

Humanizing Mareros: Exposing the continuum of violence, lack of reconciliation, and repressive State policies that enable the spread of gangs in El Salvador

Vanesa Tomasino Rodríguez*

Fecha de envío: 14/07/2013

Fecha de aprobación: 18/12/2013

On February 2012, 356 inmates died in one of the worst prison fires in Latin America, in the overcrowded Honduran prison of Comayagua.¹ The Comayagua survivors accused the authorities of participating in the events of that day by initiating the fire, disallowing the inmates to escape the blazes by shutting the prison doors, and shooting those who tried to leave the prison 'inferno.'²

Central American scholars argue prison fires, alongside other prison murders and 'accidents,'³ are the state's *modus operandi* for a *limpieza*

*Vanesa was born and raised in San Salvador, El Salvador. She experienced the Salvador civil war between 1981-1992 and El Salvador's postwar era. As a war survivor she has dedicated her academic career to the exploration of El Salvador's political, economic, and social dynamics. She attended Simon Fraser University (SFU) in Vancouver, Canada where she graduated with distinction and a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science. She is starting her Masters this fall at York University in Toronto where she also plans to work towards a PhD. Vanesa has an extensive career working in politics. She has worked as media liaison for political candidates during Canadian federal and provincial elections and also volunteered to supervise voting polls during the Salvadoran presidential election of 2009. Vanesa also worked for the government of British Columbia and the ministry of aboriginal affairs during her time as a legislative intern. Aside from politics Vanesa is also an accomplished broadcaster and actor. She's been a radio and TV host as well as a columnist for a newspaper in Vancouver. As an actor Vanesa has participated in over thirty-four productions that include films, TV series and cartoons.

¹EFE-AFP, "A 370 aumentan los reos muertos en incendio de carcel de Honduras," (TeleSUR 2012) AFP, "Funerals begin for victims of Honduras jail fire that killed over 350 inmates," (The Times of India 2012)

²Ioan Grillo and Mike McDonald, "Huge prison fire kills over 350 inmates in Honduras," (Reuters 2012)

³The Comayagua fire was labeled an 'accident' see Dryshia Nair, "Honduras prison:

social.⁴ According to *The Times of India*, *Terra Argentina*, and *Reuters*, sixty percent of the imprisoned inmates at Comayagua were not convicted felons, some, were imprisoned simply under suspicion of belonging to a gang.⁵ In Honduras and other Central American countries like El Salvador, looking like a gang member can get the impoverished youth arbitrarily arrested under the grounds of illicit association enacted by repressive state policies; such as the now dated *Plan Mano Dura*.⁶

Even though the inmates' relatives, the majority from the impoverished communities, question the actions of the authorities the consensus amongst Central Americans over the events at Comayagua is of joy and satisfaction that the inmates, particularly those assumed to be gang members, died in the fire. Examples of some comments made on-line include: "IT'S GOOD THAT THOSE RATS BURNED BECAUSE THEY KILL PEOPLE ON THE STREETS SO LET MY COUNTRY'S JAIL BURN AS WELL (original block letter emphasis)."⁷ Another comment, made on Facebook, came from a man who calls himself Chris P. As a victim of gang violence, he blames his hatred towards gang members, also known as mareros,⁸ on the events of his kidnapping and comments on the Comayagua fire:

'Human dignity' and 'gang members', shouldn't go in the same paragraph, especially when we are talking about gang-infested Central American prisons...Although, most of these 'inmates' are said to be awaiting sentence, from the looks and the MS and 18 marks on their skin in the pictures you can tell they are evil beings... Fact is, these gang members have abandoned all good left in them...These 'creatures' devolved into something sub-animal a long time ago... Call me

Probe says Cigarette Caused Fire; Families of inmates Smell Foul Play," (International Business Times 2012)

⁴*limpieza social* is Spanish for 'Social cleansing' or the permanent removal of 'unwanted' peoples as explained by scholar Marlon Carranza (Carranza 2006)

⁵For news on Comayagua fire see AFP, "Funerals begin for victims of Honduras jail fire that killed over 350 inmates," (The Times of India 2012); Elliot Spagat, "Pandilleros de EEUU presentes en cárceles centroamericanas" (Terra Argentina 2012); Grillo and McDonald, "Huge,"(2012)

⁶Also translated as 'Iron fist plan' or 'Firm hand.' USAID (Central America and Mexico Gang Assessment 2006) Jeanette Aguilar and Lissette Miranda, "Entre la articulación y la competencia: las respuestas de la sociedad civil organizada a las pandillas en El Salvador" (2006)

⁷"QUE BUENO QUE SE QUE MARON ESAS RATAS POR QUE ELLOS MATAN ALA GENTE EN LAS CALLES ASI QUE SE QUEME LA CARCEL DE MI PAIS TAMBIEN." Biyyo73 (pseud.), comment on "Imágenes tras incendio que mato a cientos en cárcel de Honduras," (Univision Noticias Blog, comment posted on February 16, 2012)

⁸Mareros is plural for marero, meaning individuals who belong to a gang. As of late 2012 the use of marero is being faded out and replaced by pandillero in El Salvador. The name change needs further analysis but it could be argued that the word mara is too closely linked to the MS 13 while the issue of gangs encompasses further groups. Therefore pandillas is now being used to replace *maras* in the media.

deranged, but this piece of news brought a twisted smile to my face, and I know it's not quite right, but utterly honestly, whatever the cause, I'm glad it happened.⁹

Comments such as the ones quoted above are shared by the wider society in the Central American countries of Honduras and El Salvador. Hence the dominant practice of *limpieza social* in prisons prevails (Carranza 2006, 242-245).

Most of the crimes in Central America are attributed to gangs whether or not statistics support the allegation. As argued by researchers Jeanette Aguilar and Lissette Miranda the contrast between facts and the subjective perception of insecurity by Salvadorans is perpetuated by the media's insistence on demonizing gang members. Aguilar and Miranda note that fifty percent of Salvadorans consider gangs the most urgent national problem (Aguilar and Miranda 2006, 57) while in Guatemala the practices of *limpieza social* targeting gang members is approved by forty-six percent of surveyed youth (Hum et al 2006, 107). It is therefore not surprising that the wider society in Central America is supportive of the deaths of potential gang members. By dehumanizing gang members, the continuum of violence, lack of postwar reconciliation, and repressive policies experienced in these Latin American countries are overlooked as contributing factors in the creation and spread of *maras*. The dehumanization of gang members implies that the impoverished youth have an inherent, unchangeable, permanent label of 'evil beings' whereby the only solution is to eliminate them. This is problematic when constructing policies to diminish gang membership as the factors are viewed as demonic rather than social.

This paper focuses on gangs or *maras/pandillas* in the country of El Salvador and argues that the dehumanization, demonization, and 'Othering' of *mareros* detract attention from the real factors that enable the creation of gangs and increase gang membership. Factors such as the continuum of violence in El Salvador which include the economic disparity increased by neoliberal policies during the 1990s, lack of postwar reconciliation, and the enforcement of repressive state policies to eliminate *mareros* from the wider society. The paper hopes that by humanizing *mareros* it will provide tools for alternative solutions to decrease gang membership by addressing the social, political, and economic characteristics that impact the lives of the impoverished youth. Moreover, by describing the active role of the Salvadoran elite in creating conditions that benefit mainly their class, the paper exposes the repressive historic pattern of 'Othering' 'unwanted' populations to legitimize suppressing uprisings of the impoverished population.

