

# THE JUST WORD



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

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## El Salvador Update: Political realities 15 years after the ASSASSINATION of IGNACIO MARTÍN-BARÓ

Jack Spence

November 16<sup>th</sup> marks the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Salvadoran military's pre-meditated slaughter of six Jesuits, their housekeeper, and her daughter at the University of Central America, San Salvador. The murders occurred in the midst of a ferocious counter offensive by the Farabundo Martí Liberation Front (FMLN) and were the turning point in the 12-year civil war. By war's end, 75,000 Salvadorans had been killed. In a country of about 5 million, one out of every 66 lives was lost.

Following the U.S. elections of 1982 and 1984, the Democratic opposition in Congress virtually ceased resistance to the Administration's demands for more money for the Salvadoran military. Following the murders, and the investigation led by Congressman Joe Moakley, the infinite U.S. supply line of war material was no longer guaranteed. Serious peace negotiations

began in El Salvador in April 1990 and the treaty was signed in January 1992. The FMLN's central objective in the negotiations was to reduce the power of the military. Among the many consequences of these peace



Salvadoran youth/CRISPAZ project

accords was a significant reduction in the power of the military, which once played a central role in politics in El Salvador.

Achieving a real social peace in the society has been more difficult. For citizens in urban and many rural areas, life was more dangerous during the 1990s than during the war; in the mid 1990s death by homicide

occurred at rates similar to the rate of casualties toward the end of the war, and on a par with homicides in Colombia. Crime rates have declined since then, due to draconian – and probably unconstitutional – measures, and aggressive policing. The jails are 50% over capacity.

In the 1990s, this crime wave seemed related to the war. Firearms were everywhere and in the hands of those who knew how to use them. Some gang members told pollsters that they learned their tactics from former soldiers. Unemployment was high, as was emotional distress related to post war trauma and destruction of the social fabric.

One effect of these social realities is that about 25% of the Salvadoran population now lives in the U.S. The migration has had severe social consequences, dividing tens of thousands of families, as members seek better wages

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abroad, much of which is sent back to El Salvador to support their families. These conditions are a direct consequence of the war, the war-time draft, human rights abuses, and a sharp decline in real wages. Despite a few years of strong economic growth in the early 1990s, subsequent leveling has meant that real wages, at least as of last year, have not fully reached pre war levels. The money sent home (called remittances) is by far the leading source of dollars in El Salvador, money which goes directly to families, though in general not to the most poverty-stricken.

While the right-wing National Republican Alliance (ARENA) party (in power for the last fifteen years) would claim that the economy's relative stability is due to the success of their neo-liberal economic policies, the economy would be in shambles (and the country perhaps in civil war) but for the money sent home from the U.S. The thousands of families that receive the remittances know that if the money has anything to do with ARENA's policies, it is related to ARENA's failure to increase job opportunities at home.

Since the 1992 peace accords, the main electoral competition against ARENA has been the FMLN, which made a difficult transition from a guerrilla group to an electoral party. Rarely have other guerrilla groups made this kind of change as successfully. The FMLN finished second – a distant second – in the 1994 elections. The following Table details the transition.

The proportional representation election system provides opportunities for smaller parties to gain legislative seats. ARENA has been generally successful in getting the National Conciliation Party (PCN) to vote with it. Some legislation requires a

Party	Deputies				Municipalities			
	1994	1997	2000	2003	1994	1997	2000	2003
ARENA	39	28	29	27	207	162	127	113
FMLN	21	27	31	31	13	48	67	61
FMLN coalition	—	—	—		2	3	10	12
PCN	4	11	14	16	10	18	33	50
PDC	18	7	5	5	29	15	16	15
PDC (coalition)	—	3	—	0	—	4	—	11
CDU(& PD '00)	1	2	3	5	0	0	4	5+6
Other	1	6	2	0	3	11	5	0

supermajority, which gives the FMLN some leverage. What the Table does not show is that since 1997 the FMLN has been winning the mayoral/city council elections in virtually all of the largest cities. Many ARENA wins are in small “counties” with fewer than 5,000 voters.

ARENA nonetheless dominated presidential elections in 1994, 1999, and this past March. ARENA is supported by the wealthy so, despite public campaign financing, their campaign chest is always much bigger than FMLN coffers. Their governments run extensive pre-campaign TV ads that pretend to be “public service announcements.” It has not helped that the FMLN had bruising internal battles before the 1999 and 2004 contests. ARENA has fights too, but it tends to have them after the election, particularly when the party has fared poorly.

ARENA's 2004 fear-mongering campaign against FMLN presidential candidate Shafik Handal was particularly vicious and was openly backed by the U.S. ARENA suggested that a Handal win might threaten the status of Salvadoran emigrants or that limits would be placed on money sent home – as the U.S. does with Cuba.

