

THE JUST WORD



THE IGNACIO MARTÍN-BARÓ FUND FOR MENTAL HEALTH & HUMAN RIGHTS

VOLUME V No. 2

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Fall 2000

MISSION STATEMENT

The Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund for Mental Health and Human Rights was created to foster psychological well-being, social consciousness and active resistance in communities affected by institutional violence, repression, and social injustice. We believe that the scars of such experiences are deeply seated in both the individual and society and, therefore, seek to support projects that explore the power of community to collectively heal these wounds and move forward.

Through grants, networking, and technical support, the Fund seeks to encourage the development of innovative, grassroots community projects that promote progressive social change and community mental health. In pursuit of this mission, the Fund's goals are:

- ◆ To develop a holistic perspective for understanding the connections between state and institutional violence and repression, and the mental health of communities and individuals;
- ◆ To support innovative projects that explore the power of community to foster healing within individuals and communities trying to recover from experiences of institutional violence, repression, and social injustice;
- ◆ To build collaborative relationships among the Fund, its grantees, and its contributors for mutual education and empowerment; and
- ◆ To develop social consciousness within the United States regarding the psychological consequences of structural violence, repression, and social injustice.

MARTÍN-BARÓ FUND CHARTS A NEW COURSE

Ramsay Liem

Readers of this issue of *The Just Word* may notice a change. Although we have always included information about grantees, this volume is devoted virtually entirely to the work of some of our Year 2000 awardees. We have tried to bring the objectives and actual work of some of them more to life for you. This emphasis is part of a larger refocusing of our energies that committee members adopted after nearly a year of reflection about the work of the Fund.

In view of both the changing face of state-sponsored violence and human rights abuses that undermine mental health, and the human resources available to the Fund to conduct its work, this extensive process of self evaluation was undertaken in preparation for our *second(!)* decade of operation.

The main decision we made is to develop closer, mutually supportive relationships with some of our grantees. Rather than limit our contact with projects to grant-making, as in the past, we will cultivate longer-term relationships with some groups through a variety of means. For example, for the next funding cycle (proposal deadline, March 15, 2001), we will invite proposals from a subset of past grantees supported by the Fund between 1998 and 2000. This group of two dozen projects represents all the major regions of the globe with whom we have worked in the past; includes work with women, children, communities in conflict, and survivors of political, economic, and cultural violence; and includes grantees with strong track records of service.

As we develop these relationships, we hope to participate in public education, technical assistance and networking, and basic solidarity work to a greater extent than we were able to during our first ten years of existence. We hope this new direction will appeal to you and that you will continue to be generous moral, political, and financial supporters of the Fund. We welcome your comments as we begin a challenging but exciting second decade of operations in the name of Ignacio Martín-Baró. ◆

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THE SLUM DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY: CHENNAI, INDIA (GRANT AWARDED \$7,000)

Ann B. Murphy &
Divyanthan Benjamin



The Slum Development Society (SDS) fosters self-esteem and human rights for the Dalit, the “untouchable” caste, in Chennai, India. According to its recent report, the SDS is working with funding from the Martín Baró Fund in 20 villages in the Thiruvannamalai district, Tamilnadu, India. The SDS has organized 20 women, who are from

families below the poverty line, into groups in each village.

In the past four months, the SDS conducted six one-day leadership training programs for these women, whose task will be to motivate, educate, guide and assist the Dalits by encouraging their sense of community, educating them about social equality, and encouraging them to raise their voices against oppression. The training programs focus specifically on:

- ◆ Helping people understand that human beings are more valuable than material possessions;
- ◆ Protesting against injustice;
- ◆ Teaching an ideal of democracy through non-violence and
- ◆ Motivating the younger generation to receive an education.

The SDS reports that violence against the Dalits continues daily. In the Villupuram District, for example, a teen-aged Dalit girl, Sasikala, was raped and murdered by an upper caste married man while working in the

fields. Sasikala’s parents reported the crime to other Dalit families who went together with SDS staff to the police station. They filed charges, and the police arrested the accused.

The next day, however, the upper caste community reacted by beating Dalits and setting fire to their huts, seeking to compel the Dalits to withdraw charges. The SDS staff has provided support to the Dalits during this episode, and attempted to mediate with the upper caste village head.

