

THE JUST WORD



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

Supporting Community-based Activism for Mental Health and Human Rights

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GUATEMALA'S LAW AGAINST FEMICIDE AND OTHER FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Colleen C. Silva

In the spring of 2008, Guatemala's congress passed a pivotal law against femicide, which the congress defines as the murder of a woman resulting from the unequal power relations between men and women. The Law Against Femicide and other Forms of Violence Against Women (Decree 22-2008) outlaws not only the killing of women but sexual, physical, psychological, and economic violence against women. This is a huge step forward in a country where, only a generation earlier, the military routinely employed rape as an instrument of war, using the female body as a battle ground. These attacks embodied in horrific ways the wider offensive against all resistance and, most particularly, against the Maya of the rural Guatemalan highlands. In May 2008, just as the congress signed the new bill into law, I received financial support to travel to Guatemala for the summer in order to conduct a field research project about lethal violence against women and girls in Guatemala and women's responses to it.



Ana Moraga



Luz Méndez

Luz Méndez, Program Coordinator for Peace and Non-Violence Against Women at the National Union of Guatemalan Women, described significant changes that have come about as a result of the new law in my interview with her. She commented, "This has increased the awareness of this society, that there is something wrong about violence against women. Of course the result is not all we wanted but we have

advanced in sensitizing the media, public opinion, and even some politicians. So, what in the past sounded so normal is beginning to be not so normal." In discussing the experiences of those who participated in workshops on these issues, Méndez added that the women "...came back differently to their community" after a workshop designed to inform indigenous Guatemalan women in Huehuetenango about the new law against femicide. "Even when they

know how difficult it will be for them to implement the law, they said, 'we have the right not to be punished; not to be violated, raped, by anybody.' It made a difference for them."

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APA TAKES A STAND ON TORTURE: AN UPDATE

Brad Olson, Dan Aalbers, and Ruth Fallenbaum

Since 2006 APA members of the Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund for Mental Health and Human Rights and their supporters have been actively confronting the American Psychological Association's tacit approval of psychologists' involvement in torture and other cruel and unusual behaviors in Guantánamo and Abu Ghraib detention facilities. Many of our readers signed a web-based petition toward this end. Fortunately, we were not alone in confronting the APA. Many thanks to Martín-Baró Fund supporters for your work, your petitioning, and your contributions toward the successful outcome of the APA referendum.

Finally, many grassroots groups can declare something of a victory for a topic on which the Martín-Baró Fund has long been working — the role of psychologists in US detention centers that violate the US Constitution or international law. Last year, after much effort by activists within the American Psychological Association (APA), a membership referendum won a new, clear policy barring psychologists from working in unlawful settings unless they are working directly for the detainees themselves or third-party human rights groups.

The policy itself was quite clear. Less definitive was what the APA would do in terms of putting the policy into effect. As part of this process, the three authors of the referendum (and of this article) joined the APA's "Presidential Advisory Group on Implementation of the

Petition Resolution." This group's purpose was to prepare a report that included a series of action recommendations in relation to the policy. There was much difficult negotiation, but the group made significant progress in its work.

Fortunately, the policy and the report were voted into effect at the APA's February, 2009 council meeting.

While the report is a compromise document, it includes positive recommendations, for instance, that the APA inform the Obama administration of this change in policy. It also asks the association to strengthen its relationship with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and encourages the APA to lobby the US to drop its reservations to the UN Convention Against Torture.

The full report can be viewed at the APA website at: <http://www.apa.org/ethics/advisory-group-final.pdf>

Again, thanks to supporters and allies of the Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund for its support from the beginning and throughout this long process. ♦

Brad Olson is Assistant Research Professor at Northwestern University. Dan Aalbers is Assistant Professor of Psychology at Central Michigan University. Ruth Fallenbaum is a psychologist in practice and an adjunct faculty member at The Wright Institute, in Berkeley, CA. All three are members of the APA's Coalition for an Ethical Psychology.



Six Projects Funded for 2009

During 2008 The Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund for Mental Health and Human Rights deepened relationships with its ongoing projects. This year the fund has renewed its support for these six projects. Our partners have continued to do strong work despite economic downturns and ongoing violence in many of their communities. The fund receives requests for funding and support from countries all over the world, and we are hopeful that, as we celebrate our 20th anniversary, we will be able to extend funding to new groups in 2010. Below are short summaries of some of the important work that your contributions have enabled us to support.

