

Rights Action
July 2, 2014
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Harvest Of The Guatemalan Regime, Backed By USA & Canada

- Below: “Guatemalan Boy Left For Better Life, Died Alone” (<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/guatemalan-boy-left-better-life-died-alone>)



In an undated photo taken with a mobile phone, provided by the Ramos Juarez family, Gilberto Francisco Ramos Juarez poses in an unidentified location in Guatemala. Ramos Juarez was a Guatemalan boy whose decomposed body was found in the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas. (AP Photo/Juarez Ramos Family)

As long as North American governments, companies and investors do ‘profitable business as usual’ with the unjust, undemocratic, repressive and exploitative regimes of Guatemala and Honduras, empowering and enriching them, there will be no end to the poverty, violence and despair that desperate people – like Gilberto Francisco Ramos Juarez - will logically continue to flee from.

- Recommended viewing/reading: “Harvest of Empire”, <http://harvestofempiremovie.com/>



Cipriana Juarez Diaz, mother of Gilberto Francisco Ramos Juarez, a Guatemalan boy whose decomposed body was found in the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas, cries during an interview at their home in San Jose Las Flores, northern Cuchumatanes mountains, Guatemala, Tuesday, July 1, 2014. Gilberto Francisco's mother said Tuesday she begged him not set out on the dangerous journey from their modest cinder block- and sheet-metal home high in the northern Guatemalan mountains. (AP Photo/Luis Soto)

If the stories of millions of people like Gilberto Francisco Ramos Juarez fill you with sadness and anger at the injustice, then the support and legitimacy given to their unjust, exploitative regimes by North American governments, companies and investors must fill you will equal anger and sadness.

Please share this information with your members of Congress and Senate. In Canada, share this with your Member of Parliament, as the Canadian government pushes hard in Guatemala and Honduras to open their economies to further exploitation by Canadian corporations and investors.

Guatemalan Boy Left For Better Life, Died Alone

By [SONIA PEREZ D.](#), Jul. 2, 2014

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/guatemalan-boy-left-better-life-died-alone>

SAN JOSE LAS FLORES, Guatemala (AP) — Gilberto Ramos wanted to leave his chilly mountain village for the United States to earn money to treat his mother's epilepsy. His mother begged him not to go. "The better treatment would have been if he stayed," Cipriana Juarez Diaz said in a tearful interview with The Associated Press on Tuesday. When he wouldn't relent, she draped him with a white rosary for safe passage.

A month later, his decaying body was found in the Texas desert. Now, the boy has become a symbol for the perils faced by a record flood of unaccompanied children from Central America who are crossing illegally into the U.S. Authorities said Monday that Gilberto was 11, which would have made him one of the youngest known children to die crossing the desert. But his parents said Tuesday that Gilberto was 15.

The parents explained that they had taken several years to register his birth because of the remoteness of their village in Guatemala's northern mountains. When they did, they had forgotten Gilberto's actual birth date, so they listed the same date as his younger brother.

The boy was shirtless, having likely suffered heat stroke, but still wearing the rosary. "He was a good son," Juarez said. "May God give me the strength to endure."

Teenage boys seeking work have long been part of the stream of young men heading north from Central America to escape poverty and gang violence. But the number of unaccompanied immigrant children picked up along the U.S. border has been rising for three years.

Migrants tell of hearing that children traveling alone and parents traveling with young kids would be released by U.S. authorities and allowed to continue to their destination. Gilberto, too, had heard in Guatemala that if he got in, he would be allowed to stay, his family said.

He was born and grew up in San Jose Las Flores in a modest wood and sheet-metal home in the Cuchumatanes mountains of Huehuetenango province along the Mexico border. At 6,600 feet above sea level, the exuberant beauty of deep-green hills and canyons, shrouded with clouds and floral bursts of purple and yellow, is a stark contrast to the extreme poverty.

There is no running or potable water and only a latrine in the family home. In the kitchen, there is food, tortillas or wheat atole, an oatmeal-like drink, but never enough.

The cluster of homes where Gilberto lived is accessible only by foot, a difficult walk of nearly a mile (about 1 ½ kilometers) along a rocky and often muddy mile-long path through the canyons. Gilberto took that path each way to school, where he went as far as third grade before dropping out. "He had to work to help the family," said his teacher, Francisco Hernandez, who remembered that Gilberto loved to draw.

More than half of 50 schoolchildren attending now raised their hands Tuesday when asked if they had family in the U.S., shouting, "I have eight," "seven," "three!" While many migrating minors say they are fleeing violence, the biggest threat in San Jose Las Flores is poverty. There are both mining jobs and drug traffickers in the border state, but neither touch the remote village where Gilberto grew up.

"Here most of the people are farmers. They grow beans, rice, potatoes," said Raul Cifuentes, president of the town's development committee. "But they don't have a way to import or export, so they stay poor."

