



the JUST word

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

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

Confronting War’s Legacies in the 21st Century: Central America-U.S. Relations, Past and Present

M. Brinton Lykes

Steven Spielberg’s recently released film, *The Post*, revisits the role of the U.S. media and the Pentagon Papers in exposing a massive cover-up of government secrets spanning three decades and four U.S. presidents. It underscores the multiple risks when secrecy, disinformation and silencing enshroud government and military conduct, as in the case of the Vietnam War. It reminds us of the necessity to “speak truth to power.” This has been one of the goals of the Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund for Mental Health and Human Rights. Today, governmental and military use of stealth technologies and tactics challenge all of us, and the Fund, to think newly about our quest for justice.

Ignacio Martín-Baró and many of his Jesuit brothers are remembered for the risks they took to expose the role of the United States in the twelve-year armed conflict in El Salvador, a war that took nearly 70,000 lives. Their relentless truth-telling ceased only when they were assassinated by soldiers in the Atlacatl Battalion, many of whom had been trained in the U.S. Despite vociferous U.S. government claims to the contrary, human rights advocates, lawyers, academics, and especially many brave Salvadoran citizens

have definitively documented that the U.S. secretly funded El Salvador’s civil war, alongside a host of counterinsurgent efforts elsewhere in Central America.



The Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund for Mental Health and Human Rights took root in this context.

Ignacio Martín-Baró, for whom the Fund is named, was an activist scholar who used his expertise in social psychology to accompany Salvadoran peasants in their quest for justice by gathering their perspectives into a critical analysis of U.S. and Salvadoran governmental policies and practices. He aimed to break silence and disrupt these governments’ “official story.” In the wake of his assassination thirty years ago, the Fund sought to continue his work by supporting grassroots groups in Salvador and well beyond as they raised their voices and created their own strategies to respond to gross human rights violations. Drawing on Martín-Baró’s life and work, we have sought to educate and raise public consciousness about these issues, focusing our efforts on promoting a critical analysis of U.S. policies and practices as they impinge on people around the globe. The

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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.

El Salvador 1989 – We Must Never Forget

Martha Wendlandt

After having been discovered to be residing in the Boston area after lying to United States, Inocente Orlando Montano, former Salvadoran army colonel, was detained in 2012 and pleaded guilty to six counts of immigration fraud and perjury. After a long legal process, Montano was convicted and served a sentence in the US for immigration fraud and perjury. In late 2017 he was extradited to Spain and has been imprisoned there, facing charges relating to the massacre of six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her daughter. In 1989, the Atlacatl Battalion, Salvadoran soldiers trained in, and supported by, the United States, committed the murders of the eight people living at the Jesuit university in San Salvador.

Montano has been charged with allegedly helping plan the attack against the Jesuit priests. This was done in order to derail the peace talks in El Salvador during their civil war from 1980-1992. With enough evidence to show that Montano was involved in the planning of the killings, last year a federal judge in North Carolina approved his extradition to Spain. The legacy and efforts of Ignacio Martín-Baró live on with the Fund, which was created in his memory with the goal of advancing his philosophy of promoting human rights and mental health.



"War implies social polarization, the displacement of groups toward opposite extremes. A critical split is produced in the framework of coexistence, leading to a radical differentiation between "them" and "us"...People...are no longer valued in and of themselves, but rather on the basis of whether they are "ours" or "theirs," and in terms of what they have to offer either for or against our side in the conflict. Thus the basis for daily interaction disappears...Without doubt, of all the deleterious effects of the war on the mental health of the Salvadoran people, the undermining of social

relations is the worst, for our social relations are the scaffolding we rely on to construct ourselves historically both as individuals and as a human community."

— Ignacio Martín-Baró

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projects we have supported over nearly thirty years exemplify these commitments (visit www.martinbarofund.org).

