


The devastation from two hurricanes is apparent throughout Honduras, adding new misery to existing poverty.



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# FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT: HONDURAS IN 2021

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By Carmen Manuela “Nelly” Del Cid

After the hurricanes, the clean-up begins.



**Living in a country like Honduras can make you feel like you are stuck in Hell.**

**The year 2020 seems to confirm this impression, given the arrival of the coronavirus and quarantine, followed by the two hurricanes Eta and Iota. Add to this the dictatorship and its acts of corruption that have caused the mourning of thousands of Honduran families. All of these combine to give Honduras one of the highest per-capita poverty rates in the world.**

**In such a scenario, where do we find hope? What keeps people alive and inspired to go on dreaming of a motherland for all?**

### **FIRST, COVID**

The start of the pandemic was a period characterized by fear and distrust. We distrusted everyone, and fear gripped most of us. Our houses became our cages. Many homes became danger zones for women, girls and boys. Others, however, were spaces for growth, coexistence and rethinking the meaning of life.

The pandemic showed us the most fearsome face of the ruthlessness and self-centeredness of those in control of the country. Each death bears the stamp of the greed of a corrupt and opportunistic political-business class, hungry for power. The recent acts of corruption have surpassed those committed in other times. The looting and squandering of public resources have led to the deaths of thousands of people. Speakers for the regime focused on issuing manipulated figures of infections and deaths while people died in hospitals that lacked adequate resources to address the health emergency.

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The pandemic showed us the importance of self-care and each person's responsibility for protecting their own lives. It is much clearer than ever. Yes, we had to take care of ourselves, but we also had to overcome fear. Fear lowered our body's defenses, leaving us disorganized and more vulnerable to the atrocities of the regime that has condemned us to die from either starvation or the coronavirus.

The people returned to the streets to demand their rights. Women in several communities "cooked" bullet casings and tear-gas canisters as a symbolic act to lay bare the lies of the government that gave the public bullets and bombs instead of medicine and food.

We mourn the loss of loved ones whom we could not comfort in their sick beds or say our last goodbyes to at the cemetery. Despair took us by the hand, while collective depression grew. Anxiety took root in our minds and darkness settled in; we saw no path. At every step, we ran into policemen and soldiers willing to attack us; we ran into unemployment, bankruptcy of small businesses, layoffs, hunger, death.

The quarantine gave us the space to feel the fatigue of a fight that seems to lead nowhere; to feel the heavy weight of the yoke we bear of a ruthless, corrupt and criminal dictatorship; a pause for mourning, crying alone for our losses and for our anger at what we wish were, but isn't.

We felt what we felt, and we began to name it. We came together virtually to name those feelings and emotions. The collective agreements became part of the new moment, and we saw opportunities to heal our hearts and to rethink our existence and our struggle.

## AND THEN THE STORMS CAME

We were overcoming the fear of dying from the coronavirus when hurricanes Eta and Iota hit us.

Time and again, life puts us at the threshold between life and death as a means of developing our search for the meaning of existence. The truth is that we didn't believe the hurricanes were going to have the impact they did. The official government spokesperson assigned so little importance to what was coming that many families in high-risk areas waited until the last moment to leave their homes. The government had no contingency plan; nobody knew where to go.

Our communities were covered by water and mud, but it was not the rain that flooded us, it was the negligence of a genocidal government. They opened the gates of the Cajón (Francisco Morazán Central Hydroelectric Plant). Without taking security measures for the communities, they opened the gates of the watershed and abandoned us to our fate.

The slogan "Only the people save the people" can be heard everywhere. We became our neighbors' caretakers.

The beautiful acts of heroism, shared tenderness, solidarity and willingness to give our lives for one another made us see the light at the end of the tunnel. That is the way, to open our hearts to one another, to see ourselves in the person who comes to us in anguish, burdened by the immensity of the disaster. We have been part of the most sublime dance of the thousand hands of compassion; those who gave food and shelter, who came to the rescue, who carried you in their arms to safety and who gave you something sweet to mitigate the bitterness of the moment.

Eta surprised us. We were not ready to stand again on the precipice of life and death. Eta invited us to plunge into the deepest darkness, to contemplate how the superfluous floats in the meaninglessness of an existence that is trapped in the desire to have, in which nothing is enough to calm the hunger for power, the root of all violence.

When the water covered everything, there was no escape from contemplating the uncertainty of living or dying. In that sublime moment, no words were spoken, but the heart said everything. In the silence, the darkness, the thoughtlessness, there was a murmur that could no longer be resisted—the acceptance of reality, with no regret, no guilt, no anger or rage, just gratitude.

Darkness and light, day and night, good and bad, life and death—don't they come from the same source?

When light filtered back in like a sheet being lifted, hands of support reached out to embrace us. Then we understood—not with the mind, but with the heart—that only love saves, only love liberates. We understood that we can lose everything, but if we keep the connection with our essential being, we will have won everything.

I look at myself and I see you, my people. I see myself in your eyes of solidarity; I love myself in your hands of compassion. I find a thousand reasons to live in the denial of your life. Your hell is the prospect of transcendence, of transformation, of germination of new life.



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