
Amigos de Honduras

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SECRETARY/TREASURER'S REPORT

Joan M. Larimore (San Francisco del Valle, 1986-88)
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Our bank account is growing as those of you who were behind in dues are coming through and others are sending in current dues as well. We have \$4810.24 burning a hole in our pockets. I recently sent a possible grant request to our Grant Committee. As soon as everyone has read it, we may want to fund it. This is a grant suggested by Fred Corvi. Many thanks to those of who continue to support Amigos. We surely have become an enduring group! Additional thanks to 2018 donors to the Grant Fund. Remember to send proposals to Joan. **GRACIAS A : Carol Spangler; Clyde & Joelle Morris-Buffa; Richard Drum; Ron Raefs; Brenda Crumppacker; Ed Fischer; Deborah Moskovitz; Elizabeth Dalton, Amy Adams, Pat Lively, Kevin Kuschal; Deb Fakkon; Drew Days & Ann Langdon; Dale Schmitz; Kate Rafftery; James Buston; Libby Dalton!**

EDITOR'S CORNER

Loren Hintz (Olanchito, 1980-82)
ldhintz@bellsouth.net This issue is a month late. Our son's graduation from college and helping my in-laws move to Denver had been keeping me busy. Thanks again to everyone who shared articles with me. This issue has the rest of **Rodia's** Honduran history article and a somewhat different impression of the election by **Barbara Joe**. After studying Honduran news I've decided that it is just as safe now as three years ago to travel to Honduras. There are lots of NGOs doing good work. Check out **Eric's. Robert Gallardo** reported enough donations were received to publish his Honduran Birds Field Guide in Spanish. Copies will be presented to Honduran schools in five different regions. The news on immigration and DACA is grim. I have heard from a number of Republican Senators saying they do support a bill allowing children who entered the country to remain and eventually become citizens. What have you heard? Am still hear rumors of reunions but don't have any details to share. Volunteers needed to create Amigos de Honduras website, summarize obits, collate Honduran news, share memories and apply for grants.

INTERNATIONAL RURAL WATER ASSOCIATION NEEDS YOUR HELP

Eric Harrison, Marcala (2006-8) My name is Eric Harrison (Hondur 8). I need your help. A local Honduras non-profit has a \$14,000 budget shortfall and will have to lay-off their workers if money is not raised. If you're like my friend Max Goggin-Kelm (also Hondur 8), you don't need more info because you love giving away your money. Click the link and donate a large amount of money.
<http://internationalruralwater.org/help-out/>

If you're not like my friend Max, read more to learn more about this amazing organization. These children need your help.



If you are like me, you're highly skeptical of development work, you think it's all a failure, a waste of resources, and you never donate to anything. You prefer to buy things you don't need to impress people that don't care about you. Luckily, I've answered several questions

below in the hopes of changing your mind.

1. Why should you care? I get it, you hated your time in Honduras and you wish you never signed up for the Peace Corps. Why should you donate to help a country that gave you nothing but dengue, amoebas, a skin fungal infection, and a bleeding stomach ulcer? Because, right now you can walk to your sink, turn the faucet and have clean, safe, drinkable water. Water is a human right and you should care about helping other people realize that right.

2. Where's your money going? Your money is going to International Rural Water Association (IRWA) and ADEC, a local Honduran non-profit. The two organizations work to increase the availability of safe-reliable water supplies in rural areas of Honduras. IRWA is volunteer run organization (no one receives a salary) that provides technical advice and oversight to their Honduran counterpart ADEC. IRWA is looking for additional volunteers, if you are interested, please email Nick Wobbrock (Hondur 10) at wobbrock@gmail.com.

3. What's your money being used for? Your money is being used to train and hire local Honduran people to work as Circuit Riders. Each Circuit Rider is a trained water technician who travels by motorcycle to monitor and advise approximately 60 community water systems in his or her assigned area.



4. Is the Non-Profit effective? Studies have shown that the vast majority of rural water supply systems built in developing nations fail well before their full design life of 20 years is reached. The IRWA/ADEC Circuit Riders are effectively reversing this trend and helping the communities to realize the full potential of their projects. This is accomplished not only by providing the critical technical services small communities cannot afford on their own to resolve operational problems, but also by offering training to each community in proper hygiene and sanitation, which are so essential to improving health outcomes. The provision of Circuit Rider services is substantially more cost effective, in terms of project-years of operation realized, than investment in new construction. The ultimate goal of IRWA is to increase the number of rural communities with Safe-Reliable water each year, and so we feel strongly that this is by far the most effective approach.

