

the just word

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

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Commemorating Twenty Years of Mental Health & Human Rights

by Ahjané Billingsley & Patrick Macquoid

During the month of November 2009, the Martín-Baró Fund marked its twentieth year of carrying on the legacy of Ignacio Martín-Baró. Through two panel presentations, the Fund commemorated the lives of the six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her daughter who were murdered at the Central American University (UCA) in San Salvador on November 16, 1989.

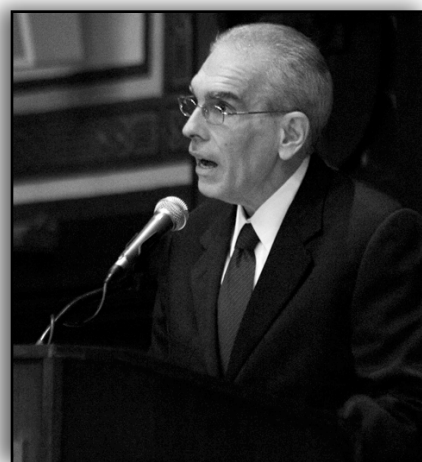
The first panel presentation, titled “Living Legacies: 20th Anniversary Commemoration of the Martyrs of El Salvador” featured the screening of “A New Person, A New Society: A Human Rights Legacy of Ignacio Martín-Baró.” This new film documenting the work of projects funded by the Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund was directed by Ms. Jenny Alexander and produced by Northern Light Productions. As we coalesce with the Center for Human Rights and International Justice at Boston College, the screening of this film provided many of our new supporters with an introduction to the work we have been committed to for the last twenty years.

Speakers at “Living Legacies” included Father J. Donald Monan, SJ, the Chancellor of Boston College; Father Rodolfo

Cardenal SJ, Associate Director, Institute of History of Nicaragua and Central America, Central American University, Managua, and Ms. Elizabeth Lira, Director of the Center for Ethics at the University Alberto Hurtado, in Santiago, Chile.

Father Monan described the unforgettable moment when he heard of the

murders in El Salvador, and told how this atrocity sounded an alarm in him. His words mark the importance of how, when tragedies such as this occur, we must take action to prevent them from happening again.



Rodolfo Cardenal SJ, photo courtesy Chris Soldt

Father Cardenal, who lived with the martyrs at the UCA, reflected on their legacy and on the continued struggles, poverty, and injustices that endure in Central America. He also spoke of our constant need to reach out and play an active role in change.

Ms. Lira recognized not only the the Jesuit priests, but also the women who lived and were murdered with them. She raised the gendered aspects of the violence, and the fact that women in El Salvador had been victimized in very particular ways.

Other scholars and supporters who knew the Jesuit martyrs commemorated the anniversary in a second presentation titled “Memory and Its Strength: The Martyrs of El Salvador.” There, Father Monan, Professor Noam Chomsky, professor emeritus of linguistics at MIT, and liberation theologian Father Jon Sobrino, SJ, recollected their memories of the martyrs, and shared their views regarding the ongoing injustices.

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Participants of the National Interfaith Humanitarian Mission, photo courtesy Rural Missionaries of the Philippines - Northern Mindanao Sub-Region

The US has sustained interests in the Philippines, first through decades of occupation in the first half of the 20th century and since then through economic and military interests. These include agri-corporations, mining firms, and policies and practices that contribute to the extreme poverty in which 90% of the Filipino people live today. Growing popular protest was met by a National Internal Security Program (NISP) promulgated in 2004. The Program seeks to crush armed rebellion and exacts a heavy toll on civilians caught in the midst of the conflict. NISP also targets activist organizations and individuals asserting their economic, social, political, and cultural rights. This violence reached Northern Mindanao in 2009, killing activists and repressing local community organizations while militarizing rural communities in the area and contributing to the displacement of thousands within the countryside. The US, in the guise of its “war-on-terror” policy, supports this militarization and contributes to the deliberate displacement of civilian farmers, including indigenous peoples and Bangsamoro (Islamized ethnic tribes), from their mineral-rich homelands. Survivors of these attacks experience multiple mental health consequences due to torture, mistreatment, and other gross violations of their human rights. Additional consequences include the constriction of social networks, distrust in communities and of authority figures, and individual and community-wide censorship.