CHILDREN'S REHABILITATION CENTER (CRC) QUEZON CITY, PHILIPPINES, \$7,000

The CRC is one of the few organizations in the Philippines devoted to caring for child victims of human rights violations. The center's well established program includes assessment of needs, psychosocial interventions, and child-led public education and advocacy. This year's grant renewal will be used to create an outreach program in the Ilocos region (northern Philippines), an area that has witnessed a significant increase in counter-insurgency violence. In 2005, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo launched Oplan Bantay Laya II, a counter-insurgency program targeting communities thought to be influenced by the Communist Party of the Philippines – New People's Army – National Democratic Front. Military operations include extra-judicial killings, enforced disappearances, torture, harassment, and forcible evacuations. In each case children as well as adults suffer immensely.



The Ilocos region outreach program will involve setting up an office, training local staff and volunteers, data gathering and case finding, and implementation of rehabilitation services. In addition, the center will gather regional child victims and their families to address members of the local Commission on Human Rights and Department of Social Welfare and Development. By doing so, the program will strengthen child victims through their support for each other and collective efforts to “face the arduous path for achieving justice and upholding children's rights.”

CENTER FOR IMMIGRANT FAMILIES (CIF) NEW YORK CITY, NEW YORK, \$7,000



In 2009 the Martín-Baró Fund will continue its support of the Center for Immigrant Families (CIF) and its “Escuela Popular de Mujeres” (Women's Popular Education Program). The *Escuela* is built on an understanding of the transformational and healing power that sharing personal stories has for individuals and communities. One of the key projects of the *Escuela* is the Women Creating Community English Literacy Project. Rooted in popular education and participatory action research, this English literacy project attempts to make the lives, stories, and challenges of immigrant women visible and helps women develop the skills to address the root causes of their oppression as immigrant women.

With continued funding, in 2009 CIF will strengthen the *Escuela*, extending its outreach efforts to increased numbers of low income, immigrant women. The *Escuela* will also engage in comprehensive curriculum and resource development, launching a media and arts project to document community expressions of participants' visions for a just world, and coordinating and implementing a series of popular education and community organizing trainings to develop and expand new leadership within CIF. Finally, CIF will engage in an assessment of the *Escuela* and plan its 2010 activities.

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Six Projects Funded for 2009



PROYECTO DE SALUD MENTAL COMUNITARIA Y ACOMPAÑAMIENTO PSICOSOCIAL (PSMCAP) CHIAPAS, MÉXICO, \$5,000

The Martín-Baró Fund will continue to support the *Proyecto de Salud Mental Comunitaria y Acompañamiento Psicosocial* (PSMCAP) (Community Mental Health and Psychosocial Accompaniment Project) in San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas, México. The state of Chiapas is mostly populated by indigenous communities who are extremely marginalized, and who in 1994 formed the indigenous political group EZLN to address the poverty and other adverse conditions they continue to experience. Rather than respond to the political demands of the EZLN and other autonomous indigenous groups, the Mexican government is engaging in low-intensity warfare through paramilitary groups. To address the consequences of this violence, the *Proyecto* has been training indigenous, community-based health promoters in community mental health, psychosocial support and accompaniment, and detecting and addressing human rights violations. Their workshops have focused on understanding low-intensity warfare, crisis intervention, tools for responding to government attacks, and addressing alcoholism and domestic violence.

The 2009 grant from the Fund will support the *Proyecto* in reinforcing the training in community mental health promotion as well as enabling promoters to extend the work through the analysis of threats to local communities' security and the development of resources to prevent harassment of local residents by paramilitaries. They will also continue to provide psychosocial accompaniment to indigenous communities in the area who are most targeted by paramilitary groups.

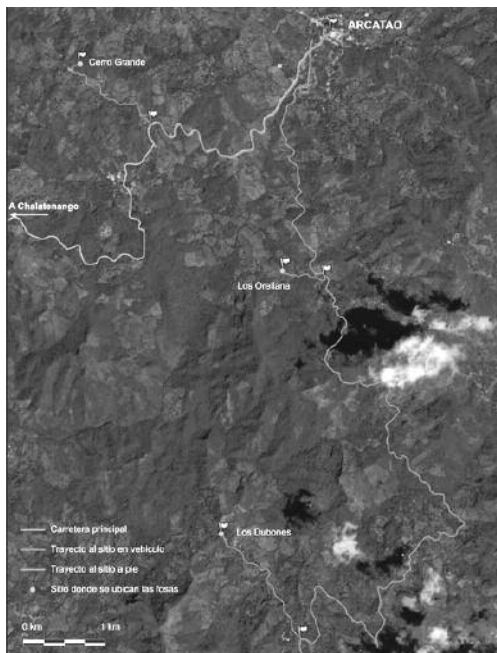
ASOCIACIÓN CENTRO DE EDUCACIÓN Y FORMACIÓN MAYA IXIL (ACEFOMI) SAN GASPAR DE CHAJUL, GUATEMALA, \$7,000

The continuing support by the Martín-Baró Fund to the *Asociación Centro de Educación y Formación Maya Ixil* (ACEFOMI) (Center for Mayan Ixil Education and Development) will enable ACEFOMI to sustain its psychosocial and human rights work in rural villages surrounding Chajul. Many living in these villages have returned from exile and resettled on the sites of massacres and/or villages that had been burned to the ground during Guatemala's thirty-six year civil war. With support from ACEFOMI, women from five of these ten indigenous communities have organized themselves into women's groups that offer participatory workshops for women and youth in their communities.

