

THE JUST WORD



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

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REMEMBERING IGNACIO



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YESTERDAY'S THOUGHTS, TOMORROW'S HOPE

by *Adrienne Aron*

In recent months, as my imaginings of transcendental communiqués with <Ignacio@heaven.com> become ever more urgent, as synagogues are torched and Jewish children are

maimed and a mailman is shot to death because he is Asian, and boys celebrate Hitler's birthday by murdering their classmates, I leaf through the writings of Ignacio Martín-Baró and find, not replies exactly, but answers of sorts.

Answers, and sometimes questions – questions that re-frame problems to make them less daunting, and open possibilities where none existed before. Ignacio, ten years dead, teaches me how to read today's newspaper.

Back when he was still a graduate student at the University of Chicago, working on a Master's thesis that his teachers said outshone most doctoral dissertations, Ignacio had already begun to look at violence – state violence, the scourge of Latin America – as something having profound consequences for everybody affected by it: perpetrators, victims, witnesses. No one escapes its influence. Nor is anybody's encounter with it wholly positive, or even wholly negative!

What?

Always attuned to the complexity of social phenomena, Ignacio avoided dichotomous categories of good and bad, Them and Us, asking instead, "Good for whom?" and "How does the benefit accruing to one individual or group affect the attitudes, motivations, and behaviors of others?" He could see that the violence in El Salvador, while producing intense fear in its principal targets, poor villagers, also sent the urban rich, who were its principal beneficiaries, scurrying to barricade their children against kidnapers. He could see that the National Security State, both as policy and ideology, no matter how economically profitable for the buyers, sellers, and wielders of weapons, or politically advantageous

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for the ruling classes and their sponsors in Washington, was psychologically problematic for everyone in El Salvador, shrinking people's life space, narrowing their horizons, and limiting their options. For the society as a whole the National Security state engendered a chronic insecurity. In turn, this widespread insecurity justified the proliferation of force and distracted attention from the real problem that needed to be solved: the problem of structural injustice, the problem that Ignacio and his fellow Jesuits at the university named over and over as the root cause of the Salvadoran crisis.

Here in the United States, as we face our own crises bereft of the ongoing critical insights of Martín-Baró, we can be thankful at least that he was a prolific writer, with analyses and methodologies that can continue to guide us. When we look closely at the violence that permeates our society today, we can see by using Ignacio's frame of reference, that the tragedies in Colorado and Georgia, California and Oregon, Arkansas and Oklahoma may represent catastrophic loss for many, but there are others whose portfolios and careers brighten with every new incident. In ways very similar to the

ways the army and its paramilitary death squads benefited from the massacres at El Mozote and the Río Sumpul, the U.S. Corrections industry benefits from bloodshed in the schools.

Everybody is scared, scared enough to look for quick solutions, and to watch hopefully as states pull funds away from education to invest in new prisons. That will protect our children – that, and metal detectors in the classroom, and security guards at the door. Police, contractors, guards, psychologists, service workers, parole officers, probation agents, court officials: Corrections is the fastest growing industry in the country. Fear is the commodity that drives it; security is purchased with force.

When we look, as Ignacio always said we must, at the historical context for this deadly combination of fear and force, we see it embedded in the culture from early on. The pistol in the hand of last night's TV hero points straight back to the earliest Pilgrim, his ax raised against something he could only see as a threat: an awesome wilderness. By now the paired association of fear with violence is so well established, and our responses so predictable, that the fear stimulus can be omitted altogether and violence will still be activated as a remedy for trouble. It's the treatment of choice for enemies real and perceived, in fiction, fancy, or fact: "action" movies, video games, Waco... Columbine.

Ignacio feared the militarization of the mind that he saw emerging from the social polarization in El Salvador. He did not live long enough to see the erection of a second front in the attack on young minds: the export of juvenile gang warfare from the United States to El Salvador. Running from the police, or just running, young Salvadoran gangbangers who reached

adolescence in the poor barrios of U.S. cities grew up safe from the war in El Salvador, but with no protection from the American culture of violence. Like depreciated machinery that continues to enrich U.S. corporations after it has been shipped off to the Third World, these wayward youth continue doing favors for the U.S. Corrections industry even after they run back to El Salvador. Though they can't be pursued and incarcerated, their presence in El Salvador is used to justify a stronger police presence on the streets there, which means more weapons, more equipment, more training, all of which advanced outfits in the U.S. are prepared to supply. The War on Drugs can help pay for all that, just as the U.S. War on Communism, in the name of National Security – theirs and ours – paid for the Salvadoran repression during Ignacio's time. In the heat of that War on Communism Ignacio was shot to death by Salvadoran soldiers in 1989 – with a bullet manufactured in a small town in Missouri.

