

THE JUST WORD



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

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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.

FEATURE ARTICLE: THE PHILIPPINES

by Laura Wald and Natoschia Scruggs

In the fall of 1998, Martín-Baró Fund Committee consultant, Natoschia Scruggs, visited two projects in the Philippines supported by the Fund.

The Children's Rehabilitation Center and the Women's Development Center were both founded in response to government-led economic oppression of small businesses and farmers. The government is using military force to support multinational corporations in economic development activities, such as extensive logging and mining. These increased military operations have sometimes involved forced dislocation of Filipino families from their homes and violent property demolitions to clear land for tourist developments and golf courses. Resistance to these policies has met with further government violence, especially in the countryside. The military is suspected of being responsible for several murders of peasant organizers, and soldiers in occupied areas have reportedly threatened



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and sexually assaulted local women. Many children have been orphaned and dislocated as well.

Natoschia was met in Manila by members of the Children's Rehabilitation Center (CRC), and taken to see their project. She met with the group at their new location, a spacious split-level home converted into office space. The atmosphere was warm and comfortable; children were running around playing games, and the "housekeeper" had her toddler daughter at work with her. The child was affectionately passed around while everyone gathered to have a home-cooked meal together.

The CRC is especially concerned about the effects of state-sponsored violence and destruction on Filipino children's physical and psychological health. With their grant from the Martín-Baró Fund, the Center is conducting fact-finding missions in six communities to document human rights violations, especially against children. The CRC passes on the information they gather to the media in order to generate public awareness.

Bim-Bim De la Paz, Deputy Director of the CRC, noted that such missions can be dangerous: "Last year members of the military

watched over us while we were doing an activity with the children. The presence of uniformed soldiers intimidated the children and they refused to speak. We had to speak to the soldiers because they would not leave and demanded to know



what we were talking about. They even demanded to see our permits, but then they backed off."

The children who come to the CRC are between eight and 18 years old. Many have been active in political demonstrations. They participate in week-long workshops where they learn about Filipino history and receive life skills training through visual arts and presentations. Activities focus on helping the children release deep feelings through creative activities or games. The children especially love theater presentations and have presented skits in protest rallies on human rights issues.

One girl, Erin, who is 14 years old, talked about her fears about where her family will live and how

they will survive. It bothers her that hard-working citizens are being driven away and treated like squatters. She says that everything is being done to accommodate foreigners, while most Filipinos feel insecure because they realize that they can be driven away by demolition crews at any time.

The Women's Development Center (WDC) was established in the context of military occupation, violence, and forced relocations associated with a development plan called "Bohol 2003," which stands to deplete further the already poverty-stricken area of Bohol. The area has been declared a watershed, and water will be transferred to a nearby area to be used in the development and maintenance of a golf course and new five-star hotel. An area called 'Chocolate Hills,' one of great natural beauty and local pride, will be mined by three companies.

With our grant, the WDC has funded a rehabilitation program for orphans whose parents have been killed in this struggle, or who are engaged in underground resistance to military and economic oppression. Sixty-seven children ages seven to 12 years old participate in WDC programs. Some have been injured in the crossfire or seen others injured or killed. Many are very malnourished, so WDC gives them food and holds community

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COMMITTEE MEMBER PROFILE: JESSICA WOL-SAN LIEM

by Jennifer Yul-San Liem



Jessica Liem is currently finishing her last semester at Columbia

University, concentrating in Anthropology and American History. She has been a constant supporter of the Martín-Baró Fund and an active member since her high school years. Since she has been in New York her support has, by necessity, been more in spirit than in deed.

It's seven-thirty PM on a Thursday night. The subways sweat the cold sweat of a mid-winter rush hour and Jes' head is filled with the words of the meeting she has just attended. Her body, in contradiction, anticipates the motions of the job she is rushing to do. Jessica Wol-San Liem is a twenty-one year old activist, bartender, and student on the verge of completing her fourth year at Columbia University. On this particular night she is in transition between her first and second identities - her thesis will have to wait as both CAAAV and Nacho Mama's Kitchen and Bar occupy her attention.

Jes is traveling from the Lower Eastside office of the Committee Against AntiAsian Violence. CAAAV is a pan-Asian grassroots NGO that organizes in low-income immigrant Asian communities in Manhattan and surrounding boroughs. Its projects operate on

the understanding that certain groups of people are subjected to systematic violence on the basis of classifications such as race, gender, immigration status, language ability, and socio-economic status. The exploitation of these groups is intimately tied to the preservation of white cultural hegemony and the protection of those who defend the interests of capital.

