THE JUST WORD

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

Volume IX No. 1

A Project of The Funding Exchange

Spring 2003

MBF Grantees Speak about Terrorism

By Ramsay Liem, M. Brinton Lykes, and Maria De Jesus

Many U.S. citizens discovered terrorism on September 11, 2001. The attacks on that day, however, do not exhaust the many uses of terror as a political weapon to which others have been subjected.

In the Fall, 2001 issue of <u>The Just Word</u>, we published expressions of solidarity sent to us after the 9/11 tragedies by MBF grantees. Since many of them live and work with survivors of terror and trauma, we asked them help us deepen our understanding of terrorism and put into perspective the self-serving rhetoric of the Bush administration that calls on citizens to "defend freedom and all that is good and just in our world" (9/11/01) and proclaims that "either you are for us, or you are with the terrorists" (9/20/01). Here are our grantees' comments on terrorism:



Boston, March 2003

AMUSAMECO (San Salvador, El Salvador)

Te believe that terrorism is any act or failure to act, wittingly or not, that threatens the physical, emotional or social integrity of people or communities.... Terrorism is not limited to what the media would have us believe. It includes not only attacks that destroy physical structures such as bridges, roads, and buildings. Rather, it ...creates genuine disarray in people's consciousness, experience, perception, and behavior.

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Slum Development Society (Chennai, India)

Terrorism has many faces and we in India are experiencing it now in different shapes and forms. For example, the recent order of the Tamil Nadu government making (religious) conversion an illegal and punishable offence is an act against human rights and individual freedom. It is directed solely against the Christian and Muslim minorities.... In India there is also the curse of racism. The upper caste never allows the lower castes to come up in life; they are mistreated and discriminated against in every walk of life. This shows utter disregard for human values and rights and is another face of terrorism. Even now, cruelties are committed against Dalits in every part of the country....

REMHI (Guatemala)

...terrorism can go under various names and have various causes: fun-



Boston, March 2003

damentalisms, politics, ideologies, religions or even economics....
When terrorism acquires state dimensions, the consequences are fatal....
In Guatemala we have the sad experience of 36 years of war, not precisely a war,... but rather (state repres-



New York, February 2003

sion) with more than 2 million victims, including non-combatant civilians.... The significance of this situation is not its momentary impact, but the long term impact that obliges Guatemalans to live in a climate of terror, fear, and distrust.

...With sadness, we point out that among those directly or indirectly responsible for this violence are transnationals, including the well-known United Fruit Company, and the U.S. CIA military intervention and anti-communist training. This aspect of our history is hard to accept because it makes the U.S. an accomplice in the generalized violence and terror we experience.

Since September 11, the definition of terrorism and the struggle against it have been radically transformed into a theme of global domination.... Answering acts of terror and violence with more of the same is an unjust and false solution.

Children's Rehabilitation Center (Philippines)

The word "Terrorism" has been abused especially here in the Philippines. As one of the first to support the Bush campaign against global terrorism, our own President Macapagal-Arroyo's government has been proposing the passage of an Anti-Terrorism Bill which defines terrorism as an "act of violence or threat thereof intended or calculated to provoke a state of terror in the general public, a particular person or a group of persons for political purposes." The phrases "acts of violence" and "state of terror" are ambiguous and open to a variety of interpretations and therefore prone to abuse. An "act of violence" may be construed as any form of militant action. An exercise of an individual or group's right to public assembly to voice grievances may be interpreted as "violent." We are alarmed that the Macapagal-Arroyo government has been overextending the definition of terrorism.

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MBF Grantees Speak about Terrorism continued from page 2

... We are also critical of U.S. President Bush's aggressive stance against Iraq and other countries suspected of having nuclear weapons. Strong, developed and rich countries like the U.S. must not impose themselves on poorer countries in the name of the global war against terrorism. The children we are servicing have gone through the worst forms of terror from the military men who have been engaged in an all out war against the so-called insurgents in the provinces. We fear this will continue and may even intensify as the government pursues its campaign against terrorism. And mostly we fear that the government is not addressing the

basic economic issues of lack of jobs, high prices, unemployment, landlessness and lack of social services.

