



Distinguished men like José Trinidad Cabañas and Francisco Morazán (two renowned Honduran presidents) are rolling over in their graves knowing that they are being compared to Rafael Callejas, Roberto Suazo Córdova, Robert Micheletti Baín, and other politicians and public officials who, despite the many accusations of corruption against them, immortalize themselves by putting their names on countless schools throughout the country.

To investigate the situation, Revistazo reviewed data from the Ministry of Public Education on 22,540 schools throughout the country, selecting a sample of 500. We found that ever since Honduras' decades of military rule, presidents, congressmen, mayors, and public officials all the way down to city councilmembers have taken advantage of the lack of regulation by christening countless elementary schools, high schools, and preschools with their sullied names.

Many of these names that are written above the doorways of schools have also appeared in newspapers, police reports, prosecution reports and judicial files in Honduras and in other countries.

Revistazo discussed the situation with officials from the Ministry of Education, and they told us that these names are not permanent. They can be changed at the request of the communities. In another article of this series, Revistazo will explain the procedure to change the names of the schools in your community.

For now, we present to you a list of individuals, and you can be the judge of whether or not they deserve to have their names on schools.

Drug dealing and money laundering

In Yoro, Yorito y Victoria, three towns in the department of Yoro, multiple education centers carry the name of the ex-congressman from the National Party, Armando Ávila Panchamé. Ávila Panchamé was arrested in Olancho July 10, 2003, and in February 2004, he was sentenced to 20 years in prison for dealing drugs. In July 2016, years before he could complete his sentence, he was killed by another inmate in the National Penitentiary.

Meet some examples and discover more about the trend in our database of more than 22,000 schools.



Yankel Rosenthal Coello is the name of one school in the neighborhood of San Marcos Arriba, in the department of Santa Barbara. The namesake of this school was a businessman who was detained in Miami October 6, 2015 by DEA agents. A court in the South District of New York is currently pursuing a criminal case against Coello for money laundering and has put Coello under house arrest in the meantime.

Another name found in the Ministry of Education's database is that of the ex- Liberal Party congressman from the department of Cortés, Mario Fernando Hernández, who was shot to death November 22, 2008, in the neighborhood of Cabañas in San Pedro Sula. The ex-congressman was seeking to get reelected on the coattails of Robert Micheletti in their party's internal election, but he was killed before the election took place

"Death of Congressmen is Associated with Drugs", was the title of an article in the Honduran newspaper [La Prensa](#) on November 10, 2009. The article states that according to the Public Prosecutor's Office, the liberal congressman was killed over a shipment of pseudoephedrine. He had been using money from drug trafficking to fund his political campaign. The article indicates that the shipment came from Syria and was valued at 7 million euros. It states that the Anti-Drug Trafficking Directorate found a runway used for drug trafficking at a ranch in Naco Cortes, a region southwest of San Pedro Sula that was allegedly linked to the Sinaloa Cartel. **"The ranch was the property of the congressman,"** says the newspaper.

Similarly, we found schools named after the mayor of Yoro, **Arnaldo Urbina Soto**, who was accused by the Special Prosecutor against Organized Crime of asset laundering and possession of illegal weapons. The case has been upheld in a public trial and is now in the hands of the trial judges. Urbina was arrested July 27, 2014 in his place of residence in Yoro.

Furthermore, the database of the Ministry of Education includes schools with the name of the mayor of Paraíso Copan, **Amílcar Alexander Ardón**, who according to publications from La Tribuna leads Cartel de los Hermanos AA (the AA Brothers Cartel). "Cartel de los Hermanos AA was given that name by the police; Alexander and his brother Alfredo [the AA brothers], are the head of the criminal group," details La Tribuna.

The authorities said that Cartel AA controls drug trafficking routes, mostly in the departments of Copán and Ocotepeque, according to the newspaper.

