

---

**THE NEO-CONSTITUTIONALISM OF THE LATIN AMERICAN LEFT: THE CASE OF THE RESISTANCE FRONT OF HONDURAS.****Breny Mendoza\***

In the last years we have been hearing a lot about a ‘turn to the Left’ in Latin America. The talk has primarily been about countries like Venezuela, Ecuador, and Bolivia, and also about Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, and Paraguay. They are given as examples of countries undergoing deep socio-economic, political, and cultural transformations. Honduras did not make it on to the list, not until recently with the coup d’état of June 2009 and the mass resistance movement that formed in its aftermath. Its adherence to the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas or ALBA in 2008 passed unnoticed, as much else that had been happening in the country for decades. This in part explains why the coup sent shock waves throughout Latin America. There has been a lot of contradictory commentary about the coup in Honduras in terms of what it means for the social experimentation that has been taking place in other countries. Does the coup mean that we are entering “neo-golpismo” or an unstoppable chain of coups in the region that will restore US hegemony and destroy the “Socialismo del Siglo XXI”? Or perhaps the contrary, the global rejection of the coup in Honduras demonstrates the political muscle that the New Leftist regimes have developed and reveals the weakness of US power in the region. Others interpreted the coup in Honduras even as a coup against the US president Obama, as his early reactions to the coup revealed some fissures between the presidency and the Pentagon. For some (particularly the right-wing in the US) Obama himself could be seen as part of the turn to the Left in the western hemisphere, as the first African-American president in the US to be seen en par with Evo Morales, the first Amerindian president in Latin America. And yet as more US-backed coup

---

\* Professor of Gender & Women’s Studies, California State University, Northridge, USA.  
[breny.mendoza@csun.edu](mailto:breny.mendoza@csun.edu)

attempts have come after Honduras, most recently in Ecuador (and there were some before, before Obama, like Venezuela and Haiti) a few Ecuadoreans expounded a new meaning of the coup by shouting “We are not Honduras” to their own golpistas or coupmakers, identifying the coup in Honduras perhaps as a disgrace that can only happen in the tiny “banana republic,” but not in their own backyard.

Putting these interpretations of the coup aside for the moment, the eruption of the resistance movement of the people of Honduras into the political field did raise some eyebrows and question marks. The scenes of fearless impoverished people, women and men alike of all ages and races, confronting tanks and soldiers for almost 200 days in a row and still doing it today came as a surprise not only to political analysts but to Hondurans themselves. As a result, the resistance movement in Honduras has increasingly gained more attention. The way the resistance movement against the coup apparently barged into history makes it, however, somewhat difficult for the external observer trying to discern what kind of social movement it actually is and what the coup d'état represents for Hondurans. Of course, it is still too early to say anything definitive about the resistance movement in relation to its internal dynamics and its political project (it is very much still under construction), as well as about its potential to enact similar transformations to those achieved by other social movements in South America. And even in the latter case, as we well know, how one views the success of the so-called turn to the Left and social movements in other countries is still a matter of debate. In any case, perhaps it is necessary to say at the start that my comments on the Resistance Front of Honduras are of a very provisional character, impressionistic, and intended as a political reflection and less as a theoretical contribution. I should also add that my view of the movement is very limited by my condition as a Honduran expatriate, and it is also influenced by my identification with Feminists in Resistance (a Honduran coalition of feminist organizations and individuals that have united to resist and organize against the coup). Thus it is a view of a partly outsider, partly insider.

---

Perhaps the words of a well-known Honduran playwright, Rafael Murillo Selva, can help us begin to understand the meaning of the coup and the resistance movement in Honduras better. He tells us:

“the eruption of the National Front of Popular Resistance is the most relevant cultural event of our supposed republican life, only comparable to Francisco Morazán’s struggle to keep Central America united (in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century)...The emergence and formation of the Resistance Front in all corners of Honduras is like a high intensity earthquake that leaves no structure standing. This earthquake has broken the ideological apparatus that has shaped our values, belief systems, and customs. Our codes are changing. In this sense, resisting is change, and change involves transforming ourselves deep inside...We have acquired a new sense of everything, of doing politics, practising religion, education, work, family, sex, love, art, science, sports, communication...We are building nothing less but a counterhegemonic culture! Bertha Caceres, a leader of the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations (COPINH) sums it up in a sentence. She says: ‘the coup created the Resistance Front and the Resistance Front has changed our way of life.’”

