

**Statement of Solidarity with the Caravan from Honduras Seeking Asylum at the
U.S. Mexico Border
Department of World Languages, Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago**

The Justice Studies Department and allies at Northeastern Illinois University stand in solidarity with the caravan of children, women, and men from Honduras arriving at the San Ysidro port of entry. We denounce the physical, emotional, and spiritual violence that these economic refugees have encountered along the Guatemala-Mexico border at the hands of both Guatemalan and Mexican law enforcement agencies. We ask that authorities from Mexico and the United States treat the Honduran caravan with humanity, dignity, and respect. It has been reported by numerous news outlets that Honduran migrants, including toddler children, were attacked with tear gas and rubber bullets at the Guatemala-Mexico border, and with physical violence and tear gas at the US-Mexico border by border patrol and US military. More than 1,600 caravan members have been deported since the caravan entered Mexico and more than 100 of them have been wounded. Tragically, on October 29th, 26-year-old Henry Diaz Reyes died from injuries sustained during a scuffle with the Mexican police at the Tecun Uman demarcation line along the Guatemala-Mexico border. We fear that this will not be an isolated case.

This type of violence along with the footage and images of children running and hiding from the police and the military invoke a moral obligation to demand that these governments reprieve from further traumatizing and violating asylum-seeking refugees as they make their way to the US. We acknowledge that economic refugees from Honduras, the rest of Central America, and Mexico are fleeing violence and economic depression fueled by the legacy of US foreign and domestic policies that exploit, displace, and force brown migrants into the most perilous and dangerous migration routes in the world as they become the target of kidnapping, extortion, robbery, and torture by international criminal organizations. As scholars who focus on all aspects of social justice and on conditions that fuel injustice, we call for an end of human rights abuses and for an end of the violence inflicted on these black and brown bodies. We also call attention to the needs and protections of the non-gender and non-binary conforming members of the caravan because of the vulnerability of their bodies and an urgency to keep them safe.

The economies of Honduras and the US have been interdependent since the late 1800s when the American Fruit Company forcefully installed its plantations in Honduras. By the early 1900s the US began a long history of government and military interventions in Honduras to protect dishonest economic and political US interests. In the 1980s, the Reagan Administration deployed US military and trained Nicaraguan 'contra' forces in Honduras to overthrow the Sandinista government as a way to challenge popular movements in Central America. Repression and human rights abuses rose in Honduras with the creation of "banana republics," the militarization of Honduran communities with the aid of the ruling class, with the implementation of US military bases, and with arms sales by the CIA. The Reagan Administration also shifted the Honduran economy to an export economy, which deregulated and destabilized the global coffee trade, upon which Hondurans livelihoods heavily depended on. A trend of deregulation, including CAFTA in Central America and NAFTA in Mexico, destabilized the already vulnerable agricultural sector, resulting in an exodus of urban emigration and international migration.

Today, unemployment rates and violence, force Hondurans to escape poverty and threats to their safety. Migrants cite the desire for safety for their children and work as their primary motivations to seek asylum in Mexico and especially in the US. We also denounce Trump's action to deploy over 5,000 soldiers and military equipment to meet the Honduran migrant caravan at the U.S.-Mexico border; we denounce plans to place asylum-seekers in tent cities in Tijuana, BC; and we denounce the announcements to end birthright citizenship, another direct attack on children. We consider the military deployment a brutal show of force on an unarmed population and a gross misuse of resources. The US government response to the migrant caravans echoes the long history of xenophobia in the US, which has resulted in the separation of thousands of families. We also fear that the response of the US government to the arrival of the caravans will further traumatize children, women, and men who are fleeing many of the same conditions of violence, military surveillance, and destitute living that they are currently experiencing. We remind the US government and its supporters that seeking asylum is a lawful act protected by international law. We reiterate our call for the humanity and dignity of Honduran asylum-seekers and stand in solidarity with the Honduran caravan and all who are seeking a stable, safe, and loving place in the world.

In Solidarity,

Dr. Sarah M. West
Dr. Denise Cloonan Cortez de Andersen
Jeanette M. Hernández
Dr. Brandon P. Bisbey
Dr. Esther M. Santana
Sanaa Rahman
Thomas Griffin
Carmel Carr