

# HONDURAS THIS WEEK

SATURDAY, JANUARY 24, 2009



Art by Honduran Artist Exhibited in the European Union

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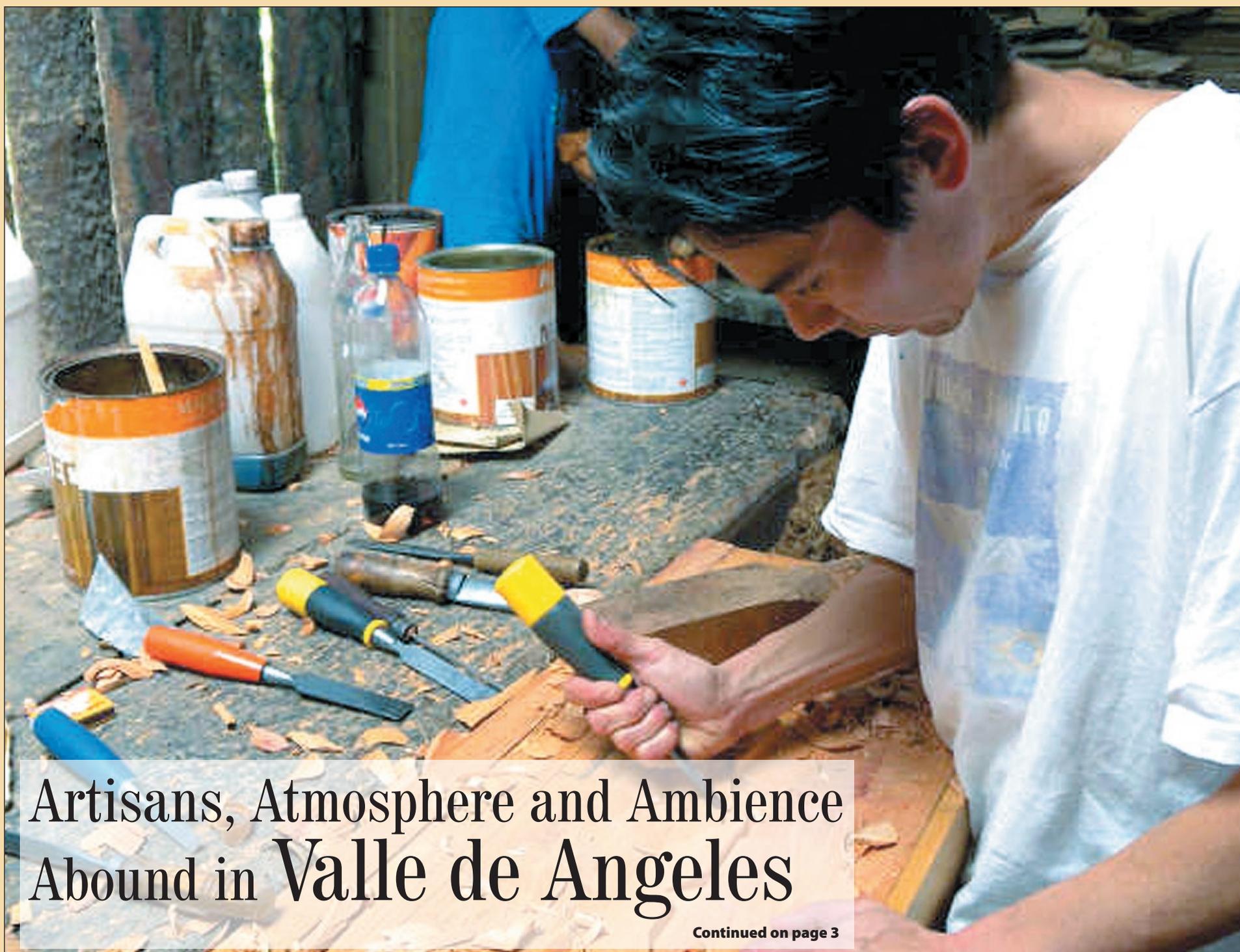
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Renato Circus Dazzles Crowds in La Ceiba

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## Artisans, Atmosphere and Ambience Abound in Valle de Angeles

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Cindy Burgess/Honduras This Week

# Barack Obama Makes History as the 44th U.S. President

Todd Ellertson  
Honduras This Week

More than 1 million cheering Americans witnessed Barack Obama being sworn in as the 44th

president of the United States this past Tuesday. "Our time of standing pat, of protecting narrow interests and putting off unpleasant decisions - that time has surely passed," Obama said during his inaugural

address.

Poised on the steps of the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C., the masses spread out before him on the National Mall, many staking their claim in the early morning

hours to catch even a distant glimpse of the new president.

Obama, the son of a Kenyan father and a white mother from Kansas, made history as the first African-American president elected

in the U.S. He characterized his swearing-in "as a moment that will define a generation." The 47-year old was raised by mostly by his single mother has now risen to

OBAMA cont on page 5

## EDITORIAL

## A Call to War

Are you tired of violence, lack of values and how difficult it is just to get by these days? Well there is good news, we have to enlist in the army, there's a call for war. The soldiers must wake up and get ready for the battle.

The battle goes on every day we can't put our guard down. This fight is against discouragement and a culture of death. We are continuously bombarded with bad news. Each person, each country has their own characteristics, their strengths and also their own resources.

As Hondurans, we have to confront one of the most degrading circumstances: poverty. Statistics on indicators of human development need to be transformed. It is necessary that we are educated with the knowledge that frees us and allows us to make decisions to impact change.

Let's be conscious of how valuable life is. Quality of life depends directly on the decisions we make. Look around; you are not alone, you belong to a society. Get involved with your neighbors, be aware of

the problematic insecurity; indifference and lack of communication are cruel allies of all kinds of harm.

Where are the true leaders? We are sure they do not belong to any political party, labor unions, or magisterial associations. Their flags are not working out well; their colors are not giving life, these have brought an environment of controversy and division.

We believe the flag of Honduras has a clear and beautiful message for all: the blue is the sky and the ocean that surrounds this immortal land in white; and the five stars represent Central America; the central star is us, symbolizing our geographic location and for the Honduran genius that once dared to dream of a splendid homeland.

When we contemplate the beauty of our national anthem, specifically the sixth verse, we reflect on the black, injured bird that lost its way, behind the top of the hills and on it free us from slavery. These are battles without end, while our hearts beat there will always be a call for war.

## OPINION



## LETTERS

Dear HTW:

Todd Ellertson wrote an article a while ago on the hazardous traffic conditions of Honduras, which resulted in arrogant, uncalled for remarks from American do-gooders who do more harm than good.

Today, traffic conditions are worse, due to the blatant disregard for the law. We cannot place all of the blame on drivers. Most of the blame falls upon the government that legislates but fails to follow-up with enforcement. Police officers stand on street corners ignoring one violation after another. Taxis and ordinary drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians cross against traffic lights. There are no police

riding patrol on the highways. These consistent violators run stop signs and drive the wrong way on one-way streets, police officers included.

Major faults of government enforcement are: A person does not have to know how to drive to obtain a driver's license: there are no written tests nor driving tests to obtain a license, there are no mandatory nor defensive driver's training facilities available, no police patrols on city streets or highways, and no book of traffic laws to educate the driver prior to a written and driving test.

Th recent Amarateca accident explains the ignorance and stupidity of drivers that think they

own the road. I experience and observe such actions daily, yet when they cause an accident, they deny any wrong doing on their part.

I carry a camera to record accident scenes. One picture is worth a thousand words.

As a retired officer, I have ticketed bicyclists as well as motor vehicle drivers because they are subjected to the laws of the road as well and it just may save their lives. Citation, citation, citation is the only way to educate delinquent drivers.

**Jorge J. Cota**  
Siguatepeque  
via Email

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In an effort to improve the quality of the paper,  
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Please call 232-2300 and ask for  
Andrea or Rosibel if you have questions.