The aim of this paper is not to justify or deny the violent acts committed by *mareros*, rather, to contextualize the development

⁹Chris P (pseudo.), comment on the news of the 350 inmates dying in the Honduran prison (Facebook 2012)

of *las maras* according to the historical, political, and economic factors surrounding this phenomenon. Currently, gang membership is explained through a discourse on 'demonized' bodies that are claimed to be inherent to the impoverished youth. By exposing their marginalization the paper attempts to humanize these victims turned perpetrators.

Qualitative research is the chosen methodology for this paper mainly to emphasize the human experiences of *mareros* and Salvadorans in a postwar era. Theories by Antonio Gramsci and Michel Foucault are used to explain the dominance of cultural and social practices and the creation of categorization as a means to control individuals. Furthermore, the paper draws on previous research on gang violence and postwar El Salvador carried out by Ellen Moodie, Clare

Ribando Selke, and Salvadoran scholars such as José Miguel Cruz.¹⁰ Ribando Selke's paper *Gangs in Central America* published in 2011 expresses similar arguments to those made in this paper but fails to emphasize the link between lack of reconciliation and the creation of gangs. She overlooks the anger and frustration of the divided Salvadoran society that is still recovering from the traumas of a twelve-year war. This paper, on the other hand, explains how lack of reconciliation alongside the continuum of violence, and repressive state policies, fuel *mareros'* and Salvadorans' anger alike. The argument in this paper is divided into three sections, *What is a Marero?*, *The Elite and the Marero*, and *Gang Membership*. The first section provides a description of *mareros*, explains the origins of *maras*, and outlines the two main groups that exist. The Elite and the *marero* discusses the hegemonic power of the elite and their historic role in demonizing the impoverished youth. Gang Membership looks at three factors that increase the spread of gangs: the continuum of violence in El Salvador, lack of postwar reconciliation, and the use of repressive policies. The paper concludes that in order to create policies that could potentially decrease violence, criminal violence included, it is imperative to humanize *mareros* and acknowledge the context that systematically marginalizes and oppresses the impoverished youth.

¹⁰Ellen Moodie is an Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She is also the author of numerous articles on gang violence in El Salvador and the author of the book *El Salvador in the Aftermath of Peace: Crime Uncertainty and the transition to Democracy*; Clare Ribando Selke is a Latin American Affairs analyst at Congressional Research Services in Washington, and author of *Gangs in Central America*; and, José Miguel Cruz is the editor of *Street gangs in Central America* and has been the director of the University Institute of Public Opinion at the University of Central America in San Salvador, worked as a consultant for the World Bank, and the United Nations Development Program on the topic of Central American violence.

1 What is a *marero*?

A *marero* is an individual who belongs to a gang or mara. In Salvadoran slang mara is short for *marabunta* meaning a crowd or group of people (e.g. *Toda la mara está acá*)¹¹ but the term is also known for its use to describe an ‘army’ of ants. Gangs or *maras* are identified mainly as groups of impoverished young men covered in tattoos who congregate on the streets. *Las maras*, plural for mara, are divided into two main rival groups, *La Mara Salvatrucha* or MS 13 and *La Mara 18* also known as 18th street or *Barrio 18*. Within these groups there are various area subgroups known as *clikas* with a more recent appearance of groups like the *Norteños*. However this paper will not engage in the classification of each group as they vary by slums, prisons, and regions.

Las maras operate in the United States and Central America under similar identities but are not necessarily organized hierarchically as a transnational network. As explained by Moodie, the nature of their organization across border is limited. Moodie goes on to provide the example of a young *marero* called Gustavo Adolfo Parada Morales, known as El Directo, alleged to be “*the most dangerous criminal*,” yet, who had never left his city of San Miguel in El Salvador (Moodie 2009, 86-92). El Directo is not an exception but rather the rule. Many *mareros* do not travel across towns, cities, or countries, for reasons that include lack of financial resources, lack of protection in territories of another mara, and the constant threat of being detained by state authorities. Although cross border crimes increase with globalization and the use of cell phones it continues to be less organized than alleged by the media.

The beginning

La Mara Salvatrucha and *La Mara 18* were originally created in Los Angeles, California. *La Mara 18* was formed in the 1960s by Mexican youth who had not been accepted in other local gangs. As noted by Ribando Selke and Tina Strickland they became the first gang to accept members of all ‘races’ and from different states (Ribando Selke, 2011, 104).

La Mara Salvatrucha was formed in the 1980s, also in Los Angeles. Salvadoran refugees that had settled in California formed *La Mara Salvatrucha* to protect themselves from other established gangs such as *La Mara 18*. *La Mara Salvatrucha* became these immigrants’ ‘family,’ especially those whose biological families were collapsing under economic pressures. Many of the refugees were forced to enter low paying jobs and thus had to work more than one job to survive.

mareros learned how to survive on the streets selling drugs,

¹¹Everyone is here.

defending territories, and adopting the gang 'look' to display masculine authority and street smarts. The 'look' included shaved heads, sporting white wife-beaters, big baggy jeans, white high-knee socks, and bodies covered with tattoos. The tattoos were specific to each gang. For example, *La Mara Salvatrucha* would tattoo the letters MS on their skin.

La Mara Salvatrucha's war experience made them physically more aggressive than other gangs. According to Strickland, *La Mara Salvatrucha* was more dangerous than their US counterparts because Salvadoran immigrants had participated in the war as army soldiers or guerrilla fighters and were "*skilled in the use of weapons, machetes and combat tactics.*" (Strickland 2009, 247-270) Moreover, the threat of a sustained demasculinization by other gangs, or wider society for being wage laborers in menial survival jobs like their parents, triggered the adoption of hypermasculine behavior that have now become staples of *La Mara Salvatrucha* such as rapes, mutilations, and beatings. Therefore, the physical violence inflicted by *La Mara Salvatrucha* surpassed that of its predecessors and is reminiscent of that of the civil war. But how did these gangs based in Los Angeles reach El Salvador?

Around the early 1990s the United States' government started deporting *mareros* to Central America. These deportations became accelerated after the *Illegal Immigrant Reform and Immigrant Responsibility act* (IIRIRA) was implemented in 1996 and the United States started deporting illegal immigrants with criminal convictions, some of whom belonged to gangs. As noted by Ribaldo Selke, between 2000 and 2004 approximately twenty thousand criminals were sent to Central America (Ribando Selke, 5). These deportations, at first, were not coordinated with the Salvadoran government. This led to an increased arrival of criminals to El Salvador who were not guilty of crimes in the Central American country and thus were set free as soon as the plane landed on Salvadoran soil (Strickland 2009, 250).

Many of the deported *mareros* had grown up in the United States and spoke very little Spanish or spoke a mixture of 'Spanglish' others no longer had ties to El Salvador (Cruz 2008, 9) and were forced to join communities and settle in a country that viewed them as aliens given their physical appearance and behavior. They were known as the first generation of *mareros*.