Jes sees classifications such as these as historical constructions without absolute reality. "We create our own world out of emptiness," she tells her employers and customers at Nacho Mama's, the bar where she works. "We are and have always been empty of 'own-being,' of an individual, autonomous self." This sort of emptiness is a concept, embedded in Buddhist philosophy, which Jes finds useful in understanding the development and use of racial, gender, and class distinctions. From initial emptiness - the primordial, undistinguished nature of all sentient beings - we begin to differentiate self and other, taking some characteristics and traits as our own, and assigning different ones to the 'other.' Historically, humanity's creative and constructive abilities have led to the differentiation of people by race, gender, socio-economic status and the like, and to the reification of these categories as essential, unchangeable facts of our world. This kind of reification, Jes asserts, has been used to validate exploitation and subjugation of the "other" in order to affirm the "self," and does so to

a heightened degree within modern capitalist societies. Jes says, "In order to stimulate social change, we must use our creative powers to re-imagine these categories without the invidious distinction of inferior/superior, and in a way that lessens the conditions that provoke violence. This may mean imagining and actively forcing some statuses (like class) into 'non-existence'."

CAAAV, Jes explains, uses reified categories as a tool in fighting oppression which is based on them. It is important, she says, to acknowledge that we have constructed a world in which the livelihood of some groups is based on violence directed against others. However, she warns, reinforcing distinctions like race often leads to targeting the "other" as fundamentally evil. Such barriers must ultimately be broken down. How can this be done? Jes now studies history in order to understand the constructive processes of the past that have brought us to where we are today. In a few months she will leave her role as "student." She hopes that, in time, she will experience its complement, that of the teacher, and have the opportunity to teach those who may ultimately be the ones to understand the relativity and destructive force of essentialist notions of race, gender, and socio-economic status.

Acknowledging the part we play in perpetuating systematic violence is not enough to motivate change. Intellectual

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COMMITTEE MEMBER PROFILE: JESSICA WOL-SAN LIEM

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commitment to positive change without human connection and compassion cannot be sustained; connection is what ultimately leads spontaneously to the desire to erase distinctions between self and “other” and the drive for personal gain at the expense of the “other.” Thus, Jes believes, we must have the courage to bring new truths into social and interpersonal relationships as she attempts to do at Nacho Mama’s, an Upper Westside kitchen and bar that serves elephant-sized burritos and specialty beers to

Columbia students and neighborhood residents.

Just another minor cog in the larger economic scheme, the restaurant is, nonetheless, a space where connection can flow at times, softly as water. Perhaps it is simply a gifted space; but somehow, amidst the mixing of Margaritas, busing of tables and ordering of black beans and burritos, compassion appears among the people who work there. What does that mean? Jes says at moments, workers and regulars recognize an underlying beauty that lies beneath social distinctions and leads them to spontaneously care for each

others’ needs and desires. This is community for Jes — where desire to do for others outweighs desire to affirm the self. It hints at possibility, Jes thinks, ...the possibility of extending community to all living beings.

What does Jes want to do in the coming years? Read, she says, and develop compassion. She plans to stay connected with CAAAV and the restaurant, to stay connected with those she loves. However, “maybe,” she says, “I’ll get fed up with being forced to take part in a capitalist society and just go into the woods to throw pots.” ♦

FEATURE ARTICLE: THE PHILIPPINES

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clinics to address epidemics like diarrhea. The WDC also holds community dialogues because kids



are seen as offspring of rebels; some consider the children’s parents as trouble-makers and the children feel the brunt of community hostilities.

This program also gives school supplies to children so that they

can go to school, since many of them cannot afford the necessary utensils (paper, erasers, pens) that they need. Creative arts and theater projects are vehicles for children to express and share their feelings, and to see that they are not alone as they hear about other children’s similar experiences. The WDC also rents half a house in an urban poor area in which families can stay overnight when the group has gatherings, or when relatives are in the hospital. Orphans who are being served by these programs expressed surprise and pleasure that people halfway around the world know and care

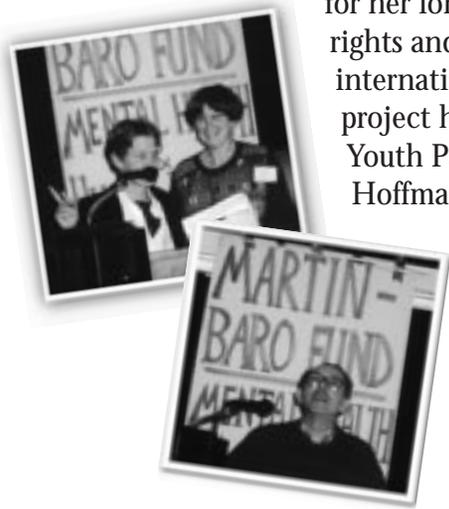
about them, and want to help them in their struggle.