In the Fund's first years, peoples' struggles were largely dictated by civil war and state violence. We can celebrate some long-sought and hard-won victories to break silences and expose the truth. For example, in Guatemala, fifteen Maya Q'eqchi' women who survived sexual violence and slavery, together with Guatemalan lawyers, psychologists and feminist activists, have successfully prosecuted two members of the Guatemalan military directly responsible for these atrocities besides other murders during Guatemala's 36-year armed conflict. In Spain, at least one of the military generals alleged to be responsible for the Jesuit murders in 1989 will soon be tried (article p. 2, this issue).

But how has the Fund's work evolved to respond to new realities?

Today in the 21st century conditions have changed. Bearing in mind the U.S. government's past support of repressive militaries in Central America, we must now focus on current post-war policies and practices. These sustain a new generation of oligarchies and military leadership who are wreaking new sorts of violence and oppression. Despite peace accords and truth commissions in both El Salvador and Guatemala:

- ◆ Government corruption and ongoing impunity stymie peoples' struggles for truth and reparations in the aftermath of war. Justice has been denied to thousands of war survivors. They remain mired in the extreme poverty that gave rise to their countries' armed conflicts in the first place. Gang violence has spiraled out of control.
- ◆ Murder rates in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, are among the highest in the world, with femi(ni)cide – the targeted, brutal murders of women – echoing torture and disappearances during armed conflicts.
- ◆ Human trafficking is widespread.

Far from being distant matters, these issues are intimately tied to the United States. While Mexicans continue to account for the majority of the more than 11 million unauthorized immigrants into the U.S. – many also escaping poverty and violence ineffectively addressed by their government – large numbers of Salvadorans, Hondurans, and Guatemalans, including many unaccompanied minors and mothers with young children, are also coming to the U.S. in search of security and a better life. Unbeknownst to many people, U.S. collusion with Central American governments has exacerbated local problems.

The Obama and Trump administrations have responded with increasingly repressive immigration policies and practices within the U.S. and less widely reported military support for

Mexico's Southern Border Plan, *Plan Frontera Sur* and financial investment in the region's *Alliance for Prosperity*.

The 2014 *Alliance* reflects a coordinated initiative of the governments of Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador.¹ It was timed to respond to the growing emigration of large numbers of unaccompanied minors arriving at the U.S. border between 2011 and 2014. Ostensibly, it proposed economic stimulation of each country's productive sector, increased public safety, and more jobs for citizens. Seeking a response to the influx of migrants, the U.S. promised to fund the *Alliance*, committing \$22 billion over five years. But initial analyses report considerably less investment. Moreover, funds that have been received have targeted industries that benefit U.S. interests and/or benefit the countries' elites, leaving local communities still exposed to extreme poverty and violence. In other words, it's an *Alliance for Prosperity*, but not the prosperity of the poor.

Civil society and local community activists have protested the *Alliance* and denounced the ongoing impunity and corruption in Guatemala, the murder of environmental indigenous activist Berta Cáceres and election fraud in the recent presidential elections in Honduras, and the continued disappearances and deaths of forced migrants from all three countries. In return, they live under constant threat. These forms of state abuse may not be as dramatic or sensational as the preceding civil war massacres nor as evident to the U.S. public. But they share the same heavy footprint of U.S. policies in Central America that have always placed the United States and its collaborators "first."

In recognition of these conditions, the Martín-Baró Fund seeks to expose the false narratives and speak the truth through direct support of organizations such as COFAMIDE (The Committee for Families of Deceased and Disappeared Migrants) (article p. 4, this issue). COFAMIDE identifies, analyzes, and responds to the psychosocial effects of this new wave of repression and human rights violations that create and directly affect forced migrants and their families.

In 1990, Ramsay Liem and I described Latin American governmental strategies to suppress popular dissent as a "systematic attack on people's ability to distinguish what is true from what is not true, or what they know based on personal experience as opposed to the 'official story.'" The dramatic extension of these strategies in the current disregard for facts by the Trump administration reflects the latest iteration of secrecy, and promotion of official stories. "The struggle to name reality, therefore, persists beyond the termination of overt violence, and bears consequences not only for direct victims but for entire populations. The truth telling of Martín-Baró served both objectives"² and continues today in the efforts of the Martín-Baró Fund for Mental Health and Human Rights.