At the same time, FMLN dissidents thought that Handal was not the best candidate. Following Handal's loss in the election, there was an immediate call for restructur-

ing the party. How these internal party dynamics will play out will be more evident by the end of November.

The people of El Salvador experienced a catastrophic civil war that also put them at odds with powerful anti-democratic forces in Washington, D.C. Thankfully, the past decade and a half has brought relative peace to the country. Still, economic, social, and emotional hardships persist. In rural areas 56% of the people are poor, and half of that group is extremely poor. A large number of families survive on remittances from the U.S. U.S. supporters of Salvadoran people should resolutely oppose using immigration, economic policy, and remittances as political levers, as the U.S. government and ARENA did in the campaign against Handal. Moreover, the CAFTA trade policy pushed by the U.S. will threaten the survival of corn and bean farmers, exactly the group that needs the most help. Rather, we should expand our efforts to provide political support and material aid as Sister City projects have done since the war. ♦

*Jack Spence, Ph.D., is Associate Professor of Political Science and Associate Dean of the College of Liberal Arts at UMASS/Boston. His research focuses on electoral politics and peace processes in Central America. He and his family have been long time supporters of the Martín-Baró Fund.*



*Editors' note: To commemorate the 15th anniversary of the assassination of Ignacio Martín-Baró, 5 other Jesuits, their house-keeper and her daughter, this issue focuses on El Salvador. In addition to the summary below it includes a feature article on El Salvador's political realities today, descriptions of the more than dozen grants made to projects in El Salvador since the formation of the Fund, an update on the work of one of these grantees, Centro Bartolomé de las Casas, as well as news about our upcoming November Fundraiser and Commemorative event and our featured speakers, Robert White, former U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador, and Maria Elena Letona, Director of Centro Presente.*

**Population** (2003 estimate): 6.6 million

**Ethnic groups:** Mestizo (mixed Indigenous and Spanish) 90%, Indigenous 1%, Caucasian 9%

**Religion:** Predominantly Roman Catholic, with growing numbers of Protestant Christian groups

**Language:** Spanish, Nahua

**Literacy** (age 10 and over who can read and write): 80.2% nationally

**Life expectancy at birth** (2002 estimate): 70.4 years

**Work force** (about 2.7 million): agriculture, 22%; services, 18.7%; commerce, 27.2%; manufacturing, 17.6%; construction, 5.4%; transportation and communication, 4.6%; other, 4.5%



## GEOGRAPHY

**Area:** 21,476 sq. km. (8,260 sq. mi.) (slightly smaller than the state of Massachusetts; smallest country in Central America)

**Capital city:** San Salvador (pop. 1.7 million)

## POLITICAL STRUCTURE

**Government model:** Republic

**Constitution:** December 20, 1983

**President:** Francisco Guillermo Flores Pérez (since June 1, 1999)

**Branches:** Executive (president and vice president), Legislative (84-member Legislative Assembly), Judicial (independent; Supreme Court)

**Administrative subdivisions:** 14 departments

**Political parties** (represented in the legislature): Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN), Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA), National Conciliation Party (PCN), Christian Democratic Party (PDC), and the United Democratic Center (CDU)

## ECONOMY

**Monetary unit:** US Dollar (\$) (dollarized November 30, 1990)

**GDP** (2003 estimate): \$15 billion (USD)

**U.S. remittances** (2003): \$2,105.3 million (USD); \$319 (USD) per capita

**Major industries:** textiles, coffee, sugar, beverages, petroleum, chemicals, fertilizer, furniture, light metals, cotton

**Major markets:** U.S., Guatemala, Mexico, Costa Rica, Germany

## BRIEF HISTORY

In 1821, El Salvador declared its independence from Spain. After an early history as an independent state marked by frequent revolutions, relative stability was achieved in the years between 1900 and 1930. However, by the 1970s Salvadorans were forced off their lands and were subjected to unemployment and extreme poverty. In 1972, the military arrested and exiled the elected president and installed their own candidate in power. Guerrilla activity increased, and the government responded by unleashing death squads who murdered, tortured, or kidnapped thousands of civilians.

In 1979, a junta of military and civilians overthrew the president and promised reforms that were never instituted. Opposition parties, including the Farabundo Marti Liberation Front (FMLN), banded together under the party name Federación Democrático Revolucionario. FMLN guerrillas gained control of northern and eastern portions of the country. In 1982, the extreme right ARENA party took power and death squads began targeting trade unionists and agrarian reformers. The Reagan Administration sought to quell this alleged communist threat, sending huge sums of money to the Salvadoran

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government whose military was decimating villages through scorched earth tactics. Troops responsible for many of these atrocities, including the assassination of Jesuit priest and social psychologist Ignacio Martín-Baró, were known to be trained at the School of the Americas in Fort Benning, Georgia.

