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U.S. crimes in Guatemala: The hypocrisy of Biden-Harris anti-migrant policy

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'Papers not crumbs': April 30 sit-in near the White House against the Biden administration's anti-immigrant repression. Photo: Movimiento Cosecha

The Biden administration began the month of June with further evidence of its policy of keeping to the Trump-era status quo, this time with immigration/migration policy. Vice President Kamala Harris was sent to Guatemala and Mexico to deliver a most disrespectful message: "Don't come to the U.S."

Here are some of her words that were caught on video: "I want to be clear to folks in this region who are thinking about making that dangerous trek to the U.S./Mexican border — do not come, do not come" (while shaking her head for emphasis).

“The U.S. will continue to enforce our laws and secure our borders. There are legal methods by which migration can and should occur ... but we, as one of our priorities, will discourage illegal migration, and I believe that if you come to our borders you will be turned back. ... So let’s discourage our friends, neighbors, our family members from embarking on what is otherwise an extremely dangerous journey.”

In regard to the danger Vice President Harris is referring to: In 2018, after the well-publicized death of a child seeking asylum at the border, the U.S. government under the Trump administration intentionally created more dangerous conditions for crossing the border by placing border sentries on international bridges to force crossings at much more dangerous and remote spots, the British Guardian newspaper reported.

So, the Biden administration is continuing the policies that have killed asylum seekers and their children — and they know it.

In fact, the speech sounded much like that of former Vice President Mike Pence regarding immigration. Some of the reactions to Harris’ speech, even amongst some Democrats, were critical of this mirror image of the Trump policy.

In fact, the law that the Biden administration is using today is a continuation of Title 42, used by Trump to negate the U.S.’s international responsibility to provide asylum for those fleeing life-threatening circumstances.

The justification for continuing this policy supposedly includes health concerns during the pandemic. However, Title 42’s continued use has been criticized even by former officials with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the administration’s own medical consultants.

Media backs anti-migrant policy

Still, the corporate media has been more sympathetic, posing the question as one of

a difficult situation that Vice President Harris and the Biden administration are dealing with in their attempt to “assist” those countries in Central America whose residents are seeking safe harbor.

As an article in the [June 8 New York Times](#) says: “Ms. Harris was similarly candid about the need to address the root causes prompting migrants to make the long, dangerous trek north from Central America, despite the hundreds of millions spent by the United States to improve prospects in the region. In Guatemala, she announced that the United States will assist an anti-corruption panel.”

In 1954, Sigmund Freud’s nephew, Edward Bernay, applying the use of psychology to assist corporations, worked for the United Fruit Company in molding the views of the largest newspapers in the U.S. to that of the company’s. He did this by inviting journalists to Central America and staging events that would convince them of the point of view of a monopoly responsible for genocide in Guatemala and an earlier 1911 coup in Honduras.

The modern Times reporter’s lack of understanding or willful disregard for the truth, or unwillingness to lose their job, in the framing of this story, shows that the work of Freud’s nephew and the views of the corporations still decide what we read in the media of record.

The fact is that U.S. transnational monopolies — using the power of the U.S. military — stole land, agricultural and mineral wealth from the countries of Central America, laying the groundwork for future repression, failed economies and genocide against the people, especially Indigenous peoples.

Despite their courageous attempts at self-determination, they were not able to overcome the millions of dollars in official aid, military advisers, military air support or one-sided “free trade” laws forced onto the population by Washington

In Guatemala, the CIA, at the behest of the United Fruit Company, began a qualitative jump in its terror, economic sabotage and regime change tactics in 1952. And the U.S. has employed all or some of this economic and warfare arsenal right up to the present day.

United Fruit: a state within the state

What was called the “October Revolution” by the Guatemalan people happened in 1944, a year that witnessed a courageous and successful uprising to bring about democracy and land reform.