¹ https://cuellar.house.gov/uploadedfiles/plan_of_the_alliance_for_prosperity_in_the_northern_triangle-_a_road_ma....pdf

² Lykes, M. B., & Liem, R. (1990). Human rights and mental health work in the United States: Lessons from Latin America. *Journal of Social Issues*, 46(3), 151-165; quotations 159, 160.

Projects Funded in 2017

CEDECOT Chiapas, Mexico

\$7,000



CEDECOT, the Center for Experimentation for Tzeltal Community Development, has worked for more than four years to support marginalized and indigenous communities in three municipalities in the state of Chiapas, Mexico: San Juan Cancuc, Chilón, and Sitalá. Their projects have focused on zoning and municipal autonomy, alternative solidarity economies, social and economic organization of women, human rights education, and organizational development.

Through last year's project, "Promoting and Strengthening the Human Rights of Tzeltal Indigenous Women in Chilón and Sitalá, Chiapas," CEDECOT offered the community tools to fight for gender equality, strengthen women's leadership, and create and consolidate organizational structures to support women's individual and collective welfare. They facilitated a series of workshops for 40 indigenous women from four locations in the region focused on understanding human rights and exercising decision-making power in their family, community and municipality. They also hosted a meeting between the 40 women and local and municipal male leaders to increase the incorporation of women's experiences into governance and policymaking, and to share findings and conclusions from the women's workshops. They report that the workshops contributed to women's creation of an educational space for themselves, the Indigenous Women's House, as well as to a more organized working group comprised of women participants from the four communities, Tzeltal Women for Community Self-Management.

In 2017-18, the group proposes to continue their workshops and annual co-ed meetings, expanding them to encompass an additional 20 participants drawn from two new communities in the region. In total, they will engage 60 women from six communities. They hope to form an Indigenous Women's Network, and to hold an exchange between members of the participants' six communities in recognition of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

COFAMIDE El Salvador

\$7,000



COFAMIDE, the Committee for Families of Deceased and Disappeared Migrants, El Salvador, was founded and is led by family members of migrants who disappeared en route from El Salvador to the United States. Their mission is to provide psychosocial support and advocacy training to other families affected by El Salvador's migration crisis, and to collectively advocate for recognition and aid from the Salvadoran government and the international community. Their membership includes 350 families, mostly headed by women, who have experienced the disappearance of a loved one and are bearing the psychological, social, and economic effects of this loss.

Last year, the group hosted a series of workshops where members received advocacy and legal training to learn about and to assert their rights, domestically and internationally, as relatives of disappeared persons. Additionally, they received training in coping with the emotional effects of the disappearance and gained psychosocial support from other members. The group's leadership team, who are themselves survivors, also participated in these self-care workshops to sustain and strengthen the organization. The group initially projected that they would hold a total of 13 workshops; however, they exceeded this and were able to host 21 workshops.

In 2017-18, COFAMIDE plans to develop technical training for its member families focused on both the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and international treaties and laws regarding disappeared persons and their descendants to which El Salvador is a signatory. They will also continue to host workshops for member families on self-care and psychosocial assistance, including a focus on self-esteem and leadership development. Finally, members of the leadership team will accompany some member families in repatriating the remains of deceased family members who have been located and identified.

FAMDEGUA Guatemala

\$7,000

FAMDEGUA, the Association of Relatives of Detained-Disappeared of Guatemala, has over 22 years of experience supporting and accompanying members of Guatemala's Mayan population who have been affected by regional poverty and migration, ongoing

state violence, and the unresolved impact of the nation's internal armed conflict that formally concluded in 1996. The group utilizes an alternative healing model that incorporates features of the Mayan cosmovision, herbal medicine, and political advocacy.