More than 75,000 people were killed and 300,000 fled the country during the 12-year war. The U.S. government donated a staggering \$6 billion (USD) to the Salvadoran government's "war" effort, despite knowledge of atrocities carried out by the military.

In April 1990, United Nations-mediated negotiations began between the government and the FMLN, and, on January 16, 1992, a compromise was signed and a ceasefire took effect. The accords established a Truth Commission under UN auspices to investigate the most serious cases of human rights abuses, which reported its findings in 1993.

It recommended the removal of those identified as human rights violators from all government and military posts, as well as numerous judicial reforms. Shortly thereafter, the Legislative Assembly granted amnesty for political crimes committed during the war. Among those freed as a result were the Salvadoran Armed Forces (ESAF) officers convicted in the November 1989 Jesuit murders, and the FMLN ex-combatants held for the 1991 murders of two U.S. servicemen. ♦

Sources: **CIA: The World Factbook (El Salvador)**

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/es.html>;

**U.S. State Department Country Pages (El Salvador)**

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2033.htm>;

**Lonely Planet (El Salvador)** [http://www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations/central\\_america/el\\_salvador/](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations/central_america/el_salvador/);

**Banco Central de Reserva de El Salvador**

<http://www.bcr.gob.sv>

## ROBERT WHITE AND MARIA ELENA LETONA TO SPEAK AT IGNACIO MARTÍN-BARÓ FUND COMMEMORATIVE AND FUNDRAISING EVENT

On November 14, the Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund will host a fundraising event to support its grant-making efforts on behalf of grassroots organizations throughout the world. The event will be held from 4:30-6pm at the First Church in Cambridge, and will include speeches by Robert White and Maria Elena Letona. Following addresses from the invited guests and a project update from El Salvador, the event will close with a reflection led by Kevin Burke, S.J., Associate Professor at Weston Jesuit School of Theology. (Please see the invitation on the final page of this newsletter for further details.)

**Robert White** has been President of the Center for International Policy since 1989. In this capacity he has presided at conferences and led delegations to Latin America and the Caribbean, published numerous studies of U.S. policy toward the region, and led an ongoing effort to reform U.S. intelligence agencies. Prior to joining the Center for International Policy, White spent twenty-five years as a Foreign Service officer, specializing in Latin American affairs with a particular emphasis on Central America. After retiring from the Foreign Service in 1981, White served as a Senior Associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. (See article on page 10.)

**Maria Elena Letona** is a native of El Salvador and the Director of Centro Presente. Operated and directed primarily by Central Americans, Centro Presente is a non-profit organization established in 1981 that empowers Latin American communities in New England through the provision of basic services, the development of leadership skills, and the promotion of civic and democratic practice. Dr. Letona brings to this work her background in community organizing and activism, and her profound commitment to and passion for social justice. Dr. Letona attended Oberlin College Conservatory where she earned a B.A. in piano performance and music history, and the University of Massachusetts-Boston where she earned a M.A. and Ph.D. in public policy.

PLEASE JOIN US ON SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 14, at 4:30 PM

**This year's School of the Americas Protest: November 19-21, 2004**

**For more information, visit the School of the Americas Watch (SOAW) website**

**<http://www.soaw.org/new/>**

# GUADALUPE LÓPEZ TOVARES JOINS MARTÍN-BARÓ FUND

Joan Liem & M. Brinton Lykes



Guadalupe López Tovares joins the Fund.

The Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund is pleased to announce the recent hire of its first Fund Coordinator, **Guadalupe López Tovares**. As reported in previous issues of *The Just Word*, the Fund has been planning to transition from being an all-volunteer committee to a staffed organization in order to increase our fund-raising capacity and enhance our political advocacy, community education, and grant making activities. Ms. Tovares is working as a consultant, assisting in this transition.

Ms. Tovares brings many years of experience promoting human rights and sustainable community development in Latin America and the Caribbean, and in the Latino community in the United States to the Fund. She has extensive experience designing and implementing grant-making programs with successful outcomes. While working at Oxfam America as the Mexico Country Officer from 1997-2002, she co-authored the original feasibility study for the Mexico Program and was responsible for the development of the program strategy, the solicitation and evaluation of grant proposals, and the monitoring of projects by program partners. She also administered the program budget, wrote reports for major donors, and facilitated the meeting of the representa-

tives from partner organizations with organizations and donors in Mexico.

