



BAHÍA DE TELA

el tercer **destierro**



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This toolkit is intended to accompany the *Bahía de Tela: El tercer destierro* documentary to promote further learning, discussion, and action. You may find the documentary online at <http://bit.ly/ElTercerDestierro>.

THE DOCUMENTARY

Honduras rarely makes an appearance in U.S. news. The summer of 2014 constituted a partial exception when media outlets reported on thousands of unaccompanied minors and families fleeing the Northern Triangle of Central America, El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala, to seek asylum in the United States.

Violence perpetrated by gangs, criminal organizations, and even security forces was often cited as the main reason why people attempted to flee the region. However, there is yet another form of violence, which contributes to mass migration. It is one that is subtler, yet leaves as much devastation as the most insidious of criminal gangs. Development projects such as the Indura Beach & Golf Resort in Bahía de Tela on the Caribbean coast of Honduras are lauded as a means to jumpstart development and stem the flow of migration from the region. However, the ethnic and indigenous communities on whose ancestral lands the resorts are built tell a different story – one of environmental damage, forced displacement, and poverty.

Bahía de Tela: el tercer destierro chronicles the resistance of the Garífuna people, the descendants of escaped slaves who for the last 200 years have made their home along the Caribbean coast of Honduras. The documentary gives fascinating insight into the complex intersection of development and violence in developing nations such as Honduras.

The title of the documentary refers to the three different instances of forced displacement of the Garífuna people: the first occurring when their ancestors were captured in Africa with the intention of selling them as slaves in the West Indies. The second occurred when they were expelled from the Caribbean island of Saint Vincent after the British invaded in 1796. Communities are now resisting a third expulsion instigated by the growth of the mega-tourism industry and projects such as Indura Beach & Golf Resort.

ABOUT

Bahía de Tela: El tercer destierro is a collaborative effort by Jénifer Ávila of Radio Progreso Honduras, and the Reflection, Research, and Communication Team of the Society of Jesus of Honduras.

Bahía de Tela: El tercer destierro was produced by Radio Progreso, a Jesuit-run radio station in El Progreso, Honduras. As the only national media outlet in Honduras that is non-commercial and independent the Director Father Ismael “Melo” Moreno Coto and his courageous staff run great personal risk in telling the stories of the struggle and persecution of marginalized groups in Honduras. This becomes especially true when that narrative runs counter to government and/or business interests.

The original documentary toolkit may be found in Spanish online at <http://bit.ly/ElTercerDestierro>. This English version toolkit was compiled by the Advocacy Office of the Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States and Ignatian Solidarity Network.

For questions or feedback related to *Bahía de Tela: El tercer destierro* and/or the accompanying toolkit, please contact:

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OVERVIEW

Bahía de Tela (Tela Bay) on the Caribbean coast of Honduras has been home to the Afro-indigenous Garífuna communities for over 200 years. Today, there are five distinct Garífuna communities in Bahía de Tela: Miami, Barra Vieja, Tornabé, San Juan, and Triunfo de la Cruz.¹ The construction of a mega-resort in the area threatens not only their sovereignty over ancestral territory, but also their entire way of life.



In 2001, UNESCO named the Garífuna as one of the Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.² The Garífuna have a rich cultural heritage, but also one that is extremely endangered. With the exception of one village, the Garífuna language is not formally taught in school. Older members of several Garífuna communities have commented on the transformation they have witnessed amongst the younger generation who no longer feel connected to their ancestral lands, their language, or culture. Many have decided to abandon their homes entirely and migrate north in search of better opportunities. Today there are large Garífuna populations in cities across the United States including New York, Los Angeles, Miami, New Orleans, Houston, and Seattle.³ While still a proud and strong community, the Garífuna identity is undeniably altered when the people are physically separated from their lands.

