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INVESTIGATING THE IMPACTS OF USAID IN HONDURAS:
NARRATIVES FROM THE HONDURAN PEOPLE

by

Bentley Cornett

A thesis submitted to the faculty of

The University of San Francisco

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Migration Studies

The College of Arts and Sciences

May 2020

**INVESTIGATING THE IMPACTS OF USAID IN HONDURAS:
NARRATIVES FROM THE HONDURAN PEOPLE**

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

MASTER IN MIGRATION STUDIES

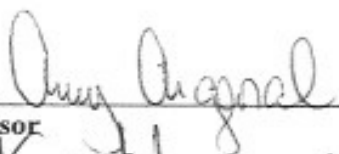
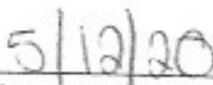

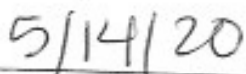
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May 2020

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approval by all the members, this thesis project has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

APPROVED:

	
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Abstract

The funds provided by the US Agency for International Development to Honduras may not be providing the humanitarian assistance that many Americans anticipate it to. In fact, in numerous instances that are outlined in this article, monetary aid distribution to governmental agencies in Honduras has proven to be one of the many factors that are counterproductive to the country's development. The aim of this study is to expand knowledge on the impact of USAID allocation to Honduras and highlight its links to migration. In order to effectively present this research, I ground my argument within the "counter-storytelling" (Solórzano and Yosso 2002) framework to analyze the biographical narratives of Hondurans. This framework opposes the majoritarian or monovocal understanding the United States government and its agencies often employ in explaining why the continuation of funds to Honduras is necessary despite the country's record of numerous human rights violations and instances of governmental corruption. This article offers an analysis of Honduran natives' narratives from three urban and rural locations including San Pedro Sula, Tegucigalpa, and Azacualpa in an effort to better understand USAID's impacts, or the lack thereof, throughout the country. By analyzing Honduran's narratives and combining them with an understanding of the United States' history of intervention and aid allocation to the country, I suggest policymakers' immediate consideration of an alternative solution that a number of Hondurans have identified to be the beginning of a solution to the complex phenomenon of out-migration from the country.

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To my participants, thank you. Thank you for taking time to speak with me and share your experiences with me. I am proud to stand beside you in solidarity in your fight for a fair democracy and independence.

To my advisor, Dr. Amy Argenal, thank you for your guidance throughout this project. Thank you for your support and enthusiasm for this topic and for your work in advocating for and with Hondurans. I feel honored to have had you serve as my advisor. To Professor Hing, thank you for your consistent support and guidance, for making me excited to learn again and for constantly pushing me to be the best student I can be.

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Introduction

We often hear of Honduras portrayed by the media as a dangerous place. The country is frequently alluded to as a region that abounds with frequent homicides, gang violence, and is one of the principle countries sending migrants to the United States (Pew Research Center, 2017). What we do not gather from these media sources however is the extensive history and root causes behind the violence and political corruption. There exists a structure of oppression enforced in a systemic manner, which seeks to repress its people, and despite this, Hondurans have continuously shown extraordinary resilience, resistance and strength in response. I had the privilege of experiencing that strength and spirit first-hand, as I lived in the small rural town of Macuelizo, Santa Barbara, Honduras from 2017-2018. As a recent graduate from the International Studies department at Virginia Tech, I joined a small non-profit organization, Bilingual Education for Central America, where I volunteered as a Third grade teacher in a Catholic home for children. Upon arrival, I was very naïve and had little experience with life outside of the United States. My time spent in Honduras quickly changed my global perspective and understanding of the level of responsibility the United States shares regarding the current conditions that makes migration from the region a necessity.

During my time teaching, I did not simply share academic knowledge, but gained an abundance of understanding from my students, many of whom were orphans with little or no prior experience in school before being brought into the children's home. Their situations led me to question the accessibility of the educational system throughout the

country, the quality of that education and the resources that were available. After having conversations with Hondurans on the subject, it became evident that a quality education is viewed widely as an enormous privilege to which many are simply not afforded. I came to understand that most public schools lack sufficient resources to provide for their students; often children of widely varying ages are crowded into one room with a single teacher, and that teacher often lacks even a high school diploma. If parents do not have the income necessary to send their children to private schools, it is not likely that students will attain an education that grants them the opportunity to attend university, let alone access to job that provides them the sufficient funds to provide for even the most basic of needs.

There were multiple instances in which I had encounters on public transportation buses with Hondurans, as they wondered where I was from and why I was visiting Honduras. Once the point in the conversation came that the individual realized that I was from the United States, I found that they almost always opened up with personal experiences about attempting to migrate to the United States, a family member's experience, or shared about their family members who current reside in the United States. It is important to note that there was a common theme in each of these narratives that I was privileged enough to have shared with me: Hondurans did not want to leave their homes, but felt that they had no other option. Honduran culture greatly values family, friends and community. It is no simple decision to leave behind one's home, language, family, and everything they have ever known for a new place, language, and culture. Considering this strong community dynamic, and despite it, the push that many Hondurans are dealt with in need to flee their homes, I began to question the role of the United States as a country that obtains powerful influence within the region. This

eventually led me to investigate how USAID was allocated and distributed throughout the country. The information that I uncovered explained much about the current circumstances that Hondurans face within their communities and society today. As 2019 data shows, the vast majority of aid is continuously allocated to the government and military, (USAID, Foreign Aid by Country: Honduras) which are embedded in a system of corruption. Realizing the importance of sharing this information with others, I focus this study on the topic of USAID's role in the conditions Hondurans face within their country today. Initially, I assumed that perhaps increasing funding to non-profit organizations instead of continuing to fund corrupt institutions could be the best way to bring about change and development, reducing the need to migrate. In order to find an answer to this question, I decided to return to Honduras in the summer of 2019 to conduct fieldwork investigating how Hondurans were speaking about USAID allocation and their sentiments surrounding it. By listening to the narratives of Hondurans, I learned the reasons why USAID in itself could be a major factor stemming out-migration from the country, and how its suspension could be beneficial to the improvement of safety and security conditions for Hondurans.

The questions that I seek to answer through this study focus mainly on how Hondurans within Honduras are speaking about aid allocation. I will answer the question of how and why aid allocation to governmental agencies is failing by utilizing narratives from Honduran citizens. Lastly, I will explain how the suspension of USAID funding to governmental agencies in Honduras could result in a decrease in migration from the region. The answers that I had assumed to uncover were not aligned with the narratives that I received from Hondurans, as of course, they had their own ideas on how USAID

should function in their society. To my surprise, I found that each of the six individuals that I interviewed shared a common vision and hope for their country.

Methodology and Theory

Counter-Storytelling

Recognizing my position as a white woman benefitting from the privileges rooted in being a citizen of the United States, I ground my research in Tara Yosso and Daniel Solórazano's (2002) notion of counter-storytelling as the framework for my study. As Yosso and Solórazano contend, failure to acknowledge white privilege assists in maintaining racism's stories. For this reason, instead of grounding my study in existing data and research that are predominately produced by Western sources and scholars, the privilege of whiteness and United States citizenship allowed me the opportunity to travel to Honduras to conduct interviews and obtain narratives from Hondurans themselves in regards to the topic of USAID allocation within their country. Yosso et al.'s contribution of "counter-storytelling" is the principle method utilized in this study to analyze the potential avenues monetary assistance could take in order to lead to necessary advancements within Honduran society. This method refuses the acceptance of "majoritarian" or monovocal stories, which are rooted in a legacy of racial privilege and silence or misconstrue the experiences of persons of color. By applying counter-storytelling as a method, majoritarian stories bounded in racial privilege are challenged and important truths are exposed that would otherwise be concealed. Counter-storytelling is comprised of real individuals with authentic experiences, allowing for the production of empirical data that is grounded in reality (Yosso et al., p.36). By employing this methodology, those in positions of advantage within societies find their perceived wisdom

to be challenged by the emergence of content that can reconstruct traditional belief systems. In this way, this study concentrates primarily on Honduran voices and assumes them to be experts on the topic, as they are the subjects who have been grounded in real-life experiences and understanding. I reject the notion that those in positions of power, particularly those in the United States who are determining allocation of aid assistance to Honduras should be deemed the experts on the topic. I instead contend that those who are the intended beneficiaries of the aid should be the determinants of how, where, and if it is allocated to their country.

In order to collect these narratives, I reached out to individuals within San Pedro Sula, Tegucigalpa, and Azacualpa that I had established connections with during my time living in Honduras. I utilized the snowball methodology as my counterparts in Honduras introduced me to individuals that they believed would be interested in participating in an interview. My interviews were conducted mainly in Spanish, one in English, and consisted of twenty-eight questions. Those questions pertained to the individual's experiences living within their community in Honduras, as well as their ideas on how and if USAID should continue to be allocated within their societies, depending on whether or not they concluded it to be of benefit whatsoever. Grounded in Yosso's counter-storytelling method, I refrained during my interviews from sharing any personal beliefs or ideas on the topic, and instead solely asked my questions and recorded the responses I received. There was also open space for the interviewee to speak on additional topics or ideas they held or that they found to be of importance.

Due to civilian's protests against the Honduran government's announcement of the privatization of education and health services that were occurring during my trip, my

travel was limited due to road blockages. Due to these restrictions and heightened tensions in the country during the time, my interview count was limited to six people. Despite this limitation, I find the narratives that were collected to be well rounded and inclusive of persons from both urban and rural areas within the country. Of my six participants, professions included a non-profit worker, a professor, two lawyers, a university student, and a computer engineer. I recognize that my participants were fortunate enough to receive access to quality education, and therefore were not able to speak to the experiences of many Hondurans who have often been marginalized due to the lack of access to these institutions of higher education. Even so, I find it necessary to include that although these individuals came from different regions and backgrounds, they each shared similar visions for their country, and strongly emphasized the need for reform of the education and health care system. Further, these individuals were sincere advocates for those who came from less fortunate circumstances than themselves, and provided many valuable suggestions as to how coming together as a country in solidarity could result in positive change and advancement for the betterment of their society.

World Systems Theory

I draw from Immanuel Wallerstein's (1976) World Systems Theory to explain the United States' neocolonial role in their abuse of power and influence to monopolize Honduras as a developing country. Wallerstein finds that the World Systems Theory was developed in the 16th century, beginning in Europe and quickly spreading thereafter throughout the entire globe (Woodman, 1981). In this system, advanced or developed countries are at the "core" while less developed or poor countries are in the "periphery." These peripheral states' economies are often defined by the dominance of agricultural or

extractive industries that are aligned with the needs of the foreign market. Wallerstein associates this with a notion he deems *unequal exchange*, and as Martínez-Vela (2001) describes as “the systemic transfer of surplus from semi-proletarian sectors in the periphery to the high-technology, industrialized core.” Honduras is a prime example of this description, as the extensive history of U.S. intervention and extraction of wealth and resources throughout the country have ultimately led to the vulnerable conditions of the nation today.

The theory is utilized to describe the global system of power, and in this way, Chirot et al. (1982) explain that what is now commonly referred to as the “Third World” reached its current state due to being systematically underdeveloped with aid of surplus extorted from exploited societies (p.83). Taking advantage of the country’s close proximity and profitable soil, the United States has exploited Honduras time after time as a “periphery state.” The actions taken asserting the United States’ dominant position and monopolizing Honduras’ main source of wealth in order to align with the needs of the foreign market put Wallerstein’s concept of *unequal exchange* into practice. Thus, Honduras as a result has been left with a suffering, unstable economy.

Review of Literature

Background and History of U.S. Intervention

Beginning in the late 1890s, Nevins (2016) points to how United States based banana companies became active in Honduras, drawn in by the arable land throughout the region. Soon following initial entry, the U.S. expanded their control by constructing railroads and establishing banking systems within the country. Ultimately, as Nevins describes in his article, “Honduras became a foreign controlled enclave bringing Honduras

to a one-crop economy whose wealth was carried off to New Orleans, Boston, and New York.” By 1914, United States banana interests owned nearly one million acres of Honduras’ most fertile soil. Subsequently, U.S. capital began to dominate the country’s banking and mining sectors, further contributing to the destabilization of the country’s business sector. Also during the period of the early 1900’s, the United States government intervened with political and military interventions on two separate occasions in an effort to preserve their own national interests (LaFeber 1993).

