



the JUST word

The Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund for Mental Health & Human Rights

A Partner of Boston College Center for Human Rights & International Justice

The Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund at Twenty-Five

Ben Achtenberg & Joan H. Liem

Over a remarkable twenty-five years of activism-linked fundraising and philanthropy, the **Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund for Mental Health and Human Rights** has raised and distributed more than a million dollars to small, grassroots projects around the world. Several long-serving Fund volunteers met recently at Boston College to reflect on that legacy on the 25th anniversary of the assassination of the organization's namesake, five of his fellow Jesuits, their employee Julia Elba Ramos, and her daughter, Celina.

field of social psychology and, in particular, in its use and meaning for work with indigenous people and the poor.



Nacho with the Mental Health Committee of Boston Committee for Health Rights in Central America, February 1989

In the late 1980s, Fund members Brinton Lykes and Ramsay Liem, had met and been inspired by Nacho, who was based at the University of Central America, in El Salvador. During a visit to the United States, he participated in a meeting where they discussed ways they might collaborate.

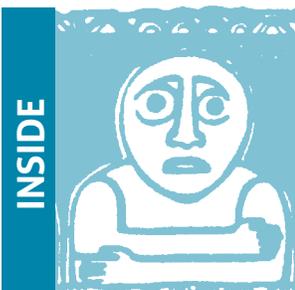
A follow-up conference call to pursue those ideas was scheduled for November 16, 1989 – 25 years ago. Ramsay and Brinton were actually in the middle of

The Beginnings

The Fund honors the life and work of Jesuit priest Ignacio "Nacho" Martín-Baró, a seminal thinker in the

setting up that call when they received the devastating news that Martín-Baró, five Jesuit colleagues, their housekeeper and her daughter had all been murdered – brutally shot, as it later turned out, by Salvadoran troops

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Our Mission & Values

Through grant-making and education, the Martín-Baró Fund fosters psychological well-being, social consciousness, active resistance, and progressive social change in communities affected by institutional violence, repression, and social injustice.

OUR VALUES

- ◆ We believe that the scars of such experiences are deeply seated both in the individual and in society.
- ◆ We believe in the power of the community collectively to heal these wounds, to move forward, and to create change.
- ◆ We believe in the importance of developing education and critical awareness about the oppressive policies and practices of the United States and of multinational corporations.

OUR GOALS

- ◆ To support innovative grassroots projects that explore the power of the community to foster healing within individuals and communities that are trying to recover from experiences of institutional violence, repression, and social injustice.
- ◆ To promote education and critical awareness about the psychosocial consequences of structural violence, repression, and social injustice on individuals and communities, while educating ourselves and the wider community about the community-based responses of grantees in their pursuit of social reparation and a more just and equitable world.
- ◆ To build collaborative relationships among the Fund, its grantees, and its contributors for mutual education and social change.

The Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund at Twenty-Five

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trained at the U.S. “School of the Americas.” The idea of a fund in Nacho’s name was a response to that tragedy. “There was no choice,” says Ramsay. “We just felt that we had to do something to honor his work and learn from it.”

Then at the University of Texas, filmmaker Pat Goudvis had connected with Brinton because of their mutual interests in Central America, and joined the Fund when she returned to Boston: “I wanted to be involved...this was something very focused and specific that just wasn’t happening anywhere else.”

At the time, Joan Liem was developing a program at UMass Boston, training psychologists to work with underserved populations. She says the Fund provided a space where she could “recommit to a different approach” free of the pressures and tensions of the Academy.

Yul-san Liem, Joan and Ramsay’s daughter, joined the Fund when she was sixteen, along with her sister Wol-san. The two girls had themselves formed a profound bond with Martín-Baró during a meeting in their home. Yul-san remembers that when he realized that the young people were not participating in the “adult” discussion, he said something like: “What are we doing? We have to make a space where younger people can be involved” and then interrupted his talk to sing and play guitar with them.

Cathy Mooney calls having lived in Latin America “a transformational experience,” but back in the U.S. she found herself in academic environments that didn’t offer many occasions for remaining involved. She saw participation in the Fund as an opportunity to serve in a different way. “A lot of people don’t want to do the work of raising money; they want the positive vibes you get from direct service. I thought, “I don’t think I need that. I think I can do this.”

