

## Summary Report

## Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding



## Honduras and South Africa Interventions



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# Honduras and South Africa Interventions

Greetings,

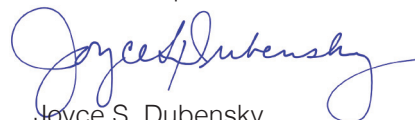
It is with great pleasure that Tanenbaum presents this Summary Report of a two-part intervention by our *Network*, one in November 2011 in Honduras and the other in South Africa in February 2013. Though the locations of these *Network* interventions are worlds apart, the involved had one goal: to build democracy and protect the people of Honduras from some of the world's deadliest violence. I am proud that – like the December 2010 Delegation to Nigeria – the outcome from these interventions far exceeded expectations while exemplifying, once again, the power of the *Network* around the world.

These *Network* initiatives were created as a targeted response to rising levels of violence and regressions in democratic practices and justice following the 2009 coup d'état against Honduran President, Manuel Zelaya. With Honduran general elections scheduled for November 2013, both interventions were designed to provide technical support for the Frente Nacional de Resistencia Popular, or FNRP, which worked to launch a nationwide peace movement to positively influence the next election.

Leading the interventions were two of Tanenbaum's inspiring Peacemakers: from South Africa, Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge, and from El Salvador, José "Chencho" Alas. The first intervention brought South Africa's knowledge and experience with a democratic transition, nonviolent resistance and reconciliation to Honduras.

In the second, Tanenbaum brought representatives of the Honduran peace movement to South Africa to begin to form a transatlantic partnership between the two countries. Chencho and Juan Barahona of the Honduran FNRP joined Nozizwe to cement commitments for technical support from the African National Congress and other key government institutions. In total, this collaboration spanned 1.5 years and included three weeks of on-the-ground collaborative work in Honduras and South Africa. Though they have already achieved much, I am glad to say that these two initiatives are only the beginning of a unique and powerful working relationship between Chencho and Nozizwe and their respective regions of the world.

In Friendship,



Joyce S. Dubensky  
CEO



### **Introduction to the Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding**

The Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding overcomes religious ignorance, intolerance and hate in four areas that influence our daily lives: education, health care, the workplace and conflict resolution. A secular, non-sectarian, nonprofit organization, Tanenbaum supports religiously motivated local peace activists based in conflict zones around the world. With over 15 years in this still emerging field of religion and conflict resolution, Tanenbaum's leadership is widely recognized.

The Conflict Resolution program began in 1998 at the urging of the late Ambassador Richard Holbrooke. Recognizing the value in drawing attention to and building the skills of religiously motivated peacemakers around the world who—without recognition from Track I diplomats or the public—are easily marginalized or killed, Ambassador Holbrooke called on Tanenbaum to develop an initiative to protect them. Tanenbaum subsequently established the program and has since recognized 28 award winners in 21 conflict zones around the world. To promote their efforts, Tanenbaum documents and promotes the work of these unsung religious peacemakers through in-depth case studies detailing their stories and techniques. To enhance their individual capacity, Tanenbaum regularly convenes them at week-long retreats where they share information, effective techniques and develop a community among people who are often isolated and alone.

### **The *Peacemakers in Action* Network**

Over the years, Tanenbaum's concluded that they could increase their impact by collective action and finding opportunities to collaborate with one another. The idea was simple: create a *Network* made up of Tanenbaum's *Peacemakers* through the creation of a formal *Network*, each would be able to provide and receive support from colleagues in a profession that is rarely recognized as a real vocation, often lonely, full of adversity and always hazardous. Even more importantly, such a *Network* would enable them to become valuable resources for one another. Because each is from a unique part of the world, the strategies, ideas and approaches to peacebuilding within the *Network* are as diverse as its membership. This diversity of experience provides a wealth of knowledge and information that can be exchanged and contextualized to resolve conflicts across the globe. They chose Tanenbaum to facilitate their affiliation.

At the Working Retreat in August 2011, they made their decision official, writing and signing a Charter to formalize their commitment. The Charter recites the *Network* official purpose: "to contribute toward the transformation of conflicts and the reconciliation of people in building a more peaceful, just and sustainable world."

