

Tegucigalpa, M.D.C. December 1, 2009.

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President of The American Anthropological Association

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Dear AAA President:

It has been brought to our attention that a resolution concerning Honduras will be voted on during the next AAA Business Meeting on December 3, in Philadelphia. For this reason we respectfully are presenting the following plea to you on behalf of our country, because we firmly believe that the people of Honduras deserve a chance to be heard and to show our good will to the world.

We are anthropologists and as such we have learned that it is our ethical responsibility to take certain steps before we consider passing judgement, if any. Certainly, we are also Hondurans, and we might rightfully be suspected of an emic point of view about the political events elapsed in the past two years in our country, which reached its most tense point in the last six months. On the other hand, our analysis of the situation is based on our day to day experience as well as on the awareness of our remote past, our recent history, and the present-day life. All of us have studied outside of Honduras, in México, the U.S.A. and Europe, and we all had the opportunity to stay abroad, but we all made the conscious decision to come back and give of ourselves in order to make Honduras a better place for the next generation.

All of us teach at public universities and also work as consultants for the government, international organizations and NGOs, and with one exception, all of us have been at one time or another employees of the Honduran Institute of Anthropology and History. The circumstances in which we left the institution are diverse, but we all recognize the important work it does and deeply regret that this scientific sanctuary—one of the few in the country—has become an instrument to accomplish political goals and, in so doing has jeopardized the already complex mission of the IHAH, namely to protect our cultural heritage. So far, Honduras has added to its modest means the donations and loans of the international community, specifically the grants obtained by our colleagues in the U.S.A., to pursue the necessary research. We are hoping that this is the way in which the collaboration will continue and that our foreign colleagues all over the world will keep joining efforts with us.

U.S.A. colleagues working in Honduras know at least one of us personally and we therefore are surprised that none of them tried to contact us, at least to provide them with data about the political situation and corroborate or not their point of view. We respect our colleagues' personal opinions, but we are troubled by their patronizing attitude towards us fellow anthropologists and deeply concerned about the means by which they present a partial, if not grossly distorted, vision of the Honduran reality. We simply cite the "laundry list" introduced in the fourth paragraph of the proposed AAA Statement: "...indigenous people, Garifunas, women, transgendered people, public school teacher and other workers, and the poor (sic)". In fact, we would have expected a more rigorous treatment of such differentiated strata of our society, and only want to mention that public school teachers earn one of the most competitive salaries in Central America and have multiple and special benefits by law, such as a life-long job contract.

Our main matter of concern relates to the state of anthropological research in our country. It is not accurate to say that it is now more dangerous or difficult for anthropologists to conduct research in

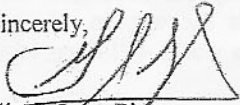
Honduras. This statement will impede precisely what we Honduran anthropologists intend to support, namely serious research that will bring the truth into the public eye. In the coming year, the National Autonomous Honduran University will put in place the first B.A. program in Anthropology in the country. It has taken us a long time to convince authorities and the general public of the importance our field holds in university settings and of the major contribution it will make to the better comprehension of our multifaceted society and our interaction with others at the regional and international level.


Some of our colleagues from the U.S.A. have voluntarily abandoned their research projects at the Honduran Institute of Anthropology and History. To the best of our knowledge, we are not aware of any political hostilities suffered by these individuals. In any case, they could have shared their concerns with us in order to better understand a very complex situation. This is a situation with deeply rooted historical precedents, which demand --among other things-- rigorous and in-depth research and analysis of the existing power relations and corrupt practices that have characterized the traditional political arena in our country. As anthropologists we are committed to putting our discipline's knowledge, perspectives and methods into practice to provide a more critical, holistic and nuanced understanding of the current situation.

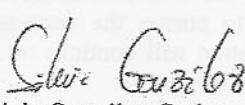
We can understand the distress of our foreign colleagues given the political situation in Honduras, and there are human rights issues with which we are also very concerned. Nonetheless, we are the first generation of Hondurans to have witnessed seven consecutive democratically elected governments. We have all actively taken part in the changes our country has experienced concerning its democratic life in the last twenty seven years, and there are more changes to come in this direction since our Honduran citizenship has been empowered due to the recent events.

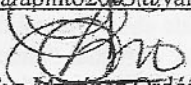
Madame President, we are aware that not all of the undersigned are active members of the AAA, which perhaps precludes us from requesting that our standpoint be heard and considered. Nevertheless, we respectfully present you with this letter and hope to appeal to the objectivity, ethics and good will of our fellow anthropologists in the U.S.A. We are optimistic anthropologists and Hondurans and trust that you will contemplate our plea to reassess the AAA's position and involvement while further investigation and scrutiny of Honduras's current state of affairs are conducted and concluded.

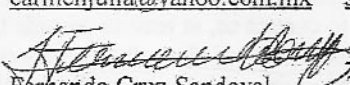
Sincerely,

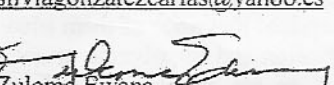

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