Both projects are deeply committed to goals in keeping with the Fund’s mission: they foster psychological well-being, social and political consciousness, and active resistance in communities struggling with government-sponsored violence and economic oppression. Through their work with children, they involve families and communities in these efforts, while providing psychological support and avenues for activism for traumatized and orphaned youth. ♦

RECENT EVENTS: ANNUAL MARTÍN-BARÓ FUND COMMEMORATIVE EVENT

by Lisa Jackson & Ramsay Liem

The Annual Martín-Baró Fund Commemoration was held October 29, 1998, at the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, MA. Catherine B. Hoffman, Director of the Cambridge Peace Commission, was honored for her long-time commitment to human rights and social justice, locally and internationally. An especially important project highlighted in the evening was the Youth Peace and Justice Corps founded by Hoffman. The corps is a multicultural group of youth organizers in Cambridge which addresses issues of racism, sexism, and homophobia.



The evening began with a welcome by Fund Committee member and founder, M. Brinton Lykes, followed by commemorative comments eloquently delivered by

Reverend Doctor Joan Martin of the Episcopal Divinity School.

The featured speaker for the evening was Jon Sobrino, S.J., Professor of Theology at the University of Central America (UCA) in El Salvador. Father Sobrino was a Jesuit brother of Ignacio Martín-Baró at the UCA who would also have been assassinated had he not been away on a trip at the time of the murders. His presentation, entitled “The Work of Justice,” reminded us of the breadth of work and commitment of Ignacio and the conditions of state repression with which he had to contend. Father Sobrino’s words and presence brought to life the spirit and dedication of Ignacio in a most tangible and special way.

Sol Y Canto and Dean Stevens provided musical entertainment throughout the evening. Colleagues and friends of Cathy Hoffman, including Michael Goodridge, Tri Phuong, and Roberto Vásquez, offered their congratulations to the award recipient and spoke forcefully about her many contributions to their lives. Fund Committee member, Catherine M. Mooney, then presented the commemorative award.

The evening was profoundly moving. One guest commented that the event was like a reunion of old friends who had not seen each

“It becomes necessary to record, in quantity and quality, the magnitude of the harm produced by the counter-insurgency campaigns and by state repression, in order to understand the deception of wanting to erase this history and start afresh. The past that we so joyfully wish to seal up is not only alive in individuals and groups — victims and victimizers — but continues to operate in the very social structures.”

— Ignacio Martín-Baró

other in a long time, yet who continued to share the sense of urgency in acting on behalf of the struggles for social justice that we shared with Ignacio. The members of the Martín-Baró Fund Committee thank everyone who attended the event and the many others who contributed financially and in spirit. We look forward to seeing all of you again next year, and, hopefully, sooner. ♦

*Editor: Brian Murphy. Assistant Editors: Candace Anderson, Lisa Jackson, Jennifer Yul-San Liem, Joan Liem, Ramsay Liem, Catherine Mooney, Natoscha Scruggs, and Laura Wald. Letters, inquiries, contributions, etc. can be sent to: **The 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!*

by Candace Anderson

The psychological effects of trauma and torture remain long after the events that produced them. Victims of state-sponsored violence who emigrate inevitably find that they have carried their trauma with them. Symptoms of post-traumatic stress syndrome include nightmares, an exaggerated startle response, heightened defense system or sense of fear, and flashbacks. The most common initial response to these symptoms is denial. However, the effects of trauma and torture continue to disturb the survivor in one way or another—in violence within or outside the home, substance abuse, or, most often, isolation

from family, and personal suffering. The sense that no one can understand what the survivor has endured or that the survivor cannot speak of trauma and torture to his or her children, who may have been spared the same horrors, perpetuates this sense of isolation. Women who have been raped have a particularly difficult time with marriage and family relationships.