Terrorism in the experience of our grantees goes far beyond the clichés employed by the Bush administration. Its source is as likely to be internal to the state as an assault from the outside, and a product of entrenched conditions rather than single acts of explosive violence. And its effects are not limited to acute fears. Our grantees speak of cultures of violence, perpetual poverty, and religious and political oppression – the continual denial of the most basic requirements of human dignity.

MBF partners also question the Bush representation of the U.S. as mere victim. They name its government and corporations as accomplices to their experience of terror, past and present. They warn that the very global war against terrorism proclaimed by the current administration threatens the security and welfare of those whom they serve. They challenge us to stand with all innocents targeted by terrorism in its many forms, and to denounce all its causes including the policies and practices of our own government and corporate institutions. This is our understanding of solidarity post 9/11.

Focus on India

RISING ABOVE CASTE - THE SLUM DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY AND INDIA'S DALITS

By Ann Brian Murphy

here are more Dalits in India than there are people in Pakistan. . . . [or] in Brazil . . . They comprise about 16.48 per cent of India's population and their contribution in terms of labor and . . . culture is enormous and significantly larger than their share in the population. What is disproportionately lower relative to their size in the population is their ownership of land and property and their access to education and to employment of a serious, meaningful and gainful nature. . . . the Dalits form the single largest group of agricultural laborers in the country: the landless agricultural laborers . . . of which the majority are women . . . They are the lowest paid section of agrarian society. Their's is a triple burden . . . of class, caste and gender. (Source: www.asiasource.org/asib/dalits.cfm)

The grassroots Slum Development Society (SDS) received its third grant from the Martín-Baró Fund in 2002 to promote job training, cultural aware-



ness, community organizing, and human rights programs to educate the Dalit about their legal rights. This article introduces the vision and activities of this remarkable group offering an important approach to the human rights and mental health work we support.

The Slum Development Society of Chennai (originally Madras) offers educational services and civil rights advocacy to Dalits (formerly "untouchables") in rural villages.

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The Republi	ic of India 🥴 🥸 🐯
Population Dalits	1,025,095,000 - 1,045,845,226 (estimates vary) 16.48 per cent of India's population
Infant Mortality	Male: 89 per 1,000 Female: 98 per 1,000
Life expectancy	Female: 63.93 years Male: 62.55 years
Ethnic Groups	Indo-Aryan 72% Dravidian 25% Mongoloid and other 3%
Religions	Hinduism (82%) Islam (12%) Christianity (2.3%) Sikhism (1.9%) Buddhism (0.8%) Jainism (0.4%)
Languages	17 major languages; 844 dialects. Hindi is the official language; English is widely used.
Labor force	Agriculture 60%

POLITICAL STRUCTURE

Indian Union 28 States and seven centrally administered Union Territories

Form of government Parliamentary, based on universal adult franchise

Services 23% Industry 17%

Male: 65.5%

Female: 37.7%

Legislature Parliament, consists of President and two Houses, the upper house Council of States and

lower house Council of the People

Executive President, Vice-President and Council of Ministers led by the Prime Minister

ECONOMY

Literacy

Gross domestic product \$383 billion US (1998-99)

Population below poverty line 25%

National health expenditure Per capita in international dollars: \$71

As a percent of GDP: 4.9

Sources: High Commission of India (HCI), London; HCI, Singapore; Word Fact Book 2002; World Health Org., all online

According to former MBF staff member Natoschia Scruggs who visited the program in 1999: "Mr.

Divivanathan Benjamin started Slum Development Society in 1987 and it now has two offices, one in Chennai proper and one in a rural village a few hours away. Most of the people they service are in hard-to-reach remote locations. They are undereducated

and often jobless due to scarce employment possibilities." Average daily wages are about 25 to 30 U.S. cents (a kilo of rice costs 30 U.S.¢). She notes further that the 14-member SDS staff (mostly women) has dramatically improved literacy rates.

Mr. Benjamin, a

Dalit himself, explains that from childhood he witnessed, "the sufferings and tribulations [of] the Dalit people...and realized the need of doing something...to serve [his] community." In the years since he began the SDS, with Jesuit support, Mr. Benjamin has done postgraduate work in Sociology and

Human Rights, writing his thesis on

the problems and issues faced by

Dalit communities.