It is important to note, that although some researchers argue that las *maras* were 'exported' to El Salvador, José Miguel Cruz's analysis on the appearance of *maras* in El Salvador is not attributed only to the deportations; rather, the deportations assisted in consolidating a unified *marero* identity. As expressed by Cruz, gangs with different names already existed in Central America however the arrival of the deported *mareros* strengthened the identity of *La Mara Salvatrucha* and *La Mara 18* within El Salvador by unifying various local gangs under

these two well-developed groups and motivating them to reproduce the behavior associated with each distinct gang (Cruz, 9).

The evolution of *mareros*

The evolution of las *maras* is described through three generations. The first generation of *mareros* included deported gang members and Salvadoran impoverished youth who were unemployed, angry, and had previously been part of the civil war as army soldiers or guerrilla fighters. In the documentary *Hijos de la Guerra* (Children of the War), *El Chino*, an ex-gang member, elaborates on why he joined la mara. He explains that realizing that his violent actions as an army soldier during the war had protected the interests of the elite and resulted in his continued impoverishment became too much to handle. He joined la mara because he was unemployed, impoverished, angry, and skilled at killing.¹² The 'children of the war,' the impoverished youth who fought as soldiers or guerrillas, were seen as 'nobodies' by the wider society and ignored by the government that had 'used' them, therefore joining a mara allowed *mareros* to become 'somebody' in a 'family' of 'home boys' willing to provide and die for them.

At first, most gang activity included petty crimes against the wider society and horrific war-like violence against their rival *mareros*. But as the impoverished Salvadoran population increased due to the implemented neoliberal policies of the 90s¹³, as the media furthered demonized *mareros*, and the state incorporated zero tolerance policies against *maras*, the violence escalated. Examples of violence include: *El Directo's* alleged seventeen murders in 1999 (Moodie, 87), the decapitation of two boys age thirteen and fifteen in el cantón or slum of Aguilares in 2008 (Escobar 2008), and the burning of eleven people in a bus in Mejicanos in 2010 (Labrador 2010).

The second generation of *mareros* did not experience the war directly but grew up in an increased level of poverty caused by neoliberal structural adjustment programs and surrounded by an established gang culture that had developed in the impoverished areas of the city. Although the second generation was unaware of the historic context that enabled the creation and spread of las *maras* they did experience however, the 'hangover' of the war. They were marginalized and demonized by a postwar Salvadoran society that was projecting onto them the uncertainties and frustrations of an unsatisfactory armed

¹²Interviews with first generation *mareros* can be seen in the documentary Children of War (Bollier et al 2006)

¹³According to Rodolfo Cardenal and Luis Armando González by 2007, fifty percent of Salvadorans were considered impoverished. And as noted by Moodie, the Salvadoran population living on a dollar a day increased from twenty-five percent in 1995 to thirty-one percent in 2000 (Cardenal and González 2007, 17) (Moodie 2010, 161) (Gramsci 1971, 12)

conflict.

The members of the second generation were recruited at a much younger age than the first generation as families continued to disintegrate due to financial stress and violence. As argued by Nancy Scheper-Hughes, the family is one of the most violent of social institutions and in the case of El Salvador impoverished families behave 'violently' as their only means to handle the exclusion and marginalization felt from the wider society and the economy (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004, 3). Violence is a normative for the impoverished youth argues Mo Hume, "*violence has become-in a Gramscian sense- a 'common sense' for many young people, both as a form of political interaction and as an expression of identity*" (Hume 2008, 742). Especially when violence is also reproduced in all public spheres and is used by Salvadoran state agents to showcase 'power.'

Violence as an expression of identity is represented through hypermasculine behaviors that are not foreign to the *machista*¹⁴ Salvadoran culture. The army exhibited similar hypermasculine aggressive behavior during the war as exemplified by the crimes committed by the Atlacatl Battalion in the massacre at El Mozote detailed below¹⁵.

The second generation of *mareros* was already morphing into the third generation that was more complex and better equipped to evade state agents. As reported by the National police of El Salvador, *La Mara 18* had outlined its new rules:

- Take over drug trade, drug trafficking corridors in two to three years, and small cartels
- Purchase more weapons
- Eliminate members who are traitors
- Prohibit new tattoos
- Do not recruit women as new gang recruits
- Execute members consuming crack and cocaine (using marijuana, including marijuana laced with coke, is permitted)¹⁶

The new rules are now being followed by the third generation with *mareros* no longer having tattoos or using crack and cocaine (Aguilar and Miranda 2006, 41-42). Ribando Selke argues that the third generation might be evolving into an international network with political aims (Ribando Selke, 2011, 4). However, as noted earlier,

¹⁴*Machista* comes from *Machismo* referring to the dominance of excessive masculinity.

¹⁵(Americas Watch 1991, 50)

¹⁶Quote modified from original. Combined all points on drug trade and trafficking into a single point. USAID. Central America.

Moodie sustains that long-term research shows the limited access *mareros* have to international networks (Moodie, 2009,86). It is possible *mareros* maintain international personal relationships with one another through migration, deportations, and the use of cell phones but it is unlikely that the third generation of *maras* operates as a uniform entity in a hierarchical structure across borders given the different subgroups or *clikas*¹⁷ that already exist even within Salvadoran borders.

2 The Elite and the *marero*

The dominant group in El Salvador is the oligarchy or elite. Antonio Gramsci argues that every social group creates with itself intellectuals “*which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields*” (Gramsci, 1971, 5). These “*organizers of a new culture... create the conditions most favourable to the expansion of their own class*” (Ibid., 5-6). The Salvadoran oligarchy has successfully produced intellectuals that shape the economy, politics, and culture to its interests while also co-opting or disciplining those groups who do not consent to their dominant discourse. The Salvadoran ‘intellectuals’ are educated in the United States and their main goal is to create living standards in El Salvador similar to those of the Global North- yet much elevated than those of the middle or upper classes in the North. As argued by María Dolores Albiac, the Salvadoran elite is used to better living standards than the international median (Albiac 2007, 179). For this to be possible the oligarchy exploits the impoverished labor force, directs the culture by controlling the media, and suppresses any possible uprisings.

The power of the oligarchy started during colonization and has been sustained ever since through capital accumulation that included primitive accumulation. Between the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century the elite’s greatest source of revenue was coffee. The oligarchic families exercised control of the Salvadoran economy through a coffee oligopoly that also enabled them to centralize political power amongst these families. Between 1900 and 1931 Salvadoran Presidents were not elected but rather selected by the incumbent President. This has become known as *democracia cafetalera*,¹⁸ where the state apparatus and the economy merely serve

¹⁷*clikas* is another name for ‘Cliques’ meaning smaller groups within *La Mara Salvatrucha* and *La Mara 18* that operate in communities. They represent the two dominant gangs despite the lack of centralized hierarchical coordination amongst them. They operate in a horizontal structure, therefore, las *maras*, do not have ‘leaders’ that supervise all of the operations of the *clikas* in each country. For more see Aguilar and Miranda, “Entre la articulación,” 43-44; Ribando Selke, Gangs, 4-5.