5. What's in it for you? This provides you a good reason to take a trip to Honduras. If you donate, we will try to accompany you so we can show you all the awesome work that IRWA/ADEC accomplishes. Mail donations to: IRWA 171 5th. St. Lake Oswego, OR 97304 Phone 503-705-7720

HONDURAN ELECTIONS ANALYSIS Part II (Rodia Flores SPS, Tegucigalpa)

(Ed. Note: Rodia is a Honduran Economist who was a housemate and friend to many PCVs. She volunteered to write an article

about the Nov. 2017 election and the history before it. In Feb. we published part I which was about the 20017 election. Here is the first part of her analysis which includes early history, the 2009 coup and the contested 2013 election. The article has been edited for space considerations.)

General information. Honduras is a Central American country. It borders Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua. Honduras remains one of the poorest countries in Latin America and also the most violent in the world. The country's poverty rate is around 64.5 percent and 42.6 percent live in extreme poverty. Honduras has a population of about 9 million, and 54 percent living in urban areas. Honduran politics from independence (1821) until 1900s saw a succession of Liberal and Conservative presidents. The two main parties during those years have National Party (conservative) and Liberal Party. The country was ruled by military regimens from 1963 to 1980. From 1980 to 2005 Honduras had eight elected presidents, in four years terms each.

In 2009 the democracy was interrupted and the political situation in Honduras turned problematic and violent. This was true in the last two presidential elections in the country. The actual president Juan Orlando Hernandez (JOH) was accused in 2013 and 2017 by his opponents of election fraud. His supporters affirm the contrary. Whatever argument is right or wrong, the president has managed to be reelected president for another four years even when it is prohibited by the Constitution.

Brief Historical Review. Honduras with the rest of Central American became independent of Spain Sept. 15, 1821. Honduras declared itself independent from the Central

American Union on November 15, 1838 and its Constitution was formally adopted in January 1839. It was followed by a period of instability and during this period a conservative, Francisco Ferrera was the country's first elected president. The presidential term was for a two-year period, but Ferrera extended his *de facto* control of the country for the next five years. From 1839 to 1899 there were around 24 presidents whose governments lasted from a few months to four years. For much of the Honduran's history the US Banana Companies or the US government was involved in Honduran elections and coups. From 1900 to 1920 there were 10 elected presidents from both parties Liberal and National. Everything was working fairly well until Democracy was interrupted. From 1963 to 1982 there were *five* military coups. (See Honduras.com: [Presidents of Honduras](#), by Jonathan R., January 17, 2014). Prior to 1922, the military was used as a force by politicians and their parties. The military suppressed opposition and served as officials for political-electoral rules. From the beginning they have favored the National Party. In November 1963, the passive military forces changed their role, when General Oswaldo Lopez Arellano removed in a coup President Ramon Villeda Morales of the Liberal Party. From 1963 to 2005 (42 years) there were several military interventions coups allowing them to rule the country.

1980 to 2009. Honduras was free of military coups for 29 years. This started in 1980 when General Policarpo Paz Garcia allowed free elections for a National Assembly. Paz Garcia was the third military officer to hold power since the army toppled the civilian government (Ramon E. Cruz) in 1972. In the presidential election of Nov. 1981 Roberto Suazo Cordova (Liberal

party) was elected president. From 1980 to 2009 the country had non-interrupted elections. However, in 2009 another coup put Honduras on the main world news with the fall of president Zelaya. President Manuel Zelaya Rosales was elected on November 29, 2005. He took office in January 2006 and by middle 2009, Zelaya Rosales took a sharp turn to the left. This action was a direct disconnection from the USA and reaffirmed a close relation with Hugo Chavez then the Venezuelan president, and extended his relation with other left-wing Latin American countries. (Category Archives: Honduras 2013, December 4, 2013). According to this source, Zelaya in 2009 joined the leftist organization ALBA (Alternativa Bolivariana para las Americas) that includes Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia, and Nicaragua. These leftist policies that Zelaya Rosales adopted provoked strong opposition from both National and Liberal conservative elites even in his own party (Liberal Party).

In addition, during his term Zelaya organized a national referendum that, if passed would have allowed him to revise the constitution and run for reelection. To consolidate this plan, President Zelaya pressured elections to vote for a "Cuarta urna" (fourth ballot box). The military and the Congress had opposed the referendum. Congress had banned Zelaya's proposed referendum and the president just ignored it and proceeded to dismiss the military Chief who had opposed his plans. The Supreme Court also had considered Zelaya's plans illegal and invalidated his dismissal of the military commander. The president continued with his plans and on June 27 (five month before the presidential election), everything was ready to cast the vote. Fear and uncertainty was in the air, it felt like an internal war among powers.