As the historian LaFeber (1993) explains, these interventions only continued throughout the 1980s into the Reagan era, during which period hundreds of U.S. soldiers were deployed to Honduras to train Nicaraguan contra rebels on foreign soil. The massive increase of U.S. funds allocated to the Honduran military at that time resulted in the militarization of Honduran society. A study conducted prior to the 1980s by Baldwin (1969) finds a pattern of strong connections with these sort of interventions and foreign aid increases. He discusses the relationship between “intervention” and “influence” in aid, concluding that developed states more often than not base fund distribution based on national interests. Baldwin’s findings prove to be accurate in the case of Honduras, as evidence of the true intentions of aid distribution point consistently to actions being taken for the consolidation of power and influence within the country. This society embedded in seeming chaos all around has not changed substantially since this period, largely due to the United State’s continued generous contributions to the government and military. Not only does the U.S. administer funds, but according to data available from usatrade.census.gov, they also have supplied the military with millions of dollars worth of firearms and explosives.

Current Implications Resulting from U.S. Intervention

A 2019 fact sheet by John Lindsay-Poland, Coordinator of Project to Stop US Arms to Mexico, found that Colt Manufacturing based in Hartford, Connecticut exported 1,714 machine guns to Honduras in 2015, 350 in 2016, and 1,000 in 2017 at a \$3,558,686 value. Those guns were then used by Honduran military police to fire against those protesting presidential electoral fraud in 2017 (Human Rights Watch, 2017). Companies in Florida, Wyoming, and Illinois have additionally provided Honduras with a combined 8 million dollars profit from purchases of firearms and explosives. Lindsay-Poland also mentions tear gas, a weapon commonly used by the military police in Honduras against protesters, which is also an import from the United States, manufactured by Nonlethal Technologies in Homer City, Pennsylvania. In the words of Julieta Castellanos, a Honduran sociologist and dean of the National Autonomous University of Honduras in a 2012 article by published by the Institute for Policy Studies, the United States continues serving as the primary actor “feeding the beast,” arming the military with the weapons and tools to commit these abuses in support of the government’s agenda.

In 2012, *La Tribuna* published another article finding that COFADEH, the Committee of Families of the Detained and Disappeared of Honduras, disclosed that more than ten thousand complaints had been issued regarding police and military abuses since the 2009 coup, but none of those concerns had been addressed. This brought rise to former Honduran congressman Alfredo Landaverde’s (2012) accusation that one in every ten members of Congress was a drug trafficker, and additionally declaring that he had evidence to prove that both national and political leaders were involved in drug trafficking. Shortly following his reveal, Landaverde was assassinated. (Frank, 2012).

According to a report organized by the Inspector General of the Honduran Police, also published in 2016 by Malkin et al. in *The New York Times*, Landaverde's assassination was evidenced to be a conspired killing, planned and carried out by twelve members, including generals, of the Honduran national police force. This is just one example of the numerous instances of organized crime and violence committed by those in positions of power within Honduras.

The U.S. Government's Role in Destabilization

Taking all of these factors into account, it is necessary to understand and examine the reasons and incentives related to the reasons why the United States continues to supply aid to Honduras despite obvious instances of corruption and human rights abuses.

Hiemstra's (2017) article examines why proposed cuts to humanitarian aid within Central America are perceived to be harmful by U.S. Congress members. She discusses the Obama administration's push for investment within the Northern Triangle region as a means to provide residents with better living conditions, presented as an effort to decrease out-migration. In addition to this plan, however, Obama-era policies further included the strengthening of "military and security partnerships" with Central American governments, including border control initiatives as well as equipping police and military with training and equipment. President Obama's administration is especially important to evaluate considering the 2009 coup d'état that occurred during the time of his administration and the extremely violent human rights abuses taking place within the Aguán Valley during the time.

Frank (2018) explains the entry of two hundred to three hundred armed security guards into the Aguán in support of former president Facussé's Dinant Corporation, which

is a major producer of palm oil and other agricultural products (Frank, 2011). In an effort to protect the corporation's interests, security guards enclosed on a group of campesinos at work in their fields, shooting five men to their deaths, all of which were members of the Campesino Movement of the Aguan (Frank, 2018). When no justice was provided for these killings, two thousand campesinos organized to set up unarmed blockade on a highway. As a result of this blockade, between five hundred and one thousand police, military, and private forces surrounded protestors aiming firearms at them (Frank, 2018). Connecting this incident back to the Obama administration, it is important to recognize that those same security forces had been trained and funded in part by the United States. (Human Rights Watch, 2014). Serving to exacerbate an already severely problematic set of conditions within the nation, a 2013 Congressional Report by Peter Meyer notes that in 2010, US funding for the Honduran police and military had increased.

On March 12, 2012, a document available on congresswoman Jan Schakowsky's website offers that 94 members of the House sent a letter to former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton requesting to suspend security assistance to Honduras. The letter raised concerns regarding human rights violations, in particular within the Bajo Aguán region where a total of 45 residents had been killed at the hands of police and security guards in a three-year span. In the letter, Representative Schakowsky counters,

In the absence of a serious commitment to stopping human rights abuses, including a full investigation and prosecution of the killings and suspension of any members of the Honduran official security establishment involved in the abuses, The U.S. should suspend military assistance to Honduras. (Press Release, 2012)

Instead of suspending aid, however, the United States took the initiative to change the narrative, legitimizing continued aid assistance due to the region's drug war and "security crisis," which the U.S. portrayed to have arisen entirely as a result of drug trafficking.

An article published by CNN documents Vice President Joe Biden's visit to Honduras in March of 2012. There, he pledged to the current Honduran president, Porfirio Lobo, that the United States would continue providing economic assistance and training to Honduran law enforcement and judicial officials as an act of solidarity to prevent drug trafficking. By doing so, the United States government made the decision to appeal to U.S. national interests and blatantly ignore the rampant human rights abuses against citizens regularly being committed by Honduran police and security officials. Ultimately, the Obama administration had legitimized the increased distribution of aid assistance to corrupt forces in the name of fighting against drug trafficking.

U.S. Laws and Regulations Regarding Aid

In light of these actions that were taken the U.S. government, it is necessary to examine any laws that exist to prevent against these types of instances in an effort to protect human rights. A 1998 U.S. law titled the *Leahy Law*, sponsored by Senator Patrick Leahy of Vermont, was enforced for these exact situations and circumstances. According data available on the U.S. Department of State's site titled *Leahy Law Fact Sheet* (n.d.) the law indicates that if the U.S. government has credible evidence that a US-funded individual or unit has committed violations of human rights and is not apprehended, it must immediately suspend all aid and cooperation with that individual or unit. Despite this law, and according to a 2012 report by the Center for Economic Policy and Research, when an AP reporter questioned spokesperson Victoria Nuland on the enforcement of the

Leahy Law in Honduras, she replied that she had no knowledge of the law's application within the country. With this remark, it can be inferred that either these violations of human rights abuses were not being investigated thoroughly enough, or they were not being examined at all.

Acknowledging human rights abuses such as the former Honduran congressman Landaverde's assassination, it is vital to question why the United States continues to fund the government and police officials. According to Hiemstra (2017), opponents to cuts on foreign aid have been bipartisan. Democrats often insist that aid must continue in an effort to defend human rights and ultimately, to decrease the need for out-migration. On the other end, Republicans normally reject cuts in foreign aid due to the desire to maintain the exercise of soft power within the region. To put this into context, following President Trump's proposal to end foreign aid to Central America, six Republican senators sent a letter to high ranking members of the Senate's Budget and Appropriations Committees emphasizing the importance of continuing aid to the region by stating, "deep cuts to the International Affairs budget would undermine our country's economic and security interests, as well as humanitarian and democratic principles we support" (Young et al. 2017).

Despite the majority of Republicans supporting a continued influx of foreign aid to the region, a Republican Senator Tom Cole from Oklahoma holds an opposing point of view, stating, "People seem to think foreign aid is charity. It's not. It's given largely in the interest of the United States" (The Hill, 2017). Alluding again to the 2019 fact sheet by Lindsay-Poland, the combined 8 million dollars of purchases from U.S. companies of firearms and teargas that were utilized by Honduran police and military officials to

suppress 2017 protestors, it is clear that aid has served as quite the opposite purpose. The same article by The Hill also quotes Democratic Senator Tim Kaine of Virginia, countering that cuts in foreign aid funding would be “foolish” and a threat to national security interests. According to Hiemstra’s article, we can see through these statements that opponents and supporters of foreign aid cuts are not always restricted to a single political party, but ideas on distribution vary widely throughout.

The United States Agency for International Development is a bilateral agency that provides aid directly from the U.S. to the receiving country. The Congressional Research Service Report of the 2019 budget found aid allocation to be “around 44% for bilateral economic development programs including political and strategic economic assistance, 35% military and nonmilitary security assistance, 18% for humanitarian activities and 4% to support multilateral institutions” (p.2). It is important to note here the difference between USAID and multilateral institutions, the latter being international organizations such as the United Nations or World Bank Group. As noted previously, USAID does at times partner with these multilateral institutions, but a very small portion of the funds are allocated to their work, receiving only 4% of the total amount of allocation. Civil society organizations are another form of aid comprising private sector individuals, groups and non-profit organizations. Both multilateral aid and civil society organizations may partner with USAID, but as previously demonstrated, the sums are generally very little. These organizations are separate from the functionings of USAID and implement their own projects and programs. An example of this includes a press release announcing the initiation of a 2019 project by The World Bank to strengthen the social protection system to benefit over 240,000 families living in extreme poverty

(The World Bank, 2019). Several non-profits also function to address economic, educational, health human rights, and governmental issues (Project World Impact, 2020). Thus, USAID is not the sole source foreign aid funding for Hondurans, but is the one that is at the main focus for the purposes of this study.

The slogan for USAID is “From the American People.” This signifies that taxpayers in the United States are those funding corrupt agencies and political figures in Honduras. In the 2019 fiscal year’s USAID Agency Financial Report, administrator Mark Green declares, “And to serve as responsible stewards of taxpayer dollars, USAID will always insist that our implementing partners operate as efficiently and effectively as possible to address immediate needs and help increase resilience against future shocks and crises” (viii). In the case of Honduras, this statement proves to be quite the opposite. In 2019, a total of \$138,389,989 was distributed to Honduras. By breaking this number down into three categories: top sectors, top partners, and top activities, USAID’s site Foreign Aid by Country: Honduras illustrates exactly how much each agency and project received. The Honduran government received the largest portion of aid, taking in \$59,911,477. On the other end, Humanitarian Assistance was among the lowest of all the sectors, receiving only \$3,018,321. It is alarming to consider the large sums of money that are continuously allocated to the Honduran government through USAID and taxpayer dollars considering the brutal human rights violations committed by security forces in the Aguan Valley (Frank, 2018). These forces had received their equipment and training through the Obama administration’s strengthening military partnership policies (Human Rights Watch, 2014.)

No justice has been imparted by the Honduran government or its agencies to make amends for these types of human rights abuses and according to a 2020 Human Rights

Watch World Report, no system is in place to prevent violations from occurring in present or in the future (Human Rights Watch, 2020). Under the Trump Administration, USAID distribution for 2020 according to USAID's site has decreased significantly to a total of \$20,101,138, but the Honduran government remains the top beneficiary taking in \$9,263,749. Humanitarian aid has decreased greatly, and is allocated only \$594,523. Alluding to Poland's (2019) Arm Sales Fact Sheet, it is important to note that the funds administered to the government include military and police equipment and training. According to Poland, this assistance rarely includes firearms, but it does not restrict the purchases of arm sales from U.S. based companies, which are licensed by the State Department. Thus, while the United States may not be directly delivering firearms and other weapons such as tear gas, the Honduran government and military officials are not barred from making those purchases from U.S. suppliers.

The Trump administration has continued to exacerbate conditions in the country, as fraudulent elections and human rights abuses persist while USAID resources and funds continue to pour in. Despite the Honduran Constitutional prohibition of presidential re-elections, Gustavo Palencia (2017) found that the current President of Honduras, Juan Orlando-Hernandez, illegally and covertly fired four Supreme Court members and replaced their positions with supporters of his agenda in order to remain in power for a future term. The Honduran population intensely protested these actions, asking the electoral authority to nullify the president's candidacy pending the obvious constitutional violation. According to a 2017 study conducted by Sarah Chayes, nearly two-thirds of Hondurans were opposed to Hernandez's re-election. On November 26th, Election Day, the ballot count from *La Prensa* (2017), a popular Honduran media source, consistently

showed that Hernandez's liberal opponent, Salvador Nasralla maintained a significant lead in the election. However, as the day progressed, all ballot counts were suspended and the Honduran people were left without any information regarding the results (La Prensa, 2017).

This period of silence from the government and the media went on for weeks, and Hondurans became increasingly infuriated with the governmental corruption and lack of information. Palencia et al. (2017) explain in an article published by Reuters that this delay resulted in nation-wide protests and riots in which 21 people were reported killed by police forces. A nation-wide curfew was implemented until circumstances calmed down. On December 22, 2017, just a few days after the Honduran government released results deeming Juan Orlando Hernandez as president, Elisabeth Malkin with the New York Times published an article confirming that the United States government under President Trump's administration had recognized the election's legitimacy by publicly congratulating his victory. For many Hondurans, this announcement and recognition of a clearly fraudulent election by the United States signified a loss of their alleged "democracy." Hernandez continues to be involved in scandals throughout the country, as a Confidential HN November 2019 investigation found evidence that the administration had taken over \$162 million in public funds intended for the country's agricultural sector in order to finance his campaign.