The SDS works out of a tworoom office where, according to Scruggs, the walls were covered with pictures of the people they worked with and hand-drawn maps of their service areas filled with every statistic imaginable - "average family income, age range, health statistics, number of children, literacy rates, religion, etc. This group is serious about whom they are servicing and what the needs of the people are."

One early SDS project was a sixmonth study (later a book) called "The Human Face of the Slum," focusing on 20 villages, examining their problems and proposing solutions. Community members participated by speaking out about issues they wanted addressed and voicing complaints. The staff used street plays to explain, for example, the Dalits'



constitutional legal rights and how to cast a ballot.

For 16 years the SDS has offered literacy, skills and job training to villagers (especially women), run summer camps for kids, a night school for children who work by day to support their families, and provided small loans to women starting businesses. Scruggs notes the library they started in the rural community of the second SDS office: "AIDS awareness programs are very popular there as are other health topics." Mr. Benjamin and invited speakers with backgrounds in social work and psychology conduct these sessions.

Today the SDS is facing a new challenge. The rural villagers of

Chennai have suffered a severe drought due to the failure of the monsoon rains this past year. The SDS is planning to sink five deep bore wells in five villages over the next five years. Each well costs about \$900, an enormous sum by Indian standards. Electric wells are impractical because those living in Dalit villages cannot afford the cost of elec-

> tricity. The new wells will be manually driven. The SDS has applied for financial assistance to the Tamil Nadu Government, but given the intractable caste system, the government is likely to favor other areas over the Dalit villages.

The SDS is also continuing the programs initially funded by the Martín-Baró Fund. Action Groups of young villagers run the night classes for

village children (about 60 girls and 50 boys), provide health awareness and human rights programs in the villages, and organize other villagers for infrastructure repairs neglected because of discrimination against the poverty-stricken Dalit. SDS resource people have run Health Awareness programs for about five hours each month, attended by almost 100 Dalit women who learned about breast cancer, family planning, HIV-AIDS and other STDs. Five Action Groups of 40 people each have been established and trained to look after the health needs of their respective villages. SDS Resource personnel from Chennai visit the villages weekly to monitor and evaluate the work of each Action Group.

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To combat the rising infection rate of AIDS-HIV, the SDS hopes to start a new mass awareness program providing counseling, medical check ups, human rights information and medicine. They will focus on rural areas where illiteracy and lack of awareness compound a situation already made difficult by racism, poverty, inadequate health care, and structural discrimination.

Especially noteworthy in Mr. Benjamin's report to the Martín-Baró Fund is the SDS's campaign with local community members to nomi-

nate a Dalit woman for the post of Panchayet President. The panchayat, consisting of a president and five members, is the basic unit of the democratic system in every Indian village. It implements governmental policies and collects revenues for local services and utilities. Her nomination shook up the majority upper caste Hindus who normally hold the post. Although she finally withdrew her nomination after dire threats, including murder, Mr. Benjamin remarks that "the overall effect was tremendous. There was more confidence in the minds of the people.

and a feeling that sooner or later their dreams would become reality."

Our work with the Slum Development Society reminds us that human rights abuses include both state-sponsored violence, such as we've seen in Central America, and the sorts of economic oppression and state-sanctioned racism suffered by the Dalit. Addressing mental health issues means providing a greater sense of community, economic agency and self-sufficiency, as well as more direct attempts to support emotional and psychological well-being.

Update - SOFIBEF

By Laura Wald

OFIBEF is a grassroots organization that promotes the mental health of women and children who have been victims of human rights violations in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Tanzania. For the last three years, the Martín-Baró Fund has been supporting their work in areas in which ethnic conflict and war have been ongoing since 1998. SOFIBEF reports that 85% of the women they have interviewed in the last year report being victims of sexual violence, including rape by the armed forces, as well as torture, displacement, and the disappearance of family members.

