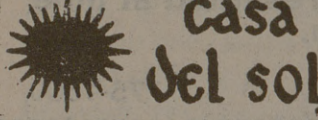


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Salvadorans finding peace

Student studying refugees in Belize

By HADDON JOHNSTON
Reporter

Refugees entering Belize, Central America seek political asylum and freedom from war-torn El Salvador. In Belize, they find freedom in the Valley of Peace, a safe and peaceful home.

Charles McElroy, a Texas A&M graduate student in the geography department, is studying Salvadoran migration and mobility patterns in Belize. He says he has visited The Valley of Peace three times since it opened in March 1982.

"It's an interesting, contemporary issue that needed some attention, so I decided to... (study) it," McElroy says.

He says Belize, a newly independent and non-aligned nation, began to feel the pressure of increasing numbers of Salvadoran refugees in 1981 because the country's borders remain open.

To offset this influx, The Valley of Peace was started by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Belize government to give the refugees land and the opportunity to provide for themselves in a peaceful atmosphere.

The Valley of Peace refugee camp is not an encampment. The Salvadorans are free to come and go.

The camp lies near the capitol of Belize and is comprised of 15,000 acres of tropical vegetation called Belizian "bush".

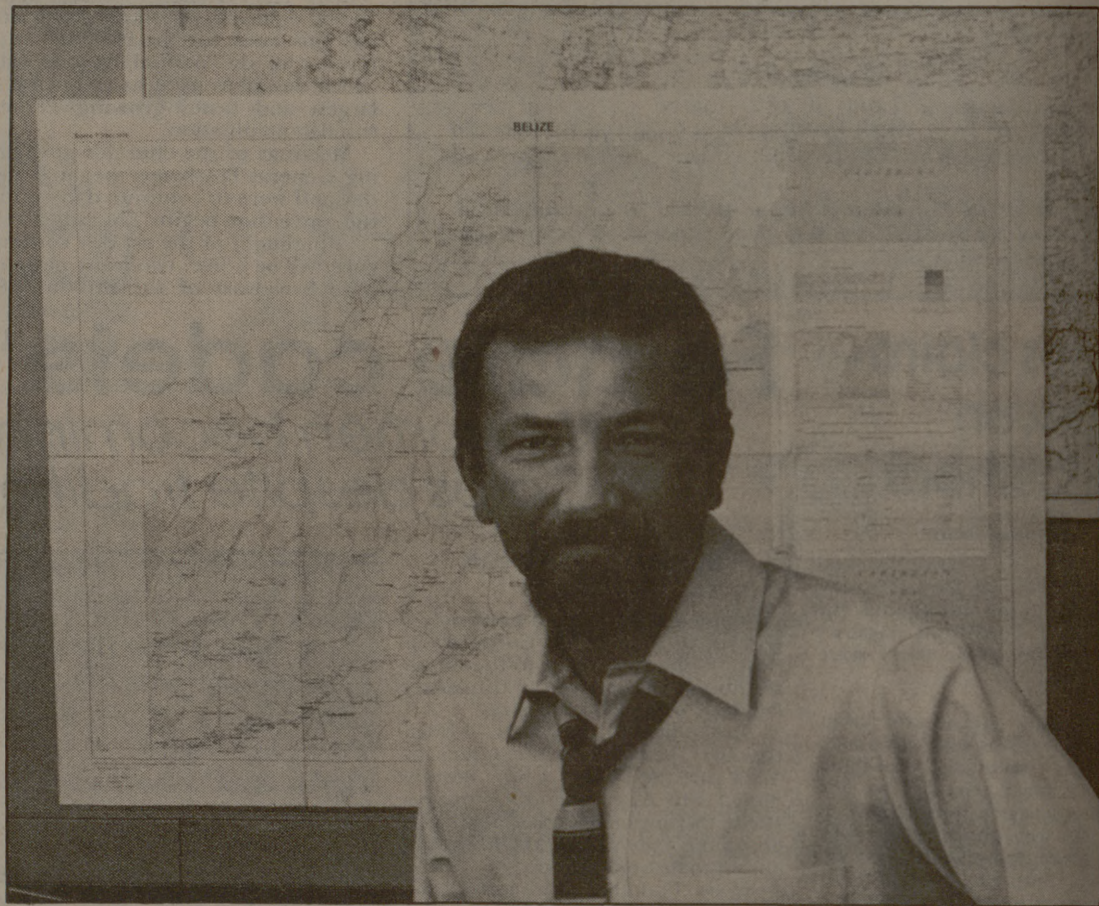
The UNHCR and the Belizian government developed the area to incorporate the Salvadorans into Belizian society and to provide a permanent dwelling for the refugees.

