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"Genocide, Alcohol, and the Maquiladora Industry in Honduras"
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This paper is about alcohol in Honduras. Alcohol is a legal substance in Honduras. It is legal for people to make, sell, and drink it there at age eighteen and culturally acceptable to drink, at least for men, from a much younger age. As such, whether one defines it as a drug or not, it has not been made the subject of an open "war" in the way that other illegal substances have. However, discourse and practice surrounding the War on Drugs are intertwined with themes of alcohol use in Honduras, and it is telling to examine them in conjunction with one another.

The U.S. War on Drugs has proven to be a war on the underclass in this country, criminalizing drug use in ways that disproportionately penalize the poor and disadvantaged minorities. The War on Drugs is carried out against people, not against the abstract category "drugs," and certainly not against underlying structural violence. The rhetoric accompanying the War on Drugs has centered around individual responsibility and choice; if it is possible to "just say no" then those who don't are certainly to blame for just saying yes. In addition to actions and monies directly committed by the U.S. government, the rhetoric of the War on Drugs has been exported, appropriated, and reshaped throughout Latin America. In Honduras, this rhetoric has been adopted in President Maduro's War on Crime, which began with his inauguration speech on January 27th of this year (my translation):

> The mandate of the people has been abundantly clear: I have been elected to fight first and foremost against insecurity. To fight against murder, against kidnapping and robbery. To fight a frontal battle without rest to bring down the delinquent who today feels safe. You can be sure that we will achieve it. Together, we will achieve it! Together we will build a secure future for all Hondurans. Nothing and nobody will distract me from the unshakeable goal of transforming Honduras into a country which is secure for life, for honor, and for people's belongings.

The War on Crime in Honduras has had murderous results. Private death squads as well as police and the soldiers which Maduro made to patrol the streets for the sake of security have been responsible for killing many hundreds of poor youths over the past year, in an escalation of a multi-year trend. Nearly no one has been prosecuted for these killings. In ethnographic fieldwork I have done since 1997 I have found that Hondurans speak of violence ceaselessly. Given this fact, I was surprised to find that the scope of and organized nature of these murders were not of much interest to my informants, who in general took a positive view of Maduro's security policy. In fact, many of my more liberal-minded Honduran friends said that the "street cleansing" was a necessary evil, if indeed it was an evil at all. The specter of gang violence was commonly cited as sufficient justification for the killings, though the victims included gang members and non-gang-members alike. As my friend Tomás said: "Yes, it is terrible. But we don't mind, because things had gotten so bad that you see, it had to happen like this or the violence would never stop."

The question "what does it take to justify genocide" is in fact closely related to questions of alcoholism and industrialization in Honduras. What has made this genocide acceptable for Hondurans –and I follow Nancy Scheper-Hughes' use of the term- is the notion that there is such a big danger out there in the first place and that the so-called "War on Crime" is the only way to fix it. One way to understand this perceived danger is to examine one of its main components, alcohol. Alcohol is one of the more salient of the many markers of delinquency which have come together to form an ideological justification for the removal, by any means necessary, of the unsightly human evidence of poverty from the public sphere. The notion of the poor as drunkards implies that they can't control their behavior, they can't control their violence, and ultimately that, unlike the wealthy, they require an external agent to control it for them. These agents include institutions like Alcoholics Anonymous, the maquiladora industry, and ultimately the state with its War on Crime. The institution of AA in Honduras, with approximately 650 groups and 15,000 members, incorporates this ideology by imbuing its adherents with a means of distancing themselves from the drunken poor while simultaneously imagining

themselves part of a middle class. This involves denigrating those who do not subscribe to the core beliefs of AA but also is manifested in their insistence that alcoholics are found in all segments of society.

Early this summer I interviewed Francisco R., the general secretary of AA in Honduras. "5 percent of alcoholics are in the street," he began the interview, without waiting for me to ask him a question. "… and the other 95 percent is disseminated, well, in banking, commerce, industry and government."

Don Francisco is fond of citing statistics, and I found that he used them to emphasize a particular theme, namely, that rich people are drunks too. It was with dismay that he told me how the wealthy patronized psychiatrists and private clinics rather than risk exposing themselves by joining alcoholics anonymous- for, as Stanley Brandes has found in the case of Mexico, there is nothing anonymous about the organization in Honduras. Just as the poorer classes, who lack access to private spheres, tend to be more public in their drinking, they are more public in their recovery than are the wealthy.