Last year, the group worked to support the families of individuals forcibly disappeared during the armed conflict as they continue to heal from the effects of political, economic, social, and cultural violence and seek justice and formal recognition for their losses. Many of the family members are women who also experienced sexual violence in the context of the armed conflict. The program was thus aimed at female relatives of the disappeared and provided 12 workshops on trauma and violence in the departments of Alta and Baja Verapaz, Guatemala.



The workshops aimed to foster a climate of confidence, solidarity, and cooperation among the women as relatives of victims of enforced disappearance, as well as psychosocial support for them as they engage formally in Guatemala's transitional justice processes and movements for truth and remembrance of the disappeared. The program coordinators observed positive effects of the workshops as well as growing trust between the participants and the departments' public prosecutor and other Public Ministry staff who oversee many of the cases that pursue those responsible for crimes committed during the armed conflict.

In 2017-18, the group plans to continue these workshops and expand them to include participants from the municipality of Panzós in Alta Verapaz. They will also deepen their work to address participants' experiences of sexual violence during the armed conflict, by 1) providing more focused psychosocial support and human rights education around this issue, 2) collecting testimonies and socializing patterns across women's experiences, and 3) holding more dialogue and trust-building meetings with staff from the Public Ministry.

Proyecto Buena Semilla Guatemala

\$7,000



For a period of three years, Proyecto Buena Semilla (the Good Seed Project, in English) has been dedicated to empowering women in Mayan communities in the Western Highlands of Guatemala. Through entrepreneurial activities, problem-based therapy, cognitive-behavioral therapy, and art-based activities, the women learn to face the hardships of child pregnancy, domestic violence, and other restrictions to their economic participation given the marginalized conditions of their communities.

The project was awarded a second year of funding from the Martín-Baró Fund to continue the series of workshops and psychological activities circles that focus on women's leadership development and mental and maternal health. For 2017, the project was able to compensate 12 women leaders for their facilitation of Women's Circles in their communities. They created spaces of encounter and dialogue where marginalized, indigenous women engaged in problem-solving therapy and empowered themselves to become agents of change in their lives and communities.

Proyecto Buena Semilla plans to extend their workshops to the women of San Juan Ostuncalco, a community that is currently not supported with funding. The project also plans to continue to support the Women's Circle workshops in Quetzaltenango, the original site of the project, and strengthen the activities offered by providing further training and stipends for the leaders. Lastly, they hope to organize site visits in the community to foster knowledge transfer and exchanges between individuals who have been leaders of Women's Circles since 2014 and the individuals assuming leadership in Cuilco, Huehuetenango.



Project Hajra Queens, New York

\$7,000

Project Hajra is in their third and final year of funding from the Martín-Baró Fund. Over the last several years, the organization's main project has been its Community Safety Initiative. This work is based on deepening the communities' understanding that interpersonal violence and gender injustice within the community are linked to the marginal status of Muslims in society. The project organizes meetings and leads discussions about the multiple forms of domestic, community, gendered, economic, and state-sponsored violence.

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Projects Funded in 2017

Project Hajra continued to support the AMEMSA (Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian) communities centered around Queens, NYC. They hosted weekly and bi-weekly workshops and discussions centered around the causes of violence and oppression within these communities. The gatherings also focused on enhancing the community members' knowledge and strategies for organizing radical, grassroots spaces to heal in the face of threats of state-sponsored eradication.

With a final year of funding, Project Hajra will continue to collaborate with the National Domestic Worker's Alliance to host training sessions related to workers' justice and strategies for negotiations with employers. They will continue to collaborate with Chhava, a group that focuses on resisting gentrification and supporting local efforts for community housing justice. Both collaborative projects aim to inform local communities of their rights and of the support that Project Hajra offers. Project Hajra will continue to focus on facilitating community conversations and workshops centered around unpaid labor, domestic workers and mobilizing families according to the community's needs.