**From all of us here at '  
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we are, as always, eternally  
grateful for your readership!**

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All letters should be no more than 300 words in length, and should include the writer's name, address and phone number. We will not publish street address, e-mail address or phone number unless specifically requested. All letters become property of Honduras This Week and are subject to editing for length, content, grammar, punctuation, etc. You can send us letters to the editor via email: [hontweekprensa@multidata.hn](mailto:hontweekprensa@multidata.hn) or mail your letter to:

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## TOURISM

## Artisans, Atmosphere and Ambience Abound in Valle de Angeles

Cindy Burgess

Honduras This Week

Wood shavings fly as Sergio Sanchez chisels away at a mahogany chest. For 10 years, this native of Valle de Angeles has been honing his craft, perfecting the techniques for which Honduran woodcarvers are well-known. The sharp crack of his hammer draws curious visitors into the workshop, where Sergio will spend a week or more carving the most intricate of details before the chest is sanded, stained and displayed for sale at the souvenir shop out front.

Handicrafts like Sergio's are a major draw in Valle de Angeles (Valley of Angels), a picturesque mining town tucked into the pine-forested mountains about 30 kilometers northeast of Tegucigalpa. But so is the town itself. Much of it has been restored to its original 16th century appearance, right down to the red-tiled roofs, lanterns and narrow, cobblestoned streets. Thousands of people visit every year, drawn by the Spanish colonial atmosphere, leisurely pace and fresh mountain air. It's a welcome escape from the smog of the capital, and on weekends the streets are filled with foreign tourists and residents of Tegucigalpa alike.

"People used to come here for day trips, to have a little lunch and do some shopping," explains James Lee, the owner of Villas del Valle, "but more and more people are coming for the entire weekend."

They come for the handicrafts and the history. Valle de Angeles is a shopper's dream, with artisan boutiques on just about every block. Visitors can choose from the best Honduras has to offer, including hand-carved wooden chests, clay pottery, baskets, hammocks, jewelry and paintings.

They do so in the shadow of the town's centerpiece, the old iglesia or church. It's one of the first sights visitors see when they enter town. Even though the church was rebuilt and modernized in the 19th century, it still retains its original, rustic charm.

The church towers over the central park, where people amble along the shady paths and gather in small groups around a painted fountain. On weekends, music blares from the bandstand, often leading to spontaneous dancing by young and old alike. The streets surrounding the park are closed to traffic, offering easy access to the art galleries, restaurants and souvenir shops nearby.

Inside one of those shops, Arte Piel, the shelves are lined



Cindy Burgess/Honduras This Week

Intricate wood carving done by local artisans adorn boxes, trunks and wall hangings.

with handcrafted leather goods in a range of colors and finishes. Through a door to the back, visitors can watch the artisans at work, tracing patterns on leather, cutting out the pieces, stitching them together at a sewing machine and polishing and buffing the final

product.

The owner of the shop, Ruben Gonzalez, has been handcrafting leather for 15 years.

He works alongside six employees, crafting everything from handbags and wallets to belts and briefcases. Gonzalez says

business is good, but he's noticed a drop in the number of tourists – and the amount they're spending – since September, when the global economic crisis began.

Another cause for concern among business owners in Valle de Angeles is the recent increase in Honduras' minimum wage. The 60 per cent hike could be a double whammy for this tourist zone. Higher wages mean increased operating costs for businesses. That prospect is already prompting companies across the country to lay off workers, meaning Hondurans may have less to spend on trips to Valle de Angeles.

"That may have an impact," said James Lee, "but we're just beginning the New Year so we don't know for sure yet."

For now though, it's hard to imagine anything taking away this beautiful Spanish town. The ladies flip pupusas as fast as they can on the grills outside Virginia's Pupusas. The chorizo and carnitas sizzle, luring hungry customers with their mouth-watering aroma. At Restaurant Manolo the tables are filled with patrons, enjoying plato tipico and a refreshing drink.

The visitors are smiling – and most importantly, they're already making plans to return.

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# NATIONAL



## DARE TO THINK!

### Problem # 28

#### Birds on the Side

In the works of an Arab mathematician from the XI century, we find the following problem: two palms trees grow on both sides of a river, one across from the other. One is 30 cubits tall, the other one 20 cubits tall. The distance between both trees is 50 cubits. At the top of each palm tree there is a bird. Suddenly, both birds spot a fish on the river's surface, between both palm trees. The birds swooped and arrived to the fish at the same time. At what distance from the taller palm tree did the fish appear?

### Answer to Problem No. 27

Let n be the number of students. We can suppose that the total score was 100 points. With 5 students, you obtain a pointage of 450. The points of one third of the rest of the class would be:

$$(n - 5) / 3 \times 70$$

The points of the remainder class would be:

$$2 \times (n - 5) / 3 \times 60$$

The sum of the points divided by the number of students is equal to 67.5, so:  $450 + (n - 5) / 3 \times 70 + 2 \times (n - 5) / 3 \times 60 = 67.5$

Simplified, you get:  $n = 32$

Think you know the answer? Please submit your best guess to: DARE TO THINK at [rosipache@yahoo.com.mx](mailto:rosipache@yahoo.com.mx)



### Honduras against South American teams

Honduras played Chile on Jan. 18, in a "international friendly" a warm-up soccer game as part of the next phase of World Cup qualifiers. Ex-captain substitute Carlos Pavon and Captain Amado Guevara scored late in the second half to give Honduras a 2-0 win over Chile. Pavon kicked a shot past Chile goalkeeper Miguel Pinto in the 77th minute to give Honduras a 1-0 lead before Amado Guevara transformed a penalty for Honduras 10 minutes before the final.

Chile played with 10 men for the final 55 minutes. Jose Fuenzalida received a red card for a hard tackle on Martinez in the 1st half. Fuenzalida had played for just three minutes before being sent

off after coming on to replace Luis Figueroa

Honduras has reached the final phase of CONCACAF qualifying play and will face Costa Rica on Feb. 11. Chile, currently tied for third with Argentina in South American qualifying, plays Peru on March 28.

### Wilson Palacios in England

Tottenham has agreed with Wigan over the reassignment of Palacios, a deal estimated to be worth nearly \$20 million.

The 24-year-old is considered an important part of the Wigan team after joining the club 12 months ago.

A statement on the Spurs' official website confirmed that: "We are delighted to announce that we

have reached an agreement for the transfer of Wilson Palacios from Wigan."

Wigan Coach Steve Bruce feels Palacios has the ability to become one of the best midfielders in the Premier League of England and did all he could to convince the Central American to stay. Wigan will now have only one Honduran player, Maynor Figueroa, who scored his first goal 2 weeks ago. Wigan is expecting to sign Hendry Thomas next season, another standout from Honduras.

### Central American CUP

Honduras is hosting the 2009 UNCAF Tournament with seven Central American countries participating. The tournament will divide teams into 2 groups. One group will include Honduras, Belize, Nicaragua and El Salvador. The other - Panama, Costa Rica and Guatemala. One team could be eliminated by only playing 2 games in this highly-anticipated tournament. Honduras will have played their first match against Belize on January at 22.

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## INTERNATIONAL



AP Photo

Barack Obama is sworn in as the 44th U.S. president on the front steps of the capital building.

## OBAMA: First African-American president sworn in

con't from page 1

the most powerful position in the world.

Expectations are running high as seemingly insurmountable obstacles lie ahead. The U.S. economy lies in ruins and two wars are being fought abroad. Obama's campaign cornerstone was based on hope and change. "Now there are some who question the scale of our ambitions, who suggest that our system cannot tolerate too many big plans," he said. "Their memories are short. For they have forgotten what this country has already done; what free men and women can achieve when imagination is joined to common purpose, and necessity to courage."

People from all over the world watched the teeming masses wave American flags and take in the historic event. Jumbo screens in both Harlem and Times Square in New York City drew thousands. Across the country, in gyms, churches, schools and college campuses, viewers in massive numbers tuned in. Luminaries

that included Oprah Winfrey and Steven Spielberg were also in attendance.

Obama, new first lady Michelle and their daughters Sasha and Malia began Inauguration Day in church and followed the swearing-in at the White House where they shared coffee with the Bushes. Then it was on to a luncheon at the Capitol where the new president was toasted by members of Congress.