Coincidentally, the *Network* interventions reported here were first conceived at this very Retreat. José "Chencho" Alas, of El Salvador, who works to reduce violent conflict in Central America, had a casual conversation with Nozizwe Madlala-





Routledge of South Africa, an activist during Apartheid, a former parliamentarian and a women's rights advocate. During this exchange, both Chencho and Nozizwe realized that while their respective conflict zones are separated by the expanse of the Atlantic, their skills and experiences were powerful resources that could be leveraged to enhance one another's work for peace. Three months later, with Tanenbaum's help, Nozizwe boarded a flight bound for Central America.

Though South Africa and Honduras are worlds apart, the sharing of knowledge and expertise between nations in the Global South is becoming an increasingly common modality for development cooperation among states. Known as South-South Development Cooperation (SSDC), this approach is unlike traditional development assistance in that it is "initiated, organized and managed by developing countries themselves" rather than Western nations like the U.S., UK, France and Germany.<sup>1</sup> SSDC allows for the creation of solidarity among Southern nations and helps to foster greater self-reliance. SSDC achieves this by encouraging nations to enhance their creative capacity to find solutions for their own development problems and to strengthen collective self-reliance among

other developing countries through the exchange of experiences, knowledge and the sharing of their national resources.<sup>2</sup>

In these most recent interventions, the *Network* operated in much the same way as SSDC exchanges in that it encouraged local actors to reach out horizontally and work with their peers in other countries, rather than vertically with the developed countries of the North.

### About the *Peacemakers*

José "Chencho" Alas, a former Catholic priest, was honored with the award in 2000 for his advocacy work for peasants in El Salvador prior to the civil war there. After the war, Chencho founded several organizations including the Foundation for Sustainability and Peacemaking in Mesoamerica and was successful in creating a "Zone of Peace" in the Lower Lempa region of El Salvador. Currently, Chencho trains peacebuilders throughout Central America by facilitating workshops on gender relations, human rights, conflict transformation and the earth and ecology.

Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge received the award in 2002 for her courageous work during and after Apartheid. She was jailed a total of three times for her affiliation with the ANC, the last time spending a year in solitary confinement without trial. After her release, she took part in drafting the post-apartheid constitution for South Africa in 1991. Today, Nozizwe is an influential player in South Africa's ANC and a former Deputy Minister of both Defense and Health. Throughout her career, she has been an outspoken advocate for issues such as the inclusion of women in peace processes and state HIV/AIDS policy rooted in science. Today, she is the leader of the Embrace Dignity campaign, an NGO committed to ending sexual trafficking in South Africa.

<sup>1</sup> UNDP. What is South-South Cooperation? United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation: Accessed 12/05/2012 from: [http://ssc.undp.org/content/ssc/about/what\\_is\\_ssc.html](http://ssc.undp.org/content/ssc/about/what_is_ssc.html)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

## **Conflict in Honduras: The coup d'état**

In 2005, Manuel (Mel) Zelaya was elected president in a close race, running on a platform of law and order, and a promise to tackle gang warfare and poverty in Honduras – one of Latin America's poorest nations.<sup>3</sup> Despite a center-right political orientation during the earlier period of his political career, President Zelaya shifted to the left during his presidency.

Following Zelaya's political shift, he began proposing sweeping reforms that shook the foundations of one of the most economically disparate countries in the world. His first reform was a 60% raise in the minimum wage for Hondurans, bringing a day's pay from \$6 to \$9.60.<sup>4</sup> Though more than 65% of Hondurans live below the poverty line, this reform met with strong opposition from Honduras's deeply entrenched economic and political elite.<sup>5</sup>

Opposition to President Zelaya rose steadily, peaking in 2009 when he began organizing a "non-binding public consultation to ask people whether they supported moves to change the constitution."<sup>6</sup> With hostility to Zelaya mounting, his opponents alleged that this referendum was an "illegal attempt by Mr. Zelaya to defy the Constitution's limit of a single four-year term for the president"