Rural Missionaries of the Philippines - Northern Mindanao Sub-Region

Iligan City, Philippines, \$7,000

The Martin-Baró Fund will support the **Rural Missionaries of the Philippines** in its efforts to respond to some of these realities through the development of a *Healing the Hurt* project. This project seeks to: (a) create a psychosocial team that will involve grassroots organiza-

tions in responding to human rights violation-related mental health issues; (b) launch advocacy and networking activities that will lead to the creation of support groups for the psychosocial needs of rural, poor human rights defenders under attack, their immediate families and communities, and women and children victims of militarization and displacement; and (c) provide psychosocial services with a particular focus on individual human rights defenders under attack, including their immediate families, and hold psychosocial missions in communities wrecked by militarization, war, and displacement that will primarily benefit women and children. 



Children calling for a stop to the government-sponsored violence, photo courtesy Rural Missionaries of the Philippines - Northern Mindanao Sub-Region

grantees


Community Mental Health and Psychosocial Accompaniment

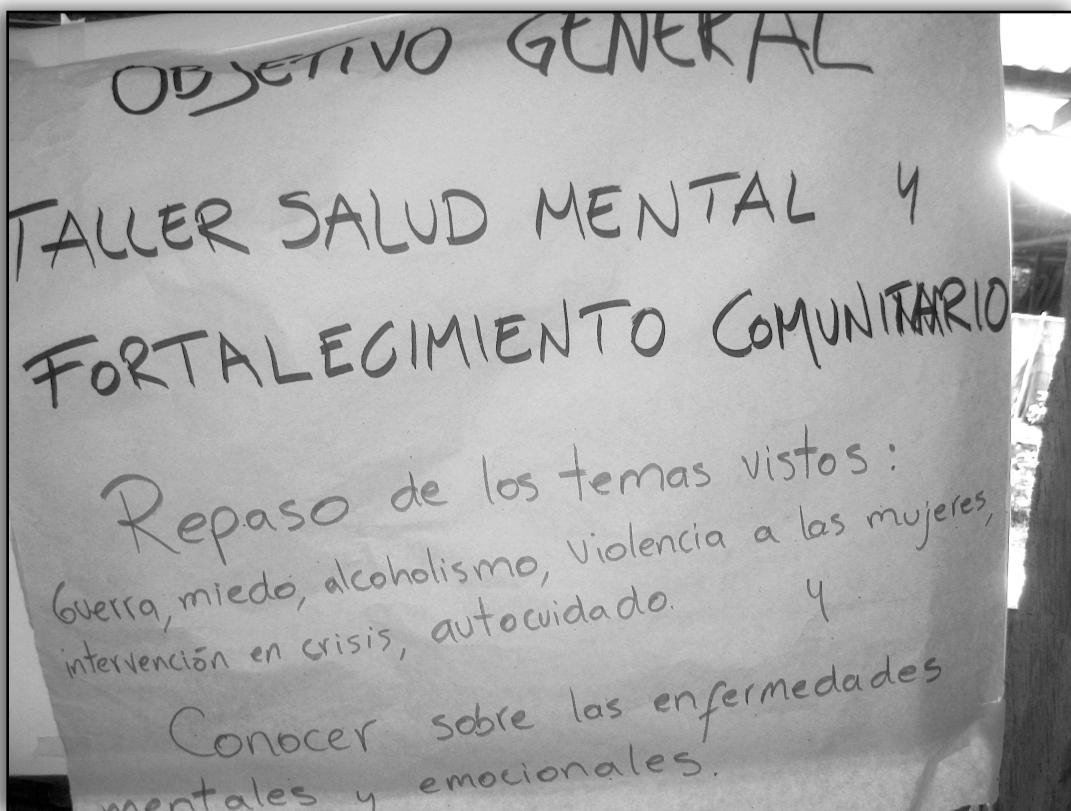
Chiapas, Mexico, \$5,000

In the last five years, the **Community Mental Health and Psychosocial Accompaniment (PSMCAP)** network in Northern Chiapas has learned to better understand and work with various aspects of mental health. The expertise the network has developed has been shared with the community of San Cristobal de las Casas in Chiapas, Mexico via two forms: through capacity building courses facilitated by experts on the theme, and by the diffusion of information by more experienced community health promoters as compared to less experienced youth promoters who are still incorporating themselves into this work.