The inaugural parade, in which the first couple was driven in an armored Cadillac limousine, again drew thousands who watched Barack and Michelle briefly step out of the limo to walk hand in hand on the parade route. Security and Secret Service were out in full force on the chilly January day.

After whirlwind appearances at no less than 10 inaugural balls, one of which included performances by Beyonce, Stevie Wonder and Faith Hill, President Obama woke up on Wednesday morning to begin work on the daunting task of governing.



Writers serve food on their head

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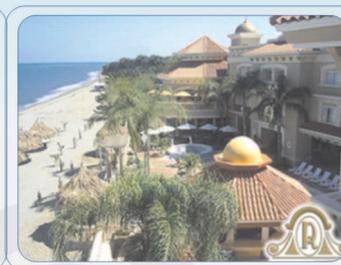
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## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

# Les Etrangers: Art by Honduran Artist Exhibited in the European Union

Federico Rosa

Special to Honduras This Week

*We may take Fancy for a companion, but must take Reason as our Guide.*

-Dr. Samuel Johnson

*There are no facts, only interpretations.*

-Friedrich Nietzsche

*Let us not forget that we are all a nation of immigrants.*

-Thomas Jefferson

On the day of my flight to Brussels, I felt no anxiety. It was my first professional art exhibition overseas (I stress the term 'professional', because I have participated in several art exhibitions overseas, but most of them were in art school) and therefore not a thing to be taken lightly. An artist's first individual exhibition (or "solo show"), post-art school, at a recognized exhibition space, is usually regarded as an immensely important, career changing experience. I got on the plane with airy, exciting thoughts of Europe. I reached 38,000 feet and reclined on my chair, amusedly reading my paperback.

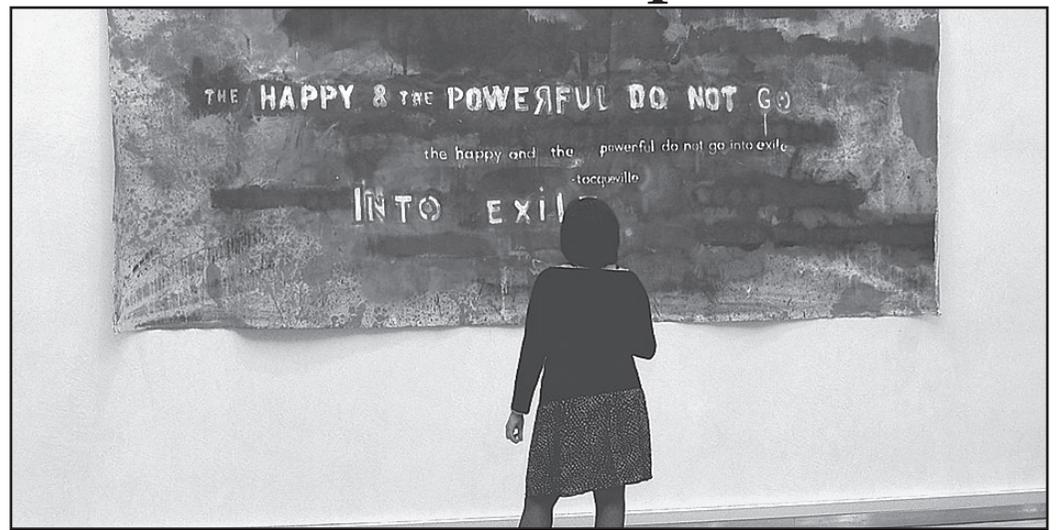
What I had in mind for this exhibition was to present visual art that has an argument, proposition, and conclusion; utilize logic in order to make a direct impact on a foreign social conscience through the unlikely, yet extremely powerful, medium of visual art. We must remember, when making aesthetic value judgments, that is, deciding whether or not an artwork has or lacks merit that we must do so while referring directly to the object in question. Aesthetic judgments should not be formulated by anything else but the artwork itself; so I will try to explain some of the ideas about what informed the works, but unfortunately for the absentees, the best judgments are made when facing the object.

The exhibition was to be held in Brussels, at the Berlaymont



Courtesy Federico Rosa

Federico Rosa spoke at the art exhibit in Brussels, Belgium.



Courtesy Federico Rosa

The exhibit in Brussels showed art with immigration as its theme.

building of the European Union, all throughout the month of October 2008. Its conceptual subject matter was illegal immigration; the tortuous odyssey through which starving, desperate Latin Americans go through year after year, sacrificing life and limb, for a tautological chance to get a chance at a better life in the U.S. The objective was to try to make a political statement based on, not pretending to own, others' tragic experiences and utilize them for subject matter in order to draw attention, not shock. The suffering of illegal immigrants is unique in its tragedy, and one cannot deny feelings of empathy for another human being's misfortunes.

For instance, as I write this there is a circus, literally, in front of Casa Presidencial, the headquarters of the Honduran government. Unintentional irony? It is not hard, while picturing this scene, to imagine why citizens flee to potentially hostile, faraway lands, enduring all sorts of hardships and threats, not least of all death; since a circus leads or at least supports the government's ideals.

The necessity to create a series of art works which reflected upon these kinds of situations became necessary, as a way to under-

stand and analyze the root causes of illegal immigration: extreme poverty, deficient welfare, criminality, lack of education. The intention to perform, rather than simply show a series of works of art to be felt instead of contemplated, was so as to confront the viewer and establish a dialogue. Immigration, border control, and foreign policy are hardly news, but we often ignore and even forget that human lives are lost every year in pursuit of a so-called dream whose value is more ambiguous than ever.

"The Outsider," by Albert Camus, is a modern classic of existentialist literature, in which an individual is challenged with the absurd. It is this notion, of the individual faced with the absurd, which was the language of the artworks inside the Berlaymont. The paintings served as an analogy for immigrants: uncomfortable, strange, difficult, and faced with absurd circumstances. That is the reason why the paintings had no stretchers, the edges were torn, and appeared weather worn and tattered.

They are foreign bodies; alien to both you and I, on the boundaries of our perception, like many illegal immigrants. The artworks were not trying to be objects of

beauty or to fit reasonably inside the space: they were invading it, literally difficult to place and hang. They were impolite, different, and thus behave differently. They arrived alone rolled up on top of each other, with no stretchers awaiting them, without any frames to decorate them upon their arrival. Sometimes, being different equals being obtuse, but it is often the best way to confront someone with an argument involving a complex topic.

The art of politics, for me, has to be as foul as the ghetto, as claustrophobic as a truck full of immigrants, as unforgettable as a glue-sniffing, barefoot child, as violent as a slaughterhouse, as indelible as blood that spills daily. The photographs exhibited were snapshots of nightmares, fit together like a string of awful bits of memories, and the paintings like the remains of human bodies, a leathery mesh covered with dirt, soot, blood, and sweat.

Alexis de Tocqueville said: "The happy and the powerful do not go into exile." It was this, precisely, what the paintings and photographs reminded us of, staring back from the abyss of exodus.

After the exhibition I did not expect much to change in my life.

(That would have been arrogant and self-centered). However, the last thing I expected was negative gossip and slander about the exhibition. Instead of looking at the positive ramifications, a random Spaniard began publishing a series of internet articles degrading our work (mine and the Honduran Embassy's), making preposterous claims, based on circumstances and coincidences, that the exhibition was a political fraud, and a product of nepotism and influence.

What disappointed me most was that the people who should have defended and supported me, Honduran colleagues and peers, were the ones involved in propagating this slander, trying to 'expose' my so-called 'elite' status in Honduras as an excuse to denigrate my capabilities as an artist, as if social class denotes an artist's quality.

It is ironic, because it was in Tegucigalpa that I truly experienced exile. The "mojados" predicament is much more tragic, obviously, but perhaps, exile is also a state of being; a psychological as well as a spiritual misfit that reminds us of the absurd circumstances we encounter daily. Maybe we all are exiles in one way or another.

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## NATIONAL

## Frustrated Workers Take to the Streets

Emily Moberly

Honduras This Week

Workers frustrated with the ramifications of the recent minimum wage increase took to the streets recently to make their voices heard.