In this area there is little public bus transportation. Due to the community clash between the Dalits and the upper caste, the community leaders of the upper caste have set fire to buses and Dalits’ huts. The government of Tamil Nadu has requested that the upper caste people refrain from this violence, but they have not complied and there is still no public transportation. ◆

FORTALEZA DE LA MUJER MAYA MEXICO, CHIAPAS (GRANT AWARDED \$7,000)

Joan Liem and Miriam Laughlin

In Chiapas, Mexico, with the support of the Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund, collective workshops of Mayan women are creating plays that dramatize the traumatic experiences of women and children in this war-torn region. Written, produced, and performed by the women themselves, these dramas are not only an invaluable medium for public education about the problems and needs of the area, but a means of developing greater self-confidence and self-esteem in the participants, and of promoting community-wide mental

health through discussion and dramatization of shared realities.

FOMMA, or Fortaleza de la Mujer Maya (The Strength of Mayan Women) is a non-profit organization of Indian women in San Cristóbal de las Casas. It operates a theater troupe and community center for Tzotzil and Tzeltal women who work to promote the rights, and enhance the self-confidence of displaced women and children through workshops in theater, bilingual literacy, and productive skills. Founded in 1994, it has attracted worldwide attention.

Thousands of traumatized women and children fled to San Cristóbal in the last decade, after the Mexican Army began razing villages in response to the Zapatista uprising. The changing Mexican economy also

made it increasingly difficult for highland communities to sustain themselves by corn farming. Illiterate and unequipped for jobs in the city, these displaced Indian women are often exploited and abused as they take on the most menial jobs in an effort to maintain their families.

Petrona de la Cruz and Juanita Jugrez Espinosa, the founders of FOMMA, first came to San Cristóbal de las Casas as illiterate servants. They learned to read and write, and have since distinguished themselves as writers, actresses, and champions of human rights. Petrona and Juanita studied bilingual education at San Jtziibajom, a Mayan cultural cooperative, where they also learned to

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MBF 2000 GRANT AWARDEES: PROJECT REPORTS

express their views – a privilege traditionally denied to Indian women – through writing, theater, puppetry and radio. Remembering all too well the suffering they experienced as Indian children in their communities and as single mothers in the city, they formed FOMMA to share with other women the alternative path they discovered.

The theater is at the heart of FOMMA's activities. Petrona and Isabel write some plays, but most often the productions are derived from group discussions and improvisations about the women's struggles to meet the challenges of living in the city. Among these challenges are the fear and shame felt by illiterate women confronted by the complexities of urban life. Therefore FOMMA also offers a bilingual literacy pro-

gram which builds confidence and helps to protect them from exploitation. Indian women learn to read and write in either Tzotzil or Tzeltal and Spanish. FOMMA provides a day care center for their pre-school-aged children, as well as a small stipend, so that mothers can attend the literacy program rather than having to work at menial jobs. School-aged children participate in a similar program on Saturdays, an important supplement to their education in the state school system, which the mothers feel is intent on cleansing them of pride in their ethnicity.

The Mayan women of FOMMA seek to ensure that their children maintain the values of their heritage, while at the same time being able to participate in the mestizo world. Bilingual literacy is key to these

endeavors. Through their stories, their theater and their shared experiences, the women of FOMMA will shape a multifaceted future for their children. ♦

"People's new knowledge of their surrounding reality carries them to a new understanding of themselves and, most important, of their social identity. They begin to discover themselves in their mastery of nature, in their actions that transform things, in their active role in relation to others. All this allows them to discover not only the roots of what they are but also the horizon, what they can become."

Ignacio Martín Baró (1994), "The Role of the Psychologist" in *Writings for a Liberation Psychology*, edited by A. Aron and S. Corne. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994.

PALESTINE

IBDAA CULTURAL CENTER:
BETHLEHEM, WEST BANK
PALESTINE
(GRANT AWARDED \$5,500)

Ramsay Liem



Can a generation of youth, faced with abject hopelessness about their future as Palestinians, meet the challenge of survival and even growth after a half century of conflict – a conflict that appears, especially at this moment, to have no end? At the IbdAA Cultural Center, located in the Dheisheh Refugee Camp in Bethlehem, The Martin-Baró Fund is supporting the development of an oral history project designed to reconnect youth with the authentic histories of their families and community, an essential condition for positive mental health and the confidence needed to work for a just future. The project involves

study, visits to villages – or the remains of villages – of parents and grandparents, and photo and video essays to bring to life the children's family and cultural roots. (See the accompanying article by Orson Moon.)