Application of Methodology and Theory to Narratives

In order to have the appropriate information necessary to address the topic, it is necessary to incorporate narratives that offer perspectives of Hondurans themselves. Yosso et al.'s (2002) contribution of "counter-storytelling" is the principle method that is

utilized in my study to analyze the potential avenues monetary assistance could take in order to lead to necessary improvements within Honduran society. This method refuses the acceptance of “majoritarian” or monovocal stories, which are rooted in a legacy of racial privilege and silence or misconstrue the experiences of persons of color. By applying counter-storytelling as a method, majoritarian stories bounded in racial privilege are challenged and important truths are exposed that would otherwise be concealed.

A 2017 article written by Honduran priest Ismael Moreno, also known as Padre Melo, outlines the concerns that many Hondurans hold regarding the United States funding and interference within the country. Moreno expresses his deep concerns with the United States’ common rhetoric of deeming the Central American region as their “backyard.” As has been shown previously by quotes from various US Senators, he counters that this has not been restricted to one particular party by acknowledging in his article, “Even before Donald Trump, we were reminded of how we’re seen in the North when, during a speech given as recently as April 2013 to the US House of Representatives’ Committee on Foreign Affairs, Barack Obama’s Secretary of State John Kerry thought nothing of saying Latin America “is our backyard... we need to reach out vigorously.” Drawing from this quote, we see that The United States would be described by Wallerstein (1976) as a “core” state, asserting their dominance by classifying the region as subordinate, and therefore subject to be shaped according to the U.S.’s vision and interest.

Moreno counters that while the United States remains active within his country today, enforcing what they have portrayed to be “drug trafficking clean ups and fights against corruption,” these efforts have risen not out of concerns for the well-being of

Hondurans, but in order to advance, protect and enforce the interests of their Northern neighbor. Moreno further asserts that the more the United States continues to intervene within the region by enforcing programs and sending funds, “the more Honduras is for Americans and less for Hondurans.”

Introduction of Participants

The six individuals that participated in the interviews that were conducted came from various background experiences, social classes, ages, genders, and professions. Something that they shared in common was their access to higher education, as all of them had taken at minimum university level courses. Though the participants came from different regions of the country, noting the considerable divides between urban and rural areas, they did share a sense of solidarity and common vision to contribute to the strengthening of their country.

Sara Castellanos*, a middle-aged woman, works as both a lawyer and professor at a public university in Tegucigalpa, the capital of Honduras. She has resided in Tegucigalpa for all of her life. Sara shares that for the most part, she has been shielded from the violence and dangers that abound within certain parts of the city, granted that growing up her parents were able to provide a home that was protected by private security forces, afford to send her to private schools that offered quality education, and so forth. Sara was eventually able to attend university in Tegucigalpa in order to become a family lawyer, and together with her husband she is able to provide for an upper-middle class lifestyle for her 3 children.

* Pseudonyms are used to protect participants anonymity

Raúl Ortega*, is a 27-year-old student at a private university in Tegucigalpa and a part-time worker at the airport. Given his upbringing and financial situation, Raúl has been able to travel around the world and speaks Spanish, English and French fluently. Due to his language abilities, he opted to conduct the interview with me in English. Due to Raúl's financial situation, he has often been protected from the dangers and violence that many face within Tegucigalpa. He hopes to graduate from university in the spring of 2020 with a degree in political science.

José Espinoza* is a 28-year-old non-profit worker who works with vulnerable children in San Pedro Sula. He grew up in the rural region of Santa Bárbara and was raised by his grandparents after his mother passed away and his father and brothers immigrated to the United States. José attended public schools in rural Santa Bárbara before eventually moving to San Pedro Sula to further his education at the university level. While José has experienced first-hand the hardships associated with growing up in poverty, he was largely sheltered from violence during his childhood by living in the more peaceful region of Santa Bárbara. As José shares in the interview, his experience of safety and security quickly evolved when he moved to San Pedro Sula for his studies.

Octavio Villanueva* works as a computer engineer in a rural town, Azacualpa, within the region of Santa Bárbara. He has always lived within the small town and has never been a victim of any violence or security issues. For university, Octavio traveled to San Pedro Sula during weekends to complete his coursework in computer science at a public university. His degree provided him with a position working for a company just outside of Azacualpa. His job provides him the funds necessary to live a comfortable life and travel to various places around the world.

Juan Tabora* is a middle aged man who works as a human rights lawyer in San Pedro Sula. Though he was born in the region of Santa Bárbara, Juan moved to San Pedro Sula in 2013 to attend university. In the public university, Juan completed two degrees, one in philosophy and another in law. Juan shared his experience of childhood growing up in Santa Bárbara without fear for his well-being. Upon arrival to the city in San Pedro Sula, his concerns quickly changed. Despite the rampant crime he describes, Juan, his wife and children continue to reside within San Pedro Sula as work opportunities are largely concentrated within the city. In addition to his work as a lawyer, Juan uses his free time to reach out to at-risk youth in his community by providing them resources and knowledge that they need to prevent them from joining gangs and other organized crime groups.

Maritza Gomez* is a middle aged woman who instructs as a professor in nutrition at a public university where she resides in Tegucigalpa. Maritza has lived in the capital of Honduras for the majority of her life, but explains that she has always had the means necessary to reside within areas of the city that are protected by private security guards. Maritza explains that she finds security concerns in Honduras to be no worse than any other major city in the world, and believes that people only focus on the violence in her country instead of the goodness and hospitality. Maritza studied in Guatemala to obtain her Masters degree in nutrition, and later moved to live and work for a short period in Mexico City. Maritza now lives together with her husband from Mexico and three children in a private and protected neighborhood in Tegucigalpa.

The locations of the interviews depended largely on my relationship to the participant. Sara and Maritza's interviews, which my friend in Tegucigalpa had connected me with but I had not previously met, I interviewed at each of their homes. My friend

accompanied me to each home and we shared a few hours chatting and getting to know one another before beginning with the interviews. I met Raúl that in a café with a nice balcony overlooking the busy capital of Tegucigalpa. We were able to catch up and chat before we conducted the interview while sharing a coffee together. In San Pedro Sula, my acquaintance José opened up his apartment as a place for me to conduct interviews; a space with many fans that made long periods of sitting and chatting more bearable considering the intense heat and humidity. In the small town of Azacualpa, I met Octavio for the first time due to a colleague's suggestion at the most popular restaurant in the small town's center square. We chatted and learned more about one another over a carne asada before delving into interview questions that were asked over the beats of reggaetón.

I began the interviews by asking background questions regarding the individual's place of residence and the duration of time they have spent within their current community. I continued by asking about the participant's extended family and if they also lived within the same community in Honduras or if they resided in a different area. This prompted a discussion on migration in each of the six interviews, as all of the participants had family members that had migrated to the United States, citing a variety of different reasons. I followed by prompting participants on their experiences with the educational systems within their communities, and whether or not they found them to be effective. The information they shared led me to inquire on the participant's current job status, and if their position provided them with a sufficient means to sustain and provide for themselves and their families, if applicable. This usually resulted in a discussion of social status, which is largely associated with accessibility to security and protection against crime and violence. The widespread issue of insecurity within Honduras led me to ask the

individuals the challenges that are most commonly faced within their communities, asking if they had any suggestions on how to best go about resolving them. Their responses led me bring up the topic of USAID funds and outside interference in general, and what their perspectives were on current aid allocation. Following their responses, I concluded the interviews by asking their views on non-profit organizations within their communities, and if they believed that an increase in funding to those organizations could be beneficial. There was space open throughout the interviews for Hondurans to address any ideas or topics that they found to be important that did not deal with directly responding to any particular question.

Findings

*Sara Castellanos**

Sara Castellanos is a middle-aged woman who has resided in the same community within the Honduran capital of Tegucigalpa for all of her life. Most of her family lives within the same community as she does, while others live in the second largest city in Honduras, San Pedro Sula. Before interviewing Sara, we had never met. She is the aunt of a close friend of mine in Tegucigalpa, and had consented to my friend's Whatsapp request to be a participant in my study. Based on Sara's stiff composure and short responses, I could sense that she initially had doubts about my intentions. After sharing with her my experience of living in rural Honduras for a year and sharing the story of how her niece and I had met, Sara began to open up to me a bit more.

The interview began with Sara explaining her background to me, albeit in brief detail. Her husband and two children live together in a protected neighborhood in the city, and some members of her extended family had migrated to the United States due to a lack

of job opportunities. She studied in a public university in Tegucigalpa to become both professor and a lawyer, and she currently teaches and practices family law. Sara shared that by in large, education is seen as a privilege, and is not readily accessible to all Hondurans. When I asked Sara about the access to quality education in her country she expressed concerns by stating:

Las condiciones no son las adecuadas. O sea...no existen las condiciones adecuadas para que las personas reciban una educación de calidad. En muchos aspectos, desde la preparación de los docentes, ehh... desde la desnutrición. (Interview, June 16, 2019)

Conditions for accessibility are simply not set up in a manner that is adequate and inclusive of all communities and persons. For this reason, there exist a variety of factors and ineffective practices which play a role in the overall ineffectiveness of the educational system, thus diminishing its capacity. In response to Sara's concerns, I prompted her by asking if she believed that USAID funds could be of assistance, perhaps in a scenario in which more funds were allocated to the country's education sector. She responded by explaining:

Podría ser un auxilio pero no la solución a los problemas. O sea, lo que creo es que no se puede estar dándole los pescados a las personas sino enseñándoles a pescar, dice un, un proverbio chino, que usted no puede estar dándoles los pescados, aquí esta, aquí esta el dinero, aquí esta todo, no. Ensénales a las personas "a." Porque si tengo entendido de que tal vez hay esas organizaciones que quieren ayudar pero... es mínimo. Es mínimo lo que hacen. (Interview, June 16, 2019)

Sara refutes the idea of simply receiving outside aid or funds as a sole way to improve conditions in her society. In order to create a substantial and lasting change, it is necessary not only to provide the means to build, expand, develop and improve but also to teach *how* to do all of those things. Stemming from Sara's response to my question I further inquired as to her opinion and understanding of the United State's role in providing

funds to Honduras through USAID. She explained that though she understood that most of the money was intended for advancements in security, she had experienced no improvements, and explains that the current circumstances surrounding violence in the city are critical and are in the worst conditions she has ever experienced throughout all of her years living in Tegucigalpa. She explained that the government also charges citizens taxes to improve security, yet she states:

Actualmente el gobierno dice que está haciendo esfuerzos para la seguridad. Me están cobrando tasa. Le cobran a nosotros tasas, impuestos. Pero la realidad es diferente porque siempre vivimos bajo condiciones inestables, inseguras. O sea que prácticamente el dinero no está siendo utilizado para esos fines. Si era así estuviéramos... no viviéramos con miedo, no estuviéramos con tanta situación crítica. (Interview, June 16, 2019)

Although the Honduran government receives millions in funding each year from USAID funds, and additionally taxes citizens in an effort to improve security, one can see, based on Sara's response, that conditions are not improving. Though Sara did not infer as to what the funds were being used for in lieu of security improvements, it is evident that those resources and funds funnelled into the Honduran government as an intended means of protection for Hondurans have generated no visible impact. To sum up Sara's general sentiment in regards to outside interference, she concluded with the following, illustrating her desire for independence and sovereignty for Honduras:

Es que, lo que le podría decir yo, ay sí, que vengan como otras personas a salvar lo que nosotros tenemos que hacer por nuestros propios medios... como esta la situación en este país... no, no tengo idea." (Interview, June 16, 2019)

Sara suggests that it is not necessary for any organizations or individuals to come in and "save" Hondurans. In order to gain independence and legitimacy, she believes that Hondurans must work together on finding a solution to any issues or hinderances in developments that exist within their country.

Raúl Ortega*

Raúl Ortega is a 27-year-old student studying political science at a private university in Tegucigalpa. I met Raúl in the capital during my time living in Honduras, and we have been friends since. Raul has resided in Tegucigalpa, within the same community, for all of his life. Though his immediate family resides with him in the capital, many of his extended family members reside in the United States as they were granted Temporary Protected Status after fleeing Hurricane Mitch, which hit Honduras in 1998. He explained that beyond natural disasters, the lack of education has been a common factor driving Hondurans out of their home country. Raúl explained that the universities and private schools are mostly found within the larger cities such as Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula, and therefore, those residing in more rural areas often lack access to higher education.