When the Fund first supported SOFIBEF, the organization's primary goal was to train women to lead community workshops and to network between neighboring villages, promoting solidarity among women victims of violence and raising aware-

ness about human rights. Currently, the Fund's resources are being used to visit women victims of violence in five local villages, interview them, and document and report human rights violations. SOFIBEF also helps these women obtain mental health services for the sequelae of these experiences, includ-

ing depression and anxiety, as well as testing and treatment for STD's and HIV. SOFIBEF has also developed a drop-in center where counseling and support are available. Other recent activities include monthly workshops about gender issues, and workshops on children's human rights. Street theater and music are used as educa-



tional tools, along with the publication and distribution of a bimonthly newsletter. Workshops in local villages have increased in number and size, despite the fact that political instability in the region continues and violence against women and children remain significant problems.

School of the Americas Protest, November 2002



by Maria De Jesus

he U.S. Army School of the Americas (SOA), renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHISC) on January 17, 2001, is based in Fort Benning, Georgia. It is here that Latin American soldiers are trained in combat, counter-insurgency, and counter-narcotics campaigns.

Graduates of the SOA are responsible for some of the worst human rights abuses in Latin America. Among the SOA's nearly 60,000 graduates are notorious dictators Manuel

Noriega and Omar Torrijos of Panama, Leopoldo Galtieri and Roberto Viola of Argentina, and Juan Velasco Alvarado of Peru. SOA graduates were also responsible for the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero and the murders of Ignacio Martín-Baró, his Jesuit brothers, and their housekeeper and her daughter. In November 2002, as in previous years, I attended the vigil and nonviolent protest at Fort Benning to close down what many now refer to as the School of Assassins, and to stand in solidarity with the victims of the SOA. Thousands were present - young and

old, singles and families, individuals from different ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds, and from all walks of life. It was a powerful experience to be a part of a collective, sharing a vision of global peace and justice. This year officers at a checkpoint searched every peaceful protester with a metal detector. People shouted, "The arms are not on us, they are on the other side of the

point. You should be searching for arms in the SOA!" Marcher Karl Meyer asserted he should not have to sacrifice his civil liberties in order to exercise

check-

his right to freedom of expression and refused to submit to this search; upon entering the protest site, he was arrested, held overnight, and released on \$1,000 bond. His trial date has not been set.

Another eighty-six activists, young and older, were arrested for trespassing. Forty-nine people were

New Bill Seeks To Close The School of the Americas

n March 13, 2003, Representative Jim McGovern (D-MA) and 49 other Representatives introduced a bill (H.1258) to close the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHISC). The bill, "The Latin America Military Training Review Act of 2003," repeals authority for the SOA/ WHISC and states that no successor school can be opened for at least 10 months. It also demands the establishment of a joint congressional task force to assess U.S. training of Latin American military. Visit the SOA Watch website (www.soaw.org) to find out your Representative's position on this bill.

sentenced to prison and more than 30 others received probation and/or house arrest. Together they were fined over \$39,000 and required to serve over 6000 hours of community service. Updates on trials are posted at www.soaw.org.

The juxtaposition of the humanity of the defendants and the harshness of the court exposes the kind of struggle involved in closing the School of Assassins and speaking out against the policies it represents.

THE JUST WORd.

2003 GRANTEES

Asociación de la Mujer Maya Ixil (ADMI), Chajul, Guatemala, \$7000 👫



The Association of Maya Ixil Women works to organize community-based educational, economic development, and psychosocial projects for the women and youth of five Mayan communities who have suffered from the armed



conflict of the past decades. Through workshops and training in these villages, ADMI encourages participants to: 1) discuss the origins of the war, 2) understand the impact of the war on mental health, 3) analyze the condition of women in Guatemala, and 4) develop projects to meet psychosocial needs.

In 2003 the association will continue to support healing and improved mental health through specially targeted workshops designed to break the silence and open a space for women and youth to express their feelings about what life was like during the war. These meetings will also use the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as an important frame of reference for these discussions.

Asociación Mujeres en Adovo Para La Salud Mental COMUNITARIA (AMUSAMECO), SAN SALVADOR, El Salvador, \$7,000

AMUSAMECO (Women's Association for Community Mental Health) conducts weekly meetings with women in five poor and marginalized communities who are struggling with the devastating consequences of El Salvador's long civil war and of two earthquakes in 2001. Trained mental health workers facilitate meetings in which women share experiences and learn about basic human rights related to healthcare, education, employment, and housing. They also focus

on specific women's issues such as gender equality and the right to protection against violence. The project aims to empower women and increase their self-esteem.