Mobile Expressive Therapies Program Palestine

\$7,000



With a third year of funding from the Martín-Baró Fund, the Mobile Expressive Therapies Program will continue to support the psychosocial wellbeing of children, adolescents, parents, teachers, and volunteers in the West Bank. Such individuals continue to experience fear, isolation, and multiple other challenges of living under Israeli occupation. Through providing art-based therapy as well as teaching individuals about the multiple psychosocial effects of living under constant threat, the program has succeeded in enhancing local communities' resources for coping with stress and anxiety.

During the previous year, the Mobile Expressive Therapies Program worked in Bedouin villages, which are among the most impoverished, marginalized, and neglected Palestinian communities. The program provided expressive art therapy training sessions and workshops in different locations around the villages including in kindergartens and in tents. In total, approximately 140 children, 4 teachers and 11 volunteers received the program's services. The program also collaborated with 12 women from Kufu-Aqab, Ramallah, and the Qalandiya refugee camp. Some of these women are widows, some have children with disabilities, and some have lost children in clashes with the Israeli military.

Finally, the program worked with 12- and 13-year old students in the U.N. school in the Qalandiy refugee camp. Some of these young teenagers have been identified as being hyperactive or as having learning difficulties, while others were recently released after spending a year in an Israeli prison. Since 2015, the program has reached communities located in remote villages and underserved refugee camps. In 2017 they will continue to help individuals, especially children, prioritizing those who are challenged by emotional, behavioral, and/or learning difficulties through art-based therapy.

Freedom Summer Palestine Palestine

\$7,000

For the past three years, Freedom Summer Palestine has offered a range of educational activities and workshops designed to enhance the creativity and leadership of youth within the Aida refugee camp in the West Bank, north of Bethlehem. Artistic and cultural training includes photography, music, dance, theater and creative writing through which youth analyze and represent their experiences of separation due to the wall. Workshops focus on facilitating youth's expressivity and creativity through which they can better support themselves and others in the community in their activist campaigns of resistance.

The funds from the Martín-Baró Fund were used to provide training to individuals in art therapy, human rights, and advocacy, as well as to provide refreshments for community events and transportation to and from events. Through workshops and advocacy, Freedom Summer contributes to youth's enhanced engagement within the Palestinian community and evokes for some the Freedom Summer Civil Rights projects in the U.S. more than 50 years ago.



Committee Member Spotlight: Dorothy Burlage

Martha Wendlandt

Dorothy is a clinical psychologist who has always been an advocate for the welfare of children and families. Her interests reach further than clinical work as she appreciates the ways in which mental health is related to issues of social justice, both in the U.S. and in other countries.

In her travels to countries in South America, Central America, the Middle East, Africa and the Far East, she has seen how the lack of human rights has negatively affected the emotional well-being of local people. In Argentina, she learned how people had been “disappeared.” In Mexico, Dorothy could see how corporations exploited labor in towns close to the U.S. border. In Texas, she saw how Mexicans would come across the border into the desert, risking their lives to improve their lot, and then be persecuted or deported as immigrants who lacked proper documentation.

In her travels to Africa, Dorothy observed how U.S. corporations were moving in and using cheap labor to exploit indigenous or local resources. In the Middle East, she met Lebanese and Palestinians whose homes had been bombed and whose houses had been invaded by Israeli forces. She became aware of how much the United States was complicit in the problems of other countries and how little most U.S. citizens know about their own country’s foreign policy.

For her doctoral studies at Harvard, Dorothy was in a psychology program that emphasized public policy while most such programs focus exclusively on clinical training. Her academic experience was a perfect foundation for what would later be called liberation psychology. She understood that human rights are directly related to mental health, the guiding principle of the Martín-Baró Fund. Dorothy sees that people can develop a sense of helplessness resulting from oppression and that they can become empowered by working together as a community. She

commented that there is a saying in political circles that “the personal is political and the political is personal.” Thus the Martín-Baró Fund was a perfect fit for the way she viewed many psychological problems and social issues.