Contrary to Zelaya's plans, on June 28, 2009 the day the referendum was to be held, the military ousted Zelaya from office. He was arrested at home early in the morning and flown to Costa Rica. The National Congress voted him out of the office and elected congressional leader Roberto Micheletti as an interim president until the end of the term in January 2010. (Goldberg, Maren, [Manuel Zelaya Rosales-President of Honduras](#), Encyclopedia Britannica). Removing brought negative consequences to the country. The OAS (Organization of American States) suspended Honduras' membership. All other countries turned away from Honduras. Three countries recognized Micheletti's government: Israel, Italy, and Panama.

November 2009 presidential election. As stated before, Zelaya was the cause of the Liberal Party's split. The party was divided in two groups: His Party LIBRE (Liberty and Refoundation), and the original Liberal Party group. Because of this, their opponent, the National Party's candidate Porfirio Lobo won the presidency

After Zelaya, Honduras elected two more presidents: Porfirio Lobo (2009) and Juan O. Hernandez (2013). On November 2009, Porfirio Lobo from the National Party won the presidency with no problems due to the split of the Liberal Party. He got about 56 percent of ballots cast to 38 percent for his opponent Elvin Santos from Liberal Party. Zelaya has been accused as the person who most damaged the Liberal Party. He fractured the Liberal Party (that put him in power) with the creation of LIBRE (Liberty and Refoundation Party). Zelaya's followers did not vote in the 2009 election. President elect Lobo told supporters he would work to improve security, create new

jobs, and restore international ties. How would he do that? Improving security was his largest failure. Besides the country's homicide rate being astronomically high, it was a prime transit corridor for drug cartels moving to the US, and slipped deeper into economic and social disarray. After Lobo's victory, many Latin American countries said they won't recognize the election results as a response to Zelaya's coup. Among these countries were Zelaya's supporters: Brazil, Argentina, Cuba, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Ecuador, and Bolivia. Other countries like Colombia, Panama, and Costa Rica said they would accept them in an effort to resolve the political crisis. (See World Elections, [Category Archives: Honduras](#), Posted December 4, 2017)

November 2013 Presidential election. In this election there were four candidates, for the National Party (Juan Orlando Hernandez), for the Liberal Party (Mauricio Villeda), for LIBRE (Liberty and Refoundation) Xiomara Castro - Zelaya, and for the Anticorruption Party (PAC) Salvador Nasralla who is the founder.

Juan Orlando Hernandez (JOH) was President of the National Congress during Lobo's presidency. He was in office from January 2010 to June 2013. He is a reserve army lieutenant and studied law at New York University. In 2010 he became the body's president. Opponents have accused him of using the position to consolidate his power over other branches, including the judiciary. ("[Honduras elections: ruling national party's candidate wing presidential race](#)". The Guardian, November 26, 2013). He has used his military experience to design carefully his political strategies in the Congress and as a president later. In 2013's Hernandez repeated a line he

had used during the campaign to suggest how he would combat crime: "I will do what has to be done." This was to keep up his militarized fight against the gangs. This has turned Honduras into one of the world's most violent country. (Johnson, Tim: "[Turmoil as two candidates in Honduras claim election victory](#)," Miami Herald, November 24, 2013). Hernandez received 36.8 percent of the votes.

One of the most horrendous things that President Hernandez has done to the country was the decapitalization of the Instituto Hondureño de Seguridad Social. This provoked the anger of young people and formed the groups of "indignados" that marched pacifically many evenings on the main cities' streets. Allegedly \$350 million were stolen from the institution. The scams included overpaying \$400,000.00 for ten ambulances and buying overpriced medicines which were then repeatedly stolen and resold to the IHSS. This weakened his government for a short time in 2015.

Marches continued on the streets and boulevards. In order to calm the masses, Hernandez announced on Friday that a curfew will be in effect for ten days, from 6:00 P. M. to 6:00 A.M. next morning. JOH knows that Hondurans can protest, can bang pots and pans, and can yield against him for a week, a month, or two months, he knows how to calm them down. He used the force of the military police, and putting them in jail. After two months everything was forgotten and he continued enjoying the power.