Prior to joining Oxfam, Ms. Tovares worked from 1990-1996 at the United Universalist Service Committee where she focused on the promotion of women's health projects in six Latin American and Caribbean countries. In that position she provided technical assistance to increase the institutional capacity and networking of women's health clinics and organizations, and helped to develop an advocacy agenda around those issues. In addition, she played a significant role in helping the UUSC initiate programs in both Haiti and Mexico. Ms. Tovares worked from 1986-1990 as a Latin American research associate for *Human Rights Internet* where she conducted research and designed educational programming. From 1982-1986 she was the co-founder and director of the Central American Education Fund where she was responsible for constituency building around issues related to Central America. Ms. Tovares has a B.A. in History from the Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, Mexico. She is fluent in Spanish and English and reads French and Brazilian Portuguese as well.

Ms. Tovares's responsibilities for the Fund will include enhancing fundraising capacities and infrastructure, reviewing and improving grant-making procedures, facilitating improved access to our records and our history, and increasing our contact and networking with similar groups and organizations. She can be reached at [gltovares@martinbarofund.org](mailto:gltovares@martinbarofund.org) or at the office, 617-469-4999 at 4196 Washington St., Roslindale, MA 02131. ♦

## 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. As an organization based in the United States, we have a special responsibility to support groups in regions harmed by U.S. policies and addressing problems created or aggravated by those policies.

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.

While the 1991 Peace Accords marked the end of the armed struggle in El Salvador, more than twelve years of civil war had taken its toll. Beyond the physical destruction of the country and its people—bombed out villages and amputees—lie deeper wounds of trauma: shattered families, ‘disappeared’ loved ones, horrific experiences of death, rape and torture. Often the trauma runs so deep that many have not been able to confront their own suffering, nor acknowledge a need to heal. Among non-governmental organizations and even sectors of the government there is much rhetoric about the task of recovering the “*memoria histórica*” (historical memory). Unfortunately, this often translates to encouraging people to forget the past and move on. However, one institution, El Centro Bartolomé de Las Casas, located in San Salvador, has taken a distinctive and unique approach to the healing of trauma.

Centro Bartolomé de las Casas offers a refuge from the taxing life in the capital and a place where many can come to pray, to rest in the painful memory of the civil war, and to even cherish the memory of those killed and ‘disappeared.’ It is a place where every name of the killed, ‘disappeared’ and the survivors is remembered. Every personal story is worth telling and remembering. They speak of not forgetting what transpired during the conflict but working to honestly acknowledge and clarify the collective historic memory of the war. At Centro las Casas they affirm that true reconciliation cannot happen without first addressing the trauma that has occurred.

The dynamic team at Centro las Casas of Larry, Walberto, Jenny and others explores avenues of reconcilia-

tion and healing through cooperative game-playing, expressive arts, meditation, yoga, and creative rituals that celebrate and cherish the memory of those killed or ‘disappeared’ during the civil war. Through cooperative games they challenge the precedence given to individualism and competition forced upon the poor by an excessive,



*Mural in offices of Centro las Casas.*

inhumane capitalism. These very games, which often include healthy physical contact among both men and women, help confront the strong current of *machismo* that feeds domestic violence, the oppression of women, and their exclusion from society. Larry shared that in their workshops on gender and masculinity men also learn to become liberated from traditional societal expectations, discovering that being men does not mean being violent and *macho*. The war has left many, especially men, without limbs. A loss in their physical competence, they learn, does not necessarily mean that they are any less men, or even less human. During game-playing there are many moments when participants will open up and confront their trauma: their feigning strength gives way to an honest self-confrontation.

Days after our visit to the Centro las Casas, we traveled north to Arcatao, a village that suffered massively during the civil war, where we stayed with families. I stayed in the home of Elida, who works as a com-

munity health promoter and is a participant in the Mental Health Project that Centro las Casas has implemented in Arcatao. Through art, music, movement therapy, meditation, massage, and cooperative games Elida is learning to confront the personal trauma that she suffered during the civil war, as well as to identify where she holds that trauma in her body. Elida shared that through the mental health workshops she has experienced a “breaking through,” an honest, painful confrontation of her suffering and trauma, which has led to “a lifting of her burden.”