Brian Murphy, another early member, notes that hearing about the assassinations “was part of the whole awareness of what our country was doing internationally. To be in this group of people who had known Ignacio personally was very powerful.” Brian spoke for many Fund members when she talked about the power of our connection – though indirect – with the projects we supported: “What really kept me going was reading about the work people were doing, learning how it could change their world to have a corn mill in their village, for example – to have a sense of what people were doing in the world.”

Among some later arrivals to the Fund, Ben Achtenberg talked about his mentor and collaborator, a psychiatrist turned filmmaker, from whom he learned how to use film to illuminate the human condition. Yet he found working with the Fund to be a welcome counter-experience: to have the

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Editors: M. Brinton Lykes and Joan Huser Liem. Translations Spanish to English and English to Spanish: Carolina Carter **PLEASE SUPPORT OUR WORK.** Contributions can be made on-line at: www.martinbarofund.org or by check made out to Peace Development Fund, noting that it is for the Martín-Baró Fund on the memo line and sent to PO Box 40250, San Francisco, CA 94140. For questions or comments, please email us at info@martinbarofund.org or write us at Martín-Baró Fund, P.O. Box 302122, Jamaica Plain, MA, 02130.

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opportunity to support interesting and exciting social movements without the distancing effect of seeing them as potential film subjects.

Bryan Gangemi felt his undergraduate work in psychology at UMass Boston was “completely devoid of any political content.” He learned about the fund through a mentor at UMass: “It was one of the first things that actually made sense to me within psychology.” Another factor motivating him to “get grounded” in the political realities of Latin America was learning that his partner’s grandfather had himself been a victim of political violence in Ecuador.

Sam Wechsler’s first experiences in Guatemala were “life changing,” and motivated her to want to know more. Back in the States, someone linked her up with Brinton. “We talked under a tree for hours and at some point she said, ‘Do you want to join the Fund?’” On her return to Guatemala, Sam visited the project where Brinton was working in Chajul, which influenced the founding of her own *Voces de Cambio* (Voices of Change), a writing and photography project for teenage girls in Quetzaltenango. Regarding the Fund, Sam says, “I was thrilled to be part of a group of like-minded people. I felt like I learned a tremendous amount.”

Reflections on Working with the Fund

In thinking about the accomplishments of the Martín-Baró Fund, the members noted that, on the whole, the money raised and awarded to grantees was well used, generally for direct support of the projects proposed, and with very little spent on administration. Despite the modest amounts we were able to provide, moreover, most groups funded accomplished a great deal toward their stated goals.

Fund members take pride in the fact that we managed to sustain an entirely volunteer-based effort for far longer than many such groups, and developed a strong, collective process both for running the organization and for relating to the groups we funded. We were able to remain true to and to promote the core mission and goals of the

Fund while expanding our understanding of changing global conditions. In the process we were also able to include a large number of undergraduate and graduate

students in our work – for short-term fundraising projects like our annual Bowlathon but, more importantly, as committee members, participating fully in proposal evaluation and grantmaking.

In addition, we offered valuable educational programs for audiences in Boston. We brought in some truly wonderful speakers to well attended events and successfully spread the word about the work our grantees were doing. Though we weren’t necessarily planning on it, our programming helped create a sense of community in our local audiences during rather difficult times. Our newsletter and website, created on a shoestring budget, continue the Fund’s educational mission and remain ongoing successes.



Photo courtesy Martín Baró Family

Nacho the Magician

Fund members reflected on the stresses and complications that arose as we expanded our geographic reach to fund projects in areas where we had less contact but, as one member noted, “we managed over time to become informed about a larger number of areas through the groups and projects that applied to us.”

The Fund continues today as a project of the Center for Human Rights and International Justice at Boston College. Although some of the original members continue to be involved, the membership is now largely drawn from faculty, administrators, and students at the University. As in the past, we continue to support grassroots organizations that are addressing human rights and mental health issues. Simultaneously, we wrestle with many of the same but also new challenges of the changing world order. What remains constant, however, is the guiding vision of Ignacio Martín-Baró: that grassroots people have the capacity collectively to resist state-sponsored violence, and promote social healing and social change, that is, “to construct a new person in a new society”.