Ten years earlier, Ignacio Martín-Baró finished his Ph.D. in psychology. Ten years before completing the doctorate he was studying theology, having joined the Jesuit order ten years before that, in 1959. It is now ten years since the agents of fear and violence put an end to this extraordinary man. But there is no doubt at all that ten years hence, and for a long time after, his thoughts will still be alive and viable, showing us how to think about the problems we confront, and offering us hope for a future of justice and peace. ♦

[Adrienne was a friend of Ignacio, a founding member of the Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund, co-editor of Writings for a Liberation Psychology: Ignacio Martín-Baró and initiator of The Centro Ignacio Martín-Baró (see "The Legacy Survives").]

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REMEMBERING NACHO

by Jon Sobrino, S. J.

[Editor's Note: The following edited excerpts were taken from a speech by Jon Sobrino, S.J., Professor of Theology, University of Central America, San Salvador, given at last year's Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund Annual Commemoration Event. A colleague and comrade of Ignacio and leading liberation theologian, Father Sobrino visibly moved his audience with his recollections of Nacho.]



... I was a friend, more than a friend, of Nacho: I lived with him for fifteen years. ... In 1966, in El Salvador, I was working as a very young Jesuit at the University of Central America and Nacho was working at a high school and I met him. And he looked, well, very creative. He wanted to do things original, but I also think, as true for many of us, he was unsatisfied with life somehow... he was looking for something else. This is how I remember Nacho in the first part of his life – he wasn't so happy.

Then I met him in 1974. We were both ordained priests and we were working at the University of Central America. And this was a different Nacho, this time. I also found out why he was different. He had found something. What was it?

Visibly, the poor of this world. It centered him. And also, I think, he found God. The ultimate mystery of that impressed me. But he had changed in the final analysis because something was given to him, as it happens in life. Something is given to us and we call it grace, in Christian language. And what was given to him was more life, more sincerity, more truth, more love, more commitment in that world of the poor.

In the last couple of years, it has almost disappeared ... the idea that to liberate people, you have to work and fight; not necessarily with weapons, not only with weapons. But you have to liberate people – from what? From powerful, oppressive forces – and those have not been defeated. The greatest trick of our civilization, our culture, is to make us believe, in the language of old Christianity, that there is no devil, as if there were no evil forces. The media hides them, or tolerates them, and then the media shows the friendly face of reality. So the fact is that liberation is really being conscious of those forces deep, deep in the culture, in democracy, in socialism – in Catholicism. I just wanted to remind you of the fact that Nacho was a scholar and fighter, intellectually; a fighter for liberation. I hope we remember that.

... From what I've learned about you as a group, you want to help people in other countries, and I'm sure you do. I wanted to add something: as you know, help is not enough. Solidarity is important. And solidarity means helping one another. We carry each other, the North and the South. That's not easy because it's difficult to accept. It's more of a cultural, structural problem that we are not able to see that we, ourselves, can be helped by others... But there is no human conscience if we must be superior to others. This is what I

understand to be solidarity – if you don't get something, then you have given nothing.

... Nacho is a martyr. And martyrdom is something they want to take from us... Martyrs are reference points of humanity, the possibility of humanity, in a world of lies; truth is possible and love is possible in a cruel world. How can we say this (when the official voices tell us otherwise)? Because we've seen it – in the martyrs. So martyrs are very important because they express the best that people can be.

So Nacho Martín-Baró was a martyr – our martyr, your martyr. So honoring him – how can I say this – it's not only honoring a good human being; it's a commitment, actually more than a commitment – it's feeling joy in belonging to a certain tradition of history. It's one way of saying there is hope: the forces of evil, so real, have not killed everything. So that's what remembering Nacho means. The generals do not care about him, but people like you and all over the world remember him and for that I want to thank you. ♦

“Mental health in the context of this project is defined as a state of mind that facilitates empowerment, specifically advocating for better living conditions, better pay, better medical services, constitutional rights, labor rights and human rights.”

– Movimiento de Mujeres
Dominico-Haitiana,
Santo Domingo,
Dominican Republic

Compiled by Ramsay Liem and
Brinton Lykes

At this ten-year anniversary of the murder of Ignacio Martín-Baró, it is important for all of us to know that the values, commitments and spirit of Ignacio endure in the work of many people around the world. The Martín-Baró Fund for Mental Health and Human Rights is itself a case in point, but the path that Ignacio charted has many other travelers. What follows are only a few examples of this legacy in action.