Garífuna are no strangers to suffering. Their history is full of hardships including slavery, military aggressions by several European nations, forced migration, natural disasters, and more. In 1635, two Spanish slave ships sailing from what is present-day Nigeria in West Africa, shipwrecked near the Caribbean island of Saint Vincent. Those who survived cheated fate and avoided the bone crushing life of slaves in the West Indies to instead enjoy a life of freedom and tranquility on the island of Saint Vincent. There, the Africans intermingled with the local indigenous population known as the Red Caribs. This blend of cultures resulted in the modern-day Garífuna people, also known as Black Caribs.⁴

In 1796, the British invaded Saint Vincent and forced the Garífuna to migrate first to Jamaica and soon thereafter to the island of Roatán, which today belongs to Honduras. More than 4,000 Black Caribs were

¹ "Bahía de Tela: el tercer destierro." (2015, Dec. 11). Radio Progreso. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/1KQwuHI>

² Minority Rights Group International, World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples – Honduras: Afro-Hondurans. Retrieved from <http://www.refworld.org/docid/49749d1537.html>

³ Junior Worldmark Encyclopedia of World Cultures. (1999). Garífuna. Retrieved April 15, 2016, from <http://bit.ly/1TWBgGe>

⁴ Minority Rights Group International, World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples – Honduras: Afro-Hondurans. Retrieved from <http://www.refworld.org/docid/49749d1537.html>



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forcibly displaced, however, only about half of them reached Roatán alive. Their new home was small and the soil was infertile, which prompted the Garífuna to petition the Honduran Government for permission to move to the mainland. Once granted permission, the Garífuna people began populating much of Central America. Today, the Garífuna have well-established communities along the Caribbean Sea on the Gulf of Honduras, southern Belize, the Guatemalan coast, the Island of Roatán, and coastal cities in Nicaragua.⁵

**“WE ARE GOING
AFTER THE
SUN AND THE
BEACH.”**

*Ana Abarca, Secretary of Honduran
Tourism Institute*

The Bahía de Tela community is one that has historically been neglected by the Honduran Government. There are no school, hospitals, electricity, or running water. Any attention that is given is directed towards exploiting what the State sees as abandoned territory. The former secretary of Honduran Tourism Institute (IHT), Ana Abarca, said in 2001, “We have hundreds of kilometers of beaches that aren’t developed and it’s a waste. We want strong tourism. We are going after the sun and the beach.”⁶ Since then, public and private entities have scrambled for territory along these pristine beaches, often clashing with Garífuna communities who have peacefully worked and lived on these territories for over two centuries.

INDURA BEACH AND GOLF RESORT IN BAHÍA DE TELA

The Barra Vieja territory has been in use since 1885 when Garífuna families were forcibly displaced from their homes in Triunfo de la Cruz, now known as the city of Tela. More recently, the devastation caused by Hurricane Mitch in 1998, coupled with a disease that killed most of the coconut plants, led to a mass exodus from Honduras in the late 1990s. However, in 2003 young community members decided to return to their ancestral homes and reclaim their history and traditions. Unfortunately, they found a significantly altered landscape as plans were already underway for the construction of the mega-hotel Indura Golf & Beach Resort.⁷

Induras is the Garífuna word for “Honduras,” and served as the inspiration for the resort’s name.⁸ Construction plans began in 2003 during the administration of President Ricardo Maduro, who along with a group of businessmen helped form the Tourism Investment Fund, a public-private entity currently financing the US \$122 million project. Forty-two percent of the hotel is owned by the Honduran Ministry of Tourism and 51 percent by a group of private businesses. Supposedly, the five local Garífuna communities most affected by the construction of the resort own a seven percent share, however, according to the Garífuna leader Nahum Lalin, “no one knows the fate of that seven percent.”⁹ Despite the government’s claims that the project will stimulate infrastructure and public service improvements in the neighboring communities, as well as create 6,000 direct and 18,000 indirect jobs, it appears that most of the costs associated with the resort will be shouldered by the Garífuna people, who will receive very few, if any, benefits.¹⁰

Many communities are being forcibly displaced to make room for this mega-development project. The resort will eventually include four luxury hotels, 360 villas, and a shopping center, effectively privatizing and cutting off locals’ access to three kilometers of beachfront as well as to the fish that serve as both their source of food and income.¹¹ While the Garífuna are denied access to their traditional fishing grounds, commercial trawling fleets from Isla de la Bahía over-fish the area. The Garífuna have seen their catch plummet, forcing them to travel further to find food for themselves and their families.

5 Junior Worldmark Encyclopedia of World Cultures. (1999). Garífuna. Retrieved April 15, 2016, from <http://bit.ly/1TWBgGe>

6 Rodríguez, J. Garífuna Resistance Against Mega-Tourism in Tela Bay. Retrieved April 15, 2016, from <http://bit.ly/1Wwad5d>

7 Bahía de Tela: el tercer destierro, Guía Metodológica. (2015). San Pedro Sula, Honduras, ERIC & Radio Progreso (Producer.)