Over the course of the summer I interviewed many AA's, or Anonymous Alcoholics, as group members call themselves, and found out early on that there was a standard set of things which they felt like they needed to tell me. As with Don Francisco, they all started their interviews without waiting for me to ask a question. "*Licenciada*", they would begin, addressing me with the honorific signifying my higher status, "you know, alcoholism is a disease. It's not because I say so, it's the doctors who say so. The doctors themselves have written this." The medicalization of alcoholism is a central part of AA doctrine, but AA members in Honduras were especially insistent that I understand that their "disease" was validated by the medical profession. Another common theme was that mentioned by Don Francisco, that most alcoholics were not vagrants, but professionals. AA's seemed to have an urgent need to let me know that alcoholics belonged to all sectors of society, and were not only the people who they assumed I thought they were- that is, public drunks. At the same time, they actively distance themselves from the lower classes and their associations. The focus on bourgeois values

which is central to AA in Honduras is coupled with a bitterness among its members about the near-absence of the upper class within their ranks.

This points to an irony within the organization. AA members often do succeed in attaining sobriety, the main focus of AA as an organization. But that is not all they strive for: AA's present themselves as changed men (there are no women in AA in Honduras), with better morals, better self-presentation, and better work ethics than their drinking peers and their former selves. However, despite their best efforts to provide for their families and improve their own lots through involvement with AA, often these men fail. As it turns out, lack of sobriety is usually not the only thing holding them back from entering the elite. The efforts and claims of AA's to pertain to the respectable middle- and upper-middle classes are belied by the lack of AA membership of people originating from those classes.

The lower classes in Honduras are seen as dangerous, even by themselves. One long-time AA member said to me of alcoholism: "The scourge has so thoroughly invaded this country that the majority of crimes, of abandoned children, of gangs is a product of alcoholism. But those of us who have arrived by the grace of God to alcoholics anonymous have recovered." All the members I spoke with were very concerned that I did not view *them* as just a bunch of poor men, or as a part of this scourge. Drunkenness in Honduras is not only something that poor people are seen as more likely to exhibit, it is understood as a central characteristic of poverty itself, and both poverty and drunkenness are construed as being the responsibility of the individual. Even the disease concept of alcoholism, meant to lift the burden of guilt from the alcoholic and free alcoholism from social structure, reinforces this notion. While it frees alcoholics from blame for their alcoholism to the extent that diseases are understood as pertaining primarily to the body, the cure is seen as something only the alcoholic (with the help of God) can undertake using his mind. The unrepentant alcoholic, therefore, is ultimately responsible for just saying no to AA. This construction of alcoholism brings us back to the notion, mentioned above, that the poor as a class are reckless and violent, and a fitting target for control, in this case through Alcoholics Anonymous.

Many of the poor do not join Alcoholics Anonymous, first of all, because most of them are *not* alcoholics. Others are driven away by the philosophy and politics of the organization. A large number of heavy drinkers who might be seen as candidates for a support group don't join for a third reason: they are women. I would like to expand on the complex gender issues behind their exclusion here, but alas, time runs short. Although poor men have been depicted as more dangerous, and have been killed in far greater numbers than poor women in the War on Crime, the latter are still of the same ilk, and their refusal to become un-poor just as vexing to development ideologues. As with poor men but with more evident reproductive results poor women have diminished control over their own bodies and life choices. Both their continued poverty and their "unrestrained sexuality" are countered in the maquiladoras, multinational factories producing textiles for the U.S. market.

