

Annex III

Anonymous Interview to lawyer at U.S. international NGO

Interviewer: Sebastián Rodríguez

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Paper on Critiques to Human Rights Legal Activism: THE INDUSTRY OF ADVOCACY

**INTERVIEW/CUESTIONARIO DE ENTREVISTA**

Review and sign inform consent form previous to the interview/Revisar y firmar el formulario de consentimiento informado antes de realizar la entrevista

1. Why did you decide to become a human rights legal activist? (personal history: what and where did you study, what motivated you)/ ¿Porque decidió convertirse en activista legal de derechos humanos? (Historia personal: ¿qué y dónde estudio? ¿qué lo motivó?)
  - She was initially interested in international human rights law, but she didn't know.
  - Before law school she worked at a social service drafting press releases, she also worked in a theatre company and she was interested in the social work related to that.
  - She wanted to make change on the issues that were important for her.
  - Then she decided to go to Law School, she choose the school because they have a strong program on international human rights law.
  - She then was part of a team of access to mental health services in a country of the global south. She spent a summer in a country in the global south working for domestic NGOs.
  - While she was there she got interested in a new project. Native lawyers cannot access to justice because there's barriers to become lawyer. She started interview people for that. The U.S was exporting their legal model which was not applicable in that country of the global south. A government development agency was giving trainings to people, so they could participate at the courts. But the program was flawed, as they lack the local knowledge, starting by the fact in that country didn't even have law schools at the time.
  - When she was an undergrad she didn't know if she wanted to become a lawyer.
  - Her dad was a lawyer but she studied theater at college. She used to draft scripts. She was a paralegal once so she was interested. But it took a while for her to find out that this was what she wanted.
2. How long have you been working as a human rights legal activist? / ¿Cuánto tiempo lleva trabajando como activista legal de derechos humanos?
3. Can you describe the kind of organizations where you have worked as a human rights legal activist? (kind of organization, kind of job you have done (including internships and volunteer experiences), size of organization, is it national or international, what is a normal day of work for you, how big is your team, what area do you specialize in)/ ¿Puede describir el tipo de organizaciones en las cuales ha trabajado Como activista legal en derechos humanos? (tipo de organización, tipo de trabajo que realiza o ha realizado, tamaño de la organización, si es nacional o internacional, como es un día normal de trabajo para usted, cual es el tamaño de su equipo, en que área se especializa).

- At a small domestic NGO, the funding comes from international aid.
  - At a Human Rights Clinic, they have many fellows. She was the only person doing domestic work at the time because of the nature.
  - Before coming to work for a Global NGO, she started working on sexual rights because she did a small project on birth control. Right now, if someone wants to work at a global NGO, the impression is that the path is that U.S. non-profits want lawyers with law firm experience. She has found that the legal market wants somebody that has been trained by a firm. It's just her perception. Commitment to the cause from day 1 is not important as the credentials and legal experience a person has.
  - Is it just global NGOs? Maybe, maybe not. There are very few jobs at non-profits and payment is not great. Some people don't have the option to take a lower payment job as they get their law degrees and have to pay their debts. Philanthropy doesn't really offer many options. As a result, working in a non-profit becomes a privilege. If you have a family, probably might not be able to afford working in a non-profit. There's many factors that determine who do this kind of work, in this case, this type of work is reserved to the most privileged ones.
4. What expectations did you have about social justice when you decided to go to law school?/ ¿Qué expectativas tenía sobre la justicia social cuando decidió estudiar Derecho?
- As an undergrad she didn't had any expectations. She didn't really question if she could contribute to the world. Perhaps because her career at the time was not aiming that.
  - It became as a late idea when she became angry about injustice. It was reinforced by the political context in the U.S. after the Bush administration. Her direct experience with low income children. She realized her privileges and then decided to do something. Now that she is a lawyer she wants to continue doing this.
5. What expectations did you have when you started working as a human rights legal activist?/ ¿Qué expectativas tenía cuando empezó a trabajar como activista legal de derechos humanos?
6. Where those expectations fulfilled? Explain/ ¿Fueron sus expectativas iniciales cumplidas? Explique.
- She doesn't think that she can see change.
  - She feels like her job is a positive contribution but at the end of the day she hasn't feel like she has been changing the status quo. It's a tough reality.
  - Only institutions have the money to make the change. The more established the institution is the more likely they are to make this change. She had to create her own opportunities to do that.
  - She writes academic articles and she thinks that's her contribution.
7. What obstacles have you encountered as a human rights legal activist? (financial, type of job, supervision, organizational, bureaucratic)/ ¿Que obstáculos ha enfrentado en su carrera

como activista legal de derechos humano? (financieros, tipo de trabajo, supervisión, organizacional, burocracia).

- In the Global South country that she worked at was frustrating to see that people were ok that American lawyers were working with corrupt bar associations. Spending money on trial competitions in English for people in a country that didn't even had law schools. It was a system that legitimize the bar association. People were okay with it. IT was better that the U.S. shouldn't have been there. That is a fascinating example how the economy is sustained by the NGO business. It's nice for ex-pats, it's cheap and people get exciting jobs with fairly good salaries. People move there but they don't really contribute to the problem, however people don't question these dynamics.
  - At a global NGO, is a different story. These are big hierarchical organizations. They have development offices that allows them to get a lot of funding for their work.
8. How do you think those obstacles could be overcome?/ ¿Cómo sobrepasaría esos obstáculos?
- We have to be more open to internal debate and intra-movement debate.
  - Conservatives work like that and we don't.
  - On the left, we want not to show a united front voice. It's hard to disagree between each other. It's not well-seen to have diverse opinions within the left. We have different agendas. We want to respond quickly to problems. We don't think strategically.
  - Lawyers need to do more to train non-lawyers do they can demand their rights and feel ownership of their rights.
  - Lawyers are not super specials and thinking that way it reproduces hierarchical structures and creates harm. Services are not affordable. Lawyers could be training non-lawyers to advance access to justice.
  - Community voices have to be included in the litigation. She feels in her job that she has no interaction with the people. But because her role is different. It's tough for these impact litigation lawyers to be connected to what is going on the ground.
9. To what extent do you consider the work you has a real impact on the human rights of the communities/groups you work on?/ ¿Hasta qué punto considera cuál es el impacto que tiene su trabajo sobre los derechos humanos de las comunidades/grupos que defiende?
10. What is your relationship with those communities?/ ¿Cuál considera es la relación con esas comunidades?
11. What is the thing you enjoy the most about your work?/ ¿Qué es lo que más disfruta de su trabajo?
12. What is the thing that you like the least about your work?/ ¿Qué es lo que menos disfruta de su trabajo?
- Different people do different things. Not everyone should be radical. Some people transform organizations. Some people create their own. Some people adapt to an organization. Starting by your own is risky unless you have connections and donors.

- Change often don't come from existing institutions. We need to find ways to bring new institutions to do new kinds of work.