*Filmmaker Ben Achtenberg’s most recent documentary is **Refuge: Caring for Survivors of Torture** (2013). Joan Liem is Professor of Psychology and Special Assistant to the Provost for Graduate Program Development at University of Massachusetts Boston.*

New Publication Highlights Accomplishments of the MBF from 1990-2014

Erin Sibley & M. Brinton Lykes

This summer, *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* published “Liberation Psychology and Pragmatic Solidarity: North-South Collaborations Through The Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund.” Co-authored by Lykes and Sibley, the article describes the link between mental health and human rights, focusing on Ignacio Martín-Baró’s contributions to our understanding of mental health and human rights, as well as the accomplishments of The Fund in developing and sustaining “pragmatic solidarity” over its 24-year history. A copy of the article can be found at www.martin-barofund.org.

An extensive quantitative and qualitative review of applications to The MBF was undertaken beginning in the summer of 2011 to understand the scope of work of grantees over the past few decades. A total of 179 projects directed by 93 organizations were supported between 1990 and 2014 with a total of \$1,035,011 in funding. The greatest number of projects were located in Central and South America (77 projects, 43%), although projects were funded throughout Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, North America, and the Caribbean.

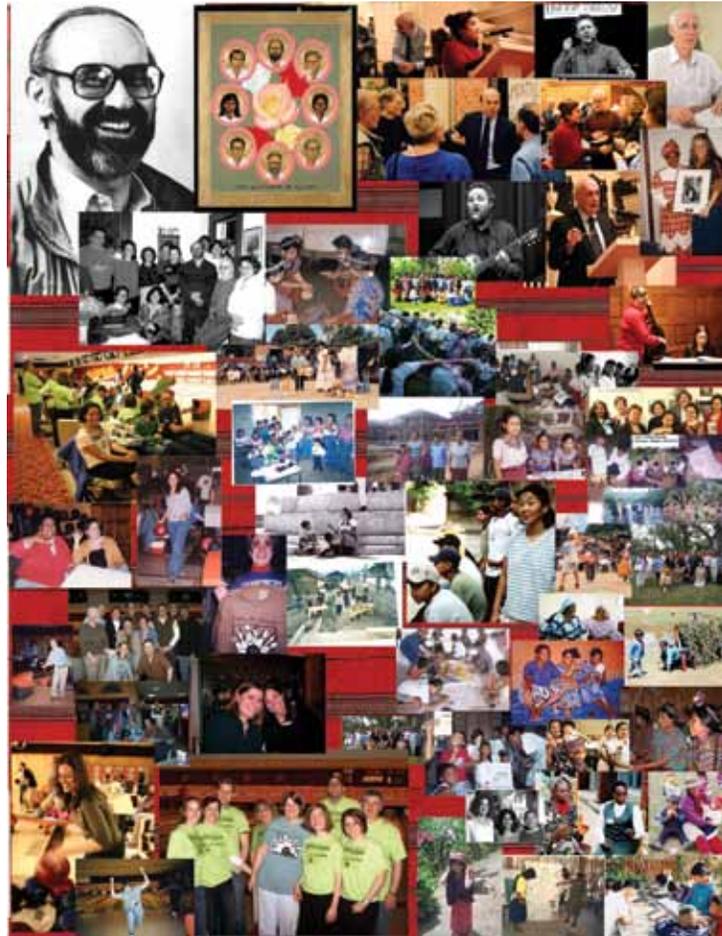
Qualitative analysis focused on understanding the type of the work undertaken by each of the projects, the projects’ targeted demographic groups, as well as their expected outcomes, among many other

aspects of their work. Results indicated that trained local facilitators (community participants) were the most common providers, and women or girls were the most common target demographic group. Survivors of war-related trauma were the individuals most frequently participating in the projects, and armed conflict was the most frequent problem targeted by those who received grants from The Fund. The vast majority of projects used group activities and participatory workshops as the modality of their work. Twenty organizations made direct references to the harmful effects of U.S. policies on their target population in their applications to The Fund.