AMUSAMECO has had much success in developing women leaders and incorporating young women into their Coordinating Committee. In 2003, they will continue this work as well as expand the project to other communities. They will also hold parallel meetings with young adults aged 12 to 18 years.

MADRE/Wangki Luhpia, North Atlantic Coast, Nicaragua, \$7,000

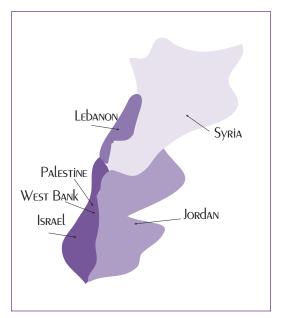


Nicaragua's predominantly rural North Atlantic Coast has been devastated by decades of war, government neglect, and U.S.-driven economic policies that have undermined local economies and traditional ways of life. For 2003, the MBF will be partnering with MADRE, an international women's human rights organization, to support Harvesting Hope, a project of Wangki Luhpia. The Fund will provide approximately half the budget of Harvesting Hope, which seeks to alleviate depression, trauma, and a pervasive sense of powerlessness among the people of two indigenous Miskito communities. This project will provide both agricultural and human rights training as well as seeds and livestock to families in these communities, in order to increase their self-sufficiency and ensure sustainable access to food, while also strengthening local indigenous women's organizations and empowering them to exercise the full range of their human rights.

2003 Grantees

Ibdaa Cultural Center – Dheisheh Refugee Camp, Bethlehem, West Bank, Palestine, \$7,000





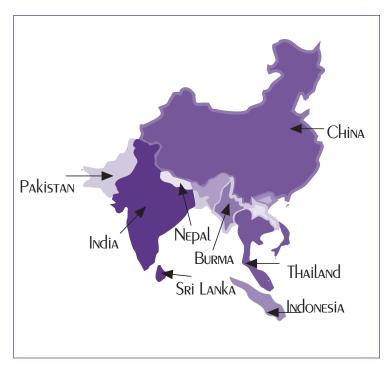
Dheisheh is one of the 59 Palestinian refugee camps established after the expulsion of more than 750,000 Palestinians following the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. Since the beginning of the second Intifada in September 2002, unemployment has skyrocketed and Dheisheh has been the site of intense Israeli military assaults, including numerous invasions by tanks and shelling by Apache helicopters. Political instability and violence, compounded by daily obstacles under the occupation, have had a profoundly negative impact on the children whose lives are defined by curfews, demonstrations, and funerals.

The Ibdaa Cultural Center was established to enable children to participate in activities that nurture their talents and creativity. The MBF grant will support counseling services, workshops (music, art, creative writing, and drama), and other therapeutic activities for the children of Dheisheh, particularly those with family members killed or imprisoned since the start of the Intifada. It will also provide mental health workshops for parents and other adult volunteers working with children and youth.

Burmese Refugee Project, Thailand, \$2,500

The Burmese Refugee Project works with Shan refugees who have fled persecution by the military junta in Burma, and are now living in camps in Thailand. Many of the Shan, who have survived rape or torture, and have seen family members murdered in Burma, suffer from nightmares, depression, and loss of the will to live. As a result, some refugees have turned to drugs, and family violence, once rare, has become a problem. The Shan are not eligible for refugee status, and thus cannot enter UN refugee camps. They are liable to deportation by the Thai government.

The project we are funding is run by two collegeeducated Thai social workers who employ a participatory model of community development, providing social support and overseeing the educational needs of Shan children. Services include group cognitive therapy, literacy classes, and health and emergency management workshops. The goals of the project are to support participants in envisioning a future demo-



cratic Burma, creating a supportive, participatory, and prosperous community, preserving Shan cultural values, and reclaiming their rights as displaced people.