¹⁸*Democracia cafetalera* translates to Coffee democracy, where continuously members

the interests of the oligarchy.¹⁹

As the coffee economy declined and neoliberal practices such as the privatization of banks occurred, the oligarchy started to see changes in power and within their rankings. The rise of media moguls such as Boris Esersky, José Roberto Dutriz, and Enrique Altamirano alongside bankers like the ex-Salvadoran president Alfredo Cristiani, replaced the top oligarchic ranks previously occupied by coffee landowners (Albiac 2007, 161-167). Moreover, they became the new intellectuals creating profitable neoliberal postwar opportunities by re-structuring society. Gramsci explains:

the intellectuals are the dominant group's 'deputies' exercising the subaltern functions of social hegemony and political government. These comprise: 1. The 'spontaneous' consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group. . . 2. The apparatus of state coercive power which 'legally' enforces discipline on those groups who do not 'consent' either actively or passively (Gramsci 1971, 12)

When co-opting the masses with discourse on the benefits of capitalism and neoliberalism appear ineffective, the Salvadoran state has applied coercive power to discipline Salvadorans. Historically, the Salvadoran elite, through the state, has managed to suppress peasant uprisings through long-term starvation, chronic poverty, and state-sponsored violence, as expressed by Ignacio Ellacuría²⁰ and quoted by Leigh Binford, state-sponsored violence "*tries to hinder the struggle against injustice by taking preventive measures*" (Binford 2004, 423). On January 22, 1932, a peasant uprising was suppressed by general Maximiliano Hernandez Martínez, and supported by a fraction of the coffee oligarchy killing approximately twenty to thirty thousand indigenous peasants (González, 2007 [2], 36). The repressive policies against *mareros* also serve as preventive measures against impoverished populations who might consider rebelling. As argued by Luis Armando González, the elite gains and maintains control of El Salvador through an organized chaos (González 2007 [5], 353). *mareros* are blamed for a big part of the chaos distracting the wider society from the ongoing crimes committed by the elite.

of the oligarchy were selected to take positions of power in the government.

¹⁹For accounts on *Democracia cafetalera* see González (2007, 33); Griffith and González (2007, 63)

²⁰Ignacio Ellacuría was a naturalized Salvadoran Jesuit priest from Spain, writer of Latin American Liberation Philosophy who performed the role of director at the Central American University Jose Simeon Cañas (UCA) in El Salvador. Ellacuría was one of the Jesuit priests assassinated in 1989.

Creating a biospectacle

Orchestrating the ‘Othering’ of impoverished youth in postwar El Salvador was not a big challenge for the elite. The right-wing Salvadoran government and the United States celebrated the 1992 peace agreements mainly for its multiparty electoral participation and cease-fire (Moodie, 2010, 139) despite the poverty, impunity, and uncertainty that continued to haunt the wider society. After all, as explained by Moodie in her article *Seventeen Years, Seventeen Murders*, “Neoliberal globalization itself, as the latest phase of capital expansion, has been aptly described as a form of spectacle: an ‘economy of appearances’ in which spectacles of dramatic performances (attracting audiences, publicity, investors) must precede economic performance” (Moodie 2009, 84).

mareros’ bodies covered in tattoos were conveniently turned into a spectacle of deviancy and fear by the government, the elite, and the media. Moodie argues the biopolitical spectacle created by the media and politicians aim at channeling the fears of the postwar uncertainty onto the ‘Otherness’ of *mareros*. Moodie defines it as a *biospectacle*: “a biopolitical spectacle where managing populations become a sensational visual display, an exhibition of marked bodies” (*Ibid.*, 80). Therefore, *mareros* are unable to escape their ‘marked’ bodies and they become “*contrainte par corps*.”²¹

Moodie’s definition of *biospectacle* is shaped by Michel Foucault’s theory of *bio-power*, where the body becomes a place of power, in this case, the marked body of a *marero* makes him/her subjugated to other ‘bodies’ (Foucault 2004, 80-81) and this enables the state, controlled by the elite, to kill *mareros* in name of ‘national security.’ Saturating the media with gruesome images of mutilated bodies, blood running on the streets, and a deviant looking individual covered in tattoos detract attention from the heightened structural violence in an unequal society.

Postwar El Salvador’s first president was banker Alfredo Cristiani from the right-wing *Alianza Republicana Nacionalista (ARENA)* party. *ARENA*’s agenda was to continue protecting the oligarchy’s interests therefore it can be argued that demonizing *mareros* became a mechanism to project onto them the failures of the elite controlled economy. For example, *mareros* are blamed for the failures of small local businesses, claiming insecurity and extortions have forced shop owners to close instead of blaming large international corporations for eliminating local competition.

To do this *ARENA* received support from all media outlets, as they were owned and operated by the new high-ranking members of the elite. The three major media outlets *Telecorporación Salvadoreña*

²¹“*Contrainte par corps*” is French for “imprisonment effected via the body” used by Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc Wacquant. (2004, 273)

(TCS) TV, and the two major newspapers La prensa Gráfica, and El Diario de hoy, are owned by the previously mentioned intellectuals Esersky, Dutriz, and Altamirano respectively. Esersky is known for being very conservative, supporting anticommunist propaganda, and giving ARENA large amounts of money (Rockwell and Janus 2003,45). He delivers programming that demonizes *mareros* through his radio stations and Salvadoran TV network TCS that includes the most watched local channels 2, 4, and 6. Newscasts such as *Noticias Cuatrovisión*, *Tele2* and both newspapers *El Diario de Hoy* and *La Prensa Gráfica* run sensationalist stories on *mareros* and their crimes to terrorize the wider society²². Through the biospectacle, Salvadorans are reminded of their experience in the war and project onto the *marero* their unresolved anger and fear. With the help of the media, the government and the elite have attributed the *marero* an unchangeable, demonic 'nature' claiming a need to eliminate him from society. *mareros* are aware of the spectacle being created on their behalf, and this, only leads to further alienation, anger, and frustration of *mareros* towards the wider society that consents to their oppression. As mentioned by the *El Directo*, "they see me as a monster. But inside there's a human being same as you" (Moodie, 92).

The media campaign against *mareros* has been successful with fifty percent of Salvadorans viewing *maras* as the biggest national threat and ninety-one percent agreeing that these groups are a national problem. Even though, as reported by Aguilar and Miranda, police statistics show that in 2004 and 2005 no more than 30.6 percent of crimes were attributed to gangs, the police continue to report that sixty percent of crimes are caused by *mareros* (Aguilar and Miranda 2006, 52-53). The biospectacle makes possible not only the marginalization of the impoverished youth, but also, the initiation on a 'war on crime' whereby the state uses repressive policies, similar to the ones used during the war, to capture suspected *mareros*. It would seem as if the civil war has not ended, instead it has been replaced with a war against criminals where the alleged 'criminals' happen to be the similar impoverished populations from the war. *mareros* are now an issue of national security but as expressed by linguist Noam Chomsky and quoted by Anthropologist John H. Bodley, the word 'national security' enables the further violation of human rights (Bodley Press 2008, 260).

Overall, the elite has successfully managed to deter attention from their own predatory capitalist actions and the crimes they committed during the war and shifted the blame of all criminal activities to the

²²Latin America's private broadcasting is heavily controlled by the elite and police any criticism towards its programming. Ellen Moodie's research elaborates on the role of the media and the TCS newscast Cuatrovision in El Salvador extensively (2010); (2009) ; Judith Adler Hellman also mentions the control of newsprint and private broadcasting such as Televisa in Mexico that have a great influence over the perception of the Mexican society, similar to that of El Salvador. (Adler Hellman1997, 91-99)

marero. The biospectacle distracts Salvadorans from the structural realities that plague the society, and has turned the problem of gang violence into an independent, demonic, war against 'evil beings.'