The **CENTRO IGNACIO MARTÍN-BARÓ** in Berkeley, a project of the Committee for Health Rights in the Americas, was founded 10 years ago as a pro-bono service to Central American Refugees in the Bay Area. Its work has entailed providing psychological evaluations of refugees applying for political asylum in the United States, and consulting to lawyers and mental health workers who are performing evaluations to help people win asylum. Out of the project have come some publications regarding trauma, torture, and the interface of legal and mental health workers on behalf of refugees. Address: P.O. Box 9899, Berkeley, CA 94709. Phone/Fax: (510) 528-1782.

The **ANNUAL MARTÍN-BARÓ AWARD BANQUET** recognizes outstanding contributions to the Catholic community, particularly in social justice and public policy. Calvert House, University of Chicago Catholic Center and Chapel, 5735 University Ave., Chicago, IL 60637. Website: www.uchicago.edu/docs/maps/eastquad/calvert.html.

The **IGNACIO MARTÍN-BARÓ HUMAN RIGHTS ESSAY PRIZE** is in the memory of a cherished member of the University of Chicago community who led a life

of fierce commitment to the human values of democracy, social justice, and service among the poor, the voiceless and the dispossessed. Ignacio Martín-Baró Prize Committee, Pick Hall 105, 5828 South University Avenue, Chicago, IL 60637. Website: www.uchicago.edu:81/maps/mainquad/pickhall.html.

IGNACIO HALL at Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA, is an undergraduate residence renamed in honor of the memory of the slain Jesuits. The graduate and undergraduate curricula at Boston College also include a variety of courses in which the writings of Ignacio Martín-Baró and his colleagues are prominent resources. Website: www.bc.edu.

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL AMERICA, JOSÉ SIMEON CAÑAS WEBSITE, San Salvador, El Salvador. The website of the UCA honors the memory of the murdered Jesuits with a hypertext link titled "Nuestros Mártires" (Our Martyrs). This section of the website offers biographical information on each of the priests along with their pictures, significant achievements and publications. Website: www.uca.edu.sv.

WRITINGS FOR A LIBERATION PSYCHOLOGY: IGNACIO MARTÍN-BARÓ, Edited by Adrienne Aron and Shawn Corne (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994). This volume makes available to English readers twelve original articles by Martín-Baró ranging in topic from the politics of psychology to war and trauma to the 'de-ideologizing' of reality. The book also includes the most extensive bibliography of Martín-Baró's writing available in English.

BROCKMAN ROMERO PAPERS, Special Collections and

Archives, The DePaul University Library. This historical collection about Oscar Romero, Archbishop of San Salvador, El Salvador from February 1977 until his murder on March 24, 1980, was generated by Rev. James R. Brockman, S.J. Part 2 contains "Research of the Six Jesuit Murders and Martyrdom in El Salvador" including commentary about Ignacio Martín-Baró. The DePaul University Library, 2350 North Kenmore Ave., Chicago, IL 60614. Phone: (773) 325-7864; Fax: (773) 325-7869; Website: www.lib.depaul.edu/speccoll/index.htm.

THE JESUIT MARTYRS OF EL SALVADOR: A RESEARCH GUIDE, was developed to aid students in conducting research on the lives and work of the six Jesuit priests. Saint Peters College Library, St. Peter's College, Hackney Road, St. Peters SA 5069, Adelaide, Australia. Website: www.stpeters.sa.edu.au/home.htm.

XXVII CONGRESS OF THE INTERAMERICAN SOCIETY OF PSYCHOLOGY, June 8, 1999, Caracas, Venezuela. This Society, in which Ignacio had an outstanding presence from 1985 until his untimely death, had a symposium commemorating the 10th anniversary of his murder. The symposium was coordinated by Amalio Blanco, from Spain, and the panel included Tod Sloan (USA), Ignacio Dobles (Costa Rica), and Maritza Montero (Venezuela).

II INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF LIBERATION SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY, November 13-15, 1999, Universidad Centroamericana José Simeon Cañas, San Salvador, El Salvador. A follow-up to a similar Congress in Mexico last year, the Congress will focus on what is happening in the field based on the work of Martín-Baró, Freire, and others. The Congress will end with a

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by *Silvina Moncho*

The civil war that raged in Guatemala for three decades left communities and villages destroyed. Chajul, a small isolated Mayan village within the Ixil area, was deeply affected by the war. Many people in the community were forced into exile or killed. The war served to exacerbate the extreme poverty, malnutrition and high infant mortality rates that affected Chajul. Women and children especially suffered social, economic, educational and cultural marginalization.

