

The Wisdom of the Honduran People

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By Glen Evans

Like many others, I began going to Honduras to provide support for the poor. My focus has been on helping people to help themselves. Along the way, I have been careful to avoid doing things for people that they can do for themselves. In nearly ten years of volunteering in Honduras, I have seen progress as a result of these efforts. Homes have been built, businesses have been started, children are graduating from high school and college, families are healthy and remaining together.

The progress has been experienced by all involved. One of the [core beliefs](#) of my organization, Art For Humanity, is that those being served and those doing the serving benefit equally. We believe that, while it may not always seem like volunteers receive as much as they give, in time this becomes apparent. The quality of my life has been enhanced by what I have learned from individuals who do not have very much material wealth. In reflecting

over my life, I can trace most of the new good things I have experienced to the people of Honduras.

I have learned, for example, that I do not require much of what I used to think I needed. As I work with the Honduran people and see how they get along with so much less than I have, I have come to realize that many of my possessions are more of a cumbersome hindrance cluttering my life than a benefit. Hondurans have taught me the value of simplicity, and thus have contributed to the quality, and perhaps the length, of my life. Certainly, their influence has added to my peace of mind.

In addition to learning lessons in simplicity from the people of Honduras, I have been inspired by their emotional resilience. They suffer setback after setback, hardship on top of hardship, and disappointment after disappointment without losing hope or a willingness to keep trying.

Most of the *gringos* I know in the United States would become deeply depressed and maybe even contemplate taking their own lives if they had to deal with the degree of disappointments that many Hondurans routinely face. Yet, Hondurans just keep moving on with life without stopping very long to worry about the losses or hardships. It is not unusual to see them laughing about a disappointment or a piece of hard luck. An example would be a flat tire far from home and no tools to repair it. While most of my friends in the US would get angry, kick the bike, and throw things wildly while cursing profusely, a typical Honduran quietly gets off his bike and begins pushing it toward his destination while taking time along the way to stop for conversation and laugh when asked about his misfortune.

Similarly, I see Hondurans calmly walking in the rain while making their way home from work or school. Rather than complaining or cursing as many *gringos* might, Hondurans tend to take it in stride with no apparent negative attitude... only gratitude when finally arriving home. Not only do Hondurans make the rainy journey without complaining, they socialize as they walk, often smiling at others along the way. Perhaps it is this amazing resilience that impresses me most about the Honduran culture.

Honduras has taught me a great deal, and I know that I have only begun to scratch the surface of what its people have yet to teach me. I believe in the wisdom of the ancient saying, "When the student is ready, the teacher arrives." That has certainly been true for me in Honduras. If you are ready to learn, travel to Honduras. Your teacher awaits. (10/26/10)

Note: The author is the founder of [Art for Humanity](#), a non-profit organization based in Arlington, Virginia. He is helping to establish the Leadership University in Honduras to help educate good students from poor families.