Disciplined bodies are, of course, central to the success of capitalism, as well as being one of the themes which tie maquiladoras, alcohol, and state violence together. In AA, members learn to control what they ingest into their bodies, what they wear, and how they emote, in new ways which mark them (they hope) as candidates for social advancement. In the maquiladora industry young women, who are hired in far greater numbers than men, learn how to discipline their bodies to go to the bathroom, eat, sleep, and work by the clock, and to become embodied extensions of the machinery they operate during most of their waking hours. In addition, maquiladora owners want their employees' focus to be on production rather than reproduction, and often actively promote this through hiring and firing practices, as well as birth control and abortion policies. In this way industrialization addresses the high birth rate of the poor- another mark of its uncontrolledness as a class. The cleanliness and modernity of maquiladora factories contrast with notions of poor Hondurans as dirty and underdeveloped. This, coupled with the demand for a protestant work ethic in maquiladora workers, is meant to bring progress to the country. Progress, at least in terms of improved standard-of-living, has not arrived, despite several decades of maquiladora presence.

The notion that modernizing institutions like AA and maquiladoras are adequate means for challenging societal problems stems from a colonialist ideology, which these institutions further reify. At the same time that AA fights the stereotype that only the poor are drunks and that the poor are necessarily drunks, it unwittingly promotes the idea that those who haven't become sober or who refuse to join AA are more deserving of violence. The rhetoric of industrial progress is tied to a protestant ethic also central to AA, in which individuals are seen as responsible for, yet individually incapable of bettering themselves. Maquiladoras, also understood as a civilizing force, have the same effect. Both of these institutions purport to offer improvements in standard-of-living for their members, while in fact these improvements are minimal. And both institutions, by asserting themselves as bastions of civilization and progress, strengthen the notion that the deinstitutionalized poor are dangerous and uncivilized. Those leftover people, mostly young unemployable men, have become fodder for the War on Crime. Let me make clear that I am not making an argument that AA or the maquiladora industry cause genocide. However, the idea of the poor as dangerous, which both institutions actively promote, has been instrumental in the popular acceptance of Maduro's policy. Wars carried out in the late era of the nation-state- dare I call them postmodern wars, such as the War on Drugs, the War on Terror, and Maduro's War on Crime, are able to be fought because they make ideological sense. In Honduras institutions like AA and the maquiladora industry help make this possible.

Maduro's War on Crime, modeled on Rudolph Giuliani's Zero Tolerance policy as mayor of New York, represents the globalization of methods of controlling violence. Incidentally, Giuliani was just hired as a consultant for the Mexico City government, to help "fight crime" there.

Is there any way to change the way the poor are thought about, by us, by Hondurans, by themselves? Obvious immediate answers would include fundamental changes in policies affecting the poor, such as the criminalization of homelessness and industrial incentives that bring no tax revenue for needed services. The nearly exclusive focus on poor-on-poor violence in the media would have to be replaced with more balanced reporting.

There are also ways to challenge the symbolic violence that makes the poor complicit in their own oppression. I do not think the development of class-based self-hatred need be an integral part of recovery from alcoholism, nor do I think it need be a part of industrialization. If alcoholism were redefined to incorporate structures of power, it might be possible for AA to address this- a sort of liberation theology of AA. But this would require significant changes in the disease model.

I believe a Freirian process of consciousness-raising in AA would promote a recovery that was not only personal but political as well. For while alcoholism is undeniably experienced on a personal level, the class politics which influence the personal embodied experience of it could be challenged in the recovery process. The fact that this has not occurred is not exclusively the fault of AA members. To claim this would be to further blame the poor for their own lot, and would also be wrong. AA as an organization, like evangelical Christianity (from which it derives), is a colonizing institution based in the North. It does not arrive separately from other development institutions, like the maquiladora industry or neoliberal governmentality. Also like Christianity, it promotes itself as an exclusive, self-contained means for improvement. AA promotes the idea that AA is the only way to recover. AA's commonly told me in Honduras that AA itself was a miracle, that the 12 steps were divinely inspired, that Bill W. and Dr. Bob themselves were divine figures. As a rule, doxa is difficult to reform. Few dedicated AAs entertain the possibility that the program could stand some improvements. Many are ready to admit that groups themselves have problems, but this is attributed to members improperly following the program.

Likewise, for a more beneficial kind of industrialization to occur, the excellent Honduran labor code would have to be put into effect and unions permitted to organize so as to foster an awareness of the structural violence oppressing all Honduran poor. Ideologies blaming the poor for their fate can be challenged only through the formation of a broader class consciousness. The terrible effects of the globalization of methods of class-control- be they wars on drugs, crime, or terrorism- will not be ameliorated through self-help and a good work ethic.