Because it's so expensive to send students to come and study here. And especially if you're coming out from outward parts of the country towards the inner parts of the country. You know that we have public schools here... but the living expenses in the city are so high, and a lot of people don't have what they really need to go and take classes and go to school, so that's why, that's the reason we have so many poorly educated people here. (Interview, June 17, 2019)

Raúl went on to explain that even those who do have the means and are able to obtain quality education within Honduras frequently choose not to stay in the country due to a lack of job opportunities. This “brain drain” creates the potential for having significant negative implications for the country, considering that Honduras could be losing many of their most highly educated due to their lacking job market and non-competitive pay. Currently, Raúl works in the local airport, but explains that he was only able to land that job because he is multi-lingual. He works only part-time and finds that

the hourly pay is unlivable, although many of his coworkers depend on that job to provide for themselves and their families. Due to Raúl's parents' earnings, he is able to live within a private gated community in Tegucigalpa. Despite living in a private neighborhood, he tells me that he and his family are still not exempt from criminal activity that is common throughout the city. Though he does not normally fear for his own personal security within his neighborhood, he is always on edge and aware of his surroundings. He shares that the times in which he fears for his own safety are while he is driving, especially while waiting for traffic lights to switch. Raúl acknowledges that he is relatively lucky compared to his other Honduran counterparts, as his family is able to afford a home in a gated community. Not all of those who live in Tegucigalpa are afforded this "luxury."

There are private securities, um, but many people can't afford them. Others can. And if you can't pay for it, for that service, you can't get it, it's as simple as that. (Interview, June 17, 2019)

Raúl believes that there is not a single one, but a combination of factors that limit development and access to sustainable job opportunities. He explains that first; if there is no access to education, there is no pathway to progress. If there are no job opportunities, there are no means to sustain one's family and afford to pay for a home. When I prompted him by asking what potential avenues could be to resolve these injustices, he responded with:

To be honest I don't think they can be resolved right now. It's not a near future solution, it's more of a long-term solution because we would have to educate the future generations in order for the culture to change and not just the present you know. You can't change an older person, you can't change a 50-year-old guy, a 50-year-old woman, you know. So I think it has to be gradually made. It starts with the youth. (Interview, June 17, 2019)

Of all of the different sectors, Raúl believes that education is the most powerful tool to create lasting change in his community and country. Recognizing that the path

towards progress could be a long one, Raúl is a firm believer that change will stem from the young people and younger generations, reiterating this various times throughout the interview to create an emphasis on its importance.

As much as there could be done here, I would believe in making a change in education. Starting a new program or developing a program that allows young children to learn new things, not just the traditional learning but learn how to build a computer, speak a different language, and you know, innovation in education would be my best bet. (Interview, June 17, 2019)

Raúl's emphasis on education led me to ask the question of whether or not he believes USAID could serve as a way to improve the educational system and development rate in general in Honduras.

Well, USAID could help, but the focus is all wrong. Just go, deep in the country. Don't go to the cities. Go outside of the country. There's a lot of communities that still don't have any electrical services they don't even have you know safe water, clean water, or access to any public health or hospital. So why not build on organizations that can fulfill or you know at least bring a 80% of these necessities to the community? You know it's so easy to do research and just go out and look into those communities. Even an hour away from the city there's so much change that can be made... Also because most of the migration that comes to the U.S. are from those rural areas, not the big cities. Of course you will see some people from big cities and whatnot but they mostly are from small towns and communities that lack resources. (Interview, June 17, 2019)

Due to his call for more resources, programs and funds from USAID to rural areas, I asked Raúl if aid allocation should be changed in order to best benefit those communities.

He responded:

Uff.. Um, I don't, I don't, I certainly don't think USAID funds should be distributed the way they are being and have been because I think there could be made a lot of progress through the international aid, but not through the government here. Because if you want to help with development in our country, don't do it through the government you know, especially if you know we have such a corrupted government... and not only this government. I mean politically speaking the structures of our system are very corrupt so why? Why would you even care about trying to help and bring the money to the government here? I would say just build or create new organizations that you can bring this help to and

you know, be diverse and spread the help throughout those (organizations).
(Interview, June 17, 2019)

José Espinoza*

I met José Espinoza during my year volunteering in Honduras. He had become friends with many of the teachers that were working at a branch of the school that I taught for in a town just outside of San Pedro Sula. My colleagues introduced me to José and we became close friends upon realizing that we had many interests in common, especially in relation to advocacy for migrants. José works for an international nonprofit organization, but also does volunteer work on his own time to help recently deported youth readjust back to life in Honduras. José is passionate about uniting Honduras and improving conditions in his country that would allow Hondurans the possibility of remaining at home. He was eager to participate in my study and even had his neighbor take part in an interview as well. Due to the fact that I already knew much about José's background, I began by prompting him to speak in regards to his experience with employment and education opportunities after moving from rural Santa Barbara to the city of San Pedro Sula. José began by stating:

Debería ser así... de que si tengas una buena educación, puedas encontrar un buen trabajo. Pero realmente el hecho de que tu estudies en la universidad no te garantiza que vas a encontrar un mejor empleo, que vas a mejorar tu situación económica. Ehh primero, bueno, te cuento cuando yo gradué de la universidad al nivel superior, yo salí de la universidad buscando empleo. Pero lo que me enfrenta... las instituciones me ofrecía mensualmente no era ni 200 dólares y estaba en un nivel superior. Con 200 dólares ni compres comida para vivir. Básicamente se te va en transporte, en pagar por tu casa. Entonces 200 dólares no verdad? Entonces actualmente hay personas graduado de la universidad que están ganando 300, 400 dólares al mes. Entonces no hay garantía que vas a mejorar, no es sostenible. (Interview, June 11, 2019)

According to José's experience, simply obtaining a university degree does not automatically guarantee access to even a job that pays a salary necessary for basic

necessities such as food and housing. Upon graduating university, the monthly rate he was offered was below two hundred dollars a month, which is not even a sufficient amount to buy enough food for the month. Therefore, Honduras' economy may provide sufficient employment opportunities, but the question of underemployment is another category that should be examined significantly. José also explained that there may be many institutions or businesses looking for employees, but the contracts that they offer are based on specific defined times, leaving workers without any sense of security that they will continue to be able to provide for themselves and their families once their contract ends. He provided an interesting statistic from the Honduran Secretaria de Trabajo, finding:

Imagínate que las estadísticas de la Secretaria de Trabajo dicen que cerca del 60% de las personas es como subempleo. Gente que busquen empleo y recursos sin tener trabajo estable. (Interview, June 11, 2019)

Clearly, with 60% of people working underemployed, there is a vast lack of opportunities available for Hondurans to progress. Outside of José's current job working for a non-profit, he has experience working in a factory setting as well as serving as an educator. He explained, to my surprise, that working in a factory actually paid more than his position as an educator.

Yo tuve varios empleos. Estuve varios años en una empresa maquila. Era como un horario "turno" Entonces trabajaba como 5 días desde las 5 de la mañana hasta 5:30 en la tarde a 6 de la mañana. Era muy mal pagado. Yo ganaba allí estando yo en la universidad como 200 dólares al mes. Tenía que pagar mi transporte, mi alimentación, mi casa. Después trabajé en un educativo, un colegio dando clases y aún era peor. Porque allí era como por horas. Pagaron "per hour" entonces te pagaban la hora que normalmente era entre 15 dólares máximo, no menos... 10 dólares por hora por clases. Y era como 3 horas máximo entonces era como 30 dólares cada semana. Era peor no? Era más difícil. (Interview, June 11, 2019)

It is clear from José's narrative that advancing one's education in Honduras is not an investment that is certain to bring better paying jobs. While neither of the positions

José mentioned provided sufficient funds to cover basic living costs, it is revealing in many ways to uncover that in many instances, factory workers are comparatively provided with better wages than teachers. This also speaks volumes to the concerns regarding the educational system. If educators are not being paid fair wages, few can afford to serve in such a position if they do not have an alternate source of income. This is why, José explains, there is such a stark divide between the public and private educational system in the country, with private schools tending to have much more funds and resources and better compensation for teachers. This divide is not solely limited to education, however. José explains that security issues throughout San Pedro Sula are focused on mainly by certain zones of the city. If one cannot afford to pay the cost of residing in a “safer” zone, they are more likely to be exposed to become victims of violence. In the words of José:

En San Pedro en general... Bueno mira, ehh, la situación de inseguridad es por zonas. Hay zonas muy peligrosas, hay zonas menos peligrosas pero no es que son seguro del todo. Hay otras zonas que son zonas de guerra literalmente, entonces es inestable y se propaga actualmente. Se parece una colonia en San Pedro que hay 8 maras no, maras o pandillas y de pronto se parecen en otros lados. Y la gente viven constantemente en temor, en temor de que se secuestren, temor a que le asalten, constantemente en temor. Somos una comunidad psicológicamente afectada por eso. Muchos viven peor porque viven en zonas periféricas y por eso tomen la decisión de migrar no, al cualquier país del mundo, sobre todo los Estados Unidos, no? Pero si es una situación muy difícil, y la inestabilidad política y económica todavía afecta mas. (Interview, June 11, 2019)

José brings up a powerful point that speaks to the root causes behind migration from Honduras. When one’s security and well-being depends upon their income and ability to afford private protection, there are severe consequences and actions that must be taken as a result. In the words of José, some zones are truly “war zones” of fights between gangs. Considering this, José explains that many make the decision to migrate to the United States in hopes of finding safety and opportunities to advance in whatever path

they so desire. Instances of violence and crime have become the norm in San Pedro Sula, and José shared with me his own personal experiences being affected by organized crime.

Yo he sido afectado muy directamente por temas de inseguridad. Me intentaron de secuestrarme... a mi casa se metieron como asaltaron a mi casa como 8 veces, extraían como todo lo que había. Era por bandas organizadas que roban casas. Entonces era una situación muy difícil no, entonces, puedo decir que si, desde asaltos muy básicos que se dan constantemente en la ciudad, hasta intento de secuestro y robo con armada a mi propia casa. (Interview, June 11, 2019)

José explained all of these traumatic events to me in a very matter-of-fact tone. He has been a victim of assault, robbery, and attempted kidnapping, but speaks of these traumatizing instances as something that is to be expected in the city. He explained that this violence has been normalized in order for Hondurans to survive, especially in cities like San Pedro Sula. Therefore I decided to inquire as to what means of protection, if any, were available, to protect residents against these types of assaults.

En esta comunidad en que yo viví que sufrí varios intentos de secuestros y robos, la comunidad se organizó y decidió crear una patrulla entre la colonia para que la gente afuera no podrían entrar. Eso fue en el momento muy efectiva, pusieron guardias de seguridad, otros medios. Pero lo que sucedió fue que la inseguridad se transforma en otra cosa. La inseguridad se transforma en una colonia de narcotraficantes. Era muy común que cuando cruzaba del portón de la colonia, recataban a uno de los narcos, mataron a uno de los narcos. Entonces eso provocaba también otra situación más difícil todavía no? Y de pronto también comenzaba a distribuir drogas, incluso la policía estaban involucrada si? Nosotros sabían que la policía estaba involucrada porque llegaban a las casa donde vivían estas personas y salían como que si nada no? Entonces era evidencia de que recibían dinero de estas personas. Entonces si se buscan estrategias pero la efectividad dura poco.. son como muy propensas a que se pierden los esfuerzos porque la inseguridad se transforma no en una forma otra entonces eh parecería ese panorama como muy sombría, como muy difícil de superar y más con la involuntad política para mejorar la estructura del gobierno y del país o el estado en general. (Interview, June 11, 2019)

This is undoubtedly a very complex issue, considering that communities are left with no other option than to try and create their own system of patrol to enforce a sense of security. It is widely accepted and acknowledged in Honduras that the police are involved

with the gangs and narcotraffickers for financial compensation, as José explains.

Therefore, Hondurans are often hesitant to report incidents or call for support in regards to a crime. As a result, efforts taken collectively by José's community to keep out gang members rather resulted in a safehaven for narcotraffickers, creating an even more dangerous reality for the original community members. The question that remains then, is what is the Honduran government's role in serving to protect their citizens? José sheds light on this topic, and speaks to the funds the United States has provided through USAID and their ineffectiveness regarding matters of security.