Centro las Casas extends the reach of its therapeutic activities by training participants to replicate these workshops for others in their communities. The funds donated to Centro las Casas by the Martín-Baró Fund allowed two members of their staff and several volunteers to expand their work into both Arcatao and Perquin. The Centro staff trains local community workers in the villages who then work with organizations of survivors. Together, they systematically address social trauma through individual and group-based work using creative play, traditional medicines, and acupuncture. Centro las Casas is a community organization that works with local communities in economic, social, psychosocial, and spiritual development. ♦

*Author David Sulewsk is a graduate student at Boston College. In June of 2004, 13 graduate students from a variety of disciplines at Boston College traveled to El Salvador for a 10-day immersion experience. The group visited grassroots organizations, where they listened to talks on current social, economic, and political struggles in the country, as well as the struggle of the civil war.*

The staff of Asociación Centro de Educación y Formación Maya Ixil (ACEFOMI) had to wait two months to access the grant they received from the Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund earlier this year. Upon each visit to the local *BancoRural* to withdraw money from their account, computer screens flashed that the funds were reserved. No one working at ACEFOMI, nor anyone working at the local branch, had any idea why. When they were finally able to withdraw the funds, they learned that those working at the bank's headquarters in Guatemala City got nervous when such a new account suddenly received a large sum of money. Apparently they had held the money on reserve in order to do some investigating.

But the members of ACEFOMI, who just celebrated the organization's one-year anniversary, are accustomed to bumps in the road—especially considering the larger context of where they work. Chajul and its surrounding communities were devastatingly affected by a civil war that raged in Guatemala for more than three decades. Reminders of this violence and its root causes—the country's extreme disparity of wealth and systematic discrimination against the majority indigenous population—persist. Exhumations of mass grave-sites are a common occurrence, though work to give families the chance to formally mourn and bury their loved ones has scarcely begun. In many communities, men who were in charge of numerous killings and disappearances continue to control local institutions—either within the government or as pastors in the ever-increasing Evangelical churches. In addition, with the impending passage of the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), small landowners and partners in local

business cooperatives rumor that foreign oil companies are to begin drilling in areas close to Chajul. Residents rightfully fear the effects of further land struggles and underpaid jobs. Finally, many who go to work daily in their *milpas* [corn fields] have reported the existence of a group of armed men in the surrounding mountains. Though their mission and plan of action remain a mystery, the threat of violence once again is too horrifying for some to imagine.



*Rebecca Herhold visits a mental health workshop with Mayan women.*

Plans for ACEFOMI's project have long been set on paper. The approved proposal includes a year-long series of ten workshops. The series runs simultaneously in five different communities surrounding Chajul—Ju'íl, Tchacalte, Vi'pech, Ixal' and Visikitchun—and in each community, the same thirty women participate throughout the entire year. These communities and the women involved in the workshops were especially hard-hit by civil war violence and continue to live with its effects. Focused on mental health, the first five workshops encourage the women to reflect upon their experiences during the war and how their past interacts with contemporary experiences. Using United Nations' declarations and Guatemala's 1996 Peace Accords, the second set of five workshops is centered on human rights, especially in relation to the rights of indigenous people, women,

and children. Throughout the course of the year, these ten workshops create a space for women to unearth experiences long shrouded in silence, and in doing so, allow them to become more assured in their roles as mental health promoters and community leaders.

The grant from the Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund is ACEFOMI's first major funding and the group faces continuing challenges. Founding members worked for nearly a year without regular salaries, materials, basic technology, or infrastructure. Moreover, many of those involved in ACEFOMI are haunted by their previous participation in other local initiatives, some of which ended poorly due to lack of funding or irreconcilable internal conflicts. Traveling to the various communities, which in some cases means a two-hour walk from Chajul, setting up meetings, and facilitating the workshops is clearly a lot of work for the group's sole staff person.

The mental health project is clearly articulated in the group's grant proposal and is now gradually being operationalized. Despite initial setbacks and daily challenges, work has moved quickly since the funds were accessible. Within the first two weeks of September, the mayor and other local authorities approved the project in four out of five communities and in the fifth community, Tchacalte, 30 women were introduced to their roles as participants and agreed to commit to the program's year-long duration.

ACEFOMI exists because people in Chajul and its surrounding communities have determined to address issues of mental health and human rights. Their need is so overwhelm-

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## SUPPORTED BY THE IGNACIO MARTÍN-BARÓ FUND FOR MENTAL HEALTH AND HUMAN RIGHTS SINCE THE FUND'S INCEPTION

### 1990 **Committee of Families for the Liberty of Political Prisoners** (also funded in 1991 and 1992)

This group established a Child Development Center which provides a fully integrated program of psychological counseling and therapy, popular education training, and physical care critical to the recovery of children three months to 14 years of age whose families have been the target of state-sponsored violence. The grants enabled an increase of psychological services to 100 children and the expansion of support for psychological trauma victims of the war, to facilitate a full reintegration into Salvadoran society and contribute to the peace process.