At another point in the conversation, Murillo Selva adds,

“the coup has allowed Hondurans for the first time to feel a sense of belonging and enabled us to draw our own path (to the future). We have rationally and emotionally become aware of our historical being and are now more able to connect to other processes occurring in the region. Appropriating our history gives us a sense of a higher purpose in life that goes beyond our personal lives. This explains why the murders of hundreds of resistance members have not caused fear, instead they have served to reenergize and keep the struggle going.”

Like many others in the Resistance Front, Murillo Selva ends by mentioning the almost million and a half signatures that the Front has been able to collect to call for a constitutional assembly. He raises hopes for “a new constitution that creates a new social contract that is more kind, just, more humane, participatory, inclusive, dignifying, more accepting of our diversity in unity, communitarian, less vertical etc.”<sup>1</sup>

I have cited Murillo Selva’s words at length because perhaps like no other, he has been able to capture what many have called the renaissance of Honduras

---

<sup>1</sup> (My translation) <http://www.redaccionpopular.com/content/honduras-rafael-murillo-selva-cultural-en-resistencia>.

---

and describe the structure of feelings that characterizes the lived experience of those engaged in the resistance movement. The euphoria one senses in his words resonate with many descriptions of other social movements in the region. His assessment of the deep transformation that is taking place at the level of consciousness of the masses seems to integrate Honduras into the political/cultural map of the alleged shift to the Left that is taking place elsewhere in the region. No longer excluded or separated from the context of struggles of Latin America as it had been in the past, in the '70s and '80s when other Central American countries were engaged in guerrilla warfare and as Honduras was being used by the US as the counterrevolutionary platform, Honduras appears now to have intensified her communication and interaction with other movements in Latin America, revealing her "sentido de lo latinoamericano," that is, showing what she shares with other ethnic groups, regions, or nations (Escobar, 2010, 5).

One can say then that Honduras has joined Latin America in the struggle against colonial/modern capitalism. She too has turned to the Left or she too would have become decolonial. That is, she has begun entering that third political space that creates a form of politics that interweaves social movements and unorganized masses of people who together shape a new political culture, independent of political parties, and the traditional ideologies of the left and right. If we, on the other hand, accept Nelson Maldonado-Torres' description of the decolonial turn as the horror that the excesses of colonization provokes in the colonized, then Hondurans participating in the Resistance Front are probably expressing a decolonial attitude also (Maldonado-Torres, 2008). They are reacting with horror as they experience the genocidal reason of internal and external colonization with its daily dosage of state violence, the daily hemorrhaging of the resistance front, dispossession of the livelihoods of the poor, and the complete illegality of the ruling regime. The Resistance Front and their sympathizers are asking simply for a new beginning that is, in their own words, anti-capitalist, anti-neoliberal, anti-oligarchic, anti-imperialist, anti-racist, and anti-patriarchal. That so many feel this way after the coup and that these words are

---

part of the new political discourse of the many social movements that comprise the resistance movement indicates that social movements are ready to undertake new alliances among themselves to create a counterhegemonic bloc and a new logic of power to transform society.

But Honduras enters this process of building a counterhegemonic bloc in a different international context than that in which the left in South America was able to take control of state power. It makes its appearance at a moment when the project of the Left has begun showing its limited capacity to decouple from the logic of neoliberal global capitalism and as one has begun to doubt seriously the capacity of the state to make the structural changes that are necessary to transform society. The resistance movement in Honduras takes the stage when the decolonial turn in the South American bloc, led mainly by indigenous movements, is being already singled out by some social movements as “andinocentric” or as the project of re-Indianization of society collides with some strands of feminism and other ethnic groups: that is, as internal contradictions begin to appear. The Resistance Front in Honduras also occurs at a high point in the crisis of capitalism, and at a moment when the declining US empire turns its attention towards Latin America and attempts to re-militarize the whole region (Golinger, 2009).<sup>2</sup> But perhaps most importantly, it comes into being as the hegemonic bloc in Honduras has closed ranks like at no other point in history, and as the transnational ultra-rights of the world extend their helping hand.<sup>3</sup> This political conjuncture is very challenging for the National Resistance Popular Front and it certainly puts in question the possibility of it taking state power any time soon---as it said it wants to do. But it also provides a great opportunity to revise the strategies and political models used by others to bring about social change.

