



Vehicles of Injustice: White Savior Complex in Latin America

Cian Savoy

University of Oregon, Global Engagement ARC

Division of
Global Engagement



Introduction

I explore historical examples of Latin American countries' oppression and how that correlates to the white savior complex today.

Research Question

What is the root cause of the white savior complex and what are the consequences of maintaining this system of injustice?

Methods

First, I examine two leaders from Bolivia and Venezuela through historical reports by researchers. Second, I examine the economic regression in terms of GDP on both of those countries. Last, I reflect on my own experience in Latin America seeing vehicles of injustice with my own eyes.

Result 1

The United States opposed the political direction Bolivia was going and supposed a more conservative leader. Hugo Banzer arose as competition to Juan Torres and created a bloody military uprising. He reigned power after three days of taking control of the military on August 21, 1971. After he took power the United States provided significant military aid to stem protests against the militarized government. Banzer cracked down on freedom of speech and other crimes that are considered rights in the United States.

Result 2

Maduro's presidency has coincided with a decline in Venezuela's socioeconomic status, with crime, inflation, poverty and hunger increasing. Analysts and critics have attributed Venezuela's decline to both Chávez and Maduro's economic policies in addition to the United States' economic policy against them, while Maduro has blamed speculation and economic warfare waged by his political opponents. The United States backed Maduro but then with several economic policies began crippling Venezuela's economy.

Result 3

In Baja, agricultural workers only make about forty dollars per week, and when their children come of age, they become migrant workers. This cycle of poverty stunts economic growth and economic mobility upon these families. Improving their wages would help in the short term, but a stable solution involves breaking that cycle by changing the job opportunities of children in Baja.

Conclusions

Due to many Latin American countries' crippled economies, the government struggled to provide basic needs for its citizens. The United States is partially to blame for the economic regression. This alludes to the white savior complex because people in developed countries like the United States feel it is required to help the local communities in places like Venezuela. However, if those volunteers look slightly deeper at the root cause of Venezuela's problem, they will see that the solution lies in the developed country rather than the developing country.

References

Engaged researchers from the New York Times, Washington Post, and other research reports. Most notably, Brennan Moffitt and James Emersberger.

Acknowledgments

Professor Matthias Vogel