Dorothy has been involved with many community organizations over the years. In the 1960s, she worked in the civil rights movement and was a founder of the Northern Student Movement. In 1971, as a graduate student, she started the Women’s Counseling and Resource Center to provide support for women as they addressed problems arising from the way society limited women’s opportunities. At the time, it was a radical change in the way counseling was practiced. It was through the Center that she met Brinton Lykes.

She has been a committee member of the Martín-Baró Fund since 2014. She first learned about the Fund from Brinton and felt that the goals of the Fund aligned well with her own concerns. She has been impressed by the integrity, seriousness, and thoughtfulness of the Fund’s members and that organizations from all over the world submit proposals to meet human rights and mental health challenges in their own countries. She looks forward to continued collaboration with other volunteers whose donated time makes it possible for all the financial contributions to the Fund to go directly to the projects, without siphoning off overhead for paid staff. It is also inspiring for her to meet some of the many donors, both small and large, who care about the oppressed in other countries and whose generous contributions provide direct support to the Fund’s grantees. She feels that there are many, many people struggling to create positive and equitable programs and hopes that more donations will be made in order to further expand the Fund’s contributions to human welfare around the world.

The MBF Welcomes New Graduate Student Coordinator



This year, the Martín-Baró Fund (MBF) welcomed Martha Wendlandt as its Graduate Assistant and Student Coordinator. Martha brings a rich background to the MBF and noted in her initial interview that her decision to apply to the position was greatly influenced by her previous experiences. “I was born and raised in Mexico but moved to San Antonio, Texas, to complete my high school and undergraduate education. Yet, I continued to visit Mexico five to ten times each year. I love to volunteer with non-profit organizations there with the objective to help communities in the country, particularly those that are marginalized from basic health care and denied their human rights.”

In the spring of 2017, Martha had the opportunity to study abroad through Semester at Sea (SAS); in the course of five months, she visited 12 different countries in Asia, Africa, and Europe. Martha shares how important this experience was and also how it affected her perspective on world issues and the multiple needs for systemic and structural changes to redress the injustices that she witnessed. “Studying abroad in Myanmar was the most impactful for me; I visited Bagan and Yangon. Being there while the ‘ethnic cleansing’ against the Rohingya Muslim minority of the country was occurring was eye opening and impactful. I knew then I wanted to dedicate my time and work with projects or organizations that are aligned with human rights but also stressing the importance of the mental health of individuals and their communities. This is why I am extremely excited and thankful for the opportunity to be working with the Martín-Baró Fund. It truly is such a powerful and impactful organization that leaves a mark not only within the United States but in countries all over the world with a particular focus on those in the global South.”

Bowling Throughout the Years

On Saturday, April 22, 2017 the Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund for Mental Health and Human Rights held its annual Bowl-a-Thon fundraiser at Lanes & Games in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Unfortunately, after nearly two decades of hosting our annual fundraiser, the Lanes & Games bowling alley closed at the end of 2017. Although it was our last year at this location, that did not stop the Fund and all of the teams that participated from having a great time and raising critical funds for our grantees! Participating teams were affiliated with the Boston

College Center for Human Rights and International Justice, Boston College Law School, RADICALeS Research Team, Chelsea Public Schools, and many other new and long-time friends of the Fund. We are pleased to announce that we raised \$15,000 from this event.

The members of the Fund wish to express their deep appreciation to all those who over the years have pledged to support their favorite bowlers, as well as to those who collected



pledges and came out to bowl for our worthy cause. This annual event has become not only one of our most important ways to raise funds to support our grantees, but also a time to affirm and strengthen our community of activists who sustain the Fund's mission of supporting diverse mental health programs all over the world. We also thank the Lanes & Games bowling alley for hosting us throughout the years and for their continuous support.

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