Over the years, a grassroots

organization of Mayan women from Chajul, known as the Association of Maya Ixil Women, has established programs to promote the well-being and development of the community. The women – widowed, married and single – gather to find solutions to the social problems of Chajul, particularly those related to gender issues, mental health, the development of women and children, and human rights.

With support from the Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund, the Association was able to successfully establish a community run corn mill, a small store providing basic goods and yarn at reasonable prices, a revolving loan fund and a Center of Education and Formation of Mayan Children. The Association has also conducted workshops on mental health, the peace process, and organization and decision-making skills.

In March 1999, two of the founding women of the Association, Isabel Ana Laynez and Ana Caba Mateo, came to the United States to share in person their experiences and accomplishments. Despite the peace accords – signed in December of 1996 – terror and fear have continued to be present in Chajul, silencing many voices from telling their stories. To

begin to heal the deep wounds of the community, the Association began documenting through photographs the experiences and daily life of the people of the community. Through both taking the photographs and discussing them, the women were able to begin expressing their suffering as a community. This activity developed into a community research project, which includes analyzing the photographs and then selecting and documenting the emotional, developmental, political, and economic themes that emerge.

During a talk presented at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, Laynez and Caba showed some of the photographs from their project and told the story of their small village. They said that at first the women were shy about taking pictures and many of the early photographs were of the backs of peoples' heads and shoulders. Over time, however, they explained how the women gained confidence and developed a sense of empowerment from the stories being told through their work.

After the presentation, Laynez discussed future goals and projects of the Association. They would like to buy a location from which to work, since as it is now, they pay high rent for a space. They also would like the women from surrounding villages to participate more in the Association. Caba spoke about establishing a health clinic for women and children, since many children are born in the street and access to health care is very limited. Finally, they described the Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund as a fountain from which the women of Chajul can make better lives for themselves and for the community. ♦

THE LEGACY SURVIVES continued from page 4

midnight vigil in remembrance of Ignacio and the others killed at the UCA ten years ago. Contact: Mauricio Gaborit, S. J. Phone: (503) 273-4400 Ext. 394. Email: gaboritm@buho.uca.edu.sv. Conference email: congreso@buho.uca.edu.sv. Conference website: <http://www.uca.edu.sv>.

This list includes only a small sampling of work spawned by the life and commitments of Ignacio Martín-Baró. We would like to expand its coverage and invite readers to send us descriptions of their own activities or others with which they are familiar that also constitute Ignacio's legacy. We will on occasion include some of these projects in future issues of *The Just Word*. See mailing address on the last page of this newsletter or email: liem@bc.edu. ♦

Editor: Patricia Goudvis. *Contributors:* Adrienne Aron, Joan Liem, Ramsay Liem, Brinton Lykes, Silvina Moncho, Jon Sobrino, S.J., Laura Wald. *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!*

PROJECT SUMMARY: PROJECTS FUNDED IN 1999

by Laura Wald

THE PHILIPPINES



A \$7000 grant will fund the Children's Rehabilitation Center for the third time. The CRC will continue work with children who have been affected by military violence and other human rights violations, helping them move from expression of distress towards active participation in advocating for human rights. A collective of children at the Center will participate in workshops and training on children's rights issues. They will then plan and implement outreach activities to raise awareness of other children in the urban poor community.

The Overseas Filipino Workers Resource and Service Center, Inc. will receive a grant for \$5000. Many Filipinos have been compelled to work outside their country to survive financially; abuse by their employers has been documented at increasing rates. This grant will fund training and education about employee and human rights, and provide legal assistance to OCW returnees who were victimized by their employers overseas. The group will also provide counseling to help returning workers recover from abuses they have experienced.

KYRGYZSTAN

The Sezim NGO will receive \$6975 from the Fund. Domestic violence is currently accepted by the culture and the authorities in this country, which is struggling with an economic crisis, high unemployment, and resulting feelings of frustration and helplessness. With this grant, Sezim will provide group therapy, education, and legal advice to lower class women who are victims of violence. Discussion groups will meet regularly to talk about violence against women as a social problem and encourage movement toward social change.