### 1991 **Asociación Salvadoreña de Ayuda Humanitaria Pro-Vida**

In the daily life of the majority of Salvadorans there has existed and continues to exist a violation of human rights from which children have not been spared. Pro-Vida established the Center for the Comprehensive Care of the Child, to take care of the children who as a result of the war have become orphaned and to guarantee them the necessary conditions so that they can develop physically and mentally.

### 1992 **Asociación de Capacitación e Investigación para la Salud Mental**

Since the beginning of the cease-fire in El Salvador, mental health problems have surfaced in populations affected by the armed conflict. The mental and physical well-being of the population is aggravated by the lack of an adequate health care system, especially in the northern and eastern parts of the country, the areas hardest hit by the war. The grant supported programs in Chalatenango in the northern part of the country, offering treatment for ex-combatants and the civilian population as well as an educational program for people interested in rethreading the social fabric of their communities in the post-war period.

### 1994 **Centro Coordinador de Programas Alternativos de Salud**

The Coordinating Center for Alternative Health Programs was formed in 1989 to respond to the complete lack of health services in the zones of conflict in El Salvador. They provided health training and services for the thousands of refugees who were returning to their original villages after having been forced to flee them in the 1980s. Since 1989, the Center has been training members of these communities to be health promoters. In the summer of 1993, they began a mental health project, whose focus has been to provide basic training to members of the community. They facilitate self-help groups, recreational groups for children, sports groups, and women's groups, and train women to be educators for a children's center. In addition, they have produced illustrated educational booklets on various topics, including stress reduction and natural remedies.

### 1995 **Asociación Mujeres en Apoyo Para la Salud Mental Comunitaria** (also funded in 1996, 1998, 2001, 2002, and 2003)

This group of women has created a model community mental health program to respond to the realities faced by Salvadoran women living in marginalized urban communities. The program trains and educates women leaders who strengthen local groups by helping in their integral development. Training sessions, which took place twice a week in the three participating communities, focused on self-esteem, family relations, domestic violence, and child abuse. Thematic discussions were complemented with relaxation techniques, handcrafts for creative development, celebrations of significant events, and excursions. Participants learned the importance of expression, relaxation, and self-motivation for their work on behalf of their communities.

### **Médicos por el Derecho a la Salud**

This grant supported a mental health project in the rural ex-conflict zone in the Morazan region developed by Doctors for the Right to Health. The non-governmental organization promotes health care in rural and

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poor areas, preventive community health care, and related programs. They train mental health promoters who carry out a variety of activities, especially regarding children’s nutrition, learning disabilities, and emotional problems. They also provide support activities for family mental health through community actions.

 **1996 Fundación Nunca Más por Salud Mental y Derechos Humanos**

Post-war San Salvador is a city of refugees of the war, many of whom are poor, unemployed or underemployed, and carry emotional and/or physical wounds of years of torture, murder, and kidnappings. The “Never Again” Foundation for Mental Health and Human Rights has identified the psychological needs of these victims and has created programs to encourage mental health and respect for human rights. The grant supported the Foundation’s work in identifying individual psychological services for survivors and the creation of psychological resources to promote healing on a community level through self-help groups. The Foundation also provides legal resources so that survivors can begin the judicial process of reclaiming their lawful human rights.

 **1998 Programa Construcción De Paz ‘Yek Ineme’**

Established to work among Salvadorans living in a violent and impoverished society torn by war and neoliberalism, the ‘Yek Ineme’ Building Peace Project aimed to strengthen the attitudes and abilities of their members so that they could come up with the tools necessary to develop values that would help them make conscientious and positive decisions in contexts of persistent violence and poverty. They sought to achieve this goal through (1) the design and development of methodologies that helped participants use their experiences to strengthen community-level efforts, and (2) the strengthening of a culture of peace, creating spaces where people could analyze their different problems and transform them into opportunities for growth.

 **1999 Universidad Centroamericana “José Simeon Cañas”**

The Psychology Department of the UCA has sought to continue Ignacio Martín-Baró’s work. A central component to this effort is spreading his ideas about psychology and his proposal that psychology be more responsive to the lives of the poor and marginalized groups in Latin America. One concrete strategy for realizing this goal is The International Congress on the Social Psychology of Liberation, first held in 1999 in Mexico City. The Congress is an opportunity for students and teachers striving to conduct research and teach psychology from a liberationist perspective to gather and present their work. The Second Congress took place in San Salvador immediately prior to the 10th anniversary celebration of the assassination of Ignacio and his colleagues, their housekeeper, and her daughter. The grant supported student attendance at the Congress.

 **2004 Centro Bartolomé de las Casas**

See Project Update, this issue.