2003 Grantees

Pastoral de Solidaridad y Reconcilación (REMHI), San Marcos, Guatemala, \$7,000

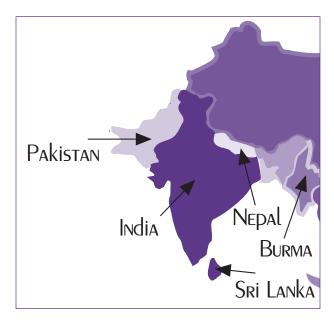


The REMHI project of the San Marcos Diocese was part of an inter-diocesan project that produced the report *Guatemala: Never Again*, a documentation of human rights violations in the country. The goal of the project is to motivate the organized participation of the people in the construction of a new Guatemala and the development of a more human and dignified life. REMHI is a response at the community level and emphasizes exposure to history, mental health training, and human rights for the people of San Marcos, which has a primarily indigenous population (mostly Mam).

In 2003, the project will continue with the work of exhumations and reburials of victims of the violence which helps family members gain closure and cope with the overwhelming fear of reprisal. It will continue to commemorate important anniversaries to prevent the obliteration of the past; and to support the training of community leaders to give workshops that contribute to reconciliation. It will also hold the first national assembly for civic groups and present a regional report on the impact of the armed conflict.

Slum Development Society, Chennai, India, \$7,000





The Slum Development Society (see *Focus on India*, this issue) was founded in 1987 to address the human rights and needs of the Dalit, or under caste, in rural Tamil Nadu. The Dalit have been oppressed for centuries, and despite the government's stated goal of ending the caste system, their situation remains dire. SDS has been involved in a wide range of social and economic action projects, including literacy, skills and job training (especially for women), a night school for children, small business loans for women, health workshops, and summer camps for kids.

MBF support this year is for job training for women making candles and doing tailoring and for a project to organize members of the Dalit community to dig new wells in response to the chronic drought afflicting the region. A third initiative is aimed at children and adolescents and includes free after-school tuition, a mental health and human rights camp, and community organizing for human rights. •



Editor: Ramsay Liem. Contributors: Ben Achtenberg, Maria De Jesus, Leah Diskin, Lisa Jackson, Joan Liem, M. Brinton Lykes, Catherine Mooney, Ann Brian Murphy, Laura Wald. 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. Checks payable to: Funding Exchange/Martín-Baró Fund, tax deductible to the full extent permitted by IRS code. Thank you

THANKS! Our Strike For Justice Bowl-a-thon Nets \$14,000





Let's get ready to bowl!

By Catherine Mooney

hanks to over 40 bowlers and hundreds of supporters who pledged to support them, the Martín-Baró Fund Annual Strike for Justice Bowl-a-thon raised about \$14,000 this year, enough to fund two full projects. We are again grateful to Lanes & Games (voted Best Bowling Alley in 2002 by Boston Magazine) for their generous collaboration with the Fund.

Many new bowlers joined us this year, some as young as a year old. What they missed in points we gained by their enthusiasm and delight.

Kudos to all who came and bowled or supported the bowl-a-thon with donations. Keep an eye out for next year's event and join us if you can. ◆

MISSION STATEMENT

The Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund for Mental Health and Human Rights was created to foster psychological wellbeing, 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.

JOB ANNOUNCEMENT

In a previous issue of the <u>Just Word</u> (Fall, 2000), we reported completing a self-evaluation of the first decade of the Fund's work. One option we considered was to add staff to strengthen our capacity to continue our mission, which we are now initiating. Please send potential applicants our way!

Position: Development Director

To insure the long-range future of the Fund and fulfillment of its Mission (see p.11, Just Word, this issue).

Primary Responsibilities:

- Achieve development revenue goals for the Martín-Baró Fund
- Craft long-range development plan in conjunction with Board Committee
- Present organizational needs as compelling opportunities for funders
- Cultivate funding sources
- Create and manage systems for tracking, reporting, and evaluating fundraising goals and information
- Research prospective funders

The Development Director position is 20-30 hours per week, benefits not included, and one-year renewable. Attendance at monthly, evening Board meetings is required. Please send letter of interest, resumé, writing sample, and contact information for references to: Attention: Hiring Committee, Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund, P. O. Box 2122, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130 or email them to opportunities@martin-barofund.org