IbdAA in Arabic means "creating something from nothing." Begun by several people including Ziad Abbas, himself a member of the first generation born in the Dheisheh camp, IbdAA has become an oasis of hope, personal and cultural awakening, and leadership development for second and third generation Palestinian children and teenagers raised in the camp. Since its founding in 1995, IbdAA has grown to include a nursery, a kindergarten, a library, a computer and internet center, an oral history project, a dance troupe that participates in international cultural exchange, and a sports program. It serves over 800 children and youth and has recently begun to extend its

reach to other refugee camps via its computer and Internet facilities.

Members of the Martin-Baró Fund were introduced to IbdAA by Grassroots International, a Boston-based development organization that is a long-time partner of several West Bank groups. What impressed us most during a brief meeting with Ziad Abbas was his low-key but gripping description of IbdAA's first youth project, developed in response to a request for a group of young people who could educate French audiences about Palestinian history, culture, and aspirations. At the time, there were no organized programs for young people in the camp. The children were mired in poverty, virtually without formal education, and could not imagine any realistic possibility for change in their life conditions. Ziad and others asked a small group of teenagers to find among themselves fifteen boys and fifteen girls to

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IBDAA CULTURAL CENTER: BETHLEHEM, WEST BANK PALESTINE

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respond to the French request. For the next year and a half, the adults worked with this self-selected group, learning the history of Palestinian culture and displacement, discovering dance and other performing arts expressive of Palestinian tradition and modern life, studying French in order to be able to communicate with their hosts – and developing the sense of self-worth and confidence needed to serve as messengers of the plight of their people.

Though criticized by some parents and camp leaders because the

project involved boys and girls studying, performing, and even traveling together, the teens presented a program of dance, music and personal story telling in France and subsequently throughout Europe and the United States. What struck us most, though, was Ziad's description of their performance in the Dheisheh camp itself, after their return. He recounted the utter surprise of parents watching their children performing on stage, confidently telling their collective and personal stories, with a presence and self-confidence perhaps unthinkable before this experience.

The moment we heard this account, I found myself thinking

about Ignacio Martín-Baró's descriptions of the children of war throughout Latin America. One of the many contributions of his work and life was his ability to see, in an individual's experience, the conditions of the whole society – the abuses and violations, but also the possibility of recovery, not only for each person, but for damaged social institutions themselves. I felt that the opportunity to support and get to know IbdAA would provide the Fund and its supporters with deeper insight, paradoxically, into Martín-Baró's vision of how human rights and mental health are inseparably linked. ♦

IBDAA CULTURAL CENTER: BETHLEHEM, WEST BANK PALESTINE

PERSONAL ACCOUNT:

By Orson Moon

NOTE: Orson Moon is an administrative coordinator for Grassroots International, an organization that works closely with the IBDAA Project. The Martín Baró Fund invited Mr. Moon to contribute a personal account of his experience visiting IBDAA in Palestine in order to offer our readers a broader perspective of the project and its work.

The speaker was Mohammed, age 13, and we were standing on an airy mountaintop in present-day Israel, the former site of Deir al-Hawa, the Palestinian village that his grandparents fled during a 1948 attack. Mohammed now lives in Dheisheh, the crowded and dusty refugee camp in Bethlehem from which we had come earlier that morning.

For ten days in early September,

I was privileged to join a tour of Palestine and Israel sponsored by Grassroots International, an independent human rights and development agency based in Boston. I had been doing office work for Grassroots for almost five years, and this was my first opportunity to observe our work first-hand. Along with several supporters of Grassroots and two other staff, I was there to witness the challenges to a just peace in Palestine and Israel, and to meet our partners – people committed to this sometimes elusive goal.

On this day, we were following the work of the IbdAA Cultural Center, the recipient of a recent grant from the Martín-Baró Fund. IbdAA, based in the Dheisheh refugee camp, made its reputation organizing effective programs for youth and children in the camp, ranging from kindergartens to libraries to dance troupes. In the morning we met with Ziad Abbas, a determined man in his mid-30s, who grew up in

Dheisheh and now coordinated youth programs at IbdAA.