 **2004 Christians for Peace in El Salvador (CRISPAZ)**

CRISPAZ works with a prisoner support group known as OPERA, for the Spanish initials that stand for Optimism, Peace, Hope, Renewal, and Harmony. The group works with young inmates, mostly gang members, in two prisons in El Salvador. High crime rates and the growth of gangs in El Salvador can be traced in part to the unhealed wounds of El Salvador’s civil war, and to current economic policies, promoted by the U.S., that exacerbate economic inequality. While the inmates involved in OPERA have contributed to the social violence that plagues El Salvador, they have also been victimized by it. OPERA seeks to address the mental health of young inmates by providing a variety of activities for them in prison including reading circles, craft and music workshops, film forums, and a self-help group that focuses on relationship difficulties, emotional experiences, communication problems, violence, and conflict resolution. OPERA also works to engage inmates directly in denouncing human rights abuses that are occurring in the prisons. ♦

## ADDITIONAL PROJECT FOR 2004: BOARDING SCHOOL HEALING PROJECT

Ben Achtenberg

During the 19<sup>th</sup> and well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Native American children were forcibly abducted from their homes to attend boarding schools where they were systematically humiliated, abused, and stripped of their language, cultural traditions, and family connections. Native children were taught to be ashamed of their identity and themselves, and the devastating impact of these experiences continues to affect tribal life today.

The Boarding School Healing

Project is a national coalition of organizations working with Native communities. It seeks to document and raise consciousness about these abuses so that Native communities can begin a process of healing, and demand accountability and justice. Current pilot programs are working with the Lakota nation in South Dakota and with the Navajo nation in Arizona and New Mexico. Members of these tribal communities are being trained to gather documentation using participatory action research, which can include talking

circles, interviews, and focus groups. The BSHP is mobilizing a variety of resources in this effort, including mental health professionals and support groups.

A grant from the Martín-Baró Fund will help support the costs of travel connected with documentation and training, food and supplies for tribal support groups, creation of a crisis hotline for survivors, and planning for a Boarding School Day of Remembrance. ♦

## HUMAN RIGHTS UNDER FIRE: ROBERT WHITE, FORMER AMBASSADOR

Erzulie Coquillon



Robert White prefers to meet you “for who you are,” and vice versa. The activist and former

Ambassador is humble about the achievements of his 50-year career, much of which was spent in Latin America.

The oldest of five children in a Catholic family, Robert White was born in Melrose, MA. At age seventeen, he joined the World War II Navy, and served in the Pacific as a radioman. Following the war, White attended Saint Michael's College in 1948 through the GI Bill and studied in England on a Fulbright after graduation. He returned a year later to attend the Fletcher School of Diplomacy at Tufts University, beginning a 25-year career in the Foreign Service.

In 1955, he was appointed a U.S. Foreign Service officer, and served in posts in Honduras (1965-68), Nicaragua (1970-72), and Colombia (1972-75) before being appointed Ambassador to Paraguay, and later, to

El Salvador. Upon beginning his work in El Salvador, White spoke out about the rampant human rights violations occurring throughout the countryside, most perpetrated by members of the Salvadoran army and security forces.

However, Ronald Reagan's election to the U.S. presidency in November of 1980 began a shift from the human rights-focused foreign policies of the Carter Administration to a greater emphasis on the combating of communism. Upon taking office in January of 1981, Secretary of State Alexander Haig announced that “international terrorism will take the place of human rights,” as the priority of U.S. foreign policy. In El Salvador, the weeks that followed Reagan's election were marked by increased activity among the Salvadoran death squads, which sent a distinct and chilling message to those with centrist policies, as well as to U.S. reformers.

To underwrite its increasing military aid to El Salvador, the U.S. government began to misrepresent the

state of affairs in El Salvador to the American people, tactics which offended White. White criticized the transition in U.S. governmental perspective toward El Salvador, and insists that “when people asked me to lie about the facts...that is where I drew the line.” “The one thing that I felt,” White says, “and I think it was due to my Catholic upbringing, was that you had to have some fidelity to truth, to fact, and that lying is destructive.”

White was recalled to Washington by Alexander Haig after Reagan's inauguration, and summarily removed from his post as Ambassador in 1981. Members of Congress who opposed Reagan's policies wanted White's assessment of the situation in El Salvador on public record, and White subsequently testified in front of the House Appropriations subcommittee on foreign relations, stating that the Salvadoran security forces were the country's chief killers, and that the Reagan administration's request for \$25 to \$30 million in military aid would undermine rather than support the civilian government. In an interview on National Public

Radio in March 2000, White said, "Never in the history of Latin America has a country or group of countries suffered such concentrated death and destruction as the United States, through its proxy armies in El Salvador, Nicaragua and Honduras, inflicted on Central America during the 1980s."