<sup>3</sup> The BBC. Profile: Honduras' Manuel Zelaya. Accessed on 12/09/2012 from: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8123134.stm>

<sup>4</sup> Thompson, Ginger. Presidents Ouster Highlights a Divide in Honduras. The New York Times. Accessed on 12/08/2012 from: <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/09/world/americas/09honduras.html?pagewanted=all>

<sup>5</sup> CIA World Factbook. Honduras. Accessed on 12/08/2012 from: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ho.html>

<sup>6</sup> The BBC. Profile: Honduras' Manuel Zelaya. Accessed on 12/09/2012 from: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8123134.stm>

and to seek re-election, though Zelaya denied that this was his intention.<sup>7</sup> The Honduran Supreme Court agreed that the referendum was unconstitutional. In the weeks that followed, both supporters and opponents of the president held competing demonstrations.<sup>8</sup>

Before sunrise on the morning of June 28, 2009, the Honduran military successfully removed President Zelaya from the country, marking the first coup in Central America since the end of the Cold War. Zelaya's successor, Roberto Micheletti, took control of the country and was sworn into office on the same day. A country-wide curfew was imposed and electricity was cut in the nation's capital, Tegucigalpa. Supporters of Zelaya rallied in protest, crippling the capital for weeks in a standoff with the military. Micheletti stayed in power for less than six months before Porfirio Lobo, a center-right agricultural landowner, assumed the office of the presidency where he remains as of this writing.

## **The Situation on the Ground**

Since 2010, violence has swept through Honduras at an alarming rate, and the nation now suffers from the highest intentional homicide rate in the world – 91.6 murders for every 100,000 people.<sup>9,10</sup> Much of this violence is related to a burgeoning drug trade. As explained by the country's Minister of Security, Pompeyo Bonilla Reyes, Honduras sits "between

<sup>7</sup> Malkin, Elisabeth. Honduran President is Ousted in Coup. The New York Times Accessed on 12/21/2012 from: <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/29/world/americas/29honduras.html?pagewanted=all>

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> United Nations: International Homicide, Number and Rate per 100,000 Population. Accessed on 12/22/2012 <http://data.un.org/Data.aspx?d=UNODC&f=tableCode%3A1>

<sup>10</sup> World Bank. Honduras. Accessed on 12/29/2012 from: <http://data.worldbank.org/country/honduras>

those who consume drugs and those who produce them. Logically, we are a corridor of traffic.”<sup>11,12</sup> Additionally, police and troops are said to be complicit in the drug trade and the indiscriminate violence is swallowing the nation. Today, less than half of country's homicides have official explanations and only one in nine police investigations leads to a conviction.<sup>13</sup>

Compounding the challenges posed by the drug trade, many of Honduras's major cities, including Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula, have been crippled by other forms of organized crime. Organized crime groups preying on public workers and small business owners are ubiquitous. Transportation workers are frequent victims, and are often forced to pay royalties to organized crime groups for the right to operate in the city. InSight Crime, an organization that monitors organized crime, reports that more than 500 bus drivers have been killed in Honduras since 2007, making it “the most dangerous profession on the planet.”<sup>14</sup>

State-sponsored repression continues to undermine any opposition to the Lobo Government. In a system where the judiciary is reported to be so corrupt it's almost nonexistent and crimes routinely

go unpunished: “[A]t least 34 members of the opposition have disappeared or been killed, and more than 300 people have been killed by state security forces since the coup,” with an additional 13 journalists killed since President Lobo took office. According to Cofadeh, a leading human rights organization in Honduras, “at least 43 campesino activists participating in land struggles in the Aguan Valley have been killed in the past two and a half years at the hands of the police, military and the private security Army of Miguel Facusse,” the richest man in Honduras and supporter of Lobo.<sup>15</sup>

According to Transparency International's 2012 Corruption Perception Index, of 176 countries surveyed, Honduras is tied with Iran at 133 (this index ranks nations based on perceptions of its citizens).<sup>16</sup> Honduras has one of the most corrupt police forces in Central America and has been infiltrated by numerous criminal elements. A Honduran congressman recently claimed that upwards of 40% of the Honduran police force was involved in organized crime.<sup>17</sup> Even more troubling are reports that members of the police force actually take part in assassinations and act as enforcers for criminal elements.<sup>18</sup> Such