3 Gang Membership

This section reviews three factors that impact gang membership. The continuum of violence in El Salvador that enables the reproduction of violence, the lack of reconciliation in the postwar era that increases feelings of anger and frustration, and the implemented repressive state policies to remove *mareros* from the wider society that instead increased gang membership and hostility.

The continuum of violence

El Salvador is not foreign to violence. Philippe Bourgois describes the different types of violence present during war and peacetime as direct political, structural, symbolic, and everyday violence (Bourgois 2004, 426). The direct political violence was observed mainly during the civil war, but not limited to it, as exemplified by the state's extermination of dispossessed impoverished indigenous population in the massacre of 1932.

The direct political violence in El Salvador reached its peak during the civil war, from 1980 to 1992. The Truth Commission released in 1993, noted that eighty-five percent of all crimes committed during the war were by state agents (The Commission on the Truth, 1993, 19-36) as the army and the elite, assisted by the United States,²³ fought the impoverished Salvadoran peasantry and other interested parties.

As outlined by the Truth Commission, the direct violence experienced during the war consisted of arbitrary arrests, murders, disappearances, tortures, violations of international human right law and humanitarian law (The Commission on the Truth 1993). Three examples of war violence that had a deep impact on Salvadoran history include the Assassination of Archbishop Romero in 1980, the 1981 Mozote massacre, and the assassination of the Jesuits priests in 1989.

Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero was assassinated on March 24, 1980, by a sniper sent by Roberto D'Aubuisson, the founder of the *ARENA* party (Ibid., 22). Archbishop Romero was a pillar of strength for the impoverished communities. He openly challenged the elite and army by asking the army to stop the repression of the impoverished community and instead was killed by a single bullet while

²³David McNally explains the US provided El Salvador with \$6 billion in aid during the civil war, while also training and advising state agents and paramilitary death squads. According to McNally, two thirds of the sixty military officers guilty of committing war crimes were also trained in the school of the Americas (2010, 256-257).

delivering mass. Fifty thousand people attended Romero's funeral but the violence continued as the army detonated a bomb outside of the cathedral where Romero was being mourned and then proceeded to machine-gun the people leaving forty dead and 200 wounded (Ibid., 21). The violence experienced at the cathedral along with the death of Romero was a clear message by the army-nobody was safe. The assassination fueled the guerrilla movement's anger to seek revenge through the armed conflict.

On December 10, 1981, the US trained Atlacatl Battalion entered the village of El Mozote, in the department of Morazán killing over 900 civilians, mainly unarmed women and children as young as two months old²⁴. Older men were decapitated with machetes; women were raped, tortured and shot; and children were thrown in the air and impaled as they fell, were stabbed with bayonets, had their throats slit open, their skulls crushed, and were hung from trees (Danner 1993, 287). There was only one survivor of the Mozote massacre, Rufina Amaya. She shared her experience of El Mozote with American journalists who published the story in the United States. However, the response of the US government to the atrocities of El Mozote was that "*civilians might have died in a military confrontation, rather than a massacre*" (Americas Watch, 122). The massacre was denied for ten years by the Salvadoran government until the Truth Commission released its report in 1993.

On November 16, 1989, the Jesuit priests Ignacio Ellacuría, Segundo Montes, Amando Lopez, Juan Ramón Moreno, Ignacio Martín-Baró, Joaquín López y López, and their two helpers Elba Ramos and her daughter Celina Mariceth Ramos were shot by the Salvadoran army in the University's residence. The priests were professors at *Universidad Centro Americana Jose Simeon Cañas* (UCA) and followed liberation theology whereby they believed in empowering the impoverished populations to fight their oppressors (González 2007 [3], 232-256). Their assassination sent shockwaves through the Salvadoran population. Those who protected the impoverished communities and spoke up against the state were not safe.

The oppression of the war is both physically and symbolically violent. To avoid getting marginalized, Salvadorans police their behavior in favor of the dominant discourse produced by the state. In Foucauldian terms, it establishes the 'economy of power' through the internalized panoptic fear of being constantly under surveillance (Foucault 2010, 206).

The structural violence, in the form of poverty and social inequality, also increased in postwar El Salvador. The *ARENA* government implemented neoliberal policies during the last years of the armed

²⁴(Americas Watch 1991, 86) McNally confirms that ten graduates of the school of the Americas participated in the Mozote massacre (2010, 257)

conflict that greatly benefitted their interests as many of the elite were now entering the banking system and telecommunications. As argued by Naomi Klein in *The Shock Doctrine*, many of the neoliberal ideas and programs are implemented after a crisis occurs while the population is disoriented (Klein 2008, 7). Moodie makes reference to Klein's shock doctrine theory and explains that in 1985 the US started attaching to its financial support structural adjustment demands for a more open economy in El Salvador (Moodie 2010, 42). When ARENA won the presidency in 1989, president Cristiani's administration established the *Plan de desarrollo económico y social 1989-1994* to reduce poverty, increase sustained economic growth, decrease the role of the state, and stimulate the country's resources by modernizing institutions, prioritizing the use of resources, decentralizing power, encouraging civil participation, and privatization²⁵.

As noted by Moodie, the World Bank provided structural adjustment loan packages in 1990-91 and 1993-94 as part of a structural adjustment process that the World Trade Organization would term as 'aggressive' on the part of the Salvadoran government.²⁶ The mandates of the SAPs included: "*devaluation of the currency, liberalization of the commerce and markets, decreased social spending, privatization of state companies, wage suppression, deregulation of the private sector, increased interest rates, and focus on an export industry*" (González, 2007 [2], 50). The 2001 dollarization of the economy had negative impacts in El Salvador. Not only was the Salvadoran economy now directly tied to the American economy, but also, the conversion of the prices was not implemented consistently. Food and products' prices skyrocketed while wages went unchanged.

The symbolic violence also continued in postwar El Salvador. The ARENA party and government controlled the flow of knowledge and political discourse through the media and electoral institutions. It was understood implicitly that most of the elections were fraudulent, as in the past ARENA members were found voting more than once or buying votes (Cardenal and González 2007, 269) yet the Salvadoran people did not speak up fearing reprisal from the right wing government. Moreover, the impoverished population had internalized the class hierarchy to avoid further unresolved tensions from the armed conflict. However, during the 2009 presidential elections, the hegemonic power of ARENA was challenged. People supported the guerrilla party *Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN)* candidate, Mauricio Funes, although in places of work people continued to hide their allegiance to the party of opposition. During the closing of the presidential campaign the *FMLN* organized a 'victory carnival' on the

²⁵Plan for economic and social development' (González 2007[3], 43)

²⁶Moodie also mentions how the United Nations Development Program would eventually call the SAPs in El Salvador "one of the most aggressive of Latin America." (2010, 44-45); (World Trade Organization 1996)

street Alameda Juan Pablo II, where 250,000 to 300,000 Salvadorans attended. During the event ARENA's helicopters and planes flew over the FMLN supporters as a reminder that they were always watching, reinforcing Foucault's argument on a disciplinary panopticon type of surveillance. The 2009 ARENA campaign came to be known as the 'campaign of terror,' and the FMLN's slogan challenged the terror by asking: ¿Quién Dijo Miedo?²⁷

In El Salvador everyday violence is invisible because it is overshadowed by the experienced historical direct political violence, such as the war, and the 'pornographized'²⁸ criminal violence of the gangs shown on the media. As argued by Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois, "everyday violence such as slow starvation, despair, and humiliation that destroys socially marginalized humans are usually invisible or misrecognized"(Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004, 2). *mareros* are an outcome of this continuum of violence, which includes the misrecognized everyday violence experienced by them. They kill as they learnt during the war,²⁹ and turn to a life of crime as a desperate attempt to survive in an economy that excludes them. Their actions also directly challenge the state and society that marginalizes them, just as it marginalized impoverished peasants during the war, and impoverished indigenous populations in the early 20th century.