Guatemala’s economy depended on agriculture and, before the revolution, the hold of the United Fruit Company (now Chiquita Brands International) of the economic and social conditions of Guatemalans was absolute. The online publication by PBS, [“Frontline World – Guatemala’s History of Violence,”](#) puts the role of the U.S. and the corporation in proper context:

“The United Fruit Company gained control of 42% of Guatemala’s land, and was exempted from paying taxes and import duties. Seventy-seven percent of all Guatemalan exports went to the United States; and 65% of imports to the country came from the United States.

“The United Fruit Company was, essentially, a state within the Guatemalan state. It not only owned all of Guatemala’s banana production and monopolized banana exports, it also owned the country’s telephone and telegraph system, and almost all of its railroad track.

“The United Fruit Company was well-connected to the Eisenhower administration. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and his New York law firm, Sullivan and Cromwell, represented the company. Allen Dulles, the director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and brother of John Foster Dulles, had served on UFC’s

Board of Trustees and owned shares of the company. Ed Whitman, the company's top public relations officer, was the husband of Ann Whitman, President Eisenhower's private secretary."

This is why the people of Guatemala rose up in 1944. Their actions produced the first democratic vote in the country's history, with the election of Dr. Juan Jose Arévalo to the presidency. A constitution resembling the U.S. constitution was adopted and over 6,000 schools and health care facilities now allowed further freedom to the people, providing a great leap in education and medical needs.

Then, in 1951, Jacobo Arbenz continued the will of the Guatemalan people to extend political freedoms, allowing communists in Guatemala to participate in politics and successfully redistributing much of the land to the landless farmers who made up 90% of the population. By 1952, Arbenz made 225,000 acres available to rural workers and farmers.

As a result of the qualitative changes in fighting inequity and decreasing poverty, which also decreased the power of the United Fruit Company, the CIA began recruitment for the planned overthrow of the Arbenz government, just two years after his election, with what they called Operation PBSUCCESS. This operation included the use of U.S. pilots to bomb strategic locations in Guatemala.

In 1954, President Arbenz was forced to resign and leave the country, and with his ouster the economic and social progress that was being made for the people of Guatemala ended.

With a CIA-approved successor in place, then began the massive bloodshed and terror, resulting in genocide and corruption, and the infrastructure for the drug trade and human trafficking servicing the U.S., that continues to this day.

U.S. role in terror and genocide

That continued collusion of the U.S. government into the 1990s in terror and genocide, especially against the Mayan Indigenous population, was exposed in an article in the Washington Post in 1999, reporting on then-newly declassified U.S. intelligence documents.

These documents show close cooperation and coverup of Guatemalan government and paramilitary forces that employed torture, kidnappings and genocide against Indigenous populations, including the torture and death of children - all for the purpose of maintaining the tens of millions of dollars going to assist the Guatemalan government's protection of U.S. transnational interests in disappearing those who would fight for the community's interests.

The documents were obtained by the National Security Archive, a private nonprofit group in Washington, and were used by the Historical Clarification Commission to investigate human-rights violations, which was part of the U.N.-brokered peace agreement that ended the Guatemalan Civil War in 1996.

"I have never seen anything like it," said Kate Doyle, Guatemala project director at the archives, expressing amazement at "the description of our intimacy with the Guatemalan security forces."

Today the rate of inequality in land distribution, poverty and violence in Guatemala leads Central America and much of the world.

Speaking about the Biden administration's continuation of Trump's policy, Lee Gelernt, a lawyer for the American Civil Liberties Union, which is suing the administration over its practice of turning migrants away, posed the question to the New York Times: "Why is this administration telling asylum seekers to stay home when we have a moral and legal duty to give those in danger an opportunity to seek refuge?"

The fact is, they won't adhere to their moral nor legal duty unless forced to do so. That's where our movement comes in.

The crisis of our family in Central America is a reflection of the economic and military violence by U.S. imperialism around the world that makes the building of a stronger, more unified immigrant/migrant workers' solidarity movement essential.

And we should know better than to think that the creators of the root causes of Central America's crisis are really trying to find a solution. The New York Times and other corporate media, whose life support relies on the financial and industrial monopolies, can't be depended on to tell the whole story either, since they will continue to be slipping on Freud.