8 Indura Beach Golf Resort Tela Honduras. (2014, January 30). Retrieved April 15, 2016, from <http://bit.ly/1nMzzfw>

9 “Honduras: Garífuna Village Threatened with Eviction by Mega Project in Tela Bay.” (2016, February 3). Weblog post. Human Rights Observation/Honduras. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/20H5kXk>

10 NACLA. Rodríguez, J. “Garífuna Resistance Against Mega-Tourism in Tela Bay.” Retrieved April 15, 2016, from <http://bit.ly/1Wwad5d>

11 Ibid

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Attempts to resist this displacement have consistently been met with fear, intimidation, and violence often involving the Honduran police and military. As a consequence of his efforts to protect the Garífuna ancestral territory, community activist Alfredo López was jailed for nearly seven years on false charges of drug trafficking.¹² “I have never trafficked drugs or otherwise been involved in this kind of business. The goal was probably to break me or maybe even finish me off in jail.”¹³ On June 5, 2008, Garífuna activist Santos Feliciano Aguilar Álvares was kidnapped and beaten by security guards employed by a real estate company. Two years before that, two Garífuna youths Epon Andrés Castillo and Yino Eligio López were killed. Military personnel were tried and sentenced for the killings, however, their superior remains free. The Tela Bay Tourist Development Society (DTBT) has also been able to successfully buy off corrupt local leaders for the rights to divide up and sell the land, thereby creating serious intra-communal conflicts.¹⁴

Land is more than just a place to live for the Garífuna. As Miriam Miranda of the Honduran Black Fraternal Organization (OFRANEH) said, “Without our land, we cease to be a people.”¹⁵ Mega-tourism projects like Indura Golf & Beach Resort take land previously worked by the Garífuna to sow and harvest crops like rice, beans, and yucca used both for household consumption and income.

In addition to indigenous rights and identity, there are also a number of environmental concerns related to the construction of Indura Beach & Golf Resort and other similar mega-tourist projects. “They claim to be developing the country, but they’re not doing it for the indigenous people. And in the meantime they’re damaging the environment and polluting, causing all sorts of illnesses,” said Teresa Reyes, a member of the Triunfo de la Cruz community and long-time activist with OFRANEH. Residents worry that the project will disrupt the local ecological system, and the three national parks in the area containing the Micos freshwater lake. Environmental damage also leaves local communities more vulnerable to natural disasters. For example, plans to fill 87.5 hectares of the Micos Lagoon for a golf course, will leave neighboring communities unprotected from the tropical storms and hurricanes common in the Caribbean.¹⁶

GARÍFUNA COMMUNITY OF “TRIUNFO DE LA CRUZ” AND ITS MEMBERS V. HONDURAS

The incursion of the tourist industry onto the ancestral lands of the Garífuna reaches right to the heart of the obligations of national and international bodies to protect rights such as free, prior, and informed consent of local communities as well as legal titles to communally held property.

¹² “Bahía de Tela: el tercer destierro.” (2015, Dec. 11). Radio Progreso. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/1KQwuHI>

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Kral, S., & Brock, B. (Nov. 2009). Oppression or opportunity? Tourism project in Honduras sparks conflict. *Upstream Journal*. Retrieved March 2, 2016 from <http://bit.ly/218vccZ>

¹⁵ Kral, S., & Brock, B. (Nov. 2009). Oppression or opportunity? Tourism project in Honduras sparks conflict. *Upstream Journal*. Retrieved March 2, 2016 from <http://bit.ly/218vccZ>

¹⁶ NACLA. Rodríguez, J. “Garífuna Resistance Against Mega-Tourism in Tela Bay.” Retrieved April 15, 2016, from <http://bit.ly/1Wwad5d>



**“WITHOUT
OUR LAND, WE
CEASE TO BE
A PEOPLE.”**

Miranda, OFRANEH

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Land speculation in Bahía de Tela, as well as threats and assassination of those opposed to the surrender of Garífuna territory, began as early as the 1980s.¹⁷ In response to the ongoing violence and insecurity, in 2003, OFRANEH decided to file a petition with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) alleging the Honduran State had failed to protect the ancestral territory of the Triunfo de la Cruz community from occupation and dispossession by third parties.