Lack of reconciliation

In her research on Gangs in Central America, Ribando Selke fails to link the lack of meaningful political reconciliation with increased gang membership. El Salvador's violent history has gone misrecognized, denied, or unpunished and unlike South Africa's attempt at reconciling its society after Apartheid, ARENA's postwar government did not view reconciliation as a desired goal.

As seen in the case of El Mozote, the Salvadoran government tried to block the investigations of crimes committed by state agents. Priscilla B. Hayner quotes "*the president of the Supreme Court, Mauricio Gutierrez Castro, 'interfered unduly and prejudicially, for bias political reasons, in the ongoing judicial proceedings of the case'*" (Hayner 2001, 104). Also, ex-president Alfredo Cristiani from the ARENA party granted blanket amnesty to the perpetrators identified by the Truth Commission when his request to leave the names out of the report got denied. Moreover, Cristiani praised and even honored the military men

²⁷¿Quién Dijo Miedo? Translates to 'Who's afraid?' or 'Who says we are afraid?'

²⁸The paper uses the term 'pornographized' in accordance with Philippe Bourgois's use of the expression "pornography of violence" where the violence is sensationalized by providing details of the actions with no context to explain such outburst (Bourgois 2004, 427)

²⁹Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois argue "Killing (like any other powerful human act) has to be learned." (15)

that had participated in the war for performing with “*merit, efficiency, and loyalty to the highest duties that the nation can demand*” (Ibid, 40).

This paper argues that the impoverished men and women who fought during the war lost everything and continue to be marginalized and impoverished are further angered by the lack of reconciliation in postwar El Salvador. The state’s efforts to hide the truth negatively impact the Salvadoran society as their traumatic experience is dismissed. For reconciliation to occur truth as acknowledgement and justice as recognition, as defined by André Du Toit, needs to be achieved. Du Toit argues that truth, both factual and as acknowledgement, exposes the shared historic past of a society to avoid alternative narratives. Furthermore, justice as recognition validates the victim’s experience and acknowledges the violations to his/her human dignity, allowing for the restoration of “*socially recognized self-esteem*” (Du Toit 2000, 132-138) within a country.

In El Salvador justice was never achieved. Impunity enabled the creation of a postwar state that does not uphold democratic ideals; that blurs the norms of right and wrong and creates ambiguous social, and moral limits; that institutionalizes lies; that enables individuals to take law into their own hands; invalidates and denies the experience of the victims; strengthens powerlessness; and has official and unofficial versions of the past (Ntsebeza 2000, 164-165). For example, the Truth Commission named Roberto D’Aubuisson, the founder of the ARENA party, responsible for the assassination of Archbishop Romero in 1980 (The Commission on the Truth for El Salvador, 22) yet neither D’Aubuisson or the ARENA government and party ever apologized to the Salvadoran people. Moreover, ARENA has done an excellent job of proudly defending its position against communism to this day, claiming that all of its actions, including the assassination of Romero, were carried out to protect the nation. As its march song expresses: “*Nation yes, communism no. Liberty is written with blood, labor with sweat, let’s unite sweat and blood, but first El Salvador.*”³⁰

Another example includes the cover-up of the Mozote massacre by the Salvadoran government. However, once the Truth Commission released the details of the massacre, not before the Salvadoran government tried to block the investigation, ARENA and the military also refused to apologize for the atrocities committed at El Mozote. It was not until 2009 and again in 2012 that Mauricio Funes, the first elected president from the guerrilla party FMLN, apologized on national television.

Also, in the case of the Jesuits priests, the granted blanket amnesty allowed perpetrators to escape retributive justice, although a phony ‘trial’ was performed during the war to appease the Salvadoran

³⁰“Patria sí, comunismo no. Libertad se escribe con sangre, trabajo con el sudor. Unamos sudor y sangre pero primero El Salvador.” ARENA, “Marcha de ARENA,” Alianza Republicana Nacionalista (ARENA 2011)

population. However, because the priests were citizens of Spain, their government re-opened the case in May 2011 issuing an indictment and arrest warrants for the Salvadoran ex-military officers and ex-president Cristiani. Their extraditions and trials are still pending and the charges against Cristiani are being reviewed (The Center for justice & Accountability). Yet Cristiani continues to be an important figure in Salvadoran politics as well as a respected banker. The same can be said of ex-president Armando Calderón Sol and the president of the Legislative Assembly Gloria Salguero Gross who have been linked to death squads and the latter is further known for evading taxes (Moodie 2010, 19); (González 2007 [1], 232-256). These examples represent the moral ambiguity found in postwar El Salvador.

Mareros are aware of the impunity that governs El Salvador, mainly from the elite and its highest ranks, and yet, only they experience the demonization and marginalization from the state and wider society. Why would *mareros* feel obliged to behave appropriately in a state that does not follow the rule of law? (González 2007 [4], 295)

Repressive state policies

As noted by Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois, “the violence continuum also refers to the ease with which humans are capable of reducing socially vulnerable into expandable nonpersons and assuming the license-even the duty-to kill, main, or soul-murder” (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004, 19). Since *mareros* do not participate in the economy and have been dehumanized by the state, the government made it its ‘duty’ to remove them from society. The ex-president Francisco Flores, from the ARENA party, implemented in 2003 *Plan Mano Dura* to diminish gang membership by arresting potential and known gang members.³¹ However, this meant that under the grounds of illicit association the impoverished youth with tattoos were vulnerable to arbitrary detention by law enforcement. *Plan Mano Dura*’s special characteristics included increased police presence in the poorest slums such as Mejicanos, increased media spectacle that further demonized *mareros*, and arbitrary mass detention of young impoverished males. Approximately eighteen thousand young people were captured under *Plan Mano Dura* but since the judges could not convict them for ‘appearances,’ were later released and then re-captured by the police (Aguilar and Miranda 2006, 60). As expressed by the judge for minors Aida Luz Santos de Escobar, and quoted by USAID, the judges refused to support *Plan Mano Dura* on the grounds that it:

... violated constitutional norms and international treaties. . . (1) youths were tried as adults; (2) homicide cases not commit-

³¹Also translated as ‘Iron fist plan’ or ‘Firm hand.’ (USAID 2006)

ted by gang members had advantages over those committed by gang members; (3) the law violated the equity principle, (4) the law violated the presumption of innocence until the contrary is proved; and (5) the law was enforced retroactively (USAID 2006)

Even though *Plan Mano Dura* did not decrease gang membership but instead increased it, received very little support from the judges, and violated human rights agreements such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child the repressive policy was well received by the wider society and helped ARENA get re-elected (Hume 2004, 12). The next president Antonio Saca, also from ARENA, implemented in 2004 Plan Super Mano Dura, an aggrandized version of its predecessor. Special units called GTA (Territorial anti-gang groups) formed by the military and the civil police were dispatched throughout the country. Their specific operation was called Puño de Hierro or 'iron fist' that would enable the GTA to raid homes, capture potential *mareros*, and provide continued surveillance to high-risk zones, amongst others. Alongside repressive actions Plan Super Mano Dura created underfunded rehabilitation programs ironically named Mano amiga and Mano extendida that translate to 'friendly hand' and 'extended hand.' In eleven months, the crime rate increased despite 14,601 youths being captured under Plan Super Mano Dura³².