We are excited to publicize the work of The Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund and the accomplishments of its grantees that have been made possible in part by over a million dollars in funding since 1990. We are also deeply honored to have been able to collaborate with so many incredible grantees – and thankful

for the financial and volunteer support of all those who have supported and sustained The Fund.

Erin Sibley completed her PhD at Boston College where she is now a postdoctoral research associate in the Center for Optimized Student Support. M. Brinton Lykes is Professor of Community-Cultural Psychology and Associate Director of the Center for Human Rights & International Justice at Boston College.



Martín-Baró Fund at 25:Volunteers, Invited Speakers, and Grantees.

Reflections

To commemorate the life and work of Ignacio Martín-Baró, members and friends of the Martín-Baró Fund shared their reflections on Nacho's contributions to their lives and beyond. *The Just Word* devotes this issue to these remembrances that include contributions from Argentina, Chile, El Salvador, Central and East Africa, and both coasts of the United States.



Laptops and Loyalty

Adrienne Aron

When was it? Maybe 1986. Ignacio was in the San Francisco Bay Area, and we were on our way to Santa Clara to see Charlie Bierne, who had a surprise for him—something special, but he wouldn't tell.

When Ignacio saw what was packed in the box that Charlie brought out and laid on the hood of the car, he lit up like a little kid. A laptop! One of the first on the market. With this, he'd be able to travel and not get behind in his work. He would be able to accept more speaking engagements, and that was a sort of insurance policy for the UCA Jesuits. Under constant threat from the military, they needed international exposure.

But how had Charlie managed it? Ignacio's own budget was so tight, it was only by taking up collections from the UCA's rich undergraduates that he was able to buy cookies and candy for the children in Jayaque, where he was parish priest. To bring the kids toys for Christmas, he was moonlighting, giving guitar lessons for extra cash. This Robin Hood of the campo, a Jesuit sworn to poverty and service, couldn't even dream of a laptop. At the

university he wore the mantle of Vice-President, but his pockets were empty. Charlie, a fellow Jesuit, was a university Vice-President too, but he was at Santa Clara, a more prosperous institution. He could get his hands on a computer, and in the spirit of liberation thought and praxis, give it away to a needy friend.



Adrienne Aron and Nacho, Berkeley, CA

A few years later, that same spirit carried Charlie Bierne from his comfortable California campus to embattled El Salvador, to fill the empty post of a slain Vice-President and help rebuild the university that stood for social change.

I've got money in my pocket, savings put away for Christmas, and a laptop in my pack. I hear a voice whispering in a Spanish accent: Praxis...



*Adrienne Aron is a psychologist who works with survivors of torture. She lives in California. She edited and translated work of Salvadoran psychologist Ignacio Martín-Baró (*Writings for a Liberation Psychology*, Harvard University Press, 1994).*

An unsettled debt with the victims of the wars in El Salvador

José Luis Henríquez

In an assessment of the mental health problems among persons injured in the war, conducted one decade after the signing of the Peace Accords, we found that: the presence of post-traumatic stress is associated with exposure to persecution, kidnapping, torture, ambushes, deprivation or separation from family (victims of violent acts) as well as the death of parents, siblings, spouses, children, the entire family or friends. The presence of alcoholism is related to suffering a disability and to the joint exposure to acts of violence, the loss of loved ones, and witnessing violence. All of these mental health problems are linked to low levels of formal education and lack of income. High degrees of stress and limited social support are significant predictors of the different mental health problems mentioned here.

These findings demonstrate that post-traumatic stress and alcoholism are related not only to the direct experience of violence but also to the indirect social effects deriving from the war. It is important to recognize a series of disadvantages, such as the illness or death of family members; domestic conflict; loss of emotional ties; work, legal or financial problems; and being part of an environment with relationships of limited or no observed consideration, tolerance, equality, open communication, acceptance, solidarity, and respect. These conditions reflect a significant loss of personal wellbeing, caused in part by their life experiences during the armed conflict and partly by their level of unsatisfied basic needs.

Any program designed to provide post-war assistance to the Salvadorans injured during the war should recognize that the mental health problems are a result of both internal and external matters. They are an outcome of the tragic events that make us suffer, but they are

also the result of being a woman, of being old, of a lack of education, of a lack of a job, of being alone, of living under stress. Therefore, programs should address not only their grievances but also the transformation of the social relationships that are reflected by the grievances. This requires effective and urgent action of an educational, legal, social, economic, and political nature, and also, of course, in the area of mental health.