Instead of having refugees strain the Belizian economy, the government gave them fertile land so they could produce food for themselves and add to the agricultural productivity of Belize, McElroy says.

"Because the Salvadorans are an agriculturally based people, The Valley of Peace works well," he says. "The people are happy there, and they don't want to return to El Salvador."

The Valley of Peace plan calls for one-third Belizians and two-thirds Salvadorans to settle and work on the acreage.

"They have just about reached their objective of 100 Salvadoran families and 50 Belizian families at



Charles McElroy stands in front of a map of Belize.

The Valley of Peace," McElroy says. "They're agrarian groups and work well together."

The Salvadorans sought refuge in Belize because of its proximity to their country and its friendly reputation. The refugees say they left their homeland because the war was affecting their lives and livelihood, McElroy says.

Through a survey questionnaire he distributed at The Valley of Peace in 1983, McElroy has been able to come closer to the objectives of his thesis.

"I'm looking at the details behind who, why, and how these refugees went to Belize," he says. "They're all applying for residency in Belize — they're all happy there, and Belize is

happy with the refugees at The Valley of Peace."

McElroy says The Valley of Peace has a democratic government. The UNHCR and Belizian government have organizational and managerial control over the camp, but its people have an elected village council.

The settlement works as an agricultural cooperative with Belize, a country that has always found the need to improve agricultural production for its population.

"They (the settlers at the camp) already produce enough rice for export," McElroy says.

The Valley of Peace is a centrally planned community that resembles any community from the refugees' homeland. The settlers live in thatched homes, draw their own wa-

ter and attend schools where they receive bilingual education.

Most Belizians speak Spanish, but the Salvadorans do not speak much English, the national language of Belize, McElroy says.

The village has a soccer team which competes nationally. "And they're good!" McElroy says.

The villagers also are represented at the annual agricultural fair, one of Belize's largest happenings.

"They're just as much a part of the gig as anyone else," McElroy says.

The refugee program is welcomed throughout Belize. The people and the government support it, he says.

Public housing officials say groups wanted segregation

Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Several East Texas communities are scrambling to meet a federal court order calling for improved compliance with federal regulations on integrated public housing.

Most public housing officials say community attitudes have forced them to house blacks and whites separately in the past and will make it difficult to integrate them in the future.

"We only put blacks where they wanted to be," said Alice Dougherty, manager of public housing for the city of Cleveland, located about 30 miles northeast of Houston.

"Is that wrong?" she asked. Dougherty said the Cleveland

public housing authority for the past 20 years has put black and white residents in separate projects because that is the way both races wanted it.

"Their argument is legitimate as hell if you ask me," she said. "They just wanted to live with their own."

But Cleveland officials are changing their policy because of an order issued last week by U.S. District Judge William Wayne Justice of Tyler.

Justice found the Housing and Urban Development agency's policies discriminate against minorities. He ordered HUD to respond to a desegregation plan that is part of a lawsuit filed in 1980 by hundreds of black East Texas public housing residents.

The judge also listed 36 East

Texas counties — including Liberty County, in which Cleveland is located — that are not in compliance with federal laws barring segregated public housing.

"Everybody's got a right to live where they want to live," Dougherty said. "We are moving blacks into white sections and whites into blacks. We've had some refusals, but those people are being told they have to move out of public housing."

Housing authorities in Livingston and Corrigan agreed that they only segregated blacks and whites because that is the way residents wanted it.

DeOrville Evans, manager of Corrigan's housing authority, said public residents "flat told us" they preferred segregation.

Laundromat offering tan


Associated Press

AUSTIN — Customers of an Austin laundromat can get more than clean clothes when they do their laundry, and the service will leave them beaming with good health.


Kwik Wash officials have built a tanning room in one of its laundromats. Aside from the usual line of washers and dryers, a room called Kwik Tan is furnished with a tanning bed, a stereo, and a wicker chair.


Bob Montague, a customer, says "Laundry takes at least one hour to do. I don't have time to lie out in the sun. So I use it for 15 minutes. Besides, it is too hot to lie out."

Managers at Kwik Wash, the laundromat with the upside-down signs, say they hope to attract people who have no time to get a tan the conventional way.



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