Se invierte cada año como 55 millones en seguridad, millones de lempiras en temas de seguridad en el país. Sin embargo, la inseguridad sigue igual o así peor. Imagínate que en el otro año, 32 masacres pasaban, no 32 muertos, 32 masacres. Entonces imagínate, si inviertan mucho en seguridad pero sigue... Entonces te das cuenta de que aumentar o equipar policías o militares no te ayuda. Entonces por que no mejor tal vez, la educación... por que no? Hay ataques ahorita del gobierno por la educación, por la salud que quieren privatizar. Entonces si necesitas invertir en eso. Hay hospitales que no tienen ni los instrumentos básicos para atenderte a veces. Tienes que comprarlo tu, porque los hospitales públicos no tienen los medicamentos. Y otra tema que es muy relevante es la corrupción. Esta investida todo el sistema del gobierno en corrupción. Se pierden al año cerca de 55 mil millones de lempiras en corrupción. Entonces imagínate tienes 55 millones invirtiendo en seguridad, tienes 55 mil que se pierden en corrupción, tanto es 55 mil millones de lempiras botado en la basura. Botados en la basura. Y si los invierte en la educación y en la salud...es como... ilógico. Ilógico. (Interview, June 11, 2019)

In José's view, the violence and 32 mass killing that occurred in 2019 up to the time of the interview are proof that funds that have been designated for security purposes, and are not truly being invested as a means to protect Honduran citizens. The military and police have proven ties and connection with organized criminals and narcotraffickers, José speaks from personal experience and knowledge. For him, based his first-hand experience, it makes no logical sense that the United States would continue to allocate funds to "security" when safety conditions only appear to be worsening. José makes a powerful

statement by finding that those funds from the United States might as well be thrown away into corruption, and instead of supporting Hondurans, they are only further fueling the crisis of insecurity forcing many to flee their country.

Es una política realmente estadounidense, tener junto estratégicos dentro de su pensamiento político militar. Entonces eh, para ellos somos una base de los Estados Unidos realmente. Una base militar. Mucho del dinero que envía desde los Estados Unidos por ciertas programas va a los militares, para armar a los militares. Desde el momento que llega, los militares ya lo tienen. Es como de contrate un agencia, de esas como, es como negocios, es un montón de dinero, y con este dinero, ellos controlan el país. Yo siempre he creído de que mas allá del pensamiento del estrategia política y militar de los Estados Unidos tengan en nuestros países, hay que aprovechar los recursos que dan. Sin embargo, no se hace. El gobierno de los Estados Unidos sabe que todo el sistema aquí esta involucrado en corrupción, entonces hay una intención detrás del dinero que envían. (Interview, June 11, 2019)

Jose counters that the money that is sent from the United States which is allocated for security is used to arm Honduran military officials in order to maintain control and sovereignty within the region. Therefore, the pouring in of funds is invested in such a manner intended to utilize the country as a military base for the United States's national interests. He argues instead that if funds are to continue, it is only logical that they are instead allocated in a way that serves to assist the people. Sectors severely lacking such as public health facilities and the education system are the areas that truly need to be invested in. Upon providing this suggestion, I questioned if it could be helpful to invest in non-profit organizations that are already functioning in the city. He responded by stating:

Mira si hay miles de organizaciones que existe en San Pedro. Hay miles que atienden o ayuda pero sus impactos son... no tan grandes. No solucionan la problemática. No hay un esfuerzo también.. conjunto. Cada organización trabaja de manera individual, y lo que hacen es deficiente. Tienen proyectos o requisitos que quieren cumplir, y después de cumplirlos se van. No se quedan para mantener un impacto. Siempre están pensando en sus mismos, para obtener mas fondos para sus mismos. Ganan millones, pero no beneficia a las personas en este país. Lo mejor es enseñar a la gente cómo hacer las cosas. Esto sería más beneficioso y generaría un impacto más sostenible para encontrar soluciones a los problemas que

enfrentamos. No salvamos a una persona que muere de hambre solo dándole un plato de comida una vez, ¿Verdad? Es mejor enseñar a la gente a pescar que ir a pescar por ellos. Así que hay algunos esfuerzos pero no son sostenibles. Entonces, no creo que necesiten más fondos. (Interview, June 11, 2019)

Non-profit organizations or funds distributed from the United States government in the name of security are not the answer, according to José. Non-profits mainly serve to protect their own interests and gain more money for their own organizations. They do not remain after their projects are completed, and thus their impact is brief and does not create sustainable impacts that assist the community. It appears that continued outside interference and short-term projects by non-profits are not the answer. Based on his response, I prompted José by asking if he had any ideas or alternatives through which he believes the country could reach stability, sustainable growth and development.

En los mismos desafíos tienes que encontrar la solución no? Es como, tienes un tema de corrupción que es del gobierno, es como que, los fondos están invertido en el sistema de corrupción. Como enfrenta eso, porque está invertido en todo el sistema. Yo podría decir algo fácil, que encarcelara todos los corruptos, pero los que imparten justicia son corruptos. Es más aún difícil. Es más difícil porque las policías y las militares están en favor del gobierno. Inversión en educación, en salud, en seguridad pero no a la seguridad que ataca a su propia gente. Su eslogan dice "Servir y Proteger" ¿No? Pero sirven los intereses del gobierno and y el gobierno es corrupto... se roban todo el dinero. Creo que por eso las ideas para muchos se están acabando. Que haces con una situación así tan grande, el problema es muy grande, es una instructora. Hay que reconstruir todo. (Interview, June 11, 2019)

There is no clear-cut response and solution to the issue of insecurity and development. If as José describes, when all of the funds are involved in a system of corruption, there is no easy resolution in resolving a complex web of injustices. When the country's sources of power; police, military, government and the justice systems are all involved in corrupt practices, it seems evident that the only solution would be to

reconstruct the entire structure. That is no likely or simple task, but José has one solution he believes could be the most beneficial.

Mucha gente te va a decir, ¿Qué importa que los Estados Unidos quita los fondos si no vemos ningún impacto? Los políticos corruptos no tendrán la capacidad de tener más poder si detienen los fondos, ¿Verdad? Entonces será mejor que se quiten los fondos... y tal vez comencemos a ver un cambio en este país.
(Interview, June 11, 2019)

Instead of continuing to fund corrupt governments and their politicians, José concludes that many Hondurans believe that it is better to suspend funds all together, and in this way, they could begin to see a change in their country.

Octavio Villanueva*

I was introduced to Octavio Villanueva through one of my Honduran counterparts at the school in Santa Barbara that I volunteered for. When I went to Azacualpa to interview him it was the first time we had ever met. Octavio and I had dinner at a local restaurant in the town's center park for the interview. He shared that he had lived in the small town for 27 years, all of his life. He opened up by sharing with me a bit about his family. His mother's side of the family resides in Azacualpa, while his father's side lives and works in San Pedro Sula. Many members of his family, however, had made the decision to migrate to the United States. He explained their reasoning for leaving Honduras, stating:

Ellos se fueron por falta de oportunidades, pues mas que todo por falta de trabajo. En educación también había dificultades... y algunos por persecución, ellos tuvieron problemas aquí en Honduras y les tocó migrar. (Interview, June 22, 2019)

Though Octavio's family in San Pedro had to flee the country due to persecution, he shared that he was lucky and had never been a victim of a crime during his 27 years residing in Azacualpa. He explained that the dynamics are different there; there is no gang presence and members of the community do not live in fear of organized crime groups. In

vast contrast to the interviewees responses in cities such as San Pedro Sula and Tegucigalpa, Octavio finds:

Lo considero muy bien aquí. Hay bastante seguridad. No hay problemas. Pienso que en seguridad, pues hay policías o militares acá estudiando el pueblo. El pueblo es muy sano. Entre la comunidad es muy sana, entonces no, no he tenido problemas nunca. Aquí en la comunidad encerrándonos y no tenemos ese problema de la inseguridad. Siempre ha sido así, siempre desde que yo tengo memoria, no habido problemas. (Interview, June 22, 2019)

This is experience of safety is quite a difference from the concerns of Hondurans living in the larger cities. According to Octavio, the police and military in Azacualpa are doing their job to protect the residents of the area. It is also important to note that there is no active gang presence or groups of organized crime, and thus there is less violence for those forces to respond to. Nevertheless, it is necessary to examine the differences in concerns in relation to geographical location throughout the country. Though Azacualpa is not greatly affected by violence and insecurity, they have different issues of their own living in a more rural area with fewer resources. One area that is greatly lacking is the educational system. When I prompted Octavio regarding the quality of education available to residents of Azacualpa, he responded:

Que le pudiéramos llamar de calidad, no. Puede ser que no... pero si se podría mejorar. La verdad es como, como lo que tenemos acá es como escuelas y colegios públicos. Entonces este... las instituciones de gobierno no están a un 100% entonces para recibir algo de calidad, muchas veces tiene que irse a los privados en las ciudades mas grandes como San Pedro Sula. (Interview, June 22, 2019)

The issue at hand in smaller towns like Azacualpa is that many do not have the resources or means necessary to travel over an hour into San Pedro Sula to attend private schools. Thus, education of “quality” for those who live in Azacualpa is seen as an enormous privilege. In the words of Octavio:

Que ya después de colegio muchas personas no sigan sus estudios porque, eh... dónde están las universidades, pues están en San Pedro Sula y es muy lejos. Entonces ellos les tocaría ir a vivir allá y conseguir un trabajo, y es cara la vida en San Pedro. Es cara. Entonces no muchas personas tienen esa facilidad. (Interview, June 22, 2019)

Due to these difficulties of lacks of resources and transportation, it is often not feasible for those living in rural areas to move to San Pedro Sula for education. They would first have to find a job to be able to sustain themselves, and that is no easy task. It is much more expensive living in the city than in rural Azacualpa, and most do not have enough savings to move in order to advance their education. Despite this, according to Octavio, the only way to advance and improve one's economic position is to complete an advanced degree. He is one of the few in his community that had the opportunity of traveling to San Pedro Sula on the weekends to study and complete a degree in computer science at the university. He explains his experience by sharing:

En mi caso, yo me gradué como ingeniero en computación y gracias a ellos, pues tengo mi trabajo. Siento que me pagan muy bien y gracias a ellos yo he tenido muchas oportunidades en mi vida incluso para mi familia. Entonces eso abre puertas, verdad, tener un estudio de alto nivel abre puertas porque las compañías quieren personas que estén preparadas para poder ejercer esos puestos que ellos necesitan. Estoy contento en mi profesión, me ha dado lo que yo he esperado. (Interview, June 22, 2019)

Octavio's degree has provided him with the funds necessary to provide for his family, travel around the world, and live without the worries that many Hondurans face of having the lack of obtaining even the most basic of necessities. Octavio described his life as a "dignified" life, and claims that only those who are educated are able to live comfortably and with "dignity" in Honduras. Considering this perspective, I was interested to know what Octavio thought could be potential avenues that could allow

members of his community better access to advanced education or sustainable job opportunities in general.

Abrir universidades publicas. El gobierno, en vez de seguir gastando un montón del dinero por la seguridad, ellos podría traer una extensión de universidad publica, cerca, con algunas carreras para que los estudiantes puedan optar a poder estudiar. Así poder tener un mejor trabajo, un mejor estilo de vida... Eso pienso yo. Pienso que la educación es algo muy bueno. Porque usted no puede venir y dar dinero a las personas porque ese dinero se lo van a gastar. Después le van a estar pidiendo más dinero mientras que usted le da la educación, la educación no se la va a quitar nadie. Nadie se la puede vender ni regalar, y entonces con la educación cuando usted este enseñando algo a alguien eso se queda. Entonces eso solo va a servir, verdad. Es como cuando dicen el dicho, *No le deja el pescado, ensénale a pescar que el va a poder contener su propia comida.* (Interview, June 22, 2019)

The desire for the opening more public universities in rural areas is one that many Hondurans share. In order to fulfill this desire, the Honduran government would have to be willing to allocate more funds to this sector. Octavio brought up a common theme when mentioning the government's allocation of the majority of funds to security. It is apparent that Hondurans have not seen any additional efforts by part of the government to improve the issue of insecurity. They do, however, commonly cite education to be the area that needs the most investment and attention. Considering this, I asked Octavio his perspective on USAID allocation to Honduras and whether he has any knowledge of their allocation or perhaps had experienced any impacts from the influx of those funds.

Mira, no sé mucho sobre USAID. En esos pueblos pequeños como Azacualpa, no vemos ningún impacto. Lo que sí sé es que Estados Unidos envía dinero al gobierno aquí para mantener y extender poder y influencia. Pero si los Estados Unidos quiera ayudarnos, deben dejar dando y dando a los corruptos. Invertir en educación es la única forma de mejorar nuestro país. Porque como yo ya le dije, si no hay estudio, es muy difícil para los personas. Si la gente no tienen educación, no pueden tener una vida digna. Por eso la gente están saliendo del país. Creo que si el sistema educativo mejora, menos personas necesitarán migrar. (Interview, June 22, 2019)

Octavio acknowledges that he is not very knowledgeable about the function of USAID, as he notes that in the small town of Azacualpa, they do not experience any sort of impact from those funds. What he does understand, however, is that the United States continues sending funds in order to maintain power and influence within Honduras. If the United States truly wants to help, he suggests that they should suspend aid to corrupt politicians and governmental agencies. By instead investing those funds in education, Octavio concludes that Hondurans will live a more dignified life which allows them to remain in their home country instead of facing the need to migrate elsewhere.