---

<sup>2</sup> See also <http://www.visionesalternativas.com/militarizacion/index.htm> Two years after the coup the US has opened two new military bases in Honduras (La Mosquitia and Guanaja).

<sup>3</sup> In the aftermath of the coup, Honduras received many visitors (politicians and businessmen) from the ultra-right from countries like the US, Spain, Colombia, and Venezuela. Some of them made TV appearances and organized seminars. The state's TV channel screened a Spanish documentary for several months that depicted the regimes of Chavez and Morales as fascist. Much has been said about the collaboration of Alvaro Uribe of Colombia, Otto Reich, a Cuban American, and Pedro Carmona of Venezuela in the planning of the coup.

---

The following is a reflection on the choices made to date by the Resistance Front in terms of their strategies and political models. I also reflect upon the tensions that exist between the mostly male leadership of the Resistance Front and the feminist movement, and on what feminists themselves need to do to articulate a feminist agenda inside the Resistance Front.

### **The Politics of the National Resistance Popular Front and the Problem of the Constitutional Assembly**

The Resistance Front has borrowed much of the language of social movements in other countries like Venezuela, Ecuador, and Bolivia. It has redeployed concepts such as the refoundation of the nation and decolonization to shape its own politics. The Front also uses many of the same strategies that have been used in these countries. Thus it has chosen as its main strategy the refoundation of the country through a constitutional assembly that elaborates, with the direct participation of the people, a new constitution. This new constitution, presumably, will be free from the coloniality of power that has ruled our social life since the conquest, will transform deeply the social relations based on gender, race, class, and sexual oppression that evolved from coloniality and the capitalist order, and will return sovereignty to the people. As with the other so-called decolonial processes of the region, much is expected of a new Magna Carta. In Honduras it appears sometimes that it has become the mantra of the resistance movement. To date, writing a new constitution is the sole strategy and is what defines or constructs the political philosophy of the movement. The Magna Carta would not only re-codify the social in the writing of a set of laws and thus become something like a social justice scripture; it would incarnate the new social contract that brings about decolonization, as it would be written from the basement of society, and not from its heights as in the past. Basically, it would write decolonization into law. It would restore the freedoms stolen from the colony that had become reserved only for the colonizers (internal as well as external) and make them the law, make them the new reason of state. The state,

---

then, as in other countries of the Latin American left, is visualized as the main actor and the constitution is seen as the main vehicle for the refoundation and decolonization of society.

I suspect, though, that the Constitution, being primarily a legal document, is attributed social powers that it probably is not able to deliver. This is something of which there is awareness, but more so at the grass-roots level than at the top level of the national leadership which may see in the constitutional assembly a political opportunity for themselves. At the II Encounter of the Resistance Front for the Refoundation of Honduras in March 2010, some of the delegates representing the different provinces (or departments) reminded those present that the constitutional assembly was not merely a legal issue; in fact, they noted that this attempt to build the constitutional assembly was a way of negating the priority of the juridical, and that ultimately the goal is to develop practices that are external to the state and that lead to its abolition. So there is clearly an awareness of the limits of the constitution already and a desire to build a society not constrained by the framework of the state in some sectors of the resistance front. Yet reforming the constitution has a particular urgency in Honduras not only because the existing constitution has been used to preempt any meaningful participation of the people in shaping the life of the nation, but also because the constitution was used as a prompt to execute the coup. From the oligarchic point of view (of the *golpistas*), the coup was meant to preserve the integrity of the constitution; the coup represented a way to solve a constitutional crisis brought about by the attempt of Zelaya to ask the population if they wanted a constitutional assembly. The *de facto* regime of Micheletti put in place after the coup was deemed a “constitutional succession” to legitimate the coup. So the constitution is at the center of the dispute here. In Honduras legal discourses and constitutional legalese became absolutely central to instantiating and legitimating the coup, and the constitution assumed a pivotal position in the battle of the Resistance Front to obtain power. I am not a legal scholar, but I think there are a few things one can observe about the centrality of law to the execution of the

---

coups, and the fetish character that the constitution seems to have in Honduras. It has this character for the right, certainly, but also, to some extent, for the Left as well, as long as it remains the sole strategy of the resistance movement. The use of the law to garner sovereign power, either to create legal guidelines fabricated for the occasion, i.e., to usurp power in the case of the coup or to reconstruct the power of the people by writing a new constitution in the case of the resistance front, is at the heart of this struggle.