The workshops facilitate trainings through which local communities can develop resources and skills for addressing some of the many psychological and social problems experienced by women and youth. ACEFOMI's work also helps them to analyze and better understand the social realities that contributed to the armed conflict and to the continuing violation of their rights as Maya women. They also explore the psychological and social effects of past violence to continuing poverty and violence on themselves and on others in the community. As the women learn more about their social realities and their rights as indigenous women, they are better prepared to develop programs to minimize negative risks affecting themselves and youth in the communities. The grant will also allow ACEFOMI to disseminate the popular education materials developed last year and help village-level group facilitators to incorporate the materials into their work.



SIX PROJECTS FUNDED FOR 2009



CENTRO BARTOLOMÉ DE LAS CASAS (CBC) SAN SALVADOR, EL SALVADOR, \$7,000

The *Centro Bartolomé de las Casas* (CBC) (Bartolomé de las Casas Center) works with local communities on issues of human rights and economic, social, psychosocial, and spiritual development. This past year members of the CBC visited Boston to participate in the Martín-Baró Fund Bowlathon, and also had the opportunity to share firsthand about their project activities with members of the Fund. In 2008 they continued their work with the *Programa de Salud Mental y Memoria Sobreviviente* (Mental Health and Living Memory Program), establishing solid contacts with representatives in six communities. The CBC was pleased to report that youth volunteers continued to be actively involved in the community activities. Family members of the victims of the conflict also continued to actively participate in the exhumation processes, many of which take place in remote communities such as those pictured here. With its 2009 grant, CBC will continue this work with survivors in the affected communities. Specifically, they plan to accompany families in Arcatao in the exhumation processes and in developing and giving public testimonials, which have proven to be powerful and

vital experiences for the community healing process.

THE BURMESE REFUGEE PROJECT (BRP) THAILAND, \$7,000

The Burmese Refugee Project (BRP) is a non-profit organization seeking to build participatory models for community development. It focuses on education and the social welfare of approximately 200 Shan refugees living in northwest Thailand. The Shan are an ethnic group currently persecuted by the national government in Burma (Myanmar). The Burmese government has banned the Shan language from all public institutions, engages in systematic rape and torture of the Shan people, and has captured many Shan as forced labor for the national army. Because of this, as many as half a million Shan have crossed the eastern border into Thailand. The BRP believes that in building a well-educated, healthy, and economically robust Shan community, it is laying the foundations for a future democratic Burma. The project has four components: 1) community development, 2) education, 3) sanitation, and 4) health. Funding from the Martín-Baró Fund will allow the BRP to continue to provide year-round counseling, explore community concerns and help community members to deal with those concerns, provide educational support and supplementary children's programs, and help in accessing health and legal services. In addition, the funding will allow the BRP to focus on developing Shan cultural workshops and a peer educator system on reproductive health issues in the coming year. ♦

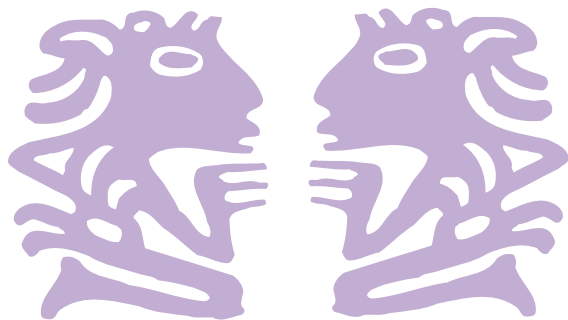


THE LONG-TERM IMPACT OF SMALL-SCALE FUNDING

Ahjané Billingsley

Martín-Baró Fund committee member Ben Achtenberg recently received a surprising look at the long-term impact that small-scale funding can have. He was visiting Advocates for Survivors of Torture and Trauma (ASTT), a support and treatment program for survivors of torture in Baltimore, Maryland. When he asked the director, Dr. Karen Hanscom, how the program got its start, she told him a story that linked her group's origins to the Martín-Baró Fund. They had been really struggling, she explained, until they got a grant in 1995 from a small, little known foundation. With the funding, the program was finally able to get established. ASTT later partnered with another Baltimore based services program to form the Partnership for Community Mental Health, which received a grant in 1997 from the same small foundation. ASTT is now one of only twenty-two specialized care centers for torture survivors in the United States, and the main center serving the Baltimore and DC metropolitan areas. Both of those grants were made by the Martín-Baró Fund. Ben shared this story with local fund activists as one example of how the small grants made by the Martín-Baró Fund can have a significant impact. We share it with you, our readers and supporters, for that reason, and to once again thank you for your ongoing support of this work. ♦

Ahjané Billingsley is currently completing her MA in Mental Health Counseling at Boston College, as well as the Certificate in Human Rights and International Justice.