Since his departure from the U.S. State Department, he has continued his activism on behalf of human rights, as a "citizen diplomat" and in

posts first at the Carnegie Endowment for Peace, and, since 1990, as the President of the Center for International Policy. He speaks out on the need for alternative policy strategies to the use of military intervention in hot spots around the world. With the Center for International Policy he gives interviews and produces numerous op-ed pieces discussing his unwavering mission for humane foreign policy. ♦

*For more on Robert White, visit the*

*Center for International Policy, [www.ciponline.org](http://www.ciponline.org), or read "Death & Lies in El Salvador: The ambassador's tale" by Margaret O'Brien Steinfels, October 26, 2001, *Commonweal Magazine* ([www.commonweal.org](http://www.commonweal.org)), the source of the above quotes.*

*Erzulie Coquillon is a graduate student at Boston College in counseling psychology. She completed her B.A. in History of International Relations at Harvard College, and has recently joined the Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund.*



PROJECT UPDATE: ACEFOMI GUATEMALA: ONE OUTSIDER'S INSIDE VIEW *continued from page 7*

ing that people will work without pay to see it alleviated. More women and children show up to be involved in potential projects than could ever be accommodated. It is important to analyze and critique how the work is being done—we would be delinquent

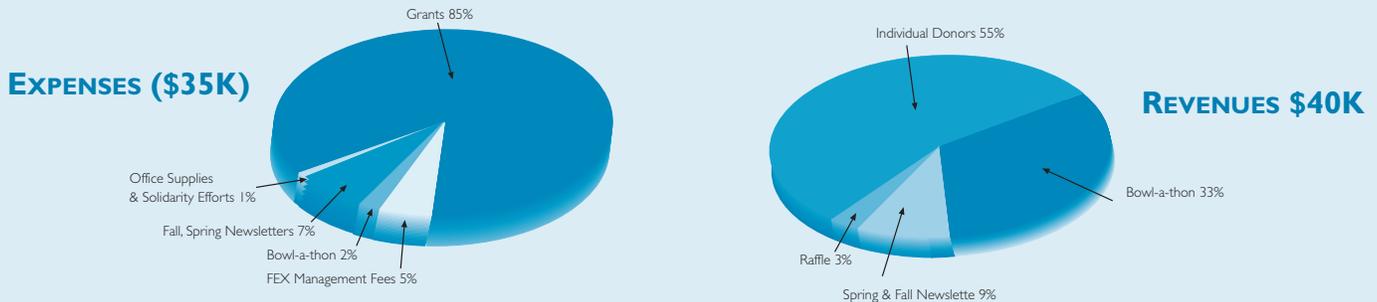
in our efforts at international solidarity if we didn't. Yet, demands from afar must be rooted in knowledge of the local context. ♦

*Author Rebecca Herhold graduated from Boston College in 2004 where she*

*completed a research project analyzing life stories of Mayan women from Chajul. She recently returned from 3 weeks living and working in Chajul and is currently serving as an educational organizer for Los Niños in Tijuana.*

## HELP US MAKE A DIFFERENCE

The number of grants we are able to make is determined by the success of our fundraising efforts. You can help us meet the growing demand for our resources and expand our grant-making by sending a generous contribution to the **Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund**, P.O. Box 2122, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130, [www.martinbarofund.org](http://www.martinbarofund.org). Checks should be made to: **Funding Exchange/Martín-Baró Fund** and are tax-deductible to the full extent permitted by the IRS.



Editors: M. Brinton Lykes, Maria de Jesus, Erzulie Coquillon. Contributors: Ben Achtenberg, Erzulie Coquillon, Maria de Jesus, Rebecca Herhold, Alden Jackson, Joan H. Liem, Ramsay Liem, M. Brinton Lykes, Catherine Mooney, Jack Spence, David Sulewsk. Distribution: Alden Jackson. **PLEASE SUPPORT OUR WORK.** Letters, inquiries, contributions can be sent to: **Martín-Baró Fund**, P.O.Box 2122, Jamaica Plain, MA, 02130, [www.martinbarofund.org](http://www.martinbarofund.org). Checks payable to: **FEX/Martín-Baró Fund**, tax deductible to the full extent permitted by IRS code. Thank you.



# ANNUAL FUNDRAISER



Commemorating

## 15TH ANNIVERSARY

of the assassination of Ignacio Martín-Baró, 5 other Jesuits,  
their housekeeper and her daughter

ROBERT WHITE, *President, Center for International Policy*

MARIA ELENA LETONA, *Director, Centro Presente*

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2004**

**4:30 pm**

First Parish Church (3 Church Street, Cambridge)  
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Event is open to all. **PLEASE CONTRIBUTE TO OUR WORK.**

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