The coup revealed for me at least two things in relation to what I would like to call the perversity of the law. First, that the local oligarchy and the US Pentagon could wield their power by securing a form of governmentality that was lawless and unaccountable, that is, by suspending the law and effectively replacing it with military codes, yet all the while doing this in the name of the law. The coup and the nullification or derealization of the law inflicted an injury to the sovereignty of the people that is considered by the majority of Hondurans to be unbearable. Furthermore, the legitimation of the coup later by sham elections meant that the state attained an indefinite power that can now be used to suspend and fabricate the law at will. A logical conclusion is that the only way to recover the sovereignty of the people is through the reestablishment of the rule of law through a new constitution. This is the conclusion the resistance movement has drawn. It must recreate the law by writing a new constitution. The problem though is that the oligarchy considers the constitutional assembly outside of the purview of its own power, an illegality. They have created a rhetoric that justifies their raw power in the name of legality and constitutionality. This sounds nonsensical but that is the logic of the state of exception. The oligarchy circumscribes the domain in which political speech and political subjectivity can be identified only with itself. It believes it has the prerogative of power and will not accept any questioning of this presumption. In their eyes, Manuel Zelaya Rosales' alliance with the social movements of the poor and his attempt to call for a constitutional assembly represented a grave transgression that could only be met with a coup and a state of exception or the suspension of all law and the

---



oligarchic assumption of absolute sovereign power. But on the other side of the political spectrum, the constitutional assembly is thought to recuperate the sovereign power back to the people. The constitution would create the necessary condition to express the political agency of the people. The constitution is used tactically too, as the constitution would establish the legitimacy of the Resistance Front within a legal framework that would be ensconced in state form.

Maintaining the state form could make the resistance front redeemable to others in society that stand in opposition—the law would make it right, even when it may imply a normative reorientation of politics. It would call for a new political game in town, one in which the Resistance Front becomes the most important political contestant. So the coup and the suspension of the law has made the resurgence of the sovereignty of the people ever so urgent, but it also has put in place the rules of the game that the resisting, opposing forces must use to gain power. The law is all about power, state power to rule over a population.

Secondly, the coup unveiled the plasticity of laws by making palpable how the law can be used to break the law and how easy it is to contort the law. More than ever, the law revealed itself as a tactic or an instrument to heighten the power of the state, but curiously enough, at the moment of its suspension. By using legal discourse and legal tactics, and military tactics to justify the coup, the state form that emerged from the coup became a state that is undone; a state that is disarticulated into a set of repressive powers that exist outside of the apparatus of the state itself. Thus paramilitary special forces, organized crime, and US military bases now form the real branches of the state and are the sites of political power for the local oligarchies. That is why Hondurans experience the coup and its aftermath as a total collapse of the legal system and have been overcome by a sense of total defenselessness. One could say that Honduras subsists today in an extra-legal field (this can be seen also by the non-recognition of the coup regime by the international community, its expulsion from the OAS, and its pariah position in international bodies) and that the coup state of President Lobo is a state form that relies on extra-legal power. It is a state that

---

can only survive by the conflation of law and violence, which is why it is not surprising that the last supportive move the US State Department made towards Honduras was to provide more police and military aid (knowing very well that these resources are being given to the perpetrators of most of the human rights violations that have occurred since the coup).

Ironically, it would seem then that in countries ruled by deep-seated social injustices and overt conditions of coloniality of power like Honduras, legalism, law enforcement, and constitutionalism provide the best platforms to suspend the law and disenfranchise oppressed people. This may explain why the resistance movement has chosen the constitution as its sole strategy, but this is also why we need a new configuration of power and a new theoretical framework, a revision of the models of thinking and exercising power that can break the empire of law in its current form.