On the 25th anniversary of the UCA martyrs, we should say that yes, we are following the words of Ignacio Martín-Baró.

Jose Luis Henriquez, Professor of the School of Psychology of the Universidad Centroamericana "José Simeon Cañas"

Psychology has many tasks pending, and even more so amongst ourselves.

Perhaps the first and most important task is to understand itself, its history and, therefore, the history of those it aims to speak of.

... Psychology has an urgent responsibility to the Central American people – a people who are frequently invoked but perhaps only to stifle their voices. It would be unfortunate if one hundred or fifty or twenty or even 10 years from now, psychology will not yet have met this responsibility, preoccupied and busy almost exclusively with the unconsciousness of those who have plenty, while the consciousness of the people continues to be ignored and neglected.

(Martín-Baró, I. (1979). Cien años de psicología. Estudios Centroamericanos, 34 (368), 432-433).

Reflections on Meeting Ignacio Martín-Baró

Vicky Steinitz & Elliot Mishler

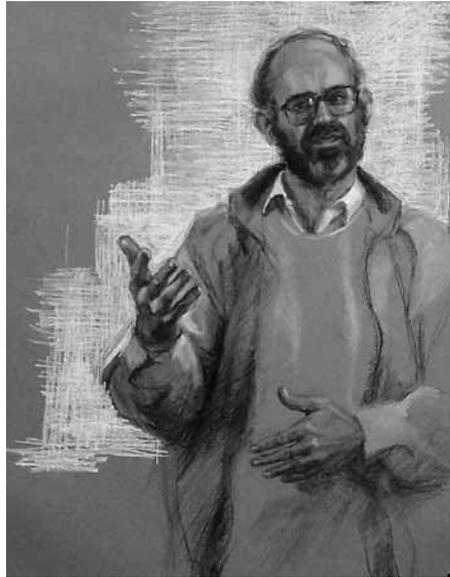
We met Ignacio Martín-Baró in 1989 at Ramsay and Joan Liem's house during a gathering of the Boston Mental Health Committee of the Committee for Health Rights in Central America. It was a transformational moment for us. Less than a year after that meeting, news of his assassination plunged us into grief and a compelling search for ways we could increase our contributions to the struggle for peace and justice for which Ignacio lived and worked and died.

Ignacio Martín-Baró fully aligned himself with the Salvadoran people in their collective resistance to oppression in the "limit situation" of war and state-sponsored terror. We knew we were not brave enough to make the same total commitment he had made in his life's work. Still Ignacio's assassination challenged us to move beyond our comfort zone as academic critics of mainstream psychological research and theory in the United States. We began to look for deeper and more meaningful ways to dedicate our personal and professional selves to the struggle for equality and justice.

How Martín-Baró's Writings Have Affected My Work as a Psychologist

Simone Lindorfer

I remember well my first “encounter” with Ignacio Martín-Baró’s writings. In 1999, I was on holidays during a work contract in Uganda. As a “trauma specialist”, I was assigned to a project in northern Uganda where a decade long brutal war had been waged, led by a rebel army that abducted and enslaved children as “child soldiers”. My task was to help a local church organization implement community-based interventions facilitating the reintegration of these formerly abducted children into their communities. I felt stuck with the professional concepts that I had been taught and felt unsure about the role that Westerners like myself and international NGOs were playing in the region.



Drawing of Nacho by Suzanne Ouellette

I remember getting Martín-Baró’s book from a friend. I read the book breathlessly, without stopping, and felt deeply moved by his writings about the role of psychology. I did not find effective intervention concepts or a tailored psychosocial program for my work in northern Uganda, but something more important: a sense of orientation and a framework of values that started to radically inform my way of thinking about what I was doing. I began to understand that it was not about me providing interventions, but about figuring out, together with the individuals most

affected how to regain a sense of power in the midst of war. Martín-Baró’s writings made me critical of the overpowering presence of internationals that was corrupting the sense of agency of the people.