Along with four young people from IbdAA, Ziad took us to places in present-day Israel where residents of Dheisheh, or their parents and grandparents, had once lived. As we toured these sites and heard stories, it became apparent that running youth programs in a refugee camp carried difficulties beyond the obvious deprivation. Each resident of the camp bore not only the poverty itself, but also the burden of historical injustice. How would these children find their way to a fully realized adulthood and still be true to their families, their communities, and their shared experience? There were no easy answers, yet it seemed they had begun the difficult process of honest negotiation with a sorrowful past. I could see it in their expressions, and hear it in their voices as we left the villages that were once theirs and returned to the camp.

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**IBDAA CULTURAL CENTER:
BETHLEHEM, WEST BANK PALESTINE**
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“When we say we want to return, we do not want to throw the Israelis out,” explained Ziad. “I want my right to return to my village. I might not – I might decide to go to Chicago instead. But I want to be able to choose. There is enough space for us to come back if we decide to. We can all live here.”

We returned to Dheisheh and toured some of the youth projects, including the former computer center, which was destroyed by arsonists two weeks before. Ibdaa set up the first Internet center and the first website of any Palestinian refugee camp,

and for the children, this was a critical link with the outside world. Someone, apparently, felt threatened by this activity, and stole the Internet server and torched the other computers and parts of the adjoining library. Ziad was undeterred, however, declaring: “They destroyed the computers, but they cannot destroy the idea.”

With international support, Ibdaa volunteers were already setting up a new computer lab in another part of the camp. The new computer lab will occupy part of a center. As this center is being built, it will also host youth exchange programs as well as other activities. When we arrived at the new center, some of the kids from our morning tour were

busily helping bring the place to life. It was good to see them smiling again. ♦

“To speak of psychosocial trauma is to emphasize that trauma is produced socially and, therefore, that understanding and resolving it requires not only treating the problems of individuals but also treating its social roots, in other words, the traumatogenic structures or social conditions. . . Psychosocial trauma thus constitutes the concrete crystallization in individuals of aberrant and dehumanizing social relations.”

From Ignacio Martín Baró (1994), “The Role of the Psychologist” in *Writings for a Liberation Psychology*, edited by A. Aron and S. Corne. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994.

ADDITIONAL 2000 AWARD GRANTEES

BALAY INTEGRATED REHABILITATION CENTER FOR TOTAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: ILIGAN CITY, PHILIPPINES
(GRANT AWARDED \$4,960)

In the context of 21st Century globalization, economic policy in the Philippines is directed at establishing the country as the next newly industrialized economy in Asia. As a result, workers and peasants, in particular women, face high rates of unemployment, displacement from agricultural self-sufficiency, increased stress in the workplace, and sexual abuse. In the Iligan area, workers are caught in the fighting between government forces and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front as well.

As a past recipient of support from the Martín-Baró Fund (1995), the Balay group continues to provide psychological and social support to women and children struggling to survive these economic and military pressures. This year’s grant will enable the Center to develop an educational module to promote mental health via workshops about mental health, training sessions on stress management, individual counseling and, most significantly, strategies for creating lasting support systems among those in need. ♦

INDRADEVI ASSOCIATION: PHNOM PENH, CAMBODIA
(GRANT AWARDED \$7,000)

The Indradevi Association is a grassroots organization that offers community education about sexually transmitted diseases. Its clinics, in slum areas of Phnom Penh and in nearby rural provinces, provide care to people with HIV, AIDS, and other STDs, especially prostitutes and the very poor. It also assists patients’ families. The Indradevi Association staff are known and respected as resources in the areas in which they work. Their involvement in the community has increased their awareness of the need to provide mental health services to these populations as well, given the high incidence of personal and community trauma that the people they work with experience.