Curiously, the Magna Carta - widely viewed as the most important document in a democracy - evolved from the same legal traditions and political cultures from which the left and decolonialism seeks freedom. Decolonialism purports to transcend liberal and representative democracy in favor of direct democracy and to recover local traditions of coding the political (Dussel, 2008). I am not sure if recovering the political forms of liberal and representative democracy that have historically ensured the rule of the powerful is the best way or if direct democracy is best served through constitutions. This means that I am not necessarily arguing that the Front's strategy of re-writing the constitution is a bad choice. I hope I have made myself clear enough. My point is merely that we should not expect too much from a constitution or a legal document codified in writing, in spite (or perhaps because) of the hopes placed therein by national-level leaders of the Front. Perhaps it is relevant to remember that constitutional traditions have been used to inscribe exclusion, even those that have been written as part of emancipatory processes (like the US constitution that excluded blacks and women). Constitutions as documents that enact the (re)foundation of the nation (or nation-building processes) can and have re-codified colonialism in

---

creative ways. This has happened even in the most recent constitutions passed in countries undergoing the turn to the Left. So it is important to ask who masters the process. It is important to ask the feminist question: Can the masters' tools dismantle the masters' house (Lorde, 1984)? Can the constitutional assembly dismantle oligarchic power?

One would say that the difference of today's conception of a decolonial constitution is that the constitutions would emanate from the people themselves and not from constitutional lawyers and political parties of the ruling class. The people would not delegate their powers to a separate political body, a political body that is separated from the community. Political bodies would be embedded within and constituted by the community, and a process would be established guaranteeing that it is the community that dictates the content of the constitution. This is the meaning to the term "poder constituyente", a process whereby the delegates of the people in charge of writing the constitution would obey, in an unmediated form, the power of the people. Or, as the Zapatistas and decolonial intellectuals might have it, leaders enact change by "mandando obedeciendo" (ruling by obedience). But if this is the case the political process of generating the constitution is more important than the document could ever be. Instead of being a petrified codex that regulates social relations, the constitution should be regarded as an unfinished product, fluid, always subject to change, always negotiating the unfixed character of the social. The constitution cannot be an end in itself, but should be more a means to arrive at the power of the people, a way to build popular power that resides at the level of the community and not at the level of the isolated juridical individual or atomized citizen that participates in an election to cast a vote and gives up her or his own power to a political body that stands for and above her or him. But, most important, I think the constitution should be an open book without margins or limits, always finding the gaps, the cracks, the spaces to negotiate, to transform, to transgress, to transcend the juxtaposition of different and antagonistic social positions that always are there, that always are part of the complexity of the social. The constitutional process

---

should be never-ending, always a process, never a book in the hands of politicians and lawyers and state institutions. It should be a civic process always belonging to the people, never leaving the community, simply there as a process, always helping us to deal with the tragic situation of making incompatible points of view (the oligarchic point of view, the imperialist point of view, the feminist point of view, etc.) where no concession or compromise seems to be possible because they all claim a social reason, somehow comprehensible, apprehensible, negotiable, recognizable, reconcilable. If we are to reexist socially or recodify our social relations, what is irreconcilable must be accounted for, must be dealt with. Social justice cannot be decreed.

I think 'the community' or the notion of 'the people' needs some reflection at this point, because it seems as if the irreconcilable is already included, or that 'the community' is 'the community minus the irreconcilable.' It would seem that the irreconcilable is outside of the community, and therefore is indigestible or impossible to metabolize.