Mauricio Villeda (son of ex-president Ramon Villeda Morales 1957-1963) was considered the most honest candidate. Villeda's more advantage was his moderation and his

ostensible honesty. His campaign focused mostly on values like fighting corruption and separation of powers between church and state. He also opposed same sex marriage. This political line didn't help him to attract voters. He only obtained 20.3 percent of the vote. (Ibid)

On the other hand, former president Zelaya couldn't run for the presidency again due to the Constitution's prohibition. So, **Xiomara Castro -Zelaya** his wife was able to do it. Her candidacy was viewed as attempt by her husband to make a comeback to continue contributing to Honduras's political instability. She portrayed herself as the candidate for change and promised constitutional reforms that would make the country more equitable. Her campaign delivered the same message that cost her husband the presidency but more moderated: to modify the Constitution if she was elected president. In this election Xiomara obtained 28.8 percent of the vote. (Ibid).

Lastly, **Salvador Nasralla** was the newest face in this election. He is a sport journalist, television presenter, university instructor, businessman, and more recently, a politician. Due to his role in television he is known as "the lord of the television." His campaign began in April 2011 when he started forming the Anti-Corruption Party (PAC). The PAC was largely made up of conservatives fleeing the two traditional parties national Party and Liberal Party) in disgust of their mass corruption. Nasralla received 13.5 percent in the official tally. (Ibid)

How Honduran saw the 2013 election? Both, the two traditional parties (national and Liberal) expected their candidate would win. The results were very controversial.

Suspicious arose when the electrical power shut off for more than two hours during ballots counting. Many argued that computers programs were manipulated during that lapse of time. They also believe that Xiomara was winning and after the power was on again, Hernandez was winning. Hernandez as a good military man and as president on the National Congress was able to carefully arrange the conditions for winning. Some of the interviewed individuals have different viewpoints. For example, Xiomara Canales a lawyer that works for a private company said: "everybody knows that Doña Xiomara won the election. Officially Juan Orlando won after the power outage to reprogram the computers." Another person interviewed was Sandra Herrera a retired secretary. She said "The results were clear. Juan Orlando won because we don't want a left wing president." A third person Norma Juarez said: "I voted for Nasralla but I think Xiomara won this election. The 'cachurecos' (followers of the National party) are cheaters."

It seems that Hernandez knows how to win on an election. In 2012, he fought a campaign against Ricardo Alvarez trying to become the nationalist presidential candidate for 2013. Hernandez won the election and became the nationalist candidate. Alvarez publicly denounced the result as fraudulent and demanded a "vote by vote" recount, which the Tribunal Supremo Electoral (TSE) rejected. Hernandez previously and strategically had removed and replaced his close collaborators in the Congress, Tribunal Supremo Electoral, the military institution, and all government offices. Hernandez had a very clear definition of how to become elected. He said: "Honduras needs a more effective anti-drug

strategy with the United States. That was clever. Who wouldn't like to hear that?"

How the election was seen internationally? Again there were contradictory opinions. On one side The North American Congress in Latin America stated "The elections have been fraught with irregularities and violent intimidation, threatening to throw the embattled nation into further political disarray." (Honduran election: Army given more powers to quash unrest. BBC, December 2, 2013) Conversely, observers from the Organization of American States and the United Nations declared that the elections met international standards and were both free and fair (Honduran election, Hernandez declared winner, BBC News, November 26, 2013).

What happened after the 2013 election? On early Sunday before the election started, near 30,000 police and soldiers were deployed to ensure security at the time of the election. During the election process no serious incidents were reported. However, the next day the tension gripped Honduras as both candidates claimed victory. Xiomara rejected the results announced by the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (SET) and called her supporters to take to the streets. So, on Monday, hundreds of her supporters protested in front of the Tribunal Supremo surrounded by heavy police and military deployment across the nation. Meanwhile, Hernandez said that the result was "not negotiable with anybody." He started naming a transition team to succeed President Porfirio Lobo (Hernandez lead 'irreversible' in Honduras, News/Latin America, November 26, 2013).

Ed. Note: As mentioned in the Feb. issue, protests followed the 2017 election results. Scores of protestors were killed. One common method of protest was to take over bridges and prevent the passage of traffic.

