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USA

The Caravan “Crisis” “€” Myth and Facts

- IV Online magazine - 2018 - IV526 - November 2018 -

Publication date: Monday 5 November 2018

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There’s a lot to be said about the caravan of Central American refugees, hundreds of miles from the U.S. border as they struggle through southern Mexico in hopes of achieving asylum in the United States. Here we will only touch on some of the most basic facts.

It’s a myth, of course, that the refugees are an “invasion force” coming to infiltrate the United States “illegally.” Quite the contrary, they want to reach regular ports of entry and make their applications for asylum – a right they have under U.S. and international law.

Asylum seekers who make illegal crossings, and immediately surrender to border patrols, have been doing so only because the Trump administration has cynically closed the legal entry points – leaving refugees stranded for days, or forced to turn back into the hands of predatory gangs. (On these atrocities, see an interview with attorney Jennifer Harbury on Democracy Now.) [1]

It’s also a myth that the caravan, or immigration “legal” or otherwise, are any kind of real “crisis” for the United States. That’s just a part of the stream of racist lies spewing from the mouth of Donald Trump and rightwing media – while Democratic politicians mostly run away from the issue.

There is, however, a very real crisis in the countries of Central America. Honduras, where the largest number of the current caravan refugees come from, is a stark illustration. People are traveling together for protection from the threat of thieves and sex traffickers. Before that, parents have been sending their children, unaccompanied, on the deadly dangerous northward journey to escape the clutches of gangs demanding that kids join them, or die.

The crisis in Honduras didn’t just “happen.” You can say it’s been brought to us by the two most recent U.S. presidential candidates, Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump.

In 2009 a coup was staged that overthrew the elected president of Honduras, Manuel Zelaya, mainly because his reform policies threatened the landed oligarchs of that country. That coup, warmly applauded and emboldened at the time by U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, effectively returned Honduras to the rule of death squads and drug lords. One result was the murder of the leading indigenous human rights and environmental activist Berta Cáceres, and many others.

In 2017, the Honduran people voted the coup president Juan Orlando Hernandez out of office. On election night, the vote count was “suspended” and when it resumed, the results were “flipped” to put him on top – a blatant, open fraud that was approved and duly congratulated by the Trump White House. No wonder that the popular enthusiasm of the Honduran people has given way to despair and organized flight.

The United States created this crisis. Let the refugees in!

November 2, 2008

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[1] https://www.democracynow.org/2018/7/9/from_cia_backed_wars_to_cartel