Gilberto and his father, Francisco Ramos, hired themselves out to harvest and clean corn. Things improved when the oldest son, Esbin Ramos, reached Chicago and started working in a restaurant. He sends \$100 to \$120 a month when he can afford it, allowing the family to build a two-room home out of cement block to replace their wooden shack and paint it bright red and green. Gilberto slept on a piece of foam on the floor.

Short, quiet and humble, he stayed close to home. But he grew despairing and bored, Esbin Ramos said. Meanwhile, their mother got sicker. The older brother suggested Gilberto come to Chicago, where he could return to school and work at night and on weekends.

Gilberto set out May 17 with a change of clothes and a backpack along the same path as his brother, walking the rugged road to the center of town and then hitching a ride to Chiantla to meet up with the smuggler, known as a coyote. He left his cowboy boots behind because he didn't want them to get ruined, his father said.

The trip cost \$5,400, and the family had borrowed \$2,600 of that, paying \$2,000 the first week of the journey and another \$600 the week before he died. They still owe the debt.

Esbin Ramos said Tuesday that he didn't know much about how Gilberto reached the Mexican border city of Reynosa. Esbin went the whole way in the back of a semitrailer. He said Gilberto told him he arrived by bus. "I'm OK, just the deposit money," Gilberto told his father as he was about to cross into Texas.

Then Gilberto and the coyote disappeared. His parents tried to call the coyote. Four days passed, then five, then six. By the eighth day, Esbin Ramos was worried. He called the Guatemalan consulate in Houston and officials in Guatemala seeking help, he said.

Then he got a call from a woman McAllen, Texas, from what agency he doesn't know, telling him his brother was dead. They had found the body June 15, authorities said, and Esbin's phone number on the inside of Gilberto's belt buckle, a tactic many migrants use to hide information from drug traffickers who are looking to extort money from their families.

The Guatemalan consulate in the United States notified the family on Tuesday that Gilberto's body would be returned soon, whenever there is an available flight. His father is already preparing his grave site in the local cemetery.

His bedridden mother stumbled to her feet Tuesday to pray at the altar adorned with wildflowers, arranged where he slept. There are no photos placed there because the family sent most of them to the U.S. to identify the body.

"The coyote told me that he was going to take him to a safe place and I believed him," Francisco Ramos said. "But that was the fate of my son."

What to do / How to get involved

Rights Action

Since 1983, Rights Action has been funding grassroots organizations in Guatemala and Honduras (and in southern Mexico and El Salvador) that are struggling for community controlled development, environmental protection, truth, justice and human rights, and for democracy and the rule of law. Rights Action does extensive education and activism work concerning how the United States and Canada contribute to and benefit from endemic harms and violations in Guatemala and Honduras. Rights Action (Canada), founded in 1999, is independent from Rights Action (USA).

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To support these and other grassroots struggles and projects for human rights, justice, the environment and community controlled development, make check payable to "Rights Action" and mail to:

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Get Informed / Get Involved

Speakers: Plan educational presentations in your community about these issues

Educational Delegation: Form your own group or join one of our educational-solidarity delegation seminars to Guatemala and Honduras to learn more about these issues and struggles

Daily News: www.democracynow.org / www.therealnews.com / www.upsidedownworld.org / www.dominionpaper.ca / www.rabble.ca /

Reading: Eduardo Galeano "Open Veins of Latin America" / Howard Zinn "A People's History of the United States" / James Loewen "Lies My Teacher Told Me" / Ronald Wright "Stolen Continents" / Naomi Klein "The Shock Doctrine" / Dr Seuss's "Horton Hears A Who" /

Say No To "Business As Usual"

The U.S. and Canadian governments, the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank, and North American companies and investors (including public pension funds like Social Security and the Canada Pension Plan) maintain profitable economic and military relations with the Guatemalan and Honduran elites, turning a blind eye to repression, violence and impunity that are the norm in both countries.

Send, and keep on sending copies of this information, and your own letters, to your own elected politicians (MPs, Congresspersons, Senators), to your media, and to your own pension and investment funds, asking why our governments, companies and investment firms do nothing about repression and violence, and environmental and health harms associated with North American businesses, while benefiting from these economic relations with the Guatemalan and Honduran political, military and economic elites.

Honduras – Murder Capital of the World

Americans / Canadians: Keep on, keep on, ... keep on sharing this information, and sending copies to your MPs, Congress members and Senators, and media. Since the June 2009 military coup, that ousted the last democratically elected government, Honduras has become the ‘Murder Capital of the world’. Repression has reached the levels of the worst years of the 1980s.

Since 2009, the U.S. and Canadian governments have legitimized a succession of illegitimate and repressive regimes. North American companies and investors, and “development” banks (World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank) have increased business activities in African palm production, maquiladora sweatshops, privatized “model cities”, tourism and mining.

The Honduran regime remains in power due in large part to its political, economic and military relations with the U.S. and Canada and the “development” banks.

Across Honduras, community based organizations in the pro-democracy movement need considerably more human rights accompaniment, funding, media attention on the harms and violations and education and activism in Canada and the U.S.

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