KINDNESS AND CHARITY IN EL SALVADOR Maggie Mcquaid Perspire (1976-8)

May I share my experience in a sh__le country? As a Peace Corps Volunteer in southern Honduras, I often went across the border to El Salvador for brief shopping excursions. It was relatively safe, with no problems crossing back and forth. But one afternoon I was across the border when there was some sort of military action in El Salvador. The border back to Honduras was closed. I had a passport and not much money. Dusk was falling and I had no idea what to do. I thought I'd try and spend the night in the church, but it was locked up. A local woman who had a stall in the market came by and told me there was a curfew, and that I needed to be off the street. I told her I had nowhere to go, and she told me just to come with her. She took me to her sister's house, basically a shack with a roof. The two women made me a pallet on the floor on old feed bags, and gave me a towel to use as a blanket. The border was still closed the next morning, and there was a big military presence in town. The ladies told me I should stay put. The market lady headed to her stall but came back at lunch with something for me - a romance novel in English, which was really a wonderful gift, and it helped me through a worrisome day. That night they brought one of their male relatives over. He had a truck, and if

the border was still closed the next day, he would try and drive me into the capital, where there was a Peace Corps office. I spent another night sleeping on feed sacks. Very early the next day, the man was there with his truck, but no sooner had we gotten started when we heard that the border was open again. He drove me to the checkpoint and watched as I went through. He was there as I walked into Honduras, and I waved back at him as I left. Those folks had nothing, but they fed me, gave me a safe place to stay, and made sure I got out of the country. They would not take the few dollars I had on me, as they thought I might need them later. They had no reason to take me in or look after me, but they did it anyway. I found kindness and charity in what Trump calls a sh__le. If I had to choose sides, those ladies or Trump, I would be with the ladies any time. I have seen mercy and goodness, Trump, and it wasn't with your kind. I kept that romance novel for years afterward.

POST-ELECTION IMPRESSIONS FROM HONDURAS: A HOUSE DIVIDED

Barbara E. Joe (La Esperanza, El Triunfo, 2000-3)

In the February issue of Amigos de Honduras, Honduran economist Rodia Flores wrote a very detailed article about the recent disputed Honduran presidential election, much more comprehensive than anything I could say. *Gracias, Rodia.*

I spent most of February 2018 in Honduras after the election, one of the most contentious presidential elections held there in recent years. My impressions were after-the-fact and not well-

organized, just what ordinary people chose to tell me, but I think they are worth sharing. I traveled around within and between cities and all over the country via ordinary buses and cabs. Although my main mission involved providing medical assistance, both as a helper and an interpreter, I was able to talk with a variety of Hondurans about the recent contested election, including health care workers, cab drivers, fellow bus passengers, and just plain folks. Based on those conversations, I concluded that the Honduran electorate is as fiercely divided as our own right here in the United States.

The UK *Telegraph* once called it “the most dangerous country on the planet” (Nov. 11, 2013) because of its high murder rate. I had been a Peace Corps health volunteer in Honduras for 3 ½ years (2000-2003), but the corps pulled out of the country several years ago, as we all know, because of the risk, though I’ve continued to return on my own annually as a medical brigade volunteer.

The November 2017 election was the first held after the Honduran courts allowed a second presidential term. This was a controversial move by National Party incumbent Juan Orlando Hernández, since the mere possibility of trying to change the constitution to allow for re-election was a primary justification for ousting repeat presidential candidate Manuel Zelaya in 2009, then a Liberal Party incumbent. Numerous irregularities occurred this time around, including polls closing one hour early at 4 pm and periodic suspensions of vote count totals. Presidential challenger Salvador Nasralla, supported by the relatively new Liber Party, was leading initially, but Nationalist incumbent Hernández was declared the winner in the end. The Liberal Party candidate, Luis Zelaya (not affiliated

with Manuel or LIBRE, the names get confusing), the traditional rival to Hernández’s more conservative National Party, had been eclipsed by the upstart LIBRE Party, started by former president Manuel Zelaya, now a member of the legislature for Liber.

The U.S. recognized Hernández as president and Canada and Mexico also recognized Hernández as the victor as well. (Incidentally, Honduras is one of few countries backing the U.S. Embassy in Israel’s move to Jerusalem.)

Nasralla, a 65-year-old TV sports personality denounced the results as fraud, urging his supporters to take to the streets, which they did all across the country. Thousands participated in *cacerolazos*, banging on pots and pans in protest. Nasralla has continued his political crusade through his popular TV show.

In mid-December, Nasralla supporter, legislator, and controversial former president Manuel Zelaya announced a national strike. The country’s two major cities --Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula-- saw streets blockaded, their main exits blocked. Over 30 people were killed. Even one of my former Peace Corps sites, La Esperanza, saw roadblocks. Nasralla then traveled to Washington, DC, to denounce election fraud at the OAS. Because of irregularities, the OAS called for a new election. Meanwhile, the UN sent a mission to Honduras to foster reconciliation. By the time I arrived there in early February, political street skirmishes were continuing, but most of the violent unrest had abated after Hernández had been sworn in under heavy security.