On January 15, hundreds of teachers, farmers, nurses and other workers marched through the streets of San Pedro Sula, Tegucigalpa and La Ceiba to put pressure on the government and businesses of Honduras.

They continue to wait for a response that will make them happy.

Wendy Figueroa, a public school teacher in La Ceiba, was among the marchers. Figueroa said that she taught for five months but was only paid for two. She said other teachers have it even worse. "Many teachers haven't been paid since last February or May," Figueroa said. "The government doesn't want to pay."

She said that she and the other teachers involved in the march expect the government to pay them the money they're owed. "If the government doesn't pay, teachers won't work," Figueroa said. One can only imagine the impact this would have on Honduras' already suffering public school system.

However, teachers weren't the only participants in the march. Everyone involved had the same



Teachers took to the streets of La Ceiba (among other cities) to protest non-payment of salaries.

complaint: "If we can't work we can't pay our living expenses." "We need to work," Figueroa said.

She said that the march had several goals in addition to wanting payment for teachers. She said that marchers hoped to put pressure on the government to reduce general

costs of living including transportation and food costs as well as put pressure on the government and businesses to respect the new law and use it to better Honduras, not to make the country poorer.

Juan Melendez, also a teacher in La Ceiba, said he thought the new

minimum wage was a good thing. "Right now the salary is perfect," Melendez said. "It used to be too little." However, Melendez said that although the new law was intended to bring the country a little further out of poverty, it is only making life more difficult for

people.

Many march participants have lost their jobs as a result of the new wage. The new wage, which increased minimum salaries from 3,400 lempiras to 5,500 lempiras in urban areas and 4,055 lempiras in rural areas, went into effect January 1.

Within the first week of January, 700 people were fired, according to the Ministry of Labor.

While trade unions rejoiced at the news, businesses were outraged. Businesses complain that they can't pay the new wage without firing workers.

A December 24, 2008 article in 'La Prensa' said that the government increased the minimum wage after it failed to bring about an agreement between workers and business, as stipulated by the country's labor laws.

President Mel Zelaya was quoted saying that the minimum wage increase "will force the business oligarchy to start paying what is fair."

Honduras is one of the poorest countries in Latin America, with a poverty rate of 70 percent, according to the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). The 2009 Index of Economic Freedom lists Honduras is one of Central America's poorest countries; two-thirds of its people live below the poverty line, and unemployment is about 28 percent.

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## ARTS &amp; CULTURE

Barack Obama:  
The Man and His Program

**Book Reviews: "Dreams from My Father" and "The Audacity of Hope"**

Patrick Ahern

Honduras This Week

Having listened to Obama's eloquent speeches, his well-written books should have come as no surprise. "Dreams of My Father" was written before he achieved major prominence. It gives some very helpful insights into what shaped him into the impressive person and politician he is today, as he was just recently sworn in as the 44th U.S. president.

Born in the melting pot of Hawaii to a man from the Luo tribe of Kenya and a white woman (Ann Dunham) from Kansas, Barack Obama could have become a bitter and confused man of mixed race instead of the self confident and tolerant person who changed history by becoming the first African American U.S. president. Barack's father (same name) left the family when young "Barry" (his childhood name) was only two years old and his mother re-married an Indonesian. Barack lived for several years with his mother and stepfather in Indonesia where he attended a local school. When he was in the fifth grade he went back to Hawaii to live with his maternal grandparents and attend the prestigious Punahou Academy, founded by missionaries to Hawaii in 1841.

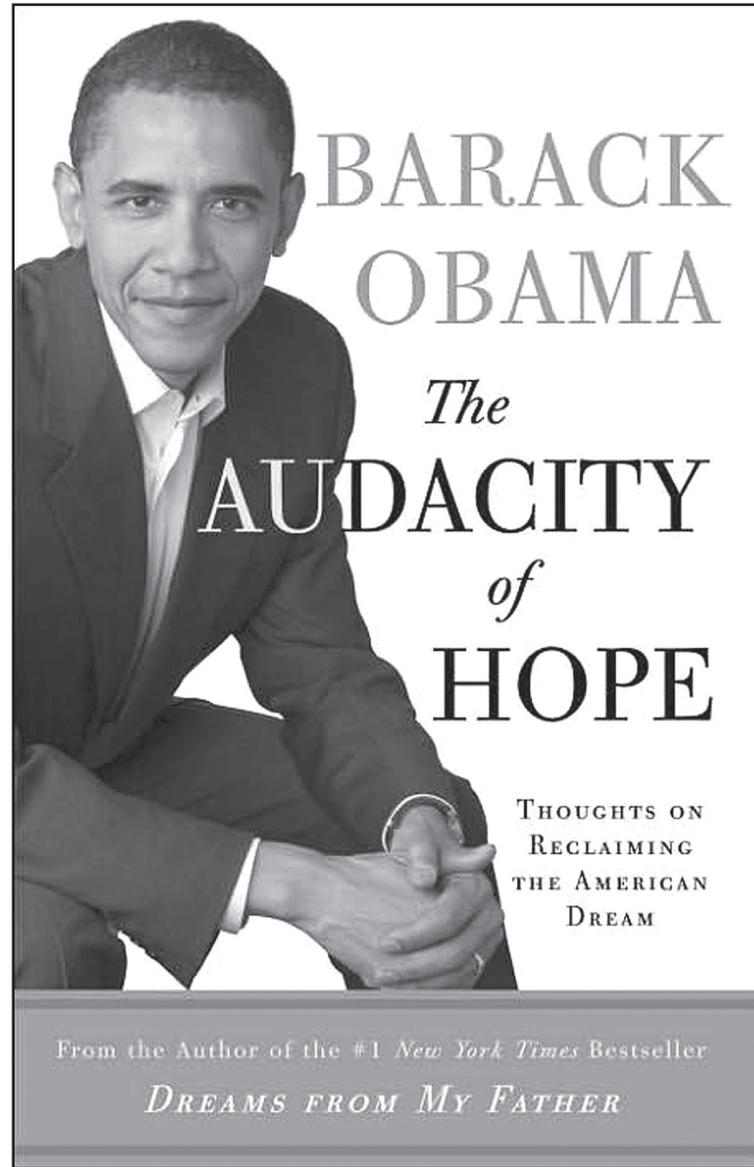
Given his absent father, Obama was raised by his white grandparents and mother from age two until graduating high school. There were only three black students at the Hawaiian school. Yet Barack cultivated his black identity by reading Baldwin, Ellison, Hughes, Wright, DuBois, Malcom X and befriending black kids who were

in Hawaii with their parents in the military. At Occidental University in Los Angeles and then Columbia University in New York City, Barack continued searching for his racial and political identity... "To avoid being mistaken for a sellout, I chose my friends carefully. The more politically active black students. The foreign students. The Chicanos. The Marxist professors, and structural feminists and punk rock performance poets. .... At night, in the dorms, we discussed neocolonialism, Franz Fanon, Eurocentrism, and patriarchy." (A stark difference from George Bush's college years, perhaps?)

Although he worked at an economic consulting firm to multinational corporations after graduating from Columbia, Barack soon opted to work as a community organizer on the south side of Chicago. The work entailed long hours, little pay and slow progress. Chicago's south side had lost most of its heavy industry and was a depressed area complete with boarded up houses, dilapidated high rise public housing projects, drugs and despair.

But Obama learned from the "black folks at the grass roots," single mothers, laid off factory workers, teachers, and church leaders. He helped build a coalition and community organization to push for jobs, better schools and for the city to pay attention to problems of the neighborhoods--from filling pot holes, to community policing to small business loans for struggling black entrepreneurs. Hopefully Obama will always carry this three year experience with him and encourage development from the bottom up.

In the interim, between organizing and going to Harvard Law School, Obama finally "went back" to Africa to meet his father's side of the family. His father had died in a



car accident in Kenya several years earlier. He spent several months meeting half brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles and his paternal grandmother. His reflections are thoughtful and one can feel the pain as he searches to understand his father whom he only remembered from his one visit back to Hawaii when Barack was ten years old.

