same. In the real world, meanwhile, Obama embraced and extended Bush's foreign policy, as the case of Honduras illustrates especially well. After the Honduran military staged a coup against democratically-elected President Manuel Zelaya on June 28, 2009, Obama and Secretary of State Clinton backed the ensuing fraudulent elections the Organization of American States and European Union refused to observe. Porfirio Lobo won the phony contest, and now holds power. "The conclusion from the Honduras episode," British scholar Julia Brixton wrote in *Latin American Perspectives*, "was that the Obama administration had as weak a commitment to democracy, human rights, and the rule of law as the preceding U.S. presidency."

The coup's plotters, it should be emphasized, knew exactly what they were doing. Colonel Bayardo Inestroza, a military lawyer who advised them on legal issues, was very open about it, informing the Salvadoran newspaper *El Faro*, "We committed a crime, but we had to do it." U.S. officials seem to have taken slightly longer to recognize the obvious, but Wikileaks documents indicate that, by late July, they understood that what had transpired was "an illegal and unconstitutional coup." Obama's legal training, cosmopolitan background and cabinet stuffed with intellectuals were all irrelevant in this situation, like so many others. A different set of factors drives U.S. foreign policy, which is precisely why, to cite just one example, Matt Bai's analysis of "Obama's Enthusiasm Gap" is featured prominently on the New York Times homepage as I write, below the Ralph Lauren ads and feature about a Pennsylvanian high school's underdog football team. In determining what's "fit to print," triviality seems to be one of the crucial considerations.

A more serious analysis of Obama might start, for example, by observing that his "enthusiasm gap" failed to materialize as he drafted lists of people to murder. It also was mysteriously absent when he stood firmly behind the Honduran coup's leaders, two of whom graduated from the School of the Americas (SOA) at Fort Benning, Georgia. Renamed the Western Hemisphere for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC) in 2001, the name-change was, predictably, just a rebranding. Nico Udu-Gama, one of the leading activists working to close the institution, emphasized recently on Al Jazeera that the school's graduates have continued to violate human rights over the past decade. This is the main reason why Udu-Gama and others organize for School of the Americas Watch, and currently are gearing up for its annual demonstrations at Fort Benning the weekend of November 16-18.

Returning to Honduras, we see that conditions there are beginning to call to mind those of, say, El Salvador in the '80s—good news, perhaps, for aspiring financial executives eager to launch the next Bain Capital. But as the business climate improves, everyday life for Hondurans working to secure basic rights has become nightmarish. Dina Meza's case is just one example. A journalist and founder of the Committee of Families of Detainees and Disappeared in Honduras (COFADEH), Meza received two text messages from the Comando Álvarez Martínez (CAM) last February. The group, named for an SOA graduate, threatened her: "We are going to burn your 'pipa' (vagina) with caustic lime until you scream

and then the whole squad will have fun.” The follow-up warning told her she would “end up dead like the Aguán people,” referring to the poor campesinos that are being slaughtered on land owned mainly by Miguel Facussé, one of the richest Hondurans.

Conflicts over land, to be sure, are nothing new in Central America. The most recent government-led assault on Honduran farmworker rights can be traced back to the 1992 Law of Agricultural Modernization. International finance lobbied aggressively for that decision, which reversed the limited land reform implemented in the preceding decades, and drove the desperately poor into city slums or out of the country, inspiring those who remained to form self-defense organizations.

The Unified Campesino Movement of Aguán (MUCA) is one of these groups. With the help of Antonio Trejo Cabrera, a human rights lawyer, the campesinos recently won back legal rights to several plantations. On September 23, Trejo took some time off to celebrate a friend’s wedding at a church in Tegucigalpa. During the event he received a call, and stepped outside to take it. The gunmen were waiting for him. They shot him several times, and he died soon after arriving at the hospital. “Since they couldn’t beat him in the courts,” Vitalino Alvarez, a spokesman for Bajo Aguán’s peasants, explained, “they killed him.” They killed Eduardo Diaz Madariaga, a human rights lawyer, the following day, presumably for similar reasons.

It is in these conditions that Honduras has been opened for business. The American economist Paul Romer proposed recently that several neoliberal “charter cities”—complete with their own police, laws, and government—be built there, and an NPR reporter recently reviewed this idea enthusiastically in a piece for the New York Times. But despite much misleading discussion of what is considered Romer’s bold entrepreneurial vision, his plan is directly in line with longstanding US goals for the region, as the constitutional chamber of Honduras’ Supreme Court explained recently. Voting 4-to-1 that the charter cities are unconstitutional, the judges concluded that Romer’s plan “implies transferring national territory, which is expressly prohibited in the constitution;” worth recalling is that Zelaya was thrown out for allegedly violating the same document. But this fact and others are considered

beyond debate this election season, an indication of how much change we can expect, regardless of November's winner.

[Nick Alexandrov lives in Washington, DC.]

\*\*\*\*\*

### **JOIN A SOLIDARITY - HUMAN RIGHTS DELEGATION TO HONDURAS**

Nov. 12-21, 2012 or Nov. 16-19, 2012.

Complete information: [AFGJ@AFGJ.org](mailto:AFGJ@AFGJ.org)

### **JOIN A SOLIDARITY - EDUCATIONAL DELEGATION TO HONDURAS**

March 16-23, 2013

Struggle for democracy, human rights, justice and the environment – versus - the illegitimate, military-backed Honduran regime and global companies and investors

Information: Grahame Russell, 1-860-352-2448, [info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org)

\*\*\*\*\*

### **DONATE (TAX-DEDUCTIBLE in Canada and the U.S.)**

Since 1995, Rights Action has been funding grassroots organizations and working for community development and the environment, and for truth, memory, justice and human rights, and for democracy in Guatemala and Honduras, as well as in Chiapas (Mexico) and El Salvador. To support Rights Action's work in Honduras, make check payable to "Rights Action" and mail to:

UNITED STATES: Box 50887, Washington DC, 20091-0887

CANADA: (Box 552) 351 Queen St. E, Toronto ON, M5A-1T8

CREDIT-CARD DONATIONS can be made (in Canada and U.S.):

<http://www.rightsaction.org/tax-deductible-donations>

- be a monthly credit card donor (Canada and U.S.)
- to donate stock, contact: [info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org)

### **MORE INFORMATION:**

Grahame Russell

1-860-352-2448

[info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org)

- Please re-post and re-publish this information
- To get on/off Rights Action's listserv: [www.rightsaction.org](http://www.rightsaction.org)
- Follow Rights Action on facebook: [www.facebook.com/RightsAction.org](http://www.facebook.com/RightsAction.org)

\*\*\*\*\*