Since repressive policies implied *mareros* were 'monsters' that needed to be taken off the streets, private social cleansing groups, such as La Sombra Negra,³³ were formed, as they felt entitled to arbitrarily shoot young impoverished men on the streets. It has been argued that a resemblance exists between the new cleansing groups and the death squads active during the civil war.

In contrast to El Salvador, Nicaragua has avoided the presence of *La Mara Salvatrucha* and *La Mara 18* in its region, despite the similarity in political history. Through outreach programs and a more civil approach the Nicaraguan government has facilitated a dialogue with the impoverished youth, who feel respected by state agents and included in society. The marginalization and anger usually associated with increased gang membership decreases when a government refrains from using repressive state policies. Also, different migration patterns of Nicaraguan immigrants are identified as factors that disable the formation of *maras* as Nicaraguans moved to Miami rather than Los Angeles and were welcomed in the United States (Bellanger 2006, 333). Repressive measures do not decrease direct

³²For more on *Plan Mano Dura* and *Super Mano Dura* see Aguilar and Miranda (2006, 60-64); and Hume (2004, 13)

³³*La sombra negra* or 'Black shadow' was a private social cleansing group of the 90s. They murdered 13 young men who were identified as gang members. Police agents were involved in the exterminati

physical violence, inequality, crime rate, or *mareros* in El Salvador instead they have proved to increase all of the above.

4 Conclusion

As this paper has shown, gang membership will not decrease unless there is an understanding on the origins of las *maras* and the context that drives some impoverished youth to them. As argued in this paper the continuum of violence in El Salvador whether in its direct political, structural, symbolic or everyday violence has provided *mareros* with the opportunity to reproduce violence in a state that is morally ambiguous. Also, impoverished Salvadorans turn to a life of crime to get access to money when the national economy has and continues to exclude them.

Lack of reconciliation and feelings of fear, anger, anxiety, and uncertainty, are projected onto the *marero* in a biospectacle in postwar El Salvador. The *marero* becomes the scapegoat of an unreconciled society thus permitting the violation to his human dignity. Furthermore, anger is expressed by *mareros* and the impoverished population whose experience in the war is invalidated by high-ranking officials and members of the elite that profit from impunity.

Finally, repressive state policies that dehumanize the impoverished youth increase gang membership. Hostility towards the state and wider society intensifies as *mareros* and the impoverished youth have their rights and human dignity violated. Repressive state policies based on appearance further encourage the marginalization and demonization of the impoverished youth legitimizing their extermination.

El Salvador has not ended its war instead it has simply changed the name of the war. The 'war on crime' is a preventive measure to control an impoverished population that is tired of being exploited and marginalized. Like the civil war, direct physical violence, intimidation, and demonization, is reproduced in postwar El Salvador. Gang membership and violence will not decrease if *mareros* continue to be viewed as an isolated phenomenon based on a discourse of unchangeable, demonic characteristics. Humanizing *mareros* should be at the forefront of the state's initiative to address the continuum of violence, lack of reconciliation, and repressive state policies, that have aggravated with las *maras*. However, by humanizing *mareros* the elite's mechanisms of control would be exposed. Challenging the power of the elite and its institutions become the biggest obstacle when trying to humanize *mareros*. Until the state and the wider society humanize *mareros* and the impoverished youth in general, the wider Central American society will continue to be supportive of the deaths of these victims turned perpetrators, at the unjust hands of state agents, the elite, 'intellectuals,' and private social cleansing groups.

And *mareros* will continue to fight against their social exclusion with further violence.

References

- Aguilar, Jeanette and Lissette Miranda. 2006. "Entre la articulación y la competencia: las respuestas de la sociedad civil organizada a las pandillas en El Salvador." *Maras y Pandillas en Centroamérica: Las respuestas de la sociedad civil organizada. Vol. 4 of maras y Pandillas en Centroamérica*, edited by José Miguel Cruz. San Salvador: UCA Editores.
- Albiac, María Dolores. 2007. "Los ricos más ricos de El Salvador." In *El Salvador: la transición y sus problemas*, edited by Rodolfo Cardenal and Luis Armando Gonzáles. San Salvador: UCA Editores.
- Americas Watch. 1991. *El Salvador's Decade of Terror: Human Rights since the Assassination of Archbishop Romero*. New York: Yale University Press.
- ARENA. 2012 "Marcha de ARENA." Accessed February 25 <http://www.ARENA.org.sv/nuestro-partido/marcha-de-ARENA.html>.
- AFP. 2012 "Funerals begin for victims of Honduras jail fire that killed over 350 inmates." *The Times of India*, February 2012. Accessed February 19, 2012. Disponible aquí
- Bellanger, Wendy.2006. 'La sociedad civil ante la violencia juvenil en Nicaragua.' In *maras y Pandillas en Centroamérica: Las respuestas de la sociedad civil organizada. Vol.4 of Maras y Pandillas en Centroamérica*, edited by José Miguel Cruz. San Salvador: UCA Editores.
- Binford, Leigh. 2004. "An Alternative Anthropology: Exercising the Preferential Option for the Poor." In *Violence in War and Peace: An Anthology*, edited by Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois. MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Bodley, John H. 2008. *Anthropology and Contemporary Human Problems*. MD: AltaMira Press.
- Bollier, Jonathan, Fourteau, Jeremy, Fuchs, Alexandre, and, *Children of the War*. New York: Fly Films, 2006
- Bourdieu, Pierre and Loïc Wacquant. 2004. "Symbolic Violence." In *Violence in War and Peace: An Anthology*, edited by Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois. MA: Blackwell Publishing.