<sup>11</sup> The Economist. Violence in Honduras, Eye of the Storm; Timid Steps to Tame the World's Most Violent Country. Accessed on 01/12/2013 from: <http://www.economist.com/node/21556914>

<sup>12</sup> For more information on the drug war in Honduras, visit: The New York Times <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/13/world/americas/in-honduras-deaths-make-us-rethink-drug-war.html?pagewanted=all>

<sup>13</sup> The Economist. Violence in Honduras, Eye of the Storm; Timid Steps to Tame the World's Most Violent Country. Accessed on 01/12/2013 from: <http://www.economist.com/node/21556914>

<sup>14</sup> Rosenthal, Elisabeth. New Guns = More Killing. The New York Times. Accessed on 01/21/2013 from: <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/06/sunday-review/more-guns-more-killing.html?hpw>

<sup>15</sup> Frank, Dana. In Honduras, A Mess Made in the US. The New York Times. Accessed on 01/21/2013 from: <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/27/opinion/in-honduras-a-mess-helped-by-the-us.html>

<sup>16</sup> Transparency International. Corruption Perceptions Index 2012. Accessed on 12/21/2013 from: <http://cpi.transparency.org/cpi2012/results/>

<sup>17</sup> Fox, Edward: Dynamics of Honduran Police Corruption Narrow Chance for Reform. Insight on Crime. Accessed on 01/21/2013 from: <http://www.insightcrime.org/news-analysis/dynamics-of-honduran-police-corruption-narrow-chance-for-reform>

<sup>18</sup> Robles, Frances. Honduras Becomes Murder Capital of the World. Miami Herald. Accessed on 02/21/2013 from: <http://www.miamiherald.com/2012/01/23/2603338/honduras-becomes-murder-capital.html>

reports led to the Honduran state purging 99 police officers, including 13 commissioners and 11 deputy commissioners in October 2012.<sup>19</sup>

### **Frente Nacional de Resistencia Popular (FNRP)**

Against the backdrop of an increasingly dysfunctional judicial system, debilitating corruption and soaring levels of violence, citizens and civic organizations have taken a stand. The FNRP, a broad coalition of grassroots and worker organizations, peasants and political movements, was founded in 2009 following the coup that ousted President Zelaya. With the goal of restoring participatory democracy, justice and peace, the coalition aims to create a constituent assembly to draft a new constitution.

Following the return of Mel Zelaya to Honduras in mid-2011, the FNRP established the LIBRE political party (short for Libertad y Refundacion, or “Freedom and Refoundation”) with the intent to run in the 2013 election. In March 2012, LIBRE was granted recognition as a political party, becoming the seventh political institution in Honduras.<sup>20,21</sup>

Though the FNRP and LIBRE party maintain a strong base in Honduras, they suffer from insufficient financial and technical capacity.



The FNRP and LIBRE were in need of substantial foreign technical assistance to build momentum going into the November 2013 elections and effectively promote a more peaceful and just Honduras.

### **Tanenbaum’s *Peacemakers* and the Conflict in Honduras**

For Chencho Alas, the violence in Honduras hits home. In Chencho’s view, peace in any of the seven countries that make up Central America is only possible with peace in all of them. The rising level of violence and deterioration of democratic institutions in Honduras has had a ripple effect throughout the region. For Chencho, reinstituting justice and participatory democracy in Honduras is a critical step in building peace in the country and the region.

For Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge, the situation in Honduras is disturbingly familiar. Nozizwe spent the early years of her life living under the repressive Apartheid government. In those days, state violence against black Africans and the poor was rampant. Human rights violations occurred regularly and those who challenged the state were dealt with violently. Much like Honduras, a small minority held political power and wealth in Apartheid South Africa. White South Africans, who made up approximately 11% of the population in 1994, ruled the country for 46 years from

<sup>19</sup> Fox, Edward. Honduras Set to Purge Police of Nearly 100 Officers. Insight on Crime. Accessed on 02/12/2013 from: <http://www.insightcrime.org/news-analysis/honduras-purge-police-100-officers>

<sup>20</sup> FNRP/LIBRE Party. Accessed on 02/12/2013 from: [http://resistiahonduras.net/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=articles&id=4446:honduran-resistance-celebrates-the-birth-of-libre-party-&catid=101:news&Itemid=349](http://resistiahonduras.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=articles&id=4446:honduran-resistance-celebrates-the-birth-of-libre-party-&catid=101:news&Itemid=349)

<sup>21</sup> The Danish Institute for Parties and Democracy. The Danish Red-Green Alliance and Frente Nacional de Resistencia Popular. Accessed on 02/21/2013 from: <http://dipd.dk/partnerships/honduras/danish-red-green-alliance-and-frente-nacional-de-resistencia-popular/>



1948 to 1994.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, in Honduras, while 66% live below the national poverty line, a handful of entrenched families control the country's wealth, politics and much of its land.<sup>23,24</sup> In both countries, police brutally dealt with groups protesting the government and demanding justice and the observation of human rights. Familiar with such struggles in a politically and economically lopsided environment, Nozizwe saw an opportunity to share her experiences with nonviolent resistance and civil disobedience to assist in the Honduran struggle.

### First Intervention:

#### November 3rd – 6th 2011

Realizing the potential of the *Network* and South-South exchanges, Tanenbaum sponsored the first of what became a two-part *Network* Intervention in November 2011. The intervention brought Nozizwe to Honduras, where she and Chencho provided trainings on peacemaking and nonviolent resistance to members of the FNRP. In total, the intervention lasted 5 days with the workshops beginning on November 3 and ending November 6.

On November 2, Chencho and Nozizwe made a 30 minute television appearance and gave four radio interviews. During these interviews, they discussed their individual work and why they were in Honduras. Nozizwe explained in detail the



process of liberation from the Apartheid regime in South Africa. She also discussed forgiveness and how Nelson Mandela—South Africa's first freely-elected black president—steered the country away from violence and toward reconciliation after years of repression and suffering under white minority rule.

The next day, Nozizwe spoke to an audience of over 50 members of the FNRP and LIBRE party, including former president Manuel Zelaya. The participants were eager to hear about Nozizwe's work, her activism during the Apartheid years and how the movement for democracy, peace and justice ultimately succeeded in South Africa. One of the FNRP's stated goals is to create a Constituent Assembly with the mandate of drafting a new and inclusive constitution that guarantees political rights and protects justice. In light of this, the participants were particularly interested in learning about Nozizwe's role in drafting South Africa's constitution, now widely considered to be one of the world's most progressive in guaranteeing civil, social and economic rights.

The workshops lasted for a total of 37.5 hours over three days, and were attended by nearly 60 individuals each day from the FNRP and LIBRE parties. In addition to the former president, the workshops

<sup>22</sup> Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Republic of South Africa. Population of South Africa by Population Group. Accessed on 02/23/2013 from: <http://www.nda.agric.za/docs/abstract04/Population.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> World Bank. Honduras. Accessed on 02/23/2013 from: [http://data.worldbank.org/country/honduras#cp\\_wdi](http://data.worldbank.org/country/honduras#cp_wdi)

<sup>24</sup> Frank, Dana. Honduras Gone Wrong: How Playing Tegucigalpa as a Proxy is Undercutting U.S. Influence. Foreign Affairs. Accessed on 03/02/2013 from: <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/138188/dana-frank/honduras-gone-wrong>

also reached former government ministers and deputies. During the workshops, Chencho and Nozizwe facilitated strategy sessions for participatory planning and network building. Nozizwe also reviewed South Africa's experience in overcoming the violent and authoritarian Apartheid government through nonviolent activism. Additional topics included: the process of democratic decision-making; justice versus reconciliation; democratic participation; representative democracy; civil society's role in building a sustainable and just peace; the role of women in all of these processes; and what can be done to fix problems with corruption and a weak state. From these sessions, the FNRP understood how much they could learn from the South African experience and the benefits of nurturing South-South cooperation between the two countries.