They also claimed the State failed to follow through on its obligations to provide indigenous and ethnic communities with free, prior, and informed consent before initiating tourism projects, creating a protected area in part of their ancestral territory, and selling communal lands. Such actions violated Honduras's international obligations such as Convention 169 of the International Labor Organization (ILO), which stated indigenous communities must be consulted before any development projects are undertaken within their territories. Honduras became a signatory of ILO 169 in 1996.¹⁸

After a thorough investigation, in 2006, the IACHR issued a set of recommendations to the Honduran Government to ensure improved protection of the property rights of the Garífuna people. Following the Commission's hearing, the Honduran State agreed to put in place such measures, however, according to leaders within the Garífuna communities, they never followed through with these commitments.¹⁹

Consequently, in February 2013, the Commission submitted the case of the Garífuna Community of "Triunfo de la Cruz" and its Members v. Honduras to the Inter American Court alleging the State had failed to demonstrate concrete steps it had taken to better enforce the property rights of the residents of Triunfo de la Cruz. "The Court's decision will be mandatory and the State of Honduras will have to enforce it, whether they like it or not. An IACHR decision will also establish precedent, which will help...all the other indigenous communities who are being persecuted in the name of multimillion dollar projects," asserts Teresa Reyes. Thirteen years after they originally submitted a petition, the OFRANEH and the Garífuna people are still waiting for a final decision from the Inter-American Court on the fate of their ancestral homes.²⁰

BARRA VIEJA

Barra Vieja is a Garífuna community located on the northern coast of Honduras. It is bordered to the west by Laguna de los Micos and to the east by the Atlantic Ocean. It is also situated between two other Garífuna communities, Miami to the north and Tornabé to the south. Significantly, Barra Vieja is also located at the entrance of the luxury resort Indura Golf & Beach Resort, placing it center-stage in one of the many land conflicts in the region between Garífuna and other indigenous communities, the private sector, and their allies in government.

Land tenure security in Honduras is challenged by ambiguity of ownership, lack of title, and the threat of land invasion. According to a 2011 USAID report, 80 percent of the privately owned land in Honduras is either untitled or improperly titled.²¹ Indigenous and other ethnic groups often lack clear title to their land, which leaves them vulnerable to encroachment and expropriation attempts by non-indigenous landless farmers, powerful business interests, and government elites.

17 "Desalojo de la comunidad de Barra Vieja y la estrategia de expulsión de los Garífunas de Honduras." (2013, September 30). Alba TV: comunicación desde los pueblos. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/1Q168Sr>

18 Jubis, S. (2015, September 23). "Garífuna Communities of Honduras Resist Corporate Land Grabs. Council on Hemispheric Affairs. Retrieved April 18, 2016, from <http://bit.ly/1QR9nuy>

19 Ibid

20 Organization of American States. (April 4, 2013). IACHR Takes Case Involving Honduras to the Inter-American Court [Press release]. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/1XPUCFX>

21 Caraski, L. (2015, October 23). "There Are No Peasants Here." Foreign Affairs. Retrieved from <http://atfp.co/1SV6xcG>

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Ever since the community learned of the plans to target the area for mega-tourism projects, the people of Barra Vieja have resisted the expropriation of their lands and fought for recognition of their rights as a Garífuna community. These efforts have been met with two eviction attempts as well as formal charges brought against the entire community for usurpation of lands.

In two separate instances in September 2014, armed forces removed all of the personal belongings from the homes of the 150 families residing in Barra Vieja. Each time, the community peacefully resisted the evictions and were able to return to their homes later that day.²² Human rights groups suspect these evictions were part of an overall strategy by both the government and powerful elites to dispossess the Garífuna of their lands to make way for the expansion of Indura Beach & Golf Resort.

In May of 2015, 66 members of the community were summoned to appear before the court in Tela and charged with usurpation in detriment to the State. More than 40 other community members were also summoned to court accused of the same crime, but were not formally charged. On June 4, 2015, the Court in Tela acquitted the 66 members of the Garífuna community, although eight other leaders were scheduled to appear for another hearing a little less than a month later.²³

ZONES FOR EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (ZEDES)

In more than a dozen areas in Honduras, the government has designated large areas of land as possible sites for Zones for Employment and Economic Development (ZEDES), or semi-autonomous cities which will largely be run by private sector interests and companies allowed to write many of their own laws and field their own judges. The project is overseen by a 21-person committee chosen by Honduras' President.