Juan Tabora*

Juan Tabora is the neighbor of my friend, José, and was interested in taking part in an interview to share his experience and perspective. Before conducting the interview, I had never met or spoken to Juan. He is a middle-aged man who migrated to the city of San Pedro Sula from the more rural area of Santa Barbara in order to advance his education and find work. Most of Juan's family also lived together with him in Santa Barbara, but Juan explains that many of his nephews made the decision to migrate due to economic difficulties with the family's coffee business.

Era por la situación económica que han migrado, principalmente. Porque en este caso mis sobrinos han migrado a los Estados Unidos. Mi familia se dedica a café. Entonces desde 2002 hasta la fecha, los precios de café han sido bajos. Aunque digan ah, café vale 200 dólares a la bolsa, pues sucede que cuando los productores da el producto a las compañías, no les da 200 dólares. Les da como 50 dólares. Por eso, en este caso es una de las razones que la gente tienen que migrar. Ha sido por eso, por los bajos precios. (Interview, June 11, 2019)

Instead of leaving Honduras due to the low prices that companies were offering for their coffee products, Juan made the decision to move to San Pedro Sula and attend the public university there. He finished his studies obtaining two degrees, one in philosophy

and the other in law. Comparing his educational experience from public high school in Santa Barbara and university level courses in San Pedro Sula, Juan noted that the city offered a much better quality of education and had access to many more resources. This is because, in the words of Juan:

Principalmente porque San Pedro Sula es una ciudad industrial. Aquí se mueve la economía. (Interview, June 11, 2019)

He went on to explain that normally, there are more job opportunities within the city for those with a degree from the university. However, they often are in search of individuals who have not only a degree, but also have practical experience working in their field of study.

Normalmente cuando las empresas empiezan a contratar personas eh, buscan por lo menos dos años de experiencia. Por eso ahora es más difícil para los estudiantes encontrar trabajo después de terminar con los estudios. (Interview, June 11, 2019)

Juan explains that business's desires for a minimum two years of experience is negatively impacting students recently graduated from university. It is difficult to find internships, and often if they are available, they pay very little to nothing at all, which is not feasible for many Hondurans. Though Juan has worked in various positions, he tells me that he is now working as a lawyer, representing multiple different types of cases. In addition to his work as a lawyer, he volunteers on his own time to help migrants who were recently deported back to Honduras.

Representó casos de derechos humanos, homicidios y derechos indígenas. Últimamente también he estado trabajando con migrantes que regresan a Honduras, ayudándoles con la transición e informándoles sobre sus derechos. (Interview, June 11, 2019)

Most days, Juan begins work at six in the morning and does not complete his tasks until late, eight or nine at night. Working long hours, and the title of “lawyer” does not

equate to a wealth of money in Honduras, either. It is often dangerous work, and Juan shares that he must be very careful, and forgets what it is like to live a “comfortable” life.

Para que una viva “cómodamente” en Honduras no es común... por el costo de los impuestos, por la violencia. (Interview, June 11, 2019)

Violence, Juan shares, that is not solely due to gang violence, but instead a more complex structure of corruption that is entangled throughout all of the systems within the country.

Es complicado. San Pedro Sula es una de las ciudades más peligrosas en el mundo, no solo en Honduras. Los sistemas aquí... todo está involucrado en la corrupción. Todos los autoridades que hay también por el parte del gobierno. No solo hay homicidios sino masacres aquí. Por supuesto que hay violencia y asesinatos por parte de las maras, pero también por parte del gobierno y los militares. Como yo le dije todo está involucrado en este sistema de corrupción. (Interview, June 11, 2019)

For this reason, there exists no source or force of protection for Honduran residents. When the police and military are also responsible for killings, it becomes difficult to decipher who can be trusted. Upon prompting Juan with the question of if he believes there are any forces in San Pedro Sula that exist to protect residents, he responded by stating:

No, no en realidad eh, como abogado yo le puedo decir que no. No, no existe una sistema que responsabilice a las personas por sus acciones. De los 100% de las delincuencias menos de 5% están investigados. Por eso, el pueblo es muy vulnerable. (Interview, June 11, 2019)

Neither the police, military, or judicial system can be confided in to impart justice for Honduran communities. This is not because these agencies are not without funds. USAID funding’s top sectors according to data from USAID’s site, U.S. Foreign Aid by Country: Honduras for 2019, included Honduras Local Governance Activity, Government and Civil Society, and Agreement with Government of Honduras totaling a sum of over 61 million dollars. Despite this influx of funding to strengthen security, Juan offers that when less than 5% of delinquency cases are investigated, there leaves no sense of safety or even willingness to come forward to report a crime that has been committed. Juan explained

then how the state of insecurity had evolved following the coup of 2009, and the role that the United States has had in that matter as well.

...Principalmente por el golpe del estado en 2009, que el seguridad ha aumentado. También hemos visto un aumento en los impuestos para aumentar la seguridad. Pero las preocupaciones no han cambiado, seguimos con los mismos problemas... entonces los impuestos que pagamos no están siendo utilizando por eso, para mejorar la seguridad. Entonces de donde se recibe la mayor parte de dinero? De la Secretaría de Seguridad. Y ahora el nivel de homicidios y asesinatos diarios es 16 personas, diarios. Si? Entonces al nivel general, estamos vulnerables, no existe aquí los derechos humanos. No podemos sentir seguros mientras exista un ambiente político como el que tenemos ahora. Y en realidad, el gobierno de los Estados Unidos tiene la responsabilidad, porque ellos están dando el dinero a ellos. ¿No? ¿No? Porque en el contexto de Venezuela, Nicaragua, El Salvador, el contexto de Honduras, no cumplen con los requisitos de los derechos humanos. Pero el gobierno de los Estados Unidos no dice nada, siempre está dando el dinero. Entonces quién está alimentando la violencia? El gobierno de los Estados Unidos. (Interview, June 11, 2019)

The argument again is made that funds allocated to security concerns are simply not showing any results or changes in society. Not only are millions of dollars in funds from the United States distributed to Honduras, but, as Juan has explained, the taxing of residents in the name of “security” is another source of money fueling the system of corruption. The extensive instances of human rights abuses committed by Honduran government officials however has not slowed down the influx of funds from the United States. Drawing from this, Juan makes a powerful case by pinning the responsibility on the United States government for continuing to supply funds despite Honduras’s failure to comply with human rights requirements. Not only does this supply of money maintain corrupt officials, but also maintains the cycle of violence. Based on Juan’s answer, I was curious to know if he believed USAID funds to Honduras were beneficial or necessary at all. He believes:

USAID como una agencia en Honduras, designa todos los fondos. Si USAID como un agencia dijera o respondiera a los indicadores o a las necesidades de la

población, las cosas pueda ser diferente. Pero no, no responden a las necesidades. Entonces el impacto es poco o nada. Necesitamos democratizar para ver mejor resultados. (Interview, June 11, 2019)

The funds are simply not being distributed in a manner that is beneficial to Hondurans. I thus prompted Juan by questioning what could be a way that USAID could potentially be more affective in responding to the needs of the population there.

Una de las cosas que es importante, especialmente para USAID, es que necesitan corresponder a un plan estratégica. Porque, eh, cuando hay mucho activismo, voluntad, no se responde a las necesidades estratégicas para resolver en este caso las necesidades sociales. Por ejemplo, en San Pedro Sula existen poblaciones vulnerables, para mencionarle, hay zonas que necesitan mayor formación, pero para eso tiene que existir la voluntad política. Voluntad política en la parte de quien? De la gobierno central. Entonces necesitamos construir un plan estratégica que responda a la necesidades de la gente y así mismo tiempo que responda a los proyectos de desarrollo. Muchas veces USAID inicia planes de desarrollo para San Pedro Sula que no se corresponden con las necesidades de la gente. Muchas veces los proyectos están alineados con los intereses de los Estados Unidos, no con las necesidades de la gente aquí. Y por eso están migrando la gente también. (Interview, June 11, 2019)

For Juan, if there is not a strategic plan to include and incorporate those being affected by USAID funding and projects, there is no chance for sustainable development. If the United States continues to develop programs in accordance with their own interests within the country, there will continue to be a flow of migrants to the United States' borders. Juan believes that there are many vulnerable communities that could benefit from USAID projects and development plans, but they must work with those communities and understand their needs instead of assuming for them. Some of Juan's final comments sum up his demand for democracy, peace, and independence.

Primero quiero decirle que no necesitamos más militarizar la sociedad. Necesitamos construir una cultura de paz, no de violencia. Pero no con los militares como hace el estado, si? Mucho de la inseguridad que estamos experimentado ha empezado con la interferencia de los Estados Unidos, no? Yo estoy en contra de la interferencia de los Estados Unidos en este país. Porque no hay una independencia, por ejemplo aquí, el gobierno actúa en respuesta a los

intereses del gobierno de los Estados Unidos. Siempre nos preguntamos, “Cuál es el impacto” “Cual es el impacto” pues, uno de los impactos de la interferencia era la militarización. (Interview, June 11, 2019)

Only through demilitarizing Honduran society and rejecting U.S. interference within the country will Hondurans begin to see a change. The result of interference from the United States has created the structure of instability and violence. Juan explains that for this reason, many Hondurans must flee their home country.

Por eso hay tanta migración. Y está aumentando, antes era de manera individual, ahora es de la manera colectiva, como las caravanas. Y el gobierno de los Estados Unidos está diciendo, vamos a parar la migración de las caravanas, sin entender que ellos tienen la culpa de crear las condiciones que crearon esas caravanas. (Interview, June 11, 2019)

Migration is increasing from the region, and recently, it has been more common to migrate collectively in caravans. While the United States government outwardly expresses their discontent with these caravans, Juan counters that the U.S. government is the source that has created a need for them. Juan shares a bit of advice if USAID truly seeks to respond to the needs and root problems stemming migration from the country.

Entonces pues, en resumen, creo que está bien si USAID continúa trabajando en nuestro país, pero no sigue las necesidades del gobierno sino las necesidades de la población. Y hay indicadores. La mayoría de la población en Honduras vive con menos de dos dólares por día. Cuántos niños no van para la escuela? Por lo menos 900,000 no van a la escuela. Si no está examinando los indicadores, está desperdiciando los recursos. Además, toda esta militarización responde no a nuestros intereses, sino a los intereses de los Estados Unidos, al gobierno de los Estados Unidos. Entonces, la lucha también es para la independencia. (Interview, June 11, 2019)

In sum, Juan offers that it is not a problem that USAID continues working on projects and programs in Honduras. The issue arises however, when needs of the government are met, but not the general needs of the Honduran people. Juan offers that the majority of the population lives on less than two dollars per day. At least 900,000 students do not attend

school at all. If USAID is not working to examine the indicators and the needs of the people, then their resources are being lost. Additionally, all of the militarization of Honduran society has not been in accordance with Honduran interests, but the interests of the United States. In conclusion, for Juan, the Honduran fight is mainly a struggle for their independence.

Maritza Gomez*

Martiza is the cousin of one of my closest friends in Tegucigalpa. Before conducting the interview at her home, we had never met. Maritza is a middle-aged woman who was born in the capital. We began the interview with Maritza sharing a bit of background about herself.

Yo nací aquí en 1981 en Tegucigalpa y he vivido acá toda mi vida. He viajado a otros países como Guatemala para estudios, para estudiar en Guatemala para mi maestría y en México porque me casé con un Mexicano. (Interview, June 16, 2019)

Martiza was born in 1981 and currently lives in an upper-class neighborhood in Tegucigalpa with her husband and two children. Throughout her life, Maritza had the opportunity to study abroad in Guatemala and live for a brief period in Mexico. During her time in Mexico, she met and married her current husband. They moved back to Tegucigalpa shortly following their wedding. She shared that the majority of her family lives in Tegucigalpa, but has three cousins that currently reside in the United States. Mariza made emphasis in recognizing that all of those cousins were granted visas for their entry into the United States.

Uno de ellos esta estudiando en la universidad allá y trabajando allí. Está dando clases allí uno de ellos, el otro si... él le ofrecieron... es dentista, y le ofrecieron una muy buena oportunidad de trabajo en los Estados Unidos. Y otro está en los Marines. (Interview, June 16, 2019)

It was interesting to me that Maritza chose to focus on those family members who were living in the United States and their success in various professions. I decided to turn the conversation more on her own experiences by asking her which career path she had chosen after her time studying abroad in Guatemala.