When I am asked today what is different about the way I do my work as a liberation psychologist, I usually respond that my approach to seeing and judging psychology’s work is sensitive to the subtle power issues involved. I reject instrumentalizing psychology and therapy to make people “function” in dysfunctional systems. I select projects for which I want to work more critically. I ask, “Does the project empower the marginalized? Does it maintain the power imbalance between helper and helped?” I offer free psychotherapeutic services to those unable to afford

them because I believe that mental health is not only a basic right, but also an important prerequisite for personal AND political empowerment. Martín-Baró has provided me nothing less than a “new horizon” for my way of doing psychology.

Simone Lindorfer, Catholic theologian, psychologist, and psychotherapist specializing in trauma, completed a PhD on Martín-Baró’s liberation psychology and gender-related violence in Eastern Africa.

REFLECTIONS ON MEETING IGNACIO MARTÍN-BARÓ continued from page 6



In the years after his death, we went to El Salvador as Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) election observers and to Chile to consult with members of Instituto Latinoamericano de Salud Mental y Derechos Humanos (ILAS) about the future direction of their work. We also struggled to redefine our own work in the United States. How could we move beyond advocacy research on behalf of others less fortunate than ourselves toward engaging in solidarity with oppressed people and movements of resistance? Ignacio’s concepts of alignment and the “preferential option for the poor” guided our way.

We have supported the Martín-Baró Fund since its inception. We recognized immediately that the Fund was a brilliant way to continue Ignacio’s work. The Fund

identifies authentic community-based efforts to build on people’s natural strengths essential to recovering from psycho-social trauma. To support this work, the Fund provides not only material resources but also personal nourishment and public recognition of mental health workers based in dangerous “limit situations” that threaten their very survival.

We look back on the past 25 years with a mix of sadness for the enormous loss of Ignacio’s life and appreciation for the extraordinary contributions the Fund has made to continuing his legacy.

Vicky Steinitz and Elliot Mishler currently live in Cambridge, MA, and continue to work actively for peace and justice.

Reflections on Ignacio Martín-Baró: 25 years later

Elizabeth Lira

Twenty-five years ago, Ignacio Martín-Baró, S.J. was 47 years old. He was a social psychologist, Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs of the José Simeon Cañas University, and pastor of Jayaque. He directed several university projects, published articles and books, and taught. He took time to talk to students and professors, respond to the letters he received from around the world, and participated in conferences. He played guitar and soccer when he could take time off from his daily activities.

But like all Salvadorans, Ignacio lived with the burden of a war that had begun in 1981, dividing the country and leaving thousands of people dead, disappeared, tortured, and living in exile. Even under these conditions, he had an amazing capacity to rally others around the academic and political initiatives necessary to overcome the political conflict and its consequences. He was especially concerned about how to address the effects of State terrorism and war on the victims and society, and about how to advance towards a peace process. He recognized the important role of psychology in raising awareness of the psychosocial barriers to ending the war, created by individuals and power structures, as well as of the potential contribution of our discipline to truth, reparations and justice mechanisms. He was aware that dictatorships and civil wars produced contexts of polarization that restricted personal liberties and autonomy, and drove people towards political and ethical options that required a complex process of discernment. He worked intensely to enable a transition from the current conflict to a future democracy capable of building peace on the basis of justice.

His assessment of the effects of war had led him to remark that one psychosocial impact was the drastic devaluing of human life that became commonplace in El Salvador. The violence had been internalized and its manifestation was the widespread moral and emotional indifference within society in the face of atrocities, humiliation and loss, which could become a psychological debt that could threaten future democratic coexistence. But,

how could these impacts be offset? How could the consequences be overcome?

In the midst of the war, Ignacio proposed creating an academic solidarity network that would transcend borders, contributing to the discussion on theories and methods for training professionals capable of responding to victims' needs. He underscored the importance of this solidarity network in the face of greater threats, which at that time could mean the difference between life and death. We were a part of this network.



Nacho with Salvadoran community

November 2014 marks the 25th anniversary of his murder, and we still feel his

absence and his loss. He was one of those human beings

that are able to transcend their lives to mobilize their legacy: linking scientific research and academic practice to the needs of peace and justice and reparations to victims. He was one of those people who was able to ignite with his flame the flames of others and whose influence will persist long after his death.