The Honduran Government has plans to sell off around 14 different areas across the country to foreign investors as ZEDES.²⁴ Proponents of the plan say the creation of these "model cities" will encourage foreign investment and overall development, however, opponents say the plan threatens national sovereignty, the basic legal rights and protections of people living in these areas, and will only exacerbate social and environmental conflicts.

Up to 20 Garífuna communities stand to be impacted by the creation of ZEDES.²⁵ In a

²² Organization of American States. (April 4, 2013). IACHR Takes Case Involving Honduras to the Inter-American Court [Press release]. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/1XPUcFX>

²³ "The Garífuna community of Barra Vieja on trial for defending ancestral territory." (2015, June 3). Honduras Accompaniment Project. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/1VESSV3>

²⁴ Caraski, L. (2015, October 23). "There Are No Peasants Here." Foreign Affairs. Retrieved from <http://atfp.co/1SV6xcG>

²⁵ "The Garífuna community of Barra Vieja on trial for defending ancestral territory." (2015, June 3). Honduras Accompaniment Project. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/1VESSV3>

COMMUNICATING OVER THE "WAVE" LENGTHS

The Garífuna community in Honduras counts on several community radio stations to counteract the narrative of large business owners, the national government, and international organizations whose development projects threaten to displace and destroy the Garífuna and their way of life. Several of these radio stations, including Radio Faluma Bitmeu in Triunfo de la Cruz, Radio Durugubuti in San Juan Tela, and Radio Warumuga in Trujillo are run by youths who are determined to resist the temptation to migrate to the cities or to the United States and instead choose to carry on the traditions of their elders.

These community radio stations have faced persecution for their resistance to land evictions and promotion of the Garífuna culture. In 2000, several pieces of valuable equipment were stolen from Radio Faluma Bimetu. Then in 2010, the station was burned to the ground. No one knows who the perpetrators were as the authorities never investigated. Nevertheless, the community radio station was quickly rebuilt and continues to serve as a beacon of hope and resistance for the Garífuna communities of Honduras.

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country with low levels of transparency and a poor record on human and indigenous rights, many advocates are concerned that the creation of ZEDES will result in these already marginalized communities facing greater threats including unchecked land expropriation for private development. “Since the time of our ancestors, we have lived in tranquility, but now a national political agenda, such as those involving mega-tourism projects in this area, has disrupted this tranquility,” lamented Teresa Reyes.

The development of ZEDES were almost effectively blocked in Honduras. In 2011, a similar “model city” measure appeared before the Supreme Court, but was declared unconstitutional. Following that decision, the Honduran Congress, led by Juan Orlando Hernández, (who would later become the current President of Honduras), dismissed the four judges who opposed the establishment of the ZEDES and replaced them with individuals who did support the plan. Consequently, when the issue came up again, the Honduran Congress faced no judicial opposition and easily passed the Law for Employment and Economic Development Zones in 2013.²⁶

PLAN OF THE ALLIANCE FOR PROSPERITY IN THE NORTHERN TRIANGLE

The large increase in unaccompanied minors and young families arriving at the U.S.-Mexico border during the summer of 2014, shone a spotlight on the poverty, insecurity and humanitarian and human rights crisis occurring in the Northern Triangle countries of Central America. Members of the Garífuna communities are increasingly among the vulnerable migrants and refugees displaced from the region.²⁷

In an effort to respond to the issues which gave rise to the migration crisis in the first place, in the fall of 2014 the Foreign Ministers of Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras presented their Plan of the Alliance for Prosperity in the Northern Triangle to U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, a proposal for which they hope to gain significant U.S. support. The Plan includes four strategic pillars- 1) Stimulating the productive sector; 2) Developing human capital; 3) Improving citizen security and access to justice, and 4) Strengthening institutions and promoting transparency. The Plan includes substantial budget commitments from each of the three national governments, and requests international donor funding, principally from the U.S. Government.