Corruption

Think about how your child would feel if she studied in one of the many elementary and high schools named after **Rafael Leonardo Callejas**, an ex-president of Honduras accused of multiple crimes that he allegedly committed before, during and after his time in office. **"Maybe they teach corruption there?"** laughed **Martín Sandoval**, a father who can proudly say that his child attends the José Trinidad Cabañas School in the neighborhood of Guanacaste in Tegucigalpa.

Cabañas was the president of Honduras in the 1850s. He was also a general with many victories to his name. He lived all of his life as a poor man, and when died, all he had was a humble home in

Comayagua, his callused hands and a white beard that fell down to his chest. In contrast, Callejas, who governed the country between 1990 and 1994, had accusations of corruption thrown at him from every side. However, the Honduran justice system absolved him of all charges.

Today this man who, despite social condemnation, was not too long ago considered honorable in his political and business circles, is facing five criminal charges in a federal court of the United States, the country that requested his extradition. Callejas and 41 other leaders from the soccer federations CONCACAF and CONMEBOL, are accused of receiving \$200 million in bribes for the broadcast rights of the national team's tournaments and games. Of the accused, thirteen, including Callejas, have pleaded guilty. **Callejas accepted two of the five charges brought up against him, and he could be facing a 20-year jail sentence.**



Transparency mural decorated by the students of the Rafael Leonardo Callejas School

By the same token, there are a number of schools bearing the name of **Roberto Micheletti Bain**, three-year liberal congressman of the department of Yoro who ended his political career as the de facto president through the 2009 political-military coup perpetrated against the then constitutional president, **Manuel Zelaya Rosales**.

Reports from national agencies indicate that as a congressman, Micheletti amassed enormous amounts of public money that he received as subsidies without giving an account of its use. Between 2006 and 2009, as President of the Congress, Micheletti managed 150 million lempiras

(about \$6.4 million) and he decided how the money would be allocated to each congressman. A report from the Legislative Budget developed in 2008 by the Center for the Investigation and Promotion of Human Rights (CIPRODEH) indicates that Micheletti eliminated the subsidies of 20 liberal congressmen.

Micheletti also received countless accusations of acts of corruption that he allegedly committed in his six months as de facto president. Former minister of finance, William Chong Wong and President of the Central Bank of Honduras, María Elena Mondragón, revealed that in October 2009 alone \$123.8 million dollars was squandered. The money was meant for agricultural support programs and for paying off the State's debt to Petróleos de Venezuela (PDVSA), a Venezuelan oil company.

Among the corrupt, we also find **Robert Suazo Córdova**, president of Honduras between 1982 and 1986. During his presidency, a national security policy was established that provoked the persecution, torture, disappearances and the deaths of many social leaders including students, union workers, teachers, peasants and religious leaders, among others. The Committee of Relatives of Disappeared Detainees in Honduras (COFADEH) recorded the forced disappearance of 184 people during this time period.

As president, Suazo Córdova lent out national territory for the training of foreign troops and for the establishment of the Nicaraguan counterrevolution. These clandestine troops from Nicaragua received logistical support as well as special territory from the Honduran government in the war against the Nicaraguan government.

During the Suazo Córdova Administration, the head of the Armed Forces was general Gustavo Álveres Martínez, the man who founded the infamous death squads named "Battalion 3-16" which were created to fight revolutionary forces in Central America.

The Honduran army participated in military actions in other countries, like the famous Massacre of Sumpul in June 1982 when more than 300 peasants, including children, women and the elderly, were murdered while attempting to cross into Honduras. The peasants were searching for refuge from the battles between specialized El Salvadorian troops and the Farabundo Martí Front for the National Liberation (FMLN), a major political party in El Salvador.

Álvarez Martínez and other officials from the Armed forces were later accused of multiple human rights violations.

Military

It is well known that military personnel used their authority and their weapons to push themselves into power governing Honduras between 1960 and 1980, two decades during which a shocking number of military coups occurred. It was then that schools began to appear with the names of men like **Juan Alberto Melgar Castro and Cristóbal Díaz García**.