A grant from the Martín-Baró Fund provides money to open a counseling room where people can discuss emotional difficulties in individual and group settings with trained volunteers and staff. Moreover, funding supports the training of 15 volunteers who lead workshops in the community focusing on problem-solving skills, ways to resolve conflict and communicate effectively, and stress management. ♦

Additional 2000 Award Grantees

INSTITUTO ACCION PARA EL PROGRESO (INAPRO): HUANCAVELICA, PERU. (GRANT AWARDED: \$7,000)

Rural towns in the Andes of Peru were devastated by the sociopolitical turmoil and violence during the 1980's. Entire Pueblos were destroyed as they were caught in the battles between the extreme leftist group known as "Sendero Luminoso" (shining light) and the state's military. Many families had to abandon their homes. As

men disappeared, women, children and the elderly were often left in the villages alone. Today, these communities are struggling to rebuild themselves and their cultural identity as they face the repercussions of war including poverty, psychosocial trauma, and fragmented families and communities.

The project, funded by the Martín Baró Fund, focuses on the psychosocial development of women, children, families, and the community as a whole. There are two components: the first focuses on psychological and cultural healing, and this

involves conducting "platicas" or talks designed to build self-esteem, promote resiliency and educate about human rights. Children's development of cultural identity is also supported through workshops on making traditional costumes and artwork. In the second component of the project, members of the community learn together how to work the land, and supplement their diets with produce from their land. The community profits directly from the produce as well, and people learn valuable skills that will empower them and rebuild a sense of community. ♦

MOVIMIENTO DE MUJERES LUCRECIA LINDO: MANACUA, NICARAGUA (GRANT AWARDED \$7,000)

Nicaragua was affected by sociopolitical turmoil for more than half a century. The economic inequalities of the Somoza dictatorship fell heavily on the backs of Nicaraguan women. With the overthrow of Somoza by the Sandinista revolutionary movement, 25% of whose military was composed of women, landmark laws were established that protected women from physical as well as psychological abuse. However, with the UNO coalition that replaced the

Sandanistas after the US-supported counter-revolution and economic embargo, Nicaragua has experienced a resurgence of inequity in the distribution of resources. This once again burdens women disproportionately and diminishes their political power.

The Movimiento de Mujeres Lucrecia Lindo was established in 1992 in response to this return to right wing conservatism. There are 1800 women members from 13 municipal areas of Chinandega whose main objective is to promote the

rights of women. More specifically, their objective is to eliminate family violence and sexual abuse, and to create a climate supportive of the emotional healing, necessitated by these abuses. With the help of its Martín Baró grant, Movimiento de Mujeres Lucrecia Lindo will train community facilitators in techniques that promote emotional recovery emphasizing women's and community perspectives. In turn, these women will provide services to members of their respective communities, meeting a critical need for mental health services that are sustainable and designed to empower whole communities. ♦

MILLENNIUM OUTREACH S. H. GROUP, HOMA BAY, KENYA (GRANT AWARDED \$6,924)



The Millennium Outreach S.H. Group is a non-political, non-religious and multi-ethnic organization of 32 people of varying backgrounds, established in 1998 to create conflict resolution with the warring ethnic communities of the Luo and Kissi tribal people. These two groups were pitted against each other by politicians of different political camps, and the resulting violence and chaos has caused death, injury, disruption of families and communities, as well as poverty and economic and cultural havoc.

With support from the Martín Baró Fund, the Group will educate the Kissi and Luo in the principles of multiparty democracy. To help the Kissi and Luo recognize the importance of reconciliation and human rights by, the Group will: (a) conduct ten workshops along the 100 kilometer stretch of contested border, which will bring together leaders from both communities to share sentiments and misconceptions about each other, and develop plans of action to bring about

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A NEW BOOK: VOICES AND IMAGES: MAYAN IXIL WOMEN OF CHAJUL

BOOK BY MARTÍN-BARÓ FUND GRANTEE WOMEN'S GROUP

Voices and Images: Mayan Ixil Women of Chajul, a book in both Spanish and English with accompanying photos, is the outcome of a joint collaboration between The association of Mayan Ixil Women - New Dawn (ADMI), a group of more than 100 women living in a rural community in the Altiplano of Guatemala that has received support from the Martín-Baró Fund, and M. Brinton Lykes, long-time Martín-Baró Fund supporter and Coordinating Committee member.