Because of my long Peace Corps tenure and my frequent return humanitarian visits to Honduras, I am a somewhat recognizable personality there. Walking along the dark, cavernous halls of Tegucigalpa’s century-old San Felipe

public hospital, both waiting patients and staff often greet me, excitedly shouting out “¡Doña Bárbara!” or even “¡Doctora Bárbara!” although I am not a doctor. In my post-election conversations this February with fellow bus passengers, taxi drivers, and street-side vegetable sellers, I was not immediately identified as a *gringa*, though not as Honduran either.

So, what were people saying? At least half told me they hadn’t even bothered to vote, finding neither candidate particularly desirable, not worth waiting in line for at a polling station. Some were registered only in their home villages and didn’t feel inspired to return there to cast their ballot. Still others were outspoken in expressing their preferences. A small-town handyman who had always voted the straight National (Hernández’s) Party ticket felt that seeking a second-term was just beyond the pale, so he voted Nasralla at the top of the ticket and straight National Party down ballot. Another voter was a high-powered city attorney who also voted Nasralla at the top of the ticket, saying, “It’s high time we broke the stranglehold of the conventional political elite around here, especially on the poorest citizens of this country.” Another voter said, “I voted JOH [Hernández’s initials] because we don’t want to end up like Venezuela,” referring to the Venezuelan ties of Manuel Zelaya, Nasralla’s patron. In fact, the tie between Nasralla and Manuel Zelaya was so transparent that several voters told me, “I voted for Mel,” using Zelaya’s nickname. Given that Manuel Zelaya is still obviously quite popular, why did he fail to run himself instead of promoting Nasralla? A Nasralla supporter explained that Manuel Zelaya had made a big deal about Hernández’s illegitimate second

term, so he could hardly have mounted a second term himself. Even Hernández voters acknowledged the second term was a problem. Hernández has claimed a 25% reduction in the murder rate in 2017, which some applauded, though his critics have argued this resulted from using excessive force. But for Hernández’s supporters, security *was* a major factor in their vote for him.

One cab driver told me to my surprise, “I really admire your great leader, *Presidente* Donald Trump, such a big strong man, very rich, very outspoken, attractive to women, not a phony, just says exactly what’s on his mind, not like our own weaselly politicians. But he shouldn’t be deporting so many Hondurans.” Through that man’s eyes, I was able to get a glimpse of what has attracted many of Trump’s American supporters, something I had failed to understand before.

An economist told me that Nasralla and his patron Manuel Zelaya are “like oil and water” and don’t belong together. He didn’t vote. “Neither candidate was better; it’s a matter of the *less worse* [*menos peor*],” said an engineer who had voted for Hernández. Others faulted Nasralla for his alliance with Manuel Zelaya and the latter’s alliance with Venezuela and Cuba.

Some people in La Esperanza, one of my former Peace Corps sites, supported Hernández and his National Party, surprisingly, because of opposition to the daughter and namesake of murdered environmental activist Bertha Cáceres, who had opposed a local dam project. They considered the daughter an opportunist cashing in on her mother’s name by running under LIBRE for a legislative seat, which she won. “She’s a single mother who has held no previous job, running only on her martyred mother’s fame.” The daughter led

demonstrations and road blockages around La Esperanza, earning her even more local opprobrium as a disruptor and publicity hound. However, the daughter did win over sufficient voters in La Esperanza to be elected. She has been elevated by Amnesty International, an organization for which I volunteer. The younger Bertha may be viewed differently in her native habitat in contrast with her current national and international reputation. Her mother’s killers should certainly be brought to justice, just as should the perpetrators of other murders in Honduras and elsewhere. An arrest reportedly has now been made of David Castillo, general manager of the company building the dam that mother Bertha had opposed. He is said to be the “intellectual author” of the murder plot in which eight other people have already been arrested. No doubt, international pressure helped achieve all those arrests and may have helped controversially re-elected President Hernández counter criticism that he was protecting the murderers. The dam Bertha Cáceres opposed was never built.

So, faced with the recent electoral choice in Honduras, how would *you* have voted? As for myself, like many Hondurans, I might have chosen to sit this one out in a perhaps cowardly abdication of duty. From a distance, political differences may seem starkly black and white, but, up close, they tend to blur, making it hard to take sides.



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