It remains to be seen if the Plan of the Alliance for Prosperity will improve or exacerbate the very conditions of violence and poverty that it claims to address. In theory, there are a number of positive elements, including greater

²⁶ Caraski, L. (2015, October 23). “There Are No Peasants Here.” Foreign Affairs. Retrieved from <http://atfp.co/1SV6xcG>

²⁷ Garsd, J. (2014, June 4). “Garífuna: The Young Black Latino Exodus You’ve Never Heard About.” Fusion. Retrieved April 18, 2016 from, <http://fus.in/1Gw5she>



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investment in education, job training and employment, justice sector reform and efforts to combat corruption. In practice there is considerable skepticism as to whether the government institutions in each country have the capacity or political will to ensure much needed reforms. Local organizations generally view the Plan as a continuation of the status quo, furthering an economic model which has done little to address inequality and reduce poverty, and much to enrich those who have historically benefited from the extreme inequality which has been a hallmark of the region.

Particularly troubling, the Plan includes an emphasis on huge infrastructure projects for tourism, model cities, and the maquila, or factory industry, which in the past has resulted in human rights violations, forced displacement, and violence directed towards those who defend their land, culture, and way of life, particularly in Honduras.

In FY2016 the U.S. Congress approved \$750 million for the U.S. Strategy in the Northern Triangle. The U.S. funding supports the pillars of the Plan of the Alliance for Prosperity with some important distinctions. The U.S. is not funding the large infrastructure projects promoted by each of the governments in the Plan, and there are additional US funds, which cover areas outside of the Alliance for Prosperity Framework, including human rights, labor rights, and civil society support.

U.S. Foreign Assistance for the three countries also includes important conditions, which must be met for the release of a portion of the funds. The conditions require the Central American governments ensure respect for human rights, including consultation with local communities, civil society organizations (including indigenous and other marginalized groups), and local governments in the design, implementation, and evaluation of the activities outlined in the Alliance for Prosperity that will affect them. However, this will be no easy task. El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras have always struggled to create full-fledged democracies with a vibrant civil society. This was evident during the First Encounter of the Alliance for Prosperity for the Northern Triangle, which was in fact held at Indura Beach & Golf Resort. Civil society organizations were entirely excluded from this meeting that included the Presidents of Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador and business leaders throughout the region.²⁸ Ensuring civil society has a meaningful voice in the implementation of the Plan will be crucial for greater accountability, promotion of a more just and equitable conditions and a reduction in forced displacement and migration from the Northern Triangle.

The Garífuna people have repeatedly stated they are not opposed to tourists or the tourism industry entering their territory.²⁹ “We are not against tourism and development. But we want to have a say, because it’s on our land. We don’t want to disappear like other indigenous cultures,” says Teresa Reyes. Instead, the community prefers small-scale eco-tourism for individuals with small hotels that do not damage the environment or the communities. Above all, they wish the Honduran government would take steps to actively protect, uphold, and respect the Garífuna people’s right to live on, cultivate, and own their ancestral lands.

²⁸ “Bahía de Tela: el tercer destierro.” (2015, Dec. 11). Radio Progreso. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/1KQwuHI>

²⁹ Kral, S., & Brock, B. (Nov. 2009). Oppression or opportunity? Tourism project in Honduras sparks conflict. *Upstream Journal*. Retrieved March 2, 2016 from <http://bit.ly/218vccZ>



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What is unique about the Garífuna community? Why is it so important that their culture and way of life be respected and preserved?
2. Why is land so important to the Garífuna people?
3. What are the Garífunas' main concerns over the construction of a mega-tourist resort on their ancestral lands?
4. What is the greatest challenge facing the Garífuna in their struggle to retain sovereignty over their ancestral territory?
5. To what extent are the Garífuna empowered to advocate for themselves? How are they limited in their ability to defend their rights?
6. What are the primary areas of concern with the design and approach of the Plan of the Alliance for Prosperity in the Northern Triangle?
7. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the U.S. government's Central American Strategy and how does it differ from previous U.S. aid packages to Latin America?
8. What, if any, benefits could the Indura Beach & Golf Resort have for the Garífuna community?
9. Given the risk they pose to human rights, why are ZEDES being proposed as a viable plan for development?
10. How does migration affect the identity of the Garífuna people?
11. What can U.S. communities do to promote the human rights of Garífuna communities in Central America?