### **Second Intervention: February 20th – March 4th 2013**

To solidify the gains made from the first *Network* Intervention and to strengthen the budding South-South relationship between Honduras and South Africa, Tanenbaum sponsored a second intervention in February 2013. In this follow up, Tanenbaum brought Chencho Alas and FNRP representative and LIBRE party vice presidential candidate, Juan Barahona, to South Africa. There, with Nozizwe, they met with key government officials, ANC leaders, and representatives of labor unions and civil society organizations. During the

meetings, they focused on how South Africa can provide actual assistance to Honduras through the transfer of knowledge and resources.

These transfers include sharing:

- Knowledge about the South African model of reconciliation;
- Practical understanding of South Africa's constitutional structures, and the ways in which it defends democracy and human rights;
- The process through which South Africa created its constitution;
- Knowledge about the South African experience in nonviolent resistance to police and military forces; and
- The South African experience with land restitution.

It is hoped that by providing leaders in Honduras with technical knowledge and experience in these areas, they will be able to adapt them for Honduras and bring a new approach to resolving that country's deep-rooted challenges.

Beyond sharing information and training in techniques and strategies, Chencho, Nozizwe and Juan seeded the creation of a partnership between Honduras and South Africa that would include ongoing transfers of technical support from the South African government and ANC to advance the Honduran peace movement and its objectives.

"The purpose of the intervention," said Nozizwe, "was to build South-South solidarity between southern Africa and Central America. South Africa and Honduras have much in common – a history of violent repression under minority rule and high levels of social and economic inequality as well as interpersonal violence."



### **Sharing New Approaches with South African Grassroots Activists**

During the course of the second intervention, Nozizwe and Chencho led a series of trainings and exchanges with South African grassroots activists. At these events, Chencho learned about the challenges facing average South Africans. Chencho was then able to share his perspectives and experiences gained through his decades of work with communities in Central America, and to provide some ideas for addressing the challenges. Reflecting on this part of their collaboration, Chencho noted that he not only shared approaches based on his work but, also, gained new perspectives on activism from the South Africans that he would bring to his work in Central America.

#### **• Trainings with the Women of Embrace Dignity**

Chencho facilitated two days of trainings for a group of women affiliated with Embrace Dignity. Embrace Dignity, an organization Nozizwe founded with her husband, Jeremy Routledge, works with civil society and government as advocates for law reform that would recognize prostitution as a form of violence against women. Chencho worked with the “Sisters,” a group of

women exiting prostitution, who are part of Embrace Dignity. Using the appreciative inquiry methodology, which focuses on exploring positive outcomes rather than naming problems, Chencho encouraged the women to transform the way they relate to their bodies, their families, their communities and their country.

During Tanenbaum’s 2013 Retreat, a bi-annual event that convenes for a week of peer training, support and learning, Chencho said the following about his trainings with the Sisters:

“We discovered the beauty and the richness of the body and the admiration that we need to have for every part of ourselves. On the day I was leaving, I asked some of them if they were doing that. They said yes. They said yes with happiness.”

During the trainings, Chencho also worked with the Sisters to develop a personal vision for their future. In the end, the Sisters developed a concrete plan to open four more centers for women seeking an exit from prostitution in the coming years and exponentially increase the number of women brought into the Embrace Dignity family. Two Sisters were so inspired that they are now training with local lawyers so they can take leadership roles in advocating for and helping women on the streets. Given that South Africa is often referred to as the rape capital of the world and that it has among the highest rates of sexual violence, the importance of this project cannot be overstated. Through Chencho’s trainings, and the work of Embrace Dignity, the women are beginning to see the power within them to change their situation and their communities. The women continue

to explore the ways in which they are connected with other women, regardless of the differences of geography, race, gender, religion and social standing. As a result of the work of Chencho and Nozizwe, they are taking courageous steps to transform their lives and recognize their capacity to live with dignity and be agents of social change in South Africa.