First, we must make a stop and think of the concept of 'the people' as used by the Resistance Front and many other social movements of the Left. The concept of the people seems to presuppose a counterhegemonic bloc (or a community of resistance, always a counterhegemonic bloc) that has already harmonized the internal contradictions based on gender, race, class, and sexual differences, or at least be so far along in the process that the counterhegemonic bloc that emerges in history as 'the people' represents a community of resistance that has become indivisible (particularly towards the external irreconcilable). It has understood the universality of all struggles even as they express themselves in particularities. It understands that the social suffering of women and LGBT people is as unjust as that of the indigenous peoples, Garifunas, peasants, union activists, etc., or vice versa. In other words, the counterhegemonic bloc would have unlearned the habit of creating hierarchies that value some oppressions over others or that deny their existence completely. It has developed social technologies that arrest the development of differences inside the

---

counterhegemonic bloc that divide the people. In feminist terms, the people or the counterhegemonic bloc will have learned to think in terms of the intersectionality of the coloniality of power: that is, understood the way external and internal colonization converged historically to create systems of power that act simultaneously and determine each other to create exclusion and subordination in some, and privilege in others. It must have concluded that just as the idea of race was essential to divide and debase us in the process of colonization and to help construct social class in the colonial/modern capitalist order, so too was the creation of gender and heteronormativity. The counterhegemonic bloc will have, in other words, made intersectional politics its logic of power to preempt phallogocentric and heterosexist coding in the constitutional process as in the codex itself. It will have thought the ways to preempt mestizaje or any racial construction from becoming the hegemonic norm that discriminates against the indigenous peoples and the afro-descendent (and other ethnic groups that make up the nationality like Arabs, Chinese); but it also has begun to think more creatively about how to conjugate the diversity or the mestizaje that evolved from colonization without having to revert to ideas of authenticity or essentialist and romanticized ideas of the pre-colonial past that serve to create new differences, new dualities, and new hierarchies and exclusions between the indigenous (or pueblos originarios) and the non-indigenous peoples.

Of course this concept of the people or the counterhegemonic bloc as deployed by the Resistance Front (largely taken from the popular Left and the decolonialism of Dussel)<sup>4</sup> may be presupposing too much (Dussel, 2008). To demand a coherent discourse or a feminist understanding of the way power is constituted and the way it complicates the formation of counterhegemonic blocs free of internal contradictions is to ask far more from the present political process

---

<sup>4</sup> The concept of the people is central to Dussel's philosophy of liberation and politics of liberation. Feminists have found his use of the concept of the people too male biased. See Mendoza (2010a).

---

and its transitional character than it can provide. But it should enter the debate more and more as tensions build in certain sectors of the resistance movement.

Feminists in Resistance are a case in point. Feminists in Resistance form part of the executive and political committees of the Front and they have made several attempts to have their agenda included in the vision that the Front slowly constructs in their documents and public declarations. Yet their viewpoints are systematically omitted and their contributions silenced. In Honduras this is important, as women compose the majority of the Front and have become a special target of the terror of the state. Six women are killed in Honduras on a weekly basis. As I write these pages, Feminists in Resistance reconsider if their efforts would be better used outside of the Front.

Tensions between feminism, governments, and Left social movements are to be found throughout Latin America. For instance, some feminists resist the notion of gender complementarity used by many indigenous movements, and question the validity of concepts such as Lugones' 'coloniality of gender,' arguing that presupposing that gender did not exist in the pre-colonial past bypasses the gender oppression existing today. Indigenous movements and others critique the urban, white-mestizo dominance of feminist movements, and the staunch liberalism of gender equality advocates who are seen as too devoted to legal reforms, or who have become too institutionalized. All these contradictions counter the internal cohesion presupposed by a unified concept of the people and the counterhegemonic bloc. A unified concept of the people or the counterhegemonic bloc does not necessarily recognize all forms of social suffering that occurs inside of it, even though this is necessary to achieve a most just society. But it must also deal with that other irreconcilable, that external other: the hegemonic bloc, the oligarchic power, the imperialist bloc that can have the face of a woman as well as the face of a man, the face of a black man as well as a white man, the face of the working class as well as the wealthy, the face of the indigenous as well as the mestizo, the face of the queer as well as the heterosexual. We cannot elude this. The contradictions live within us and we

---

must find a way to understand them, unlearn them, undo them, make them part of the constitutional process.