His father was sent to study in Hawaii just before independence and was one of the first Kenyans to receive his PhD from a western university (Harvard). Despite his brilliance he was marginalized from power because of his abrupt manner, his willingness to criticize the newly independent government and because of his tribe (Obama was Luo and President Kenyatta was Kikuyo). The senior Obama died a disappointed and bitter alcoholic.

At the end of Obama's extended

stay in Kenya, he writes about crying at the graves of his grandfather (Hussein Onyango) and father. "When my tears were finally spent, I felt a calmness wash over me. I felt the circle finally close. I realized that who I was, what I cared about, was no longer just a matter of intellect or obligation, no longer a construct of words. I saw that my life in America--the black life, the white life, the sense of abandonment I'd felt as a boy, the frustration and hope I'd witnessed in Chicago--all of it was connected with a small plot of earth an ocean away (in Kenya), connected by more than the accident of a name or the color of my skin. The pain I felt was my father's pain. My questions were my brothers' questions. Their struggle, my birthright."

Barack Obama was 34 years old when he wrote this book. A lot has happened in the ensuing thirteen

years (to say the least!). Obama became the first black editor of the Harvard Law Review and then joined a Chicago law firm where his boss was his future wife, Michelle. He practiced civil rights law and also taught at the University of Chicago Law School. In 1996 he was elected to the Illinois State Senate representing the Hyde Park area of the south side of Chicago. In the summer of 2004 he was asked by then presidential nominee John Kerry to deliver the key note address at the Democratic National Convention. His electrifying speech literally catapulted him onto the national stage. In November 2004 he was elected to the U.S. Senate from Illinois. He announced his candidacy for the Democratic nomination for president in February 2007 and at the time few felt he could beat Senator Hillary Clinton. The rest is history, as they say.

Obama's 2006, "The Audacity of Hope," is a remarkable book in that it shows that he has been quite consistent in the broad outlines of his "program for America." So many themes of the book were centerpiece of his campaign and in the debates with Republican rival John McCain. Many of the chapter headings are what seemed to inspire the voting public: Values, Our Constitution, Opportunity, Faith, Race, The World Beyond our Borders, and Family. The ideas inspire a hope that the nightmares of the Bush administration--wars, torture, environmental neglect, and economic ruin--will give way to loftier ideals applied pragmatically.

Expectations for the Obama presidency are huge.

The problems facing him are equally enormous. The world economic crisis has riveted his attention. Will this crisis not allow his administration to adequately follow through on his platform of universal health care, tax relief for the working class and educational opportunity for all? Will the invasion of the Gaza Strip cause even more turmoil in the Middle East, hampering the withdrawal from Iraq and Afghanistan and the continued treatment of Latin America as an afterthought?

We will have to wait, but this young, 47-year old gives us great reason to have the audacity to hope that the U.S. will regain its integrity at home and in the world at large.

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## NATIONAL

## Renato Circus Dazzles Crowds in La Ceiba

Emily Moberly

Honduras This Week

Children's laughter, a tiger's growl, and the occasional crack of a whip are a few of the sounds one hears at the circus; stinky animals, fresh straw and buttery popcorn are a few of the smells.

But at the Renato Circus, galloping camels, sparkling dancers and flying trapeze artists are just a few of the sights one will see.

The Renato Circus, which calls Mexico home, arrived in La Ceiba

the weekend of January 16. Javier Sanchez, manager of marketing and public relations for all circuses in Honduras, said the circus will be in La Ceiba until February before moving on to Trujillo or Tocoa.

A family owned spectacle, the Renato Circus is a single-ring show with 20 performers including jugglers, dancers, and even the world's best clown, Renato himself.

Renato inherited the role of circus ringleader from his father, Renator, Sr. in 1975. Both were born into the circus life and



Courtesy Micah Williams



Emily Moberly/Honduras This Week

The elephants are a big draw, capturing the attention of these youngsters.

Renato, the circus ringleader, commands attention in the center of the ring in between featured circus acts. consider it their family. In fact, many of the other performers are family: Renato's wife and two sons also perform in the show.

For some in the audience, this was their first circus experience, as was the case for friends Herman Enrique, 12, and Heber Lopez, 11. Both boys attended the 5 p.m. show on Jan. 17 and said they were there to see their favorite animals, the

elephant and tiger, in action.

Along with elephants and tigers, the Renato Circus also has several camels, a zebra, horses and a tiny pony among other animals.

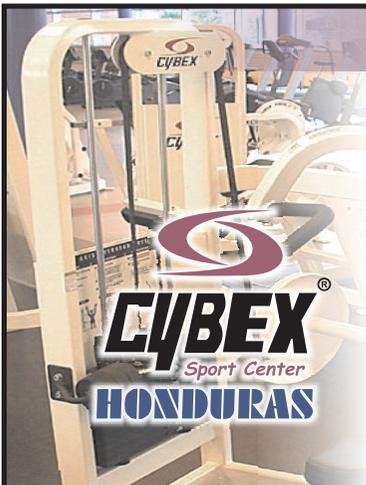
However, more amazing than the animals' performance is the circus' motorcycle act.

One, two and then three dirt bikes are placed in a large metal cage. The walls of the cage become

the road and audience members watch with one eye shut as all three bikes reach high speeds without colliding.

Whether comical, scary or awe-inspiring, the Renato Circus acts create a magical atmosphere that people of all ages will enjoy.

Performances are at 5 p.m. and 7 p.m. nightly; tickets costs 200, 300 and 400 lempiras each.



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# THE MAYA CALENDAR

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### ARTS

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**PEÑA ARTISTICA AT EL RINCÓN DEL ARTISTA.** Next to Casa Mexicana, in front of Wendys' Tepeyac, Tegucigalpa. Wednesdays-Saturdays. 8:30 pm, Musical Group Klasicos is inviting

**JANUARY AT CCET, CULTURAL CENTER OF SPAIN IN TEGUCIGALPA** (All activities are free) Open Tuesday through Saturday from 10 am to 8 pm, Sundays from 9 am to 3 pm closed on Mondays.

For more information: Centro Cultural de España, Col. Palmira 1ª calle, #655, Contiguo al Redondel de los Artesanos. Tegucigalpa, MDC, Honduras, C.A. Tel +504 238-2013 Fax 238-5332, E-mail: [info-ccet@aacid.hn](mailto:info-ccet@aacid.hn)

**LAS VEGAS ARRIVES IN TEGUCIGALPA, WITH THE PRESENTATION OF THE SPECTACULAR TIHANY.** Next to Presidential House, Tegucigalpa. From December 26. Tuesday-Thursday: 7:30 pm. Saturdays and Fridays: 4:00 pm and 7:30 pm, Sunday: 12:00, 4:00 and 7:30 pm. Tickets for sale at Multiplaza Mall, MetroMall and at the circus from 11:00 am

**SIXTH BIENNIAL OF VISUAL ARTS OF THE CENTRAL AMERICAN ISTHMUS 2008** BAVIC Illustration of the Central American Isthmus. Collection of 72 works of 36 artists participants from Central America. Location: chambers of the National Museum for the Identity MIN, Tegucigalpa. From November 21 thru February 20, 2009; 9:00 a, to 4:00 pm. Organized by Women in the Arts (MUA) "Leticia de Oyuela" [www.bienalcentroamerica.com](http://www.bienalcentroamerica.com)

**"TRIBUTE TO THE WOMEN" A PAINTING EXHIBITION.** The Cultural Center of San Pedro Sula (CCS) The CCS informs that on Monday, January 19 starts registering for the painting exhibition "Tribute to Women", to be held next January 28de in Gallery III of the center. The exhibition is part of the tribute that CCS will offer for four distinguished

women. For more information contact: Paola Villanueva Director of the Center, Tel. 553.39.11 / 553.37.68. [www.centrocultural-sps.com](http://www.centrocultural-sps.com)