#### • Seminar in Khayelitsha – Education for Self-realization and Self-reliance

Chencho and Nozizwe participated in a civil society meeting in the impoverished township of Khayelitsha. The meeting, convened around the theme of “Education for Self-Realization and Self-Reliance,” addressed the issues of self-identity and pride, which resonated with the belief that building self-esteem about one’s identity and pride in it can be a step to creating peace and ending gender-based violence. Indeed, it is becoming an important component of public education in many places across the globe, including South Africa.

During Chencho’s address, he first shared reflections from his trip. He reminded participants that while all South Africans do not yet enjoy full freedom, they have something extremely valuable: a constitution that allows them to participate in the country’s political life. He then shared about the situation in his own country, El Salvador, where people continue to experience high levels of interpersonal violence perpetrated by gangs. According to the participants, they took away an understanding of the importance of professional skill-building programs that help prevent youth from joining gangs and the importance of providing vocational training for formerly incarcerated individuals.



#### • Gothenburg Process Conference – Toward a Just Peace: Faith Based Ethics in Challenging the Arms Trade

Chencho and Nozizwe attended a conference organized by the Gothenburg Process, an ecumenical initiative that gathers churches and church-related organizations to address the arms trade.<sup>25</sup> The Gothenburg Process was established in response to corrupt arms deals such as the Strategic Arms Acquisition of the South African National Defense Force in 1999. A particular concern about war and the arms trade is that they divert resources from the nation’s development. Here, Chencho spoke to participants about the power of mobilizing faith communities to challenge the arms trade and how to apply more focus to achieving a sustainable and just peace.

#### Deepening Democracy & Constitution Building – The South African Experience

To better understand South Africa’s democratic structure, its institutions and the avenues through which ordinary South African citizens participate in the country’s political system, Nozizwe, Chencho and Juan attended a number of seminars and meetings with key government and civil society stakeholders. Through these

<sup>25</sup> Christian Council of Sweden, Life & Peace Institute, Swedish Mission Council. The Gothenburg Process. Accessed on 03/02/2013 from: <http://www.gothenburg-process.org/>



exchanges, Chencho and Juan learned about South Africa's major successes and challenges during its transition from Apartheid to participatory democracy. This provided lessons and ideas about how Honduras could facilitate such a process, including the creation of a constituent assembly, a countrywide process of reconciliation and a functional system for land restitution.

- **Seminar on Participatory Democracy – The South African Experience**

Juan, Nozizwe and Chencho participated in a seminar organized by Democracy from Below Campaign and the Alternative Information Development Centre. The seminar's theme was "Deepening Democracy: Redefining South/South Solidarity," and presenters included activists, politicians and academics. In addition to reviewing South Africa's democratic system and the ways in which ordinary citizens engage policymakers, the discussions about South Africa's ongoing labor struggles in the agriculture and mining sectors were particularly informative.

The 2012 strikes at the Marikana Mine, owned by mining giant Lonmin, garnered international attention. These strikes ultimately led to a series of violent incidents between the South African Police Service, Lonmin security, the leadership of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and the strikers themselves. In all, 47 people died in the clashes, mostly mineworkers. The affair highlights imperfection in the South African peaceful transition, where political rights have not necessarily translated into economic rights for the black majority. For Chencho and Juan, the seminar revealed some of the challenges involved in facilitating democratic transitions from authoritarian



rule and ensuring economic justice for the newly empowered.

- **Public Meeting, with the Democracy from Below Campaign**

Nozizwe, Chencho and Juan met with the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). During the meeting, Juan addressed union leaders about finding ways to help workers in Honduras achieve the right to organize and collectively bargain for better working conditions. The members of COSATU were interested in learning more about the plight of Honduran workers and supporting such an initiative. During the meeting, they also discussed expanding the mandate of solidarity structures to include Honduras.

- **A Visit to Parliament**

Mr. Obed Bapela (deputy minister of the presidency and head of the ANC international relations sub-committee), Parliamentarian Tisetso Magama (Chairperson of the Parliamentary Committee on International Relations and Co-operation) and Mazibuko Jara (Democracy from Below Campaign) received Chencho, Nozizwe and Juan at Parliament. During their private meeting, these government leaders, together with Nozizwe, Chencho and Juan as Track II Diplomats, explored ways in which the



ANC could support democratic change in Honduras by sharing the South African experience in peaceful negotiations, constitution-making and reconciliation.

