

to be related strongly to the pursuit of democracy. Thus, this section will delve into El Salvador's history by examining the evolution of democracy -- or lack thereof -- and the use of fear and violence through human rights violations, as a strategy to undermine this process. First, I will briefly look at the root factors impeding the development of democracy in El Salvador.

Second, I will provide a historical account of El Salvador, which will demonstrate how its endemic structural violence developed, and the legacy of fear began. I will structure my description of the country's history using Rupesinghe's analysis of the *Continuum of Peace and Conflict*. (Rupesinghe, 1998:60) It will reveal the direct linkage between the dominance of the military and economic elites in the political arena, the submission and oppression of the poor majority, conditions that inadvertently prevented the establishment of a 'legitimate' and representative democracy. The evolution of civil resistance, and the 12-year civil war which ensued, will also be discussed within this framework. Third, I will reflect upon the significance of this process in maintaining El Salvador's *legacy of fear*.

### **Establishing Democracy**

Torres-Rivas defines democracy as, a "societal process through which all human rights are realized." It is an interesting definition that focuses 'democracy' on the well-being and respect of people, and not solely on public policy and political process. Basic human rights include: civil, political, gender, social, economic and cultural rights. (Torres-Rivas, 1994: 9) He discusses three fundamental variables causing the 'political crisis' in El Salvador: 1) the systematic exclusion caused by modernization, which leads to 2) poverty and 3) social inequities.

Asymmetric modernization systematically generates a peasant proletarianization that only leads to greater poverty. (Torres-Rivas, 1994: 11) While social inequities alone do not explain the resulting violence, it is a variable in prompting change, which has the potential to lead to conflict. In asymmetric conditions where elites dominate the political, economic, social and judicial power, violence may be used to both deter opposition through terrorism and human rights violations, and in some cases, armed conflict may be perceived as the only way to express opposition to the system by the oppressed. (Rupesinghe, 1998:30)

The security force in El Salvador had a prevailing philosophy, which was often repeated by the Salvadoran National Guard: "Authority that does not abuse loses its prestige." (Christian, 1986:94) This 'philosophy' is evident in the history of brutalities committed by military, paramilitary and death squads.

The absence of democracy created an environment where human rights violations were undermined, as citizens motivated by *fear* for their lives and those they loved maintained the *status quo* through silence. It was the extremity of inequities and abuse that finally led to the peasant revolt in 1932, where General Maximiliano Hernández Martínez suppressed the uprising by killing 7,000-30,000 people (number varies depending on source), most of which were of

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oppressed to mobilize and resist.