In 1992, the Martín-Baró Fund provided a grant to ADMI when they identified the need for a corn mill. Their community had few mills and the women saw the opportunity to develop, manage and run their own mill as a way to generate support for their developing organization. This organization, with which Lykes had collaborated, was formed to respond to women and child survivors of the long-term civil war in Guatemala. The corn mill funded by the Martín-Baró Fund was a resounding success. It built the women's self-esteem and helped launch ADMI on a trajectory the women discuss in text and illustrate with photos in the fourth chapter of Voices and Images.

The 120-page volume, published

in Guatemala by Magna Terra, contains photographs and text by 20 ADMI women who participated in a project called PhotoVoice, a name borrowed from University of Michigan scholar Carol Wang's work with rural women in China who used photography to document their health needs. The ADMI women used the methodology to document the effects of the war and political repression on themselves, their families, their community and its surrounding towns. First, each woman took a roll of 20 photographs. From these, each selected three to five photos around which she wove a story, based both on the information gathered from the people in the photograph and on her own interpretations of the social reality represented. These analyses were then submitted to wider group analyses in which members of the project collaboratively sought to clarify causes and effects of the violence, as well as solutions towards the future.

This iterative process of collection and analysis continued for two years. During the second year, the women concentrated on winnowing through their analyses and photographs and organizing them into the four book chapters. These focus on the civil war's violence and its

effects in their lives, their Mayan Ixil culture, women's daily lives, and the work of ADMI as a response to the war and its effects. Textual discussion of each picture appears in both Spanish and English. Each page carries titles in Spanish, English and in Ixil, the mother tongue for most of the project participants. An introductory chapter by Lykes describes this cross-cultural, cross-national collaboration. U.S. scholar and activist Joan W. Williams, Ph.D., and Spanish psychologist M. Luisa Cabrera participated in the field project. Cathy Mooney, Ph.D., another long-time Martín-Baró Fund supporter and Coordinating Committee member, revised the Spanish text and translated it into English.

All proceeds from sale of the book go to ADMI. The book is available from EPICA in Washington, D.C. (epicabooks@igc.org) for \$25. It is also being distributed in Guatemala and in South Africa and will soon be available in numerous local bookstores in the United States. Please forward suggestions of magazines, journals or newspapers that might be interested in reviewing the book to 018lykes@muse.wits.ac.za or to the Martín-Baró Fund and request your local bookstore to carry it. ♦

MILLENNIUM OUTREACH S. H. GROUP, HOMA BAY, KENYA continued from page 6

a lasting change in attitude and behavior that recognizes human dignity; (b) establish ten counseling centers along that border, offering counseling and services to those affected by the ethnic violence; (c) set up ten action groups consisting of members from each group to monitor the observation of resolutions reached at the workshops; and (d) advocate for peace and tolerance between the two ethnic communities. An estimated 100,000 people will be affected by the project. ♦

Editor: Lisa R. Jackson, Ph.D.. *Assistant Editors:* Ann B. Murphy and Ben Achtenberg. *Letters, inquiries, contributions, etc. can be sent to:* **Martín-Baró Fund**, P.O. Box 2122, Jamaica Plain, MA. 02130 *Checks for tax-deductible contributions must be made out to the Funding Exchange/ Martín-Baró Fund. Thank you!*

YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT ♦ PLEASE GIVE GENEROUSLY

The only reason the Martín-Baró Fund has been able to make over six dozen awards during its first decade of existence is the generous financial support people like you have given us. This year-end appeal is extremely important because we will not be hosting our annual event this fall, which serves as a major fundraiser for our grant-making.

Our plan is to organize a spring program that can feature some of the activities of this years' grantees by bringing project staff and/or audio/visual presentations of their work to Boston. This decision is very much in line with the new direction our committee has charted for the Fund and would create an opportunity for supporters like you to learn even more about the groups with whom we are working.

So, PLEASE, think about us when you are planning your year-end contributions. Over 95% of what you contribute will be used for direct support of and work with grantees; a claim we doubt any other organization like the Martín-Baró Fund can make. If we are going to be successful in the new millennium, we MUST be able to count on your willingness to be in solidarity with the values and commitments of Ignacio Martín-Baró, the groups around the world who are putting his ideas into action, and the Fund that embodies his spirit.

Use the enclosed envelope to make your contribution, which is tax-deductible to the full extent permitted by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service. Thank you for your continued support. ♦

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