TANZANIA

A grant for \$6500 will fund Solidarité des Femmes de Fizi pour le Bien-Être Familial (SOFIBEF), a group which seeks to address sexual abuse in a volatile border region of Tanzania. Women in the area are often sexually assaulted by local armed forces and forced prostitution is a recognized problem. SOFIBEF will create a community-based program of women activists in five villages. These women will provide legal advocacy and organize community outreaches to educate both men and women about violence against women and women's rights.



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

The Movimiento de Mujeres Dominicano-Haitiana (MUDHA) will receive \$7000 from the Fund. This money will support clinics for Haitian migrant workers on sugar plantations who work with few rights and virtually no access to medical or mental health care. The clinics will offer medical services, workshops on common health concerns and traditional herbal treatments, and raise awareness in the community about the conditions under which Haitian workers are living. MUDHA will also offer counseling, as well as cultural workshops aimed at increasing the self-esteem and sense of identity of Haitian workers.

GUATEMALA



The Center for Indigenous Studies and Education (CEEI) will receive a third grant from the Fund for \$7000. They will use the money to educate and inform younger generations about the findings of the Truth Commission, especially young indigenous people whose communities were directly affected by the violence. In doing so, the CEEI aims to create and empower indigenous leaders to contribute to the restructuring of society, including defending human rights and strengthening community organizations.

EL SALVADOR

Immediately prior to the 10th anniversary of the assassination of Martín-Baró, the Universidad Centroamericana "José Simeon Cañas" (UCA), where Martín-Baró taught, will host the Second International Congress of Social Psychology of Liberation. This 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. A \$2500 grant from the Fund will be used to support student attendance at the Congress. ♦

MARTÍN-BARÓ FUND IN THE SPOTLIGHT

by Laura Wald

Thanks to everyone who wrote us after reading the article in *Parade Magazine* (February 28, 1999) mentioning the Martín-Baró Fund. We received a number of letters and donations in response and we would like to recognize one in particular. The letter came from a teacher named Janet Bralove of the First Unitarian Church in Rhode Island and reads as follows:

Our fifth grade class was very impressed by an article in Parade Magazine. We want to donate money we have earned to help the world by asking you to use it to help young people scarred by war and violence. We like the idea of young people helping each other and themselves. We have a lot of respect for all involved in this work, especially young people. Please send some information about your organization so next year's class can consider sending more.

Sincerely, Janet Bralove - teacher

Thanks to everyone who wrote us and sent donations and especially to the fifth grade class of the First Unitarian Church in Rhode Island for your generosity! ♦

1999 COMMEMORATIVE EVENT

This year's Annual Martín-Baró Fund Commemorative Event honored Father Roy Bourgeois, whose tireless and courageous efforts to shut down the School of the Americas in Ft. Benning, Georgia – where Salvadoran military personnel responsible for killing the Jesuits and many others were trained – have landed him in jail several times. See the Spring issue of *The Just Word* for details.



COMING SOON: IGNACIO MARTÍN-BARÓ FUND WEBSITE

Look for information on how to find the Martín-Baró Fund web page on the Funding Exchange site at www.FEX.org.

JOIN OUR COMMITTEE

If you live in the Boston area, we need you! The Martín-Baró Fund is run by a volunteer committee of about a dozen people who meet monthly. We decide on which projects to fund; put out the newsletter twice a year; organize events and do lots more. If you would like to get involved or just have a few hours to help out now and then or a special skill we might be able to use, please email us at pgoudvis@igc.org or liem@bc.edu.



MISSION STATEMENT

The Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund fosters psychological well-being, social consciousness, and active resistance in communities affected by violence, repression, and social injustice. Through grants, networking and technical support, the Fund works in partnership with grassroots projects that promote progressive social change.

To achieve this mission the Fund has articulated the following goals:

- ◆ Develop a holistic perspective for understanding the individual in community, through support of innovative projects that explore the power of the community. The purpose of the Fund is not to support individual therapy, but rather to support communities to heal their wounds collectively, and to move forward as a community. Funding for such projects has generally been overlooked by foundations, despite the fact that rebuilding the emotional mental health of the community is integral to economic and structural development.
- ◆ Develop social consciousness about the psychological consequences of violence, repression and social injustice within the United States.
- ◆ Build collaborative partnerships between grantees and grantors that mutually educate and empower partners toward building community.



“Within the context of this project, mental health is defined as helping to develop social consciousness about the psychological consequences of the violence, repression and social injustice perpetrated against women by political-administrative authorities of the state and helping the victims of this state sponsored violence achieve tranquility.”

– Solidarité des Femmes de Fizi pour le Bien-Être Familial,
Kigoma, Tanzania



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