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WRITE AN OP-ED/LETTER TO YOUR LOCAL NEWSPAPER

Template: *Please edit into your own words and make edits as necessary. Some newspaper guidelines will likely want op-eds to be a little longer and letters to be a little shorter.*

At the beginning of this year, Congress committed an unprecedented \$750 million in aid to Central America, with the majority of this funding intended to support the Honduran, Guatemalan and Salvadoran Governments' Plan of the Alliance for Prosperity in the Northern Triangle. The region is in desperate need of increased funding to combat crime, poverty, and underdevelopment. There are many important components in the U.S. Foreign Assistance package, particularly in terms of investment in local development, education, training and employment, and justice sector reform, as well as areas of concern.

I am very worried that Central American Governments' Plan of the Alliance for Prosperity could in the long-run end up harming, rather than helping, Central Americans, particularly in Honduras, and may leave many people worse off than they are now.

Afro-Honduran Garífuna communities stand to be particularly negatively impacted by the Plan. For over 200 years, the Garífuna have lived a peaceful existence on the northern coast of Honduras surviving on subsistence fishing and agriculture. That tranquility is now threatened by the expansion of a mega-tourist project that will cause environmental degradation and displacement to this already marginalized community.

As set forth by the governments of Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador, the Plan of the Alliance for Prosperity promotes large scale infrastructure projects and foreign investment over social inclusion programs. This is particularly troubling in Honduras, where those who oppose infrastructure projects are often targeted for violence, threats and forced displacement, including by the police and State actors. For example, in September 2014, police were used to forcibly evict Honduran Garífuna communities from their homes to make way for the expansion of a mega-tourist resort.

I support the decision of the U.S. to ensure our own foreign assistance is not used to fund these large infrastructure projects. I would also strongly encourage the Obama Administration to use its influence to promote the right of local communities in the three countries to "full, free and prior consent" prior to the design and implementation of projects that will impact their lives and land. I particularly urge the Administration and Congress to take steps to prevent the further disenfranchisement of the Garífuna and similarly vulnerable groups, through programs funded by the U.S. and diplomatic pressure to influence regional Governments and Donors.

While the Plan of the Alliance for Prosperity does have positive components, if it is not implemented for the benefit of the majority, and particularly for marginalized communities and individuals, its potential for positive change will be lost and it could lead to new displacement and migration, including from the Garífuna communities. The Garífuna are a people intimately tied to their ancestral lands and communities. Without them, their unique and rich culture may disappear, which would be a tragedy for us all.

SAMPLE LETTER TO SECRETARY OF STATE JOHN KERRY

The Honorable John F. Kerry
Secretary of State
US Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry,

As a people united in the Catholic faith, we write to make you aware of the grave situation faced by the Garífuna people in Honduras, and call upon you and the Obama Administration to do all within your power to promote and protect the rights of Garífuna communities.

Over the past 20 years, successive governments in Honduras have displaced Garífuna communities from their homes along the Caribbean coast. The Plan of the Alliance for Prosperity in the Northern Triangle, and its particular emphasis in Honduras on large-scale infrastructure projects, threatens to exacerbate rather than reverse this disturbing trend. We ask that the United States withhold funds from the Honduran government until the Honduran State takes defined steps to better protect human rights overall, including those of the Garífuna and indigenous populations.

For generations, Garífuna communities have preserved their own cultural norms, organizations, social and cultural institutions, and deep connection to their territory. These communities occupy several miles of pristine beaches, which are now the target of major development projects by private investors working in collaboration with the Honduran Government. The State has repeatedly been implicated in efforts to negate Garífuna land titles and sell their lands to investors in the tourist industry. These tourism projects threaten to dispossess the Garífuna of their ancestral lands and ignore their very real needs as subsistence fishermen and farmers.

The set of conditions placed on U.S. Assistance to the governments of Central America in the recently approved aid package demonstrates a true commitment by the U.S. to combat corruption, protect human rights, and strengthen the rule of law in the Northern Triangle. When evaluating the region's compliance with this set of conditions, we urge the Obama Administration to consider the measures taken by the Honduran Government to create a regulatory framework capable of enforcing Convention 169 of the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the Declaration of the United Nations on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which guarantee the right of local communities to prior consultation over aspects of development plans that may affect them.

While responsibility for the safety and prosperity of their countries ultimately rests with the Central American governments themselves, it is both within the U.S. interest and power to encourage greater respect for human rights in the region, including the development of a targeted response to the Garífuna people's struggle to defend their ancestral territories. If we are to realize our stated commitment to a Central America that is inclusive, democratic and secure, the rights of marginalized and persecuted communities must be defended.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.