**STARTING CLASSES AT "DANZA LIBRE" DANCING SCHOOL.** The "Danza Libre" school announces the start of classes for the 2009. "Reductive Dancing for Adults" from January 12, and for children starting on January 15, from 5:00 to 6:00 pm. For more information phone to: 235 - 8175 / 206 - 9730, 2:00 thru 7:00 pm

**MONTHLY CONVERSATORY AT MUÑOZ LOBO BOOKSHOP.** The Muñoz Lobo bookstore and the editorial group Satyagraha invite you cordially to join us at the monthly Conversatory, a free space center, which takes place every first Thursday of the month at Ave. Cervantes, opposite to Museum of Honduran Man in Tegucigalpa, from: 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

**"FRENCH ALLIANCE CINEMA CLUB.** More information at [www.afhonduras.com](http://www.afhonduras.com) or at 239-6165

**CAFÉ PARADISO EXHIBITING FILMS.** Every week you can enjoy excellent films at Café Paradiso in Barrio La Plazuela in Tegucigalpa. Contact: [anarellavelez4@yahoo.com](mailto:anarellavelez4@yahoo.com)

**EL PARNASO.** Visit [www.elparnasohn.tripod.com](http://www.elparnasohn.tripod.com), you will find all kind of artistic expressions

**TERCO CULTURAL PRODUCTIONS.** Contact them; they always have info on cultural activities. E-mail: [tercoproducciones@gmail.com](mailto:tercoproducciones@gmail.com). Visit [www.karlalara.com](http://www.karlalara.com)

**PROYECTO GRITON ACTIVITIES.** Visit [www.proyectogriton.com](http://www.proyectogriton.com) and focus on KUPIAKUMI, you'll find the daily logbook of the activities of this cultural group.

**CULTURAL ACTIVITIES AT CAFÉ PARADISO.** Café Paradiso (downtown) is always performing cultural activities. Contact [paradiso@cablecolor.hn](mailto:paradiso@cablecolor.hn)

**EXPERIMENTAL THEATRE OF HONDURAS.** Visit the website [www.telah.org](http://www.telah.org). They are presenting plays, essays about theatre culture. Tel: 220-0690, 238-3726

**ARTEACCION AND HIS BLOGSPOT:** [www.artaccionculturaenmovimiento.blogspot.com](http://www.artaccionculturaenmovimiento.blogspot.com). An area where you can learn about the work and events performed at the

cultural association Arte Accion. You can also visit the website: [www.artaccion.org](http://www.artaccion.org), which has been updated.

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**CULTURAL FRIDAY AT "CAMINANTE" BOOKSTORE.** Karla Lara and Camilo Korea will welcome to the Cultural Friday "Caminante" bookstore. Friday, January 30, 2009, 6:00 pm. In Caminante Bookstore. Our events are advertised on page <http://www.libreriacaminate.com/eventos.htm>

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**MARRIOTT HOTEL ACTIVITIES.** Every Thursday you can enjoy live music with the artist Hector Casas, from 8:00 p.m. thru 11:00 p.m. Happy hour from 5:00 p.m. thru 8:00 p.m. 2X1 Miller bear, frozen Margaritas and tequila Jimador.

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**METTA ACTIVITIES.** This Center has an excellent physical development plan for adults older than sixty years: dancing, pilates, stretching, and more. For information visit [www.mettahn.com](http://www.mettahn.com). Metta is on the street behind Emisoras Unidas. Tel. 239- 52 78, 206- 7022, 213 -3375

**CINEMAS.** Log into [www.cinemark-ca.com](http://www.cinemark-ca.com)

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**A CONTINUOUS TRAINING PROGRAM.** The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Tegucigalpa (CCIT) has a continuous training plan for its members. Contact: Fabiola Saenz: [fsaenz@ccit.hn](mailto:fsaenz@ccit.hn)

**IBERO-AMERICAN HISTORIAN FORUM. From 28 to 30 January, 2009,** Copan Ruins in western Honduras, will host an International Forum of specialized historians. For more information please contact: [culturaartesydeportes@yahoo.com](mailto:culturaartesydeportes@yahoo.com).

**HONDURAN BOOKS AT GUAYMURAS EDITORIAL.** New webpage for Honduran books: [www.guaymuras.hn](http://www.guaymuras.hn). Sections: Who are we, New books, Honduran authors, Other Honduran Editorials, Month's book

**DAY HIKES INTO THE PICO BONITO NATIONAL PARK AND THE LODGE AT PICO BONITO.** Includes a guided hike on the Lodge's natural trail into the Pico Bonito National Park with a stop at the Mermaid Falls swimming hole (Hike can be made at 8:00 am or 1:00 pm). Before or after your hike enjoy a delicious meal at the Lodge's restaurant and explore the Butterfly Farm and Serpentarium also located on the Lodge's property (before or after the hike). Price includes guide service, lunch, and park entrance fee paid to the Pico Bonito National Park Foundation (Drinks not included) Please call ahead to be sure we have guides available. E-mail: [pico bonito@caribe.hn](mailto:pico bonito@caribe.hn), Tel. 504-440-0388/0389/0468

**REPUBLIC HISTORY MUSEUM AT VILLA ROY.** Schedule: 8:00 - 4:00 pm from Monday thru Saturday.

Barrio Buena Vista, Tegucigalpa. Entrance fees: Hondurans and Central Americans: L. 10.00, from other countries: L. 20.00. For more information contact.: Patricia Cardona [museosregionales@yahoo.com](mailto:museosregionales@yahoo.com), Tania Ramirez [ardontania@gmail.com](mailto:ardontania@gmail.com), Telephone: 238-0608.

**HONDURAN DOCUMENTARY CENTER OF HISTORICAL INVESTIGATIONS (CDIHH).** Has a great collection of books and national file documentary. Old Presidential House, Barrio El Centro. Visits from 8:00 am - 4:00 pm. Attended visits, all Wednesdays, cost: L. 5.00

**SANTA MARIA DE LOS ANGELES MUSEUM.** This interesting museum is open since October 2006. It is located in the town of Valle the Angeles. You will enjoy a great collection of interesting objects, old photos from 1800 - 1900, antiques of history, art and culture. Visit us at [www.museosantamaria.com](http://www.museosantamaria.com) or e-mail us to: [santamariamuseo@yahoo.com](mailto:santamariamuseo@yahoo.com)

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**CHRISTIAN BUSINESS WOMEN MEETINGS.** Sharing testimonies and praying. Every Wednesdays, 5:30 p.m. at Glifo Room in Honduras Maya Hotel, free entrance. [yam@cablecolor.hn](mailto:yam@cablecolor.hn) or Tel. 9996-6707

**INTERDENOMINATIONAL MINISTRY SUITABLE WOMEN.** Schedule of meetings: Every first Saturday of the month, they offer a breakfast at El Candelero Room, Honduras Maya Hotel, 7:40 a.m. L. 100.00.

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**NEURAL STIMULATION.** Hands without Borders movement. Free Healing Treatments, Wednesdays from 6:00 to 7:00 p.m. Details and confirmations: 220-1441, 3345-9461 (Rosario) and 235-5045 (Alicia). [ljhondurasneural@yahoo.com](mailto:ljhondurasneural@yahoo.com)

## HEALTH/FITNESS



# Health MATTERS

Ivonne van Leest

Sports Physical Therapist

When I opened my clinic in Tegucigalpa eight years ago, I had no idea what to call it. One of the problems in Honduras is that anyone who wants to put a sign on his or her door saying "physical therapy clinic" or "rehabilitation clinic" can do just that, because this is one of the few countries where those professions aren't protected by law. So, in talking with friends, I decided, almost as a joke, to put "Clínica de Fisioterapia Profesional," so people would know I was the 'real deal,' a physical therapist, educated in Holland.

But now, after eight years, I'd like to change that because I want people to know what physical therapy is and what it can do. So, we've started advertising "Fysio Total...more than just physical therapy." I thought this was necessary because of my experience with patients and doctors over the past eight years, and another 12 years in this country working in rehabilitation.