Mr. Bapela stressed the importance of creating international solidarity for Honduras and the FNRP. He explained how the ANC continues to benefit from the support offered by various countries, including Cuba, which provides medical training for young South African doctors and delivers health care services in rural regions of the country. To create similar opportunities for Honduras, Mr. Bapela offered to create contacts and opportunities to build relationships with other foreign governments and organizations.

Since the conclusion of the intervention in South Africa, the ANC stated that it was prepared to provide counsel to the NFRP following the 2013 elections. Following the SSDC model of technical exchange, the ANC would provide Honduras with insight and guidance as it prepares to build a more just and inclusive democratic system. According to Nozizwe:

“Technical exchange would be based on South Africa’s practical experience writing a new constitution, and the justice and reconciliation process after the elections. The ANC indicated that they would be willing to do this. Of course, this would be done close to their elections with the government. Even though the ANC is a political party, it will be working from the position of government to government. They can share their experiences at this level.”

### **Lessons on Land Restitution in South Africa**

South Africa and Honduras continue to face major challenges regarding equal land distribution and restitution. In both countries, much of the land was purchased or appropriated by the minority ruling upper class at the expense of the poor majority who lived on and farmed the land. Yet, while land ownership in Honduras continues to be centralized, land in South Africa is being returned to the people. Though still painfully slow, South Africa’s formal legal and informal methods to restore land ownership are informative. In fact, both Chencho and Juan report learning valuable lessons from the South African effort at land restitution.

#### **• Visit to District Six**

During the seminar on “Deepening Democracy,” parallels in the tensions around land tenure in South Africa and Honduras became evident, and some information on land restitution in South Africa was presented. To learn more, Chencho and Nozizwe visited District Six. The visit further highlighted forced evictions and large scale land acquisitions under the Group Areas Act, an apartheid era law that separated black and white South Africans and forced over 60,000 people from their homes during the

1970's. Following the adoption of South Africa's new constitution in 1994 and the establishment of the Commission on Restitution of Land Rights, many South Africans who had lost their property were given the right to return. Although ownership of the land in District Six was officially handed back to its original inhabitants, the process of restoring land rights has been extremely complex and slow. For Chencho, the process was especially important to understand, given that land distribution issues continue to fuel societal tensions in most countries in Central America, especially Honduras.

• **Visit to Townships and Solms-Delta to Learn about Land Restitution in South Africa**

To learn about other forms of land restitution in South Africa, Chencho, Nozizwe and Juan visited the Solms-Delta farm where a creative, community-led project provides a unique and powerful example of land reform. To confront the issue of land dispossession, the farm owner called a meeting with farmworkers to seek a "win-win" solution. They ultimately agreed to establish a trust where all the profits from their wine and restaurant sales would be deposited. Today, the community of farmworkers directly participates in determining where the assets in the fund are used. To improve the lives of the community, the farmworkers have prioritized investments in education, housing and transportation. Juan found this model particularly interesting because Honduras is faced with similar problems with concentrated land ownership, where benefits accrue to only a small minority of people.

**Conclusion**

The *Network* interventions in Honduras and South Africa provide an example of the potential of the *Network*. Though South Africa and Honduras reside on opposite edges of the Atlantic, Tanenbaum saw the value of a South-South exchange of ideas and experiences between the two countries. For Nozizwe, the opportunity to train members of the FNRP in Honduras allowed her to impart skills and knowledge that will advance peace and justice in Honduras. It also afforded her the opportunity to learn about the challenges facing Hondurans and how they are similar to South Africa's prior to 1994. For Chencho and Juan, the knowledge they gained about South Africa's peaceful transition to democracy created a seed bed of ideas on how to improve the political and social situation in Honduras.

Though the real impact of these *Network* interventions will not be realized until well after the Honduran general election in November 2013, the South-South exchange initiated by Chencho and Nozizwe marks the beginning of what is shaping up to be a positive relationship of exchange between South Africa and Honduras.

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