Soy catedrática en un universidad aquí, en la carrera de nutrición. Doy clases de proyectos, gestión de proyectos de seguridad alimentaria y nutricional y formulación y ejecución de políticas en seguridad alimentaria y nutricional. También soy doctor en química mas una maestría en gestión de proyectos. (Interview, June 16, 2019)

From the lens of her experience as a university professor, I was interested to know more on her view of the educational system in Tegucigalpa. Maritza shared that in Tegucigalpa, it is not a lack of schools, but instead a lack of access to those schools that drives the issue.

El acceso de educacion, eh, lastimosamente es un tema bastante político, no es de ahorita, pero es de hace muchos años. Pues en la época que yo estudió había indicadores. En el época de presidente Pepe Lobo, había objetivos de desarrollo del milenio. Pero no se cumplieron, porque era de transferencia monetaria condicionada, donde si usted no matriculaba un niño a la escuela y lo llevaba al centro de salud el le va a dar un bono para así mejorar eh, los índices de educación en el país. Pero lo que pasa con este tipa de programa que los apoyan este tipo de programa como USAID, World Food Programme, es que no le dan seguimiento ni monitoreo. O sea una cosa es que el niño se matriculo a la escuela y otra cosa es verificar que termina el estudio secundario y logra para ingresar a una universidad. Entonces este programa lo mantiene, lo maneja por el gobierno con instituciones internacionales. Y... lo que pasa es que, para ir a los escuelas privadas, necesitan uniformes y todo eso. Entonces para que una familia tenga educación secundaria, para eso pues, hay que tener suficiente dinero. (Interview, June 16, 2019)

As Maritza describes, there have been efforts from past presidents to improve the educational system with the support of international organizations such as World Food Programme and USAID. The issue arises not from those programs and their efforts, but instead with the failure to then monitor and verify that those programs are continuing to be implemented as designed. The failure of these programs has resulted in part to the state of

the educational system of Honduras today, where “quality” education is reserved for those who can afford it. In order to progress and continue to develop, Maritza believes:

Tiene que mejorar la educación. Mejorar la educación es mejorar el país. Un pueblo educado puede superar cualquier cosa. La educación es prioridad, y la seguridad y la salud también, pero con la educación viene la salud, entonces si tiene la educación tiene la salud. (Interview, June 16, 2019)

Bringing up the topic of security, I asked Martiza to share her experience in regards to security in Tegucigalpa. She shared a bit of a different perspective on issue of insecurity in Honduras by asserting that everything should be considered in terms of a deal. Ultimately, the governments and those in positions of power act according to their own self-interests.

Hay programas de seguridad. Hay muchas programas de seguridad donde, por ejemplo, han hecho la policía militar y entre ellos eh, pues, tratan de mantener militares, policías juntos en la noche para ver si anda la gente viviendo o con drogas o si hay una pandilla o algo asi pero, que lo veo es que... Pues pasa en todos los países en en todo el mundo que el gobierno hace tratos por la corrupción, por ejemplo el narcotráfico, hace tratos y ellos pagan la... em, todo está negociado. No hay nada que no está negociado. Si les dan ayuda es porque, pues si les dan ayuda es porque hay algo quieren alla. Por ejemplo vienen muchas organizaciones médicas que vienen para hacer aqui operaciones de gratis. Yo tengo un amigo alla en los Estados Unidos trabajando en el Chicago hospital, y el hace operaciones constructivas, y dice el, “Mira, te voy a explicar algo, si vienen a ayudar es porque vienen a aprender. Porque en los Estados Unidos no se puede tocar un paciente sin pasar la praxis, o le quitan la licencia.” En estos países no pueden hacer eso. Y también ellos vienen a aprender sobre ciertas enfermedades como dengue, para conocer más bien diferentes enfermedades. Entonces si vienen a ayudar pero también para aprender. Entonces... creo que no hay una supervisión adecuada, no hay una gestión adecuada de como se deber hacer este tipo de ayudas. Y no hay nada gratis. (Interview, June 16, 2019)

Considering Maritza’s response regarding previous educational programs that were supported by USAID and considering her stated distrust for those in positions of power, especially those running governments, I prompted Martiza by asking if she believed that the United States government’s current USAID allocation was of benefit to her community.

USAID no ha hecho nada por este país. Y fondos hay, fondos hay. Lo que se necesitamos, si quieren apoyar, es empiezan con un proyecto, y después de terminar el proyecto le da un año de seguimiento y monitoreo y desde ahí se entregan a la comunidad. Lo que se debe hacer es empoderar bien a las comunidades a estos proyectos, verificar que estén bien empoderados y en el año que dan seguimiento y monitoreo después de entregar el proyecto a las comunidades, verificar que está caminando este proyecto en línea recta, y si no están caminando en línea recta pues volver a capacitarnos para que estos proyectos se sostienen solos. Eso es lo que se necesita. No funcionan estas organizaciones, estos proyectos porque no empoderan bien a las personas. Porque ahora, si no están ellos, no funcionan, tienes que empoderar las personas para que estos proyectos funcionen solo. Se los entrega a la comunidad y los jefes de la comunidad y ellos tienen que seguir trabajando. (Interview, June 16, 2019)

Collaboration, not interference, is what is needed, according to Maritza, in order to create sustainable impacts and beneficial change to Honduran communities. By offering insight, instructing community members how to complete certain tasks, Maritza believes that there is room for growth and development. To complete the interview, Maritza circled back to the topic she found of most importance, the true key to a stronger country.

Volvamos otra vez... De todo esto que te digo yo, te lleva a un simple a una simple palabra, que es educación. Y desde allí, llegará los objetivos del desarrollo. También quiero decir una cosa más. Si solo esta dando, dando, dando, dando, y no estás enseñando, como va a producir algo? Entonces todo se centra en educación. (Interview, June 16, 2019)

To leave the interview on a single word, Maritza again emphasized the importance of education. She strongly believes that from learning, development objectives will begin to develop from within the country. It is not beneficial to continue giving and giving, but instead teaching *how* to develop and build in order to strengthen the Honduran society is key. In Maritza's view, advancements and development are centered completely in the strengthening of the educational system.

Analysis

Aid Deficiency and Failure

In 2020, the United States Agency for International Development's budget according to U.S. Foreign Aid by Country: Honduras illustrates that the United States supplies Honduras with a total of 20,101,138 dollars, claiming to serve as a means of improving governance and security. Accordingly, the sectors that are continuously allocated the largest sums of money are the central government and military forces. As portrayed in the findings of my interviews, Hondurans from various regions of the country find those funds to be ineffective in improving governmental transparency and advancements in security efforts. Thus, it is apparent that the finances supplied to Honduran governmental agencies not only fail to complete the tasks for which they have been intended, but have further served as a counteractive force in the protection and safety of Hondurans. The fraudulent election of Juan Orlando Hernandez that resulted in widespread protest and the killings of at least 21 people (Palenica, 2017), and the deaths of five men in the Aguan Valley at the hands of security forces (Frank, 2018) are both instances that have proven the Honduran government to be impartial to the lives of the Honduran people if they are not in compliance with the plans of the elite.

I learned from my interviews that the government of Honduras is not only receiving millions of dollars in USAID for security, but additionally charges Honduran citizens a security tax that claims to improve security conditions and resident's safety. For Sara*, the current circumstances in regards to security are the worst that she has experienced in over 30 years of living in the capital city of Tegucigalpa. She describes the conditions for residents in the city to be "unstable" and "vulnerable." Juan*, a resident of

San Pedro Sula also shares in Sara's concerns in regards to security taxes imposed by the Honduran government. Correspondingly, in San Pedro Sula, insecurity concerns have remained the same despite the increases in security tax following the 2009 coup d'état, as the same issues of violence and instability persist. According to Juan, in the second largest city in Honduras, San Pedro Sula, homicide rates have reached an average of 16 persons per day. Clearly, no improvements are being made. Sara and Juan seem to have a similar view on the allocation of security funds, though Sara does not clearly state what she believes they are used for in lieu of security efforts. She does note, however, that the taxes and outside funds that have been allocated to security are clearly not being utilized to improve conditions. Juan is more explicit in his opinion, finding that the majority of the money is received by the Secretary of Security, and thus concludes that they are responsible for utilizing the money in an unethical manner that is not beneficial to the security of Honduran citizens.

Juan was certainly not the only participant in the study who found the Honduran government to be partly responsible for the cycle of corruption and continued violence. For Raúl*, not only the government, but also the entire structures upon which it is built are embedded in corruption. José's* narrative of his experience with narcotraffickers in his neighborhood of San Pedro Sula is a concrete example of this corruption that is, as Raúl contends, ingrained throughout the entire system. The police's common and casual visits to the homes of narcotraffickers were evidence to José that officers were involved with and receiving money from criminals. Their narratives go hand in hand with the killing of Honduran Congressman Alfredo Landaverde after he revealed that one in every ten members of Congress is a drug trafficker (Frank, 2012). Landaverde's assassination was

proven to be a conspired killing organized by twelve members of the Honduran national police force (Malkin, et al. 2016). Clearly, it is difficult to overcome issues of insecurity when the perpetrators of violence are funding the very force meant to protect against it.

Raúl subsequently poses an important question by inquiring as to why the United States would continue to fuel a system that they know to be corrupt? José and Juan cite the massacres that occur each year in the country, as 32 had occurred up to the time of their interviews conducted in May and June of 2019 (Interview, June 11, 2019). According to Juan, human rights simply do not exist in countries like Honduras. He contends that similarly, in the cases of Nicaragua, El Salvador and Venezuela, none of those countries have met the requirements “mandatory” for receiving USAID. Despite this, the United States has not taken steps to cease funding but has instead continued to supply their governments with aid. Wallerstein’s (1976) concept of *unequal exchange* is at the root of this decision-making and strategy. The insertion of capital continues in order for the United States to maintain their stronghold and expand U.S. interests throughout these countries. In the case of Honduras specifically, José explains that from his knowledge, around 55 million lempiras from USAID are distributed annually for “security measures,” equipping the military and police with arms. In support of Raúl’s point, José also contends that the entire Honduran governmental system is invested in a system of corruption. Due to this unjust system, the 55 million lempiras deemed to be invested in security improvements is instead used as a means to fuel injustices and corruption. U.S. Congress members overlook these injustices as a “core” state (Wallerstein, 1976) and focus on the strategic interest of maintaining soft power within the region (Hiemstra, 2017).

Juan, who serves as a lawyer for homicide cases in San Pedro Sula contends that there is no system that exists in Honduras to hold individuals responsible for their crimes. From a statistical standpoint, he points out that from all of the delinquency cases that are presented to the judicial system, less than 5% are investigated. This leaves the population, especially in the larger cities, vulnerable and unable to trust in the police, military, or judicial system to impart justice on their behalf. In the context of those from more rural areas, Octavio* explains that for the most part, residents of Azacualpa have been able to rid their community of violence and corruption. Without the presence of gangs and narcotraffickers, the police have little to act upon and for that reason, he concludes that they are viewed as a trustworthy force within his community. Though Octavio does acknowledge his trust in the police and military in Azacualpa, he does not share the same confidence in higher governmental officials, labeling them as “corrupt.” It is widely accepted throughout both rural and urban areas that the government and its officials cannot be trusted. The participants in my study share their own views, which are quite similar to one another, in regards to why the United States continues to supply their country with funds while they are well aware of the injustices and corruption that abound within Honduras.

There existed a common theme within each of my interviews in which each participant, in one way or another, called for independence and sovereignty from the United States’ hand in interference within their country. For many, USAID was cited as the principle means used to maintain a sense of control within the region. José explains the influx of USAID to Honduras to be the result of a U.S. political strategy that considers his country as a military base. He counters that this is why the military forces receive the

majority of the aid money, and with those funds they maintain the authority to control the country. According to José, the military and the United States can be considered as partners, trading funds and arms in return for maintaining U.S. interests within the country. Based on the human rights violations that have been committed in Honduras at the hands of military officials and police, it should be prohibited against Leahy Law (Leahy Law Fact Sheet, n.d.) to continue allocating funds to the country. Despite laws and regulations intended to prevent it, funds continue to be distributed to the government and its agencies year after year, and in Juan's view, this leaves the United States government with the responsibility for the current state of instability and violence.

It is vital to bring Honduran voices to the forefront, so that solutions that are grounded in reality and authentic experiences may be considered (Yosso et al., 2002). There exists a common sentiment, José shares, which many Hondurans feel in regards to USAID distribution to their country. Due to the fact that Hondurans are seeing no impact in their communities from the funds provided by the United States, it is in reality more beneficial if the distribution were to be suspended. In this way, corrupt politicians and officials would not have the access to funds, which have served as a major source of power and control over the Honduran population. José concludes his interview by asserting that the best route to sustainable development would be to suspend USAID, and perhaps the country could begin to improve upon its principles of democracy and independence. Sara also touches on this issue of sovereignty in her interview by clearly stating her opposition to outside interference. She voices that it is in no way beneficial for others countries and other people to enter her country in an effort to "save" what Hondurans have to fix for themselves. The current system of aid allocation is failing, and

is set up in such a way that furthers United States dominance and control within the region. In order to progress and begin taking steps necessary to prevent against future violations, traditional belief systems grounded in positions of power must be challenged, and the Honduran people must be at the center of all decision-making processes (Yosso, et al. 2002).