Unfortunately, there are a number of medical doctors who think they can do what I do, simply because of the "M.D." behind their names. Every week I get patients who are messed up, because after a perfectly performed surgery, the doctor will say things like, "Just put some ice on it in the evening and you'll be okay" or "Just bend and stretch your arm or knee a couple of times a day and you'll be fine." And every time I hear this, I wonder what those doctors think I studied all those years at the university, or if they know the classes I took in order to evaluate and prescribe treatment plans much more detailed than "put some ice on it" or "stretch and bend."

I also got a postgraduate degree in sports physical therapy, a degree completely dedicated to sport injuries and how to get

high performance athletes back in shape after an injury or surgery (which certainly won't happen with prescriptions - quite normal in Honduras - like, "an injection, rest and ice"). I have combined my training and education to create a different way of approaching the treatment of injuries and have treated patients of all ages and levels of athletic ability. The results have been fantastic. I want people to know that there is more under the sun, even in Honduras, than those kinds of prescriptions.

We have introduced what we call "Fysio Total." This is a working method only practiced in my clinic - and with proven results. First, understand that modern physical therapy is more than an ice or hot pack, massage, ultrasound, laser or electrotherapy. Scientific proof reveals these techniques alone won't fully heal. Those means are not to cure patients; they are used only to prepare patients to "move." That's what we've been doing for years. That's why we work in a medical gym, which, by the way, isn't just putting exercise equipment in a room and having your patients use it. You'll need to study to know which exercises are appropriate for which patients: how many repetitions, what resistance, what muscles to train, etc. And in order to achieve the best results, years ago, I bought my first Power Plate. It's not just a vibration machine as some people might think. Power Plate is Acceleration Training, which is used for high performance athletes.

I have studied how any kind of patient can benefit from Power Plate and get positive results.

Next time you experience muscle pain, a sports injury, back pain, pain from arthritis, osteoporosis or fibromyalgia or have had surgery to correct a herniated disc, a hip or knee replacement or knee surgery, please remember that we offer total treatment: Fysio Total...

## FYSIO TOTAL.... More than just physical therapy!

more than just physical therapy.

And never let a doctor tell you to "live with it," because I always have to wonder if they say that because they haven't a clue what to do with you or how to diagnose you. Take a chance and come to us - we'll be honest with you and if we cannot help you, we'll tell you that.

Our mission is to get you in a state of well-being. We'll teach you things you can do at home, how to prevent future pain or discomfort, and what exercises are best for you. We'll do an assessment, which includes your analyzing your work environment, even your home environment if you're interested in that.

We'll get you back on your feet - that's our goal. Not just pain free - we'll get you back to your daily activities, back to your normal athletic performance level, no matter if it's for fun, fitness or at the professional level. Our programs are like personal training: 45 minutes of one-on-one "Fysio Total."

Please don't get the idea that I don't respect medical doctors - quite the opposite. I highly respect those who practice within their area of expertise and training and let us do what will compliment their efforts. Luckily, the doctors I currently work with in Comayagua have opened my eyes to how it should be: a team working together for the best of our patients. I respect those who understand that what we do in our clinic is the right way to recover after surgery or an injury. This is our specialty and after personally working for 29 years in this field, continually studying what has been scientifically proven to really work, I guess that's not too much to ask. My colleagues have been transformed into "Total Fysio" therapists after working closely with me for the past five years.

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# ROATAN



## CONGRATULATIONS PRESIDENT OBAMA

Please allow us to wish you well as you move into the White House. Mr. President, we are all behind you and feel very optimistic about your plans to get things back on track. God speed and please don't forget our little democratic country just to the south of you - A great place to unwind.

## HE MADE-OFF WITH THE MONEY

The investors should have known by his name not to trust BURNIE MAD OFF with their hard-earned

savings. Doesn't it make you a little more comfy to realize at least we don't have any Ponzi schemers crawling in and about our island? Of course, the fact that generally speaking, we islanders are not all that flush with money to invest, having to spend it all on day to day expenses! On top of that - we have to guard our rears at all times.

We are even noticing low-end pet food is vanishing off of the store shelves in an unusually fast manner. Those giving their pooches Pedigree dog food for years are switching to Doggie brand and guess what - the dogs are loving it. Just as long as you hide the labels, they'll never know the difference. In fact, this writer once fed his doggies cat food, and not one of them noticed. Excuse me a moment - my dog is meowing at the door, there might be an intruder.

Of course, some are saying the pet foods supplies are depleted because folks are mixing them in with their rice and beans. We hope things don't really get that bad, but at least we will have strong, clean teeth. We need to hold on because the U.S. economy is just now showing tiny signs of recovery. Some optimistic financial gurus are saying we have bottomed out and we are now going to slowly start the climb back to a healthy economy. They say this is a perfectly normal reaction to all the indignities the big-time Wall Street buzzards put the market through and we just have to try harder and things will spring back into shape. I personally believe their theories and feel that by June we will be swinging and singing once more on our beautiful Roatan.

The deals I am seeing and hearing about make me think now is the time to buy something here. I have seen

some beachfront lots selling for about half of what they were selling for a year ago. Call someone quick and grab your chunk of sand!

## CHAT GROUP THUNDER

The chat channels have been alive with emotion as of late. The main subject seems to be island security. This has been a dormant issue for years now and seems to be rearing its ugly head once more. Of course, those who have not been mugged or burgled or had their flip-flops stolen off of their porch will say, "Crime, what crime?" But anyone involved in a daylight home invasion or a late moonlight beach mugging will not agree. Not that I have heard of any of those horrible crimes...but if.

Where are they always pointing fingers? It seems, at the police department, at the Fiscal Office, the immigrants from the mainland or from Guatemala or El Salvador. Everyone agrees the crooks are NOT FROM HERE. The local people are still the honest, hard-working local people and they are as troubled with the invasion of immigrants from all over the world.

There seem to be three major schools of thought on how to control the situation: one, being to once again petition the government, threaten the government by not paying taxes or just watch a little while longer while the government kicks into action and protects their cash-cow - Roatan. The danger here is that the cruise lines will not just wait; they want positive action now before an incident.

Another suggested cure is in the hiring of private security forces. This has been the norm for banks and high end jewelry stores forever

in Honduras. Now, some West End and West Bay businesses are setting up their own defense systems to combat guest harassment. This has been tagged by a few as a terrible thing leading to disaster, but we see it as a simple form of self defense, a deterrent and a good way to go.

The last approach circulating is the ever present do-it-your-selves. They want to take the law into their own hands and settle matters the old fashioned way. Well, if we go this way, we will automatically inherit the dreaded vendetta or retaliation affect that every policeman or woman has to live with. You either have to go full time cop or stay out of the business, no half way wannabes, it just does not work. How hard would it be to try to build a cement wall while looking over your shoulder at every turn? How difficult to drive a taxi and suspect every ride a potential family member of someone you helped put away?

So, this leaves one: wait for government, or two: put together a private back-up security situation. Perhaps using the tried and true 'neighborhood watch' method: neighbors watch out for each other and report everything and anything out of the ordinary.

Bottom line, we choose to live here. Let's help the community, which translates to help the police help us while we wait for election time and help from the Honduran government

## ON A MUCH LIGHTER NOTE

A lady was picking through the frozen turkeys at the Plaza Mar Grocery Store, but she couldn't find one big enough for her family. She asked a beautiful stock girl, "Do these turkeys get any bigger?" The beautiful stock girl replied, "No ma'am, they're dead."

In Tegucigalpa, right near the 'Honduras This Week' office, a truck driver was driving along and noticed a sign that read: "Low Bridge Ahead." Before he knew it, the bridge is right in front of him and his truck gets wedged under it. Cars are backed up all the way to the American Embassy, when finally

a police car comes up. The cop gets out of his car and walks up to the truck driver, puts his hands on his hips and says, "Got stuck, huh?" The truck driver says, "No hombre, I was delivering this bridge and I ran out of gas."