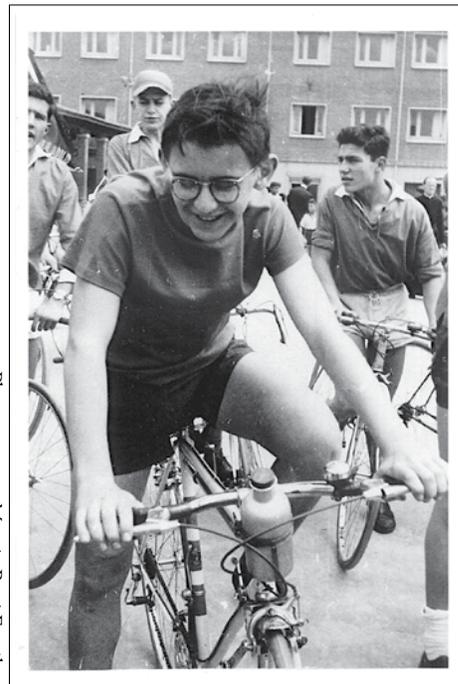


Photo courtesy Martín Baró Family

Nacho on holiday, 1956 or 1957

Elizabeth Lira, School of Psychology, Universidad Alberto Hurtado in Santiago Chile, and member of the Latin American Institute of Mental Health and Human Rights (ILAS), Santiago, Chile

Martín-Baró, Antigone and the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo: A commitment to act

Juan Jorge Michel Fariña

“Listen, listen... do you hear the sound of the bombs?”
“Nacho, when will things get better?”
“Dear Alicia, there must still be many deaths, many deaths.”

(From a telephone conversation between Ignacio Martín-Baró and his sister, Alicia, the night before the tragedy)

Death Foretold. This is the title of Marta Doggett’s book on the murder of the Jesuits. That 16th of November, 1989, the Mental Health and Human Rights Network, created two years before at the Congress of the InterAmerican Society of Psychology (SIP) in Havana, had organized a virtual conference. The topic of discussion was the issue of retaining and changing the identity of disappeared children in Latin America and the commitment of psychologists to the restitution of these children, who were now adults. Colleagues from Boston, MA, San Francisco-Berkeley, CA, Santiago de Chile, El Salvador and Buenos Aires were scheduled to participate in the event. In the early morning, when we heard the terrible news of the murder of the Jesuits, the virtual meeting focused on taking action to denounce this crime and seek international solidarity. Twenty-five years later, the reference to Sophocle’s Antigone is unavoidable. She had also been warned by the tyrant of the consequences of burying the lifeless body of her brother, Polynices. What

is a disappeared person but someone who was murdered and whose body was taken from the family to prevent the necessary burial ritual from taking place? For Antigone, as for Ignacio Martín-Baró, the commitment to this crime against humanity did not allow for any political speculation. The bodies of the disappeared had a right to burial, just as the kidnapped children have the right to recover the history that was denied them. Ignacio knew, more than many others, that this was not just an intellectual exercise. There were human bodies involved. He will be remembered for his significant contributions to social and political psychology and, above all, for his commitment to act.

Juan Jorge Michel Fariña is Professor of Psychology, Ethics and Human Rights, Universidad de Buenos Aires (UBA). The 1989 event was carried out jointly by the UBA and the Solidarity Mental Health Movement (MSSM).



Nacho and
M. Brinton Lykes,
Boston, 1989



Memorial Mural, Central America University,
José Simeon Cañas, San Salvador

A Poet's Journey from El Salvador to 2014: Witness in the Light of Conscience

Wednesday, November 19 2014 – 7:00PM

Heights Room, Concoran Commons
Boston College

The Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund for Mental Health and Human Rights, the Center for Human Rights and International Justice, the Jesuit Institute at Boston College, the English Department, and the Latin American Studies Program welcome poet, teacher, and human rights activist, Carolyn Forché, to commemorate the 25th Anniversary of the slayings of Ignacio Martín-Baró, 5 other Jesuits, their house-keeper and her daughter in 1989 at the University of Central America in El Salvador. Ms. Forché will perform a reading of her powerful and passionate poetry.

For more information, please visit
www.martinbarofund.org