Alternative Routes for Aid

Various participants did share various ideas as to how distribution could be changed if the United States truly has a desire to assist their country in the process of development. Maritza* explained that USAID has not accomplished anything in Honduras, but counters that there is a way that the organization could utilize funds to make small impacts. She explains the most beneficial way of making sustainable change is to create a project together with a community based on its needs. The community should be taught a certain task or skill, and USAID officials should ensure that the people are empowered, and have the resources and motivation they need to continue working independently. Issues arise, Maritza contends, when the officials leave the project without any form of supervision. There should be, she offers, a schedule of monitoring and follow ups to ensure that the project is functioning to the best of its ability. If the project is not succeeding, the community should then be reinstructed so that they can try again and eventually sustain the project themselves without outside interference. Juan also made mention of potential ways in which UAID could be utilized in a beneficial way, but he notes that currently, it is only a tool for expanding U.S. interests. Through the lens of Wallerstein's (1976) World System's Theory, the United States continues to utilize its position of dominance to subordinate Honduras as a periphery state, utilizing their stance

to advance U.S. interests instead of seeking partnerships that could potentially create mutually beneficial outcomes. In alignment with Maritza's suggestion, Juan agrees that USAID officials should be in contact with vulnerable communities in Honduras, learning from their requests regarding the resources and projects that are most needed. Too often, Juan finds that from his experience in San Pedro Sula, USAID programs are catered to what the United States considers to be important, and the projects do not align with the needs of the communities. Juan's suggestion mirrors that of Maritza's, calling for a strategic plan together with Honduran communities that offers monitoring and follow-ups in order to ensure that advancements are being made and projects are being sustained. Raúl shares his perspective on USAID programs and projects as well, contending that USAID has the potential to create an impact by focusing on first assisting more rural areas that lack access to even the most basic of necessities such as clean water, medical care and electricity.

Each participant cited education as the sector that requires the most investment and attention, stating that it is critical for the future of their country. Education in Honduras is widely viewed as a privilege, not a right that is afforded to all. Access to quality educational institutions are commonly centered in the larger cities, and as a result those residing in rural areas often do not have the means of obtaining education at a level comparable to those in more urban areas. It should not be assumed, however, that simply residing in an urban area is equivalent to having access to a quality educational system. The education system is instead based on class, and as Maritza and Raúl explain, and families must have enough money if they wish to attend private schools or universities. Private schools in Tegucigalpa, Martiza explains, require their students to wear uniforms

that must be paid for by families, and schools charge various other fees that many do not have the means to pay. For those in more rural areas that wish to further their education at the university level, Raúl adds that it is more expensive and more of a risk to move considering the higher cost of living within the city. The risk of moving to obtain a higher education, José adds, which is not always beneficial considering the current job market. In José's experience, before being employed by an international non-profit organization, he found factory work to provide better pay than working as a teacher. Further, Juan describes the difficulties of students recently graduated from university in finding employment related to their field of study, as businesses and institutions often require at least 2 years of experience. Thus, if students are unable to afford working unpaid internships or lack connections for job opportunities, it can take up to years following graduation to find a position.

The poor state of the economy and job market in Honduras, as Raúl explains, has led to a "brain drain" in the country, where many migrate to other countries for better opportunities. This has major economic and social implications for Honduras, as those who have the means to obtain higher education are frequently leaving their country. For those in more rural areas, however, Octavio explains that higher education frequently opens doors that would otherwise not be accessible. Currently working for a computer company in Santa Bárbara, Octavio shares that it was easier for him to find work outside of the city after graduating than directly inside San Pedro Sula. Despite Octavio's financial ability to travel to San Pedro Sula to study, he recognizes that most in his community do not share that same privilege. For this reason, he proposes a potential investment of USAID be utilized to open public universities around the country so that

both urban and rural areas may have equal access to higher education. In his view, monetary aid is not useful in the long term. If the United States wants to help create sustainable development, they should invest in education, as it is something that cannot be taken away and will only serve for the overall betterment of society. From the entirety of Martiza's interview, she finished by asking me to focus on one word: education. If there is one tool that is to fight against corruption, establish sovereignty, and form pathways to sustainable development and progress, it is accessible education for all. Despite the emphasis of the participants on the importance of education, USAID funds allocated to education are very little. In 2020, according to USAID's site, U.S. Foreign Aid by Country: Honduras, only 3.7 million out of a total of around 20 million was designated to Basic Education. Post-secondary education was at the bottom of all of the sectors, with only 239,000 dollars in funds. Clearly, Octavio's vision for expansion of universities around the country is far from receiving sufficient funding and support from the United States.

It is evident that the participants in my interviews have passion and desire to experience growth, improvements in education and in avenues for sustainable development within their country. Despite those desires, it is also clear that Hondurans have the strong will to protect their independence and sense of dignity. Four of the six persons that I interviewed quoted the same Chinese proverb, "Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime." It is not enough that USAID gives money and resources. If there is to be a true change, a beneficial difference to create improvements, individuals must be taught *how* to do those particular skills for themselves. Otherwise, people will only become dependent on the will of others

to give, without ever having the opportunity of learning to complete those skills in such as manner that is to sustain themselves.

Aid's Impact on Migration

Migration from Honduras has been a greatly contested issue within the United States, especially following widespread news coverage of the arrival of caravans to the U.S. border over the past few years (Semple et al., 2018). Often looked over, however, are the root causes that have caused so many Hondurans to flee their homes. Every single participant who took part in these interviews had family members who had migrated to the United States, granted their decision being due to various reasons. The considerably high numbers of Hondurans fleeing their homes is grounds for a deeper understanding of root causes and the United States' role in creating conditions that have led so many to U.S. borders. The participants in this study shared their own personal understandings and perspectives as to why so many of their fellow Hondurans make the decision to migrate.

The topic of migration arose naturally in my interview with José when he began discussing the issue of insecurity within San Pedro Sula. He explained that within the city there exist 8 gangs, which are largely divided by “zones” or different neighborhoods within the city. Those residents who must live in one of the more dangerous zones with higher gang presence live in a state of constant terror. Some of the neighborhoods he describes to be *zonas de guerra*, or “war zones.” Residents of these neighborhoods and surrounding areas are constantly in fear for their safety, and José explains that they are greatly affected psychologically due to this state of being.

From his own personal experience living in San Pedro Sula, José has been a victim of attempted kidnapping, assaults, and robbery. All of these offense he describes to be

common and “expected” within the city. Reporting those offenses would be a waste of time, José tells me. The police’s slogan may be to “Serve and Protect,” but José explains that they only work to serve the interests of the government’s corrupt officials and politicians. When protests occur due to injustices on behalf of the government, such as the gathering of two thousand campesinos’ unarmed blockade as a response to the killings of five members of their community (Frank, 2018), the police and military’s response was to surround them with firearms. There exists no form of protection for Hondurans against violence. In my interview with Juan, the topic of the current political environment was mentioned, and he explained that while current politicians remain in power, Hondurans will continue to be vulnerable and insecure. Due to this instability, José explains that violence has been normalized among Hondurans, especially in larger cities where brutal crimes are common and frequent. He tells me that Hondurans simply have two options, they can either accept the conditions and insecurity the way they are, or they can migrate to the United States. A statement from Octavio at the end of his interview stood out to me considering José’s experiences, finding that Hondurans decide to migrate not because it is their choice, but because they do not have a dignified life in Honduras.

Despite harsh conditions and insecurity, lack of reliable police and military officials and corrupt governmental officials and politicians, the United States’ financial support remains strong. According to Juan, the current instability of his country today is largely due to continued interference and assertion of U.S. dominance. He explains that the militarization of Honduran society has been due to U.S. intervention that has continued for centuries. Aligned with Wallerstein’s (1976) theory, the United States has repeatedly taken advantage of Honduras’s agricultural sector (Nevins, 2018), extracting their

resources and wealth for the profit of U.S. based companies. The geographical position of Honduras has led the U.S. government to allocate aid in such a manner that allows them to use Honduran land as a strategic military base. The United States is well aware that conditions of insecurity and violence have not improved, that the current president was elected by fraudulent means (Human Rights Watch, 2017), and that police and military officials regularly commit human rights abuses against their fellow citizens (Human Rights Watch, 2020). Regardless, the U.S. government continues utilizing its hegemonic status to supply corrupt regimes and agencies with USAID funds in order to bolster its power and influence. Juan concludes that accordingly, the United States plays the major role of fueling conditions of violence and insecurity that lead to migration.

Conclusion

The United States Agency of International Development's strategy in supplying aid to Honduras is not in the interest of the Honduran people, but in the interest of the United States itself. Narratives from the participants of this study illustrate that USAID has been utilized as a means of repression for Hondurans. As uncovered in this study, funds flowing into Honduras from the United States are shown to have correlations with purchases of firearms and weapons from U.S. based companies. These weapons, including machine guns and teargas are then used against protestors, as they were in the electoral protests of President Juan Orlando Hernandez of 2018, resulting in the deaths of innocent Hondurans (Palencia, 2017).

The participants in this study describe current allocation of USAID to their government by using the words "illogical," "strategic" and "corrupt." As the participants explain, Honduras is nothing more than a strategic interest of the United States, which

continues distributing funds in order to use their territory as a military base. A government that has committed human rights abuses, and evidenced instances of of embezzlement and electoral fraud has yet to cease support from the United States. In the name of defending human rights and decreasing migration, members of Congress from both political parties have continually supported aid to Honduras. The United States has chosen to blatantly ignore Leahy Laws, which state that absence of the protection of human rights is grounds for immediate suspension of all aid. These conditions of governmental corruption and violations of human rights are among the root causes forcing Hondurans to flee their homes and migrate to U.S. borders. The United States blindly continues to fuel a system of violence and insecurity, exacerbating the conditions and concerns that have contributed to its overall destabilization, resulting in vast numbers of out-migration from the country.

In order to contribute to a field that was significantly lacking, the interviews with Hondurans currently residing in Honduras were completed in an effort to better understand their perspectives and viewpoints on USAID. By traveling to the two largest cities in Honduras, San Pedro Sula and Tegucigalpa, as well as a visit to a smaller, more rural town of Azacualpa, I was able to contribute a greater understanding of Honduran's experiences and insight in regards to USAID allocation. All of my participants were in opposition to the furtherance of aid funding to their government. Some countered that it would be more beneficial to rid the country of USAID allocation all together, as it prevents their sense of independence and sovereignty as a country. Others countered that USAID could potentially be helpful, but it should instead be invested in the educational system, which is severely lacking and in need of reform. Some emphasized the need of

investment in accessibility to medical care resources and facilities, citing that some rural areas lack access to health care completely.

In sum, it was countered that USAID funds could potentially have the means to create small impacts, but programs and projects should be done in alignment and interests with Honduran communities, not based purely upon the assumptions or underlying interests of the United States. Though I was only able to interview six individuals, my interviews incorporated various perspectives and experiences. I acknowledge that it is necessary to include many more participants and viewpoints, especially those that have not had the means of obtaining higher education at the university level, to participate and share their perspectives as well. This study is a necessary starting point in beginning to take into account and understand the true impacts of USAID to Honduras from the experiences of Hondurans themselves.

Although many often see foreign aid as charity, I hope that this study has shed a light on the dangers and instability that can arise when it is allocated in a way that furthers the United States's national interests. A 2016 Congressional bill introduced by Representative Hank Johnson titled "The Berta Cáscares Human Rights in Honduras Act" calls for justice for the Honduran people by suspending United States aid to the Honduran military and police. More specifically, the bill demands that the Honduran government must have "taken effective steps to fully establish the rule of law and to guarantee a judicial system that is capable of investigating, prosecuting, and bringing to justice members of the police and military who have committed human rights abuses" (H.R. 1945). This demand is certainly in alignment with the views of the participant in this study, and it should be Honduran perspectives that are placed at the forefront of the

matter. No further aid and U.S. tax dollars should be provided to Honduran agencies guilty of an abundance of sufferings, human rights abuses and of forced migration. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of our policymakers, the U.S. government and its agencies to carry out international relations in a way that reflects the values of the United States, founded upon liberty and equality for all. The United States must make the decision if they will honor those fundamental values or, in the words of Julieta Castellanos, if they will continue to “feed the beast.”

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