

Rachel Dougherty
Hallelujah Honduras

I think a lot about water these days. Though water was not a focus of our three weeks in Honduras, the seven of us traveling through the country spent a lot of our time thinking about it. Water is scarce in countries like Honduras: for drinking, bathing, and everything in between. Homes get their water supplies through the *pilas* in the back of their homes. These cinderblock reservoirs are filled randomly at some point during the day with the day's water supply. A day's ration of water could come at any time of the day, or not at all. Some of the poorer neighborhoods in Tegucigalpa, the country's capital, have had their water supply cut off for weeks on end before, without notice or explanation. Because these *pilas* are uncovered and outside, they are malaria and dengue breeding grounds. And, of course, the water is absolutely not potable. Drinking water comes instead in water cooler-type jugs purchased by homes every week. Even the water falling from the sky is contaminated: pollution in Honduras (and especially in Tegucigalpa) is so bad that it is actually dangerous to stand outside during the rain. All of these factors together create an interminable market for the water industry.

I take water for granted every day of my U.S. American life. Water doesn't run out in the United States, for drinking or otherwise. I don't have to take showers with cold water from a bucket, or use my spending money to buy water in 90-degree heat. As a child, I could jump in puddles and play in the rain without worrying about whether or not the rain was pure. My values may be different from Honduran values; my culture may identify different needs and solutions, but water... water is a human necessity. Nothing besides the accident of my birth qualifies my access to water over someone else's. Nothing *should* make a human necessity available to me when it's not available for an entire country.

The person who decided to capitalize on water is either a genius or a villain. Commodifying survival by putting a price on water in a country that is notorious for humid, stiflingly hot days is an abomination. Many areas of the country may not even be reachable by those selling drinking water, even if the rural Hondurans have the money to pay for it. Those Hondurans waiting for buckets of water for showering, cleaning, and drinking run through my mind every time I hear the endless supplies of water coursing through the pipes in my home.

The first time I took a shower when I got off the plane from Tegucigalpa in Kansas City, I felt like the hot water was cleansing. Spiritually, water holds a lot of healing, cleansing, baptismal qualities. What does that mean when the water is tainted? What does it mean to be baptized with unclean water? To me, the strength of Honduran blessings overcomes the water's impurities.

Water is something we can all organize around; it transcends cultural boundaries. After studying the cultural difficulties in providing service internationally in Honduras, water is something I can get behind. I wish I could bless the people there with pure, clean, clear water.