## DO YOU KNOW THIS MAN?

A medium tall Gringo with dirty blonde hair, a bandana around his head, flip-flops and a filthy Chavez Regal bag around his wrist entered Banco Atlantida in Coxen Hole. He stood in front of the security camera and filled out a request for withdrawal form, then got into the shortest line. While standing there he began to worry about the surveillance camera, so he slipped out of line and went back into the busy street. He then walked to HSBC and kept his head turned past the camera and got into the shortest line there. An hour and a half later he reached a window and handed the clerk the note he wrote earlier saying, "give me all your money, I have a gun in my Chavez Regal bag." The clerk read the note and handed it back to the man saying, it was no good because it was written on a Banco Atlantida form.

He scooped up his note and went back to wait it out at Atlantida when the police picked him up. If you know this man, you might swing past Bo Jangles and pick up a snack for him - he is mighty hungry about now.

## NEW AND ALMOSTS

The Noodle Factory just opened across from Foster's West End and features...guess what? Noodles and sushi and much needed things like that. Find it and try it before they are sold out.

Someone is calling them CIA Chefs and we don't know if that means what it sounds like or not??? Anyway, one is called Carl, and he is responsible for opening the Back-Room restaurant in Coxen Hole, then the View on the Ridge, then Taty in La Ceiba and now returns to open again to the East of The View. Welcome back, traveling CIA Chef Carl. We are watching you and we hope you are not watching us.

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## LATIN AMERICA

## Latin America Remains Unsettled in 2009

James W. Bodden

Honduras This Week

The New Year presents the Latin American region with a continued opportunity to settle the longstanding political and security issues that have destabilized the southern portion of the western hemisphere. Political stability in Bolivia is at stake, the continued presence of Hugo Chavez as leader of Venezuela hangs in the balance, Nicaragua's election crisis persists to foment violence, the Colombian insurgency still holds a sizeable number of hostages, Chile, Ecuador, El Salvador and Honduras will be holding presidential elections; these multiple concerns are compounded with looming fears over the effects of the global financial crisis on the subcontinent.

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez is moving forward with his government's initiative to call for a referendum ending presidential, gubernatorial and legislative term limits, altering the 1999 constitution to legalize unlimited reelections in the country. This new attempt to extend his presidential mandate comes after the failure of Chavez's December 2007 gamble to change the Venezuelan constitution.

If able to pull it off this time around, Chavez and his supporters of the United Socialist Party of Venezuela will likely be able to secure their positions in power past the 2012 elections and continue to strengthen their political influence throughout the region. Economic concerns will also require the government's attention as inflation continues to skyrocket and oil prices decline; further reductions in petroleum revenue will threaten the country's international project

for regional political dominance.

Bolivia's socialist government has managed to maintain a relative peace, after five state prefectures attempted to defect from the central government in La Paz in 2008, fomenting violent demonstrations throughout the country. An UNASUR lead diplomatic effort was able to affect a standstill between the parties, creating a nebulous status quo that halted major acts of violence, but left key issues of state political autonomy unresolved and the opposition's objections to the new constitution approved by the MAS (Movement Toward Socialism) controlled Constitutional Assembly. With elections scheduled for January 25, President Morales' MAS government must ensure secure conditions for the vote, as the possibility of a resumption of violence becomes much more probable.

The administration's vice-president has warned that opposition prefectures are preparing plans to attack the central government politically and on the streets. Bolivia's new constitutional project is likely to be approved by a majority of citizens, but Evo Morales's victory may be short lived, as the five Bolivian dissenter states have threatened to hold referendums on autonomy if the constitution is approved.

The Sandinista regime of Nicaragua continues to reel after the fractious December elections, which demonstrated widespread abuses of authority, corruption and electoral fraud. Mobs continue to run the streets, manifesting their self-acknowledged impunity by laying siege on the capital at any moment.

Demonstrations by the second largest political force in the country,

Liberal Constitutionalist Party (LCP), are routinely overrun by Sandinista street-gangs, resulting in reported fatalities. President Daniel Ortega, struggling with one of the lowest approval ratings in Latin America, has the herculean task of either bringing an end to the bloody public demonstrations by negotiating with the LCP an impartial, monitored recount of contested votes or continuing to use the state's security services and Sandinista activists to terminate all public protest. The Nicaraguan National Assembly and Supreme Court are controlled by a political alliance between the Arnoldo Aleman wing of the LCP and the Sandinistas, a rupture of this compact could lead to tense battles in the congress, ending Ortega's hold over national legislative projects.

Colombia's President Alvaro Uribe has laid the stakes of his presidency on his controversial Democratic Security doctrine; in 2008 the Colombian army destroyed or displaced almost half of the membership of the country's most vicious insurgent outfit, Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), imprisoning or eliminating the narco-guerrilla's chief commanders, and eviscerating their command and control and communication structures.

FARC continues to have significant manpower, estimates range from 8,000 to 12,000, and holds thousands of hostages under their control (most hostages being ordinary civilians held for ransom). The narco-insurgents have initiated the process for a unilateral hostage release of two Colombian politicians and five members of the security services. Colombia's

government, the International Red Cross and Senator Piedad Cordoba, a controversial FARC sympathizer, are in the process of negotiating the hostages' release. FARC might be down, but it is not out: their mountain guerrilla forces have shot down an unmanned Colombian drone, a show of force by the narco-insurgents indicating their war is not over.

Elections in Latin America have become a game of expectations for the international community, waiting to watch which country is the next to go 'red.'

Ecuador's upcoming general election on April 26, after the approval of the new constitution, will likely see continuity for the

administration of President Correa. El Salvador's ides of March election is particularly ominous for moderate political circles, as the Faribundo Marti Front, a former terrorist organization turned political party, is poised to win by a significant margin, moving the Central American region deeper into the Venezuelan sphere of influence. Honduras's November elections will determine whether the nation will continue to veer to the political left.

Latin America's political and security conflicts are mostly left over from 2008, unresolved crises in waiting for the will and resolve to map a secure and stable course for the region's democracies.

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•East End, Guanaja, Bay Islands, 84.25 acres with approximately 2,788 feet of beach front. Coral reefs in front of property, \$60,000 per acre.

•Guanaja, Bay Islands, 10 acres with river, house, next to a hotel. Price: \$85,000 per acre.

•Tela, Atlantida, beach 100 meters away from beach, two story house, swimming pool, 3 bedrooms, price \$190,000.

•Piedra Pintada, La Ceiba, Atlantida, two beach houses with three bedrooms. Price: \$85,000.

•Piedra Pintada, La Ceiba, Atlantida, two properties of 32.8 x 65.6 feet of beach front. Price: \$16,000 per property.

•Granadita, La Ceiba, Atlantida, beach front house with two bedrooms, terrace, swimming pool, price: \$240,000.

•Balfate, Colon, 4 terrains of beach front of 65.6 x 65.6 feet, \$25,000 each one.

•Tela, Atlantida 68.8 acres in Tela, beach, mountain and plain terrain, 34.4 acres (plain) and 34.4 acres (mountains), excellent for building a hotel resort. Price \$58,140 per acre.

•Trujillo, Colon, 423.4468 acres of beach, rivers, mountain and plain terrain, appropriate for a tourist hotel resort, price: \$600,000 negotiable.

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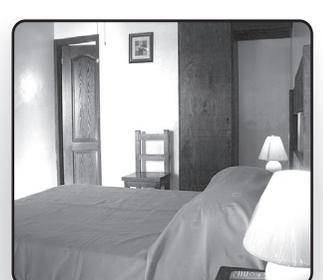
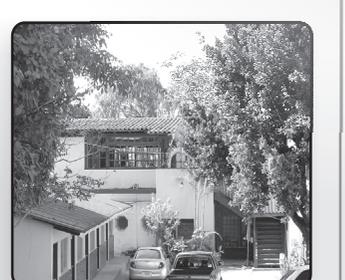
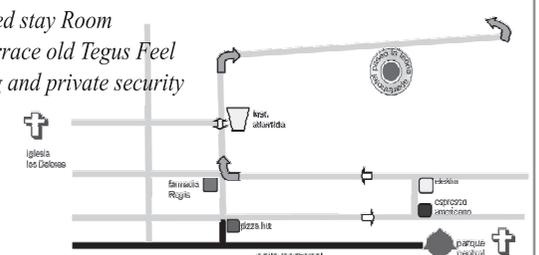
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