Advocates for Survivors of Trauma and Torture (ASTT) is an organization in Baltimore, Maryland, that seeks to address the mental health needs of immigrant survivors of state-sponsored violence. ASTT was founded by a diverse group of health care professionals, who had each lived for some time in El

Salvador and Cambodia. Their experiences of translating survivor testimony and witnessing repression led them to create an organization in the States that would begin to address the need for deep healing through clinical psychotherapeutic treatment.

In addressing community mental health needs, ASTT is affiliated with El Centro de la Comunidad (CDCL), a grass-roots organization that links service organizations with the Hispanic community of Baltimore. Most survivors originally referred to ASTT by asylum lawyers and by physicians were from Central and South America. However, in the last year alone, ASTT has also

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WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

Each organization that applies to the Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund for support is asked to define mental health in the context of its work. Here are several of the definitions of mental health offered by the organizations that received funding from IMBF this past year:

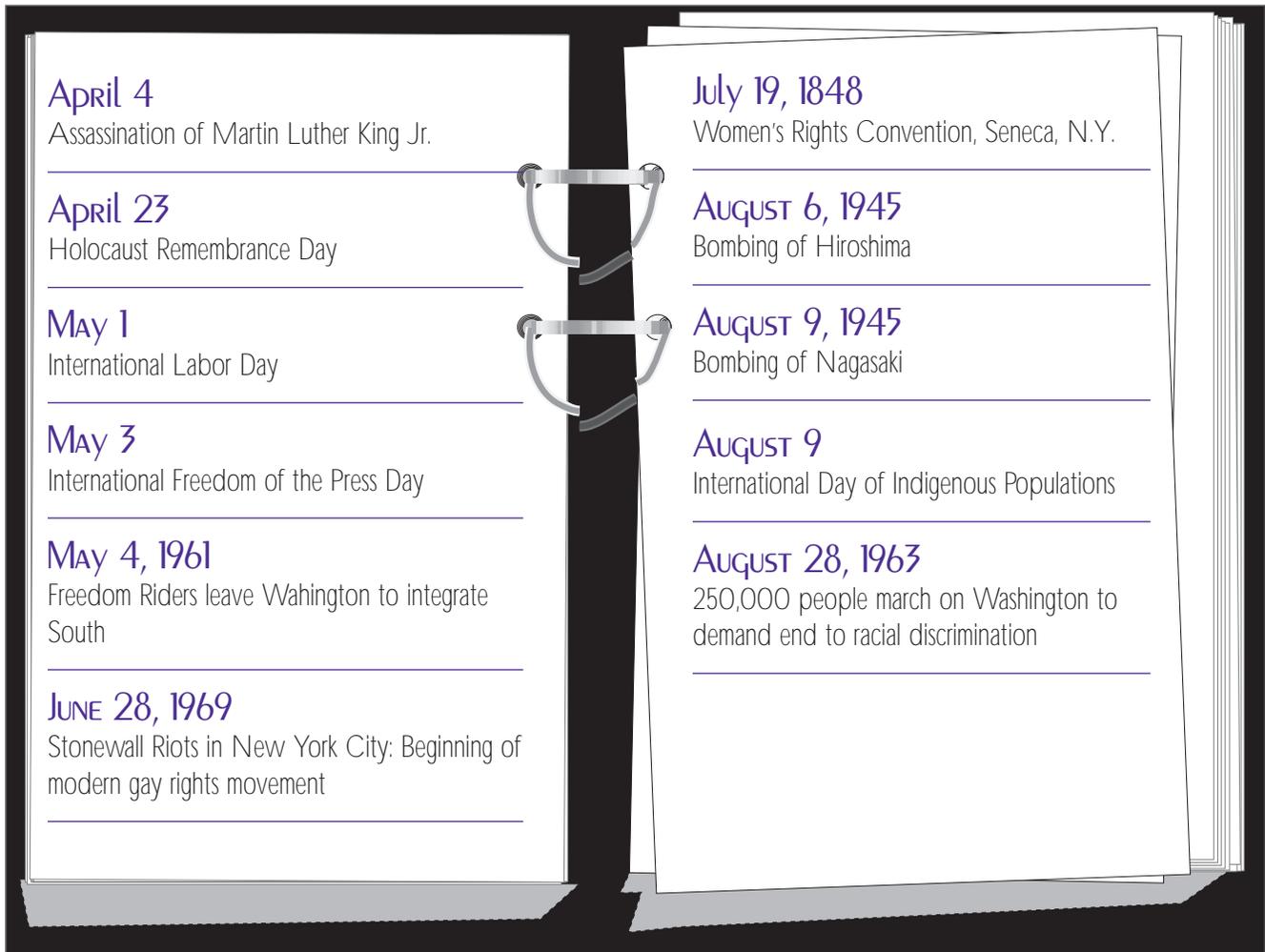
The Hopi Foundation received funding for its Center for the Prevention and Resolution of Violence which offers educational, health, and violence prevention projects for Central American Indian refugees in southern Arizona.