- Bourgois, Philippe. 2004. "The Continuum of Violence in War and Peace: Post-Cold War Lessons from El Salvador." In *Violence in War and Peace: An Anthology*, edited by Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois. MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Cardenal, Rodolfo and Luis Armando González. 2007. "El ausentismo cuestiona al sistema político." In *El Salvador: la transición y sus problemas*, edited by Rodolfo Cardenal and Luis Armando González. San Salvador: UCA Editores.
- Cardenal, Rodolfo and Luis Armando González. 2007. *El Salvador: la transición y sus problemas*, edited by Rodolfo Cardenal and Luis Armando González. San Salvador: UCA Editores.
- Carranza, Marlon. 2006. "Del asistencialismo a la incidencia y el cabildeo: las diversas respuestas de la sociedad civil organizada al fenómeno de las pandillas en Honduras." In *Maras y Pandillas en Centroamérica: Las respuestas de la sociedad civil organizada*. Vol.4 of *maras y Pandillas en Centroamérica*, edited by José Miguel Cruz. San Salvador: UCA Editores.
- The Center for justice & Accountability. 2012. "The Jesuits Massacre Case." Accessed February 25 Disponible aquí
- Cruz, José Miguel. 2008. *Central American maras: From Youth Street Gangs to Transnational Prison Gangs* TN: Vanderbilt University.
- Cruz, José M. 2006. *Maras y Pandillas en Centroamérica: Las respuestas de la sociedad civil organizada*. Vol.4 of *Maras y Pandillas en Centroamérica*, edited by José Miguel Cruz. San Salvador: UCA Editores.
- Danner, Mark. 1993. *The Massacre at El Mozote*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Du Toit, Andre. 2000. "The Moral Foundations of the South African TRC: Truth as Acknowledgment and Justice as Recognition." In *Truth V. Justice: The Morality of Truth Commission*, edited by Robert I. Rotberg & Dennis Thompson. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- EFE-AFP. 2012. "A 370 aumentan los reos muertos en incendio de cárcel de Honduras." *TeleSUR*, February 2012. Accessed February 19. Disponible aquí.
- Escobar, Sonia. 2012. "Doble asesinato en Mejicanos," *DiariosCo-Latino*, February 2008. Accessed February 25. Disponible aquí.

- Foucault, Michel. 2010. *The Foucault Reader*. Edited by Paul Rabinow. New York: Vintage.
- Foucault, Michel. 2004. "Right of Death and Power Over Life." In *Violence in War and Peace: An Anthology*, edited by Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois. MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Gramsci, Antonio. 1971. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. Edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith. London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Griffith, Kati and González, Luis Armando. 2007. "Notas sobre la 'autonomía' del Estado el caso de El Salvador." In *El Salvador: la transición y sus problemas*, edited by González, Luis Armando. San Salvador: UCA Editores.
- Grillo, Ioan and Mike McDonald. 2012 "Huge prison fire kills over 350 inmates in Honduras." *Reuters*, February 2012. Accessed February 19 Disponible aquí
- González, Luis Armando. 2007[1]. "Corrupción, impunidad y crisis de la legitimidad estatal." In *El Salvador: la transición y sus problemas*, edited by Rodolfo Cardenal and Luis Armando González. San Salvador: UCA Editores.
- González, Luis Armando. 2007[2]. "Estado, sociedad y economía en El Salvador (1880-1999)." In *El Salvador: la transición y sus problemas*, edited by Rodolfo Cardenal and Luis Armando González. San Salvador: UCA Editores.
- González, Luis Armando. 2007[3]. "Iglesia, organizaciones populares y violencia sociopolítica." In *El Salvador: la transición y sus problemas*, edited by Rodolfo Cardenal and Luis Armando González. San Salvador: UCA Editores.
- González, Luis Armando. 2007[4]. "Seguridad pública, cultura política y democracia." In *El Salvador: la transición y sus problemas*, edited by Rodolfo Cardenal and Luis Armando González. San Salvador: UCA Editores.
- González, Luis Armando. 2007[5]. "Un necesario cambio de marcha en El Salvador," in *El Salvador: la transición y sus problemas*, edited by Rodolfo Cardenal and Luis Armando González. San Salvador: UCA Editores.
- Hayner, Priscilla B. 2001. *Unspeakable Truths: Confronting State Terror and Atrocity*. New York: Routledge.

- Hellman, Judith Adler. 2007. "Continuity and Change in the Mexican Political System: New Ways of Knowing a New Reality." *European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 63.
- Hum, Lourdes, Leslie Ramos, and Iván Monzón. 2006. "Respuestas de la sociedad civil al fenómeno de las Maras y pandillas juveniles en Guatemala." In *Maras y Pandillas en Centroamérica: Las respuestas de la sociedad civil organizada*. Vol.4 of *maras y Pandillas en Centroamérica*, edited José Miguel Cruz. San Salvador: UCA Editores.
- Hume, Mo. 2012. *Armed violence and poverty in El Salvador: A mini case study for the Armed Violence and Poverty Initiative*, November 2004. Accessed February 25 Disponible aquí
- Hume, Mo. 2008. "Mano Dura: El Salvador responds to gangs." *Development in Practice*, 17, 6.
- Klein, Naomi. 2008. *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*. Toronto: Vintage Canada.
- Labrador Aragón, Gabriel and Lourdes Quintanilla. 2012. "Catorce muertos en doble ataque en Mejicanos," *La Prensa Gráfica*, June 2010. Accessed February 25, 2012. <http://www.laprensagrafica.com/el-salvador/judicial/126814-catorce-muertos-.html>.
- Ntsebeza, Dumisa B. 2000. "The uses of Truth Commissions: Lessons for the World." In *Truth V. Justice: The Morality of Truth Commission*, edited by Robert I. Rotberg & Dennis Thompson. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- McNally, David. 2010. *Another World is Possible: Globalization & Anti-Capitalism*. Manitoba: Arbeiter Ring Publishing.
- Moodie, Ellen. 2010. *El Salvador in the Aftermath of Peace: Crime Uncertainty and the Transition to Democracy*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Moodie, Ellen. 2009. "Seventeen Years, Seventeen Murders: Biospectacularity and the Production of Post-Cold War Knowledge in El Salvador." *Social Text* 99, 27, 2 (2009), Accessed February 28, 2012. Disponible aquí
- Ribando Selke, Clare. 2011. "Gangs in Central America." *Congressional Research Service*, January 2011. Accessed February 22, 2012. Disponible aquí.
- Rockwell, Rick J. and Noreene Janus. 2003. *Media power in Central America*. Illinois: Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois.

- Scheper-Hughes, Nancy and Philippe Bourgois. 2004. "Introduction: Making sense of Violence." In *Violence in War and Peace: An Anthology*, edited by Scheper-Hughes, Nancy and Bourgois, Philippe. MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Spagat, Elliot. 2012. "Pandilleros de EEUU presentes en cárceles centroamericanas" [American gang members present in central American jails]. *Terra Argentina*, February 2012. Accessed February 19, 2012. Disponible aquí.
- Strickland, Tina. 2009. "Mara Salvatrucha: A threat to U.S. and Central America Security." In *The World's Most Threatening Terrorist Networks and Criminal Gangs*, edited by Michael T. Kindt, Jerrold M. Post and Barry R. Schneider. Print. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- The Commission on the Truth for El Salvador. 2012 *From Madness to Hope: the 12-year war in El Salvador: Report of the Commission on the truth for El Salvador*. Accessed March 3, 2012. Disponible aquí
- USAID. 2006. *Central America and Mexico Gang Assessment*, April 2006. Accessed February 25, 2012. Disponible aquí
- World Trade Organization. 1996. 'El Salvador: November 1996.' *Trade Policy Reviews: First Press Release, Secretariat and Government Summaries*, November 1996. Accessed March 28, 2012. Disponible aquí