October 3, 1963, through a bloody coup d'état, with the estimated death toll reaching 2 million, the Armed Forces forced out the Constitutional President, Ramón Villeda Morales. **Oswaldo López Arellano** became the Head of State.

In June of 1965 a National Constituent Assembly made up of liberal and nationalist congressmen named Arellano the constitutional president until 1971 when the position would be handed over to Ramón Ernesto Cruz, president elect. One year later, on December 4, 1972, through another coup d'état, Oswaldo López Arellano returned to power and maintained it until 1975, the period in which the "Banana Bribe" occurred which involved United Brands Company, Arellano, and his Minister of Economy, Abraham Bennaton Ramos.

By yet another coup, López Arellano was forced out of office and the Armed Forces named **Juan Alberto Melgar Castro** as Head of State, who would also be removed from office by another general. During his administration, the massacre of Santa Clara and Los Horcones transpired in Juticalpa Olancho, where 14 people were murdered. Investigations determined that those responsible for this slaughter were military and were acting from the command of Mayor Enrique Chinchilla, Lieutenant Benjamín Plata and landowners Manuel Zelaya and Carlos Bahr. Lieutenant Benjamín Plata ordered them to throw the bodies into a well and blow them up with dynamite.

Melgar Castro was overthrown on August 7, 1978 by General Policarpo Paz García, who due to international pressures held an election in 1980 for the National Constituent Assembly, and later held presidential elections to return power to civilian governors. On June 28, 2009 the Army flexed its muscles once more and forced out president Manuel Zelaya Rosales, but this time they handed the presidency to Roberto Micheletti Bain, President of the National Congress.

Ministers of Education

Politicians and ministers of education, like **Alma Rodas de Fiallos, Alejandro Ventura, and Marlon Breve** have not missed out on the opportunity to immortalize themselves in the names of schools

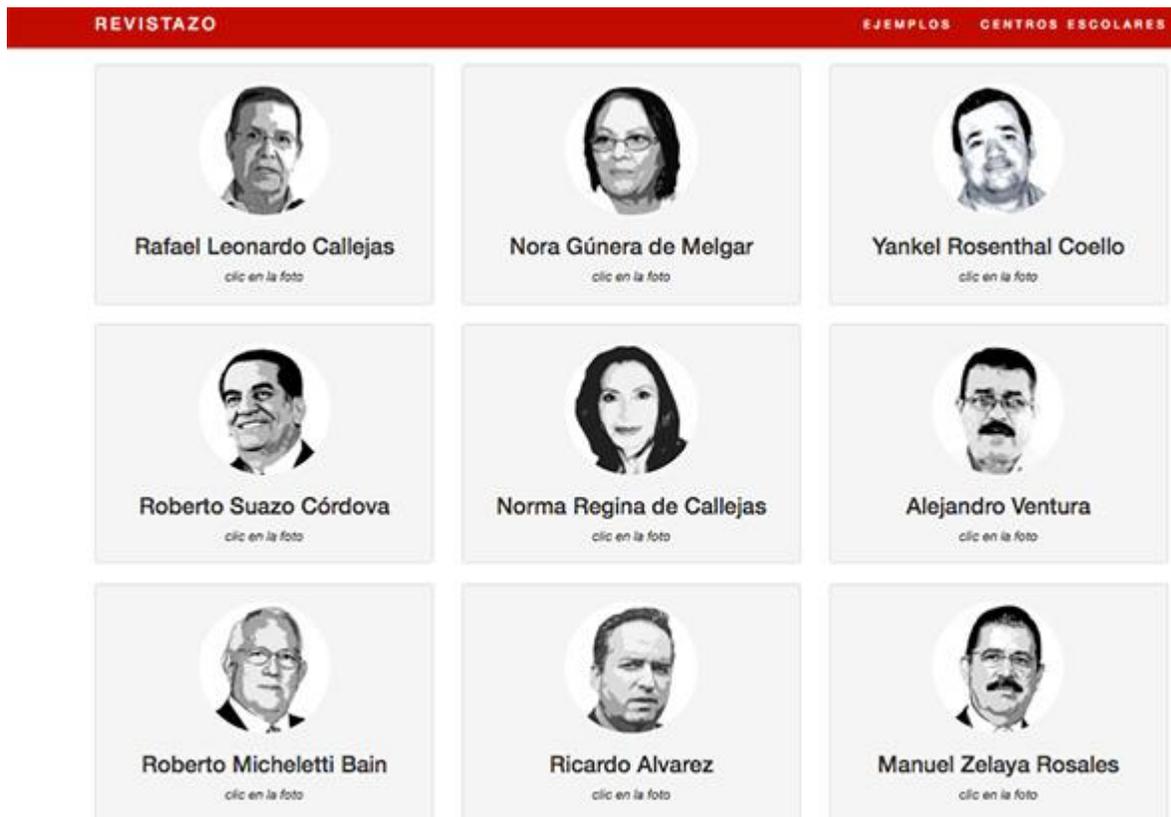
Alma Rodas de Fiallos, Minister of Education during the Roberto Suazo Córdova administration, was reported for the sale of milk that friendly countries had donated as a snack for school children. The case was never investigated further, but the name of the Minister of Education remained on many schools around the country.