Editors: Ahjané Billingsley and Patrick Macquoid. *Contributors:* Dan Aalbers, Ben Achtenberg, Ahjané Billingsley, Maria De Jesus, Ruth Fallenbaum, Cynthia Kennedy, Joan Liem, Ramsay Liem, M. Brinton Lykes, Patrick Macquoid, Catherine Mooney, Ann Brian Murphy, Brad Olson, Colleen C. Silva, and Celina Su. **PLEASE SUPPORT OUR WORK.** Letters, inquiries, contributions can be sent to: Martín-Baró Fund, P.O. Box 302122, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130. Checks payable to: Funding Exchange/Martín-Baró Fund; tax deductible to the full extent permitted by the IRS code. Thank you.

OUR MISSION & VALUES

OUR MISSION

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.

BOWLATHON 2009: BOWLERS-IN-DISGUISE RAISE \$22,000 IN FUNDS

Patrick Macquoid and Ahjané Billingsley

Despite tough economic times, the energetic participants in this year's Bowlathon raised nearly \$22,000—enough to fully fund three of our grants for this year. We want to express our gratitude to the 53 people who bowled, and the many more who sponsored them. With a costume theme, the 2009 Bowlathon attracted bowlers-in-disguise including a fairytale princess, a hardware salesperson, a team in Micronesian island dress, and at least five bowlers emulating the title character from “The Big Lebowski”.

Thirteen teams competed in all, with teams representing the Martín-Baró Fund Committee, students and faculty from



half a dozen New England colleges and universities, human rights activists visiting from Bard College (NY) and from Zimbabwe, Harvard Business Publishing, and longtime friends of the fund. This year there were also an increasing number of international students; for many of them this was not only their first bowling experience, but also their first time fundraising. Thanks once again to everyone for making this year's Bowlathon not only a fun event, but also a significant source of assistance for grass-roots projects confronting human rights crises and addressing the mental health needs produced by those crises. ♦



GUATEMALA'S LAW AGAINST FEMICIDE AND OTHER FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN *continued from page 1*

The law against femicide is recognition not only by the State but by women, too, that women and girls have a right to life free from physical, economic, sexual, and psychological violence. Moreover, several of my interviewees emphasized that one key component of the legal recognition is that it differentiates between homicides and the gender-based killings of women that permeate the country and have seemingly been taking place at an accelerating rate.

Both Luz Méndez and Ana Moraga, director of MuJER, restrained their enthusiasm for the decree with the painful reminder that the law is primarily a “piece of paper”, a gesture,

a political strategy that offers little protection for the 500+ murdered women each year who turn up in alleyways, dumpsters, and in unmarked graves after having been mutilated, tortured, and raped. Moraga noted the precarious enforcement of the law and the weak judiciary system. Moraga explained, “The police do not attend to the cases. There are means of protection given to women... Many women have been murdered even with these means of protection.”

Perhaps the Law Against Femicide and other Forms of Violence Against Women will serve as a legal instrument in the hands of women to

understand and respond to the phenomenon of lethal attacks against women and girls resulting from unequal power relations between men and women. It will take time, years perhaps, before anyone can expect to see significant changes in Guatemala and assess the impact of the new law.

Colleen C. Silva is a senior at Boston College, where she is currently completing her BA in Sociology and working with the Post-Deportation Human Rights Project of the Center for Human Rights and International Justice. During the summer of 2009 she will join Teach for America working as a Special Education teacher along the Texas-México border. ♦

SAVE THE DATE

THE IGNACIO MARTÍN-BARÓ FUND 20TH ANNIVERSARY EVENT
Wednesday, November 4, 2009

We are pleased to invite you to our 20th anniversary commemoration, Living Legacies: Ignacio Martín-Baró and the Martyrs of the University of Central America. This year, the fund's annual commemoration will feature a speaker, respondents, and our most recent documentary film followed by a special recognition reception for all friends and supporters of the Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund. The film is currently being produced by Jenny Alexander, Northern Light Productions, in collaboration with local project recipients in Central America and the Philippines as well as the Martín-Baró Fund local committee. Light refreshments will be served. This event will kick off our new partnership with the Center For Human Rights and International Justice of Boston College. Stay tuned for further details.

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