“Qa Tutsawinvu” is a Hopi concept of undoing a state of physical, emotional, or psychological threat; a state of maintaining positiveness in order to overcome and remain unintimidated by fear from any source. The worlds of those who have confronted violence have been “unmade.” Thoughts and values, hopes and dreams, expectations of dignity and respect have been violated. Violence and cruelty shatter the integrity and meaning of relationships among individuals, families, and communities. Restoring mental health requires developing local leadership and facilitating outcomes based upon the strengths inherent within specific cultures.”

The Quebec Committee for the Recognition of the Rights of Haitian Workers in the Dominican Republic is a Canadian organization that works for social and political change in order to improve the quality of life and defend the human rights of Haitian workers in the Dominican Republic.

“We believe that the mental health of the community is contingent upon the respect of human rights and human dignity, as well as a sense of cultural and social identity. None of these is possible without the

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April 4

Assassination of Martin Luther King Jr.

April 23

Holocaust Remembrance Day

May 1

International Labor Day

May 3

International Freedom of the Press Day

May 4, 1961

Freedom Riders leave Washington to integrate South

JUNE 28, 1969

Stonewall Riots in New York City: Beginning of modern gay rights movement

July 19, 1848

Women's Rights Convention, Seneca, N.Y.

AUGUST 6, 1945

Bombing of Hiroshima

AUGUST 9, 1945

Bombing of Nagasaki

AUGUST 9

International Day of Indigenous Populations

AUGUST 28, 1963

250,000 people march on Washington to demand end to racial discrimination

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served survivors from Congo, Liberia, Togo, Chad, Somalia, Cameroon, Guinea, Iran. Meeting the needs of people from such diverse countries has proven to be a challenge. Because ASTT has no political agenda, and is committed to serving all survivors of torture, the organization is currently seeking physical space in Baltimore that will be considered “neutral territory” by all those who seek a safe space in which to begin the process of healing.

In its third year of funding

from the Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund, the founding members of ASTT continue to cultivate a sociocentric approach to working with survivors, exemplified by the life and works of Fr. Martín-Baró. For Executive Director Karen Hanscom, this sometimes takes the form of training mental health promoters — ‘Promotores de Salud Mental’— in Central and South America, on issues related to post-traumatic stress syndrome.

Hanscom has written a manual for community mental

health and has developed networks with other centers for survivorship in Minneapolis, San Francisco, and New York City. The scattered nature of immigrant communities in Baltimore presents obstacles to this work. However, dedicated health care professionals and others, including artists and home makers trained as mental health promoters, are working with ASTT to help survivors to heal, to piece together lives that have been fragmented by state - sponsored violence. ♦

REPORT ON NEW PROJECT/S: continued from page 6

recognition of legal status, the provision of basic health and social services, and the recognition of the rights of Haitians as workers. . . . The lack of human rights has deleterious effects on. . . self-esteem, the capacity to form healthy relationships, and the capacity to build structures as a community to address collective needs or to work for social and political rights.”

Cunamh’s Health and Political Conflict Project in Derry, Northern Ireland offers services to relatives of people murdered by the state to enable them to explore and understand their feelings in relation to past traumatic experiences and

maximize their potential both as individuals and members of their communities to actively negotiate new routes for social change.

“People’s mental health is related to how valued they feel within personal relationships and within society as a whole. People subjected to emotional or physical violence are likely to experience a crisis of confidence and feelings of depression and fear. This may be most severe when the experience is not openly acknowledged and an image of normality is presented to the outside world.”

ECAP, Equipo de Estudios Comunitarios y Acción Psicosocial (Community Studies and Psychological Action Team) works to bring about the

psychosocial restoration and re-establishment of individuals, social groups, and communities in Guatemala who have suffered from years of state — sponsored political violence and repression.

“Mental health is not. . . the absence of symptoms nor the absence of human conflicts, but rather the healthy development of the whole person engaged in the progressive growth of his or her human capacities to reflect, to feel, and to love. Mental health cannot be related to a person in isolation from his or her immediate environment. It is fundamentally connected with the social processes of a society or group within a determined moment in time.” ♦

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