Another case is that of **Alejandro Ventura**, Ex-minister of Education and director of the First Magisterial High School of Honduras (Pricmah), who christened schools with his name despite his less than perfect record. Ventura has been accused with illicit enrichment and the irregular diversion of 10.3 million lempiras (\$440,000) from the Ministry of Education between 2009 and 2011. Ventura was the Minister of Education during the beginning of the Porfirio Lobo's presidency.

The accusation was released in a special hearing of the High Court of Auditors that documented at least 38 cases of irregular spending, among which was the renting of luxury vehicles and helicopters for around 708 million lempiras (\$30 million).

Other irregularities reported include a lack of documentation verifying the delivery of teaching materials, a lack of computer equipment, unliquidated travel expenses, the splitting of purchasing contracts (or the fractioning of a large contract to make it seem like multiple smaller contracts so that the provider does not have to go through a public bidding process that is normally required for large contracts), and the distribution of vehicles without any regulation.

Problems were also found in purchase requisitions, the irregular purchase of gasoline and vehicle parts, incorrect deductions in the payment of lawsuits and lack of regulations for granting transfers to different public institutions.



Schools that decided to change their names

The numerous examples of corrupt namesakes leave no doubt that many of the names of schools in the country are less than ideal when talking about transparency and honesty. However, it is important to mention that there are communities that have sought to change the names of their schools and have come up against opposition from community leaders associated with political parties.

This is the case in the **Rafael Leonardo Callejas** School of the Smith 1 neighborhood of Comayagüela, where attempts have already been made to change the school's name but without success.



Ana Karina David

***“No, no, no the name of the school won’t change because the esteemed Callejas is a leader of the National Party,”** is the answer that Ana Karina David, principal of the school, received when she proposed changing the name.*

***“Rafael Leonardo Callejas is corrupt, the law has shown it, at this moment he is being judged in the United States, but those who live in the community are poor people. The parents have left it up to the Party leaders to guide them, and there is no choice.”** said the principal in a conversation with Revistazo.*

Her face reflects the shame she feels knowing that the school she loves so much carries the name of a person as controversial as Callejas. For her, changing the name of the school is important because this school has never received anything from ex-president Callejas, not even a piece of chalk.

“As you can see, the school has been painted. We did it by selling nacatamales, donuts, popsicles, shaved ice,” said the teacher who, in an apparent juxtaposition, keeps a transparency mural available to the public where Callejas’s name boldly stands out. The school principal does not miss the opportunity to thank the families of the children for the support she has received.

Revistazo has discussed the topic with officials from the Ministry of Education, and they have conveyed that the names of schools are not permanent. They can be changed at the communities’ request.

In the next article of this series, Revistazo will explain how to carry out the procedure for changing the name of schools in your community.