Quijano and others have claimed in the recent past that we in Latin America have already developed new forms of social existence that are free of domination based on race, ethnicity, and even gender, albeit in incipient form (we are still learning) (Quijano, 2007). We have produced new communal ways of living by creating new political systems, based on an understanding of freedom and autonomy of the individual as expressions of our social diversity and solidarity. We are learning to decide democratically what we want to produce using modern technologies wisely; expanding notions of reciprocity in the distribution of labor, goods and values etc. Of course this very powerful and audacious way of describing Latin America contrasts with another reality that co-exists with all this social experimentation: femicide, increased homophobia and transphobia, organized crime, the highest crime rates in the world, violent gangs, human trafficking, mass migration etc. In Honduras, as said, six women are killed each week, and according to the United Nations the country has the highest crime rates in the world with 82 murders per 100,000 inhabitants (UNODC, 2010). Venezuela, a leader country in the “Socialismo del siglo XXI” has also one of the highest crime rates in the region. So experimentation with new social practices that have the capacity to reverse the coloniality of power run parallel to ongoing senseless, and sordid, violence in everyday life. This demands that we see these new social practices in their full-blown context and complexity.

In the particular case of the Feminists in Resistance in Honduras, we know it will not do to simply insert articles in the new constitution that contain a feminist agenda to end violence against women, gender wage gaps or the like. Before that can ever happen, we will have to develop political methodologies that train feminists and non-feminists alike to see the particular issue of gender oppression as a universal question—to reveal what the particular struggle of women has in common with all the other struggles, and to persuade others that the fight against the patriarchy that operates in all dispositives of power is

---

inescapable in the strategies of all the social movements that compose the resistance front. Feminists will have to create a politics of alliances with non-feminists. It will have to go beyond our limits. Many of the politics of the Left have failed to understand the dialectic between universality and particularity. The men of the left have often appropriated universality as they self-appoint themselves the universal norm of all struggles, excluding and denying the feminine and the feminist and, in the act of doing so, erasing their own particularity. Feminists themselves participate in their exclusion by articulating their social condition in a language of particularism and thus repressing their own universality. These positions of men and women cancel out mutually and allow that unjust relations of gender, class, race and sexuality reproduce ad infinitum. Political alliances in these circumstances are difficult to generate (Mendoza, 2010b). But embracing a politics of intersectionality as part of the core strategy of the resistance front might help begin tackling the contradictions at the heart of the counterhegemonic bloc. The politics of intersectionality might be a good strategy to guide the constitutional process. Not doing so might doom us to failure or simply enact a parody of power that will bring us back to zero.

## References

- Escobar, Arturo. 2010. 'Latin America at a Crossroads', *Cultural Studies*, 24: 1, 1-65. Online publication date: 12 January 2010  
<http://www.unc.edu/~aescobar/text/eng/escobar.2010.CulturalStudies.24-1.pdf>
- Dussel, Enrique. 2008. *Twenty Theses on Politics*. Duke University Press: Durham, NC.
- Golinger, Eva. 2009. *US Military Aggression Against Venezuela*. Blog post from 21 December 2009. Available at:  
<http://tonyseed.wordpress.com/2009/12/21/u-s-military-aggression-against-venezuela-escalating>
- Lorde, Audre. 1984. *Sister Outsider*. The Crossing Press Feminist Series: Boston.
- Lugones, Maria. 2007. 'Heterosexualism and the Colonial / Modern Gender System', *Hypatia*, 22: 1, 186-209.
-



Maldonado-Torres, Nelson. 2008. *Against War: Views from the Underside of Modernity*. Duke University Press: Durham, NC.

Mendoza, Breny. 2010a. 'La Epistemología del Sur, la Colonialidad de Género y el Feminismo Latinoamericano', in *Aproximaciones críticas a las prácticas teórico-políticas del feminismo latinoamericano, Vol. 1*. Yuderlys Espinosa Miñoso (coord.). En la frontera: Buenos Aires.

Mendoza, Breny. 2010b. 'Reflexiones Teóricas para un movimiento feminista de la no-violencia', Centro de Estudios de la Mujer-Honduras: Tegucigalpa, Honduras.

Quijano, Anibal. 2007. 'Des/colonialidad del poder: el horizonte alternativo'. Available at: <http://praxisdigital.wordpress.com/2011/01/22/descolonialidad-del-poder-el-horizonte-alternativo-anibal-quijsano/>

UNODC. 2010. *Homicide Statistics*. Available at: <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/homicide.html>.