A course called *"Mental Health and Community Strength"* was offered in 2009 and will be offered again in 2010 to review themes already covered and to introduce an understanding and support mechanism for those who experience emotional stress and mental illness.

Additionally, community health promoters have led leadership development workshops in various municipalities where topics covered included alcoholism, domestic violence and emotional stress. The training is offered in a course/school format to allow participants to learn from the teacher by observing their work. For this reason, teachers tend to collaborate with small groups of youth health promoters in this type of activity.

The biggest challenge in recent months has been the persecutions carried out by paramilitary groups in the region who act with total impunity. In addition, state police have conducted violent dislocations of the population that lives on the border of the biosphere reserve of the Blue Mountains. 



Capacity building materials generated by PSMCAP, photo courtesy PSMCAP

Aware Girls

Peshawar, Pakistan, \$7,000

Aware Girls participant from host community, photo courtesy Aware Girls



The Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund is pleased to work with **Aware Girls**, a Pakistan-based organization dedicated to empowering women and girls. Aware Girls is based in Swat district, in the North West Frontier Province. Swat, once a popular tourist destination and known as the ‘Switzerland of Pakistan,’ was captured by the Taliban in 2008. The Taliban, a radical Islamic movement, enforced extremely restrictive laws in the region, particularly on the freedoms of women, such as banning education for

girls. Schools were torched and non compliance was routinely oppressed by violent means, including public hanging, beheading, flogging, mutilation, and kidnapping.

In 2009, the Pakistan government launched a military offensive against the Taliban which caused the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people in the region. Even though Swat is now under the control of the Pakistan government, survivors, both in camps for internally displaced people and across the district, continue to suffer from the after-effects of trauma.

Aware Girls is a membership organization that promotes and protects the rights of young women by enabling equal access to social services, financial resources and decision making processes. The organization plans to use the grant to develop a manual on trauma and torture treatment and train 10 local counselors to engage with women and children victims of trauma and promote emotional recovery, community dialogue, and healing through creative expression. This will help begin a process of renewal for these victims with the support of their families and communities. 🕊




Focus group discussions conducted by Aware Girls, photo courtesy Aware Girls

Women Asylum Seekers Together

Manchester, England, \$7,000

Women Asylum Seekers Together (WAST), located in Manchester, England is an organization that provides a safe and supportive environment for women who are in various stages of the asylum process. These women (from countries including Bangladesh, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Pakistan, Russia, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Sudan, and Zimbabwe) experienced gender-based violence in various forms in their home countries. Some experienced trauma such as torture, organized violence, forced marriage, and female genital mutilation. While the British Government has provided asylum since 1999 for systemic persecution in certain countries, the country has not been sympathetic to women claiming asylum on the basis of gender-based persecution. Female asylum seekers in different stages of the process experience discrimination, isolation, depression, and other mental health problems, in addition to language barriers, poverty, and limited access to social and mental health services.

WAST is managed and run by a group of asylum seeker women drawn from the organization's membership base. The organization offers six-hour support group meetings every Friday where these women can gather, share experiences and knowledge, and empower each other. WAST also provides lunch and bus fares for those unable to pay for their travel expenses. Weekly sessions include a 30-minute section which focuses on practical and legal information. In addition, high speed internet access, phone, fax, photocopier, and print materials are available for use during the meetings. WAST enables women asylum seekers to overcome their helplessness and isolation, to learn from each other, and empowers them to promote their own and others' basic human rights. The grant from the Martín-Baró Fund will allow WAST to continue to expand their work and enhance psychosocial resources for the support groups for women seeking asylum. 




WAST awareness raising and lobbying on women's asylum issues, photo courtesy WAST

Sustainable Alternatives for the Advancement of Mindanao

Mindanao, Philippines, \$7,000

Sustainable Alternatives for the Advancement of Mindanao (SALAM Inc.), seeks to improve the socio-cultural, psychosocial welfare of victims of institutional violence against women and children in Mindanao. The organization addresses the needs of communities that have expressed a serious need for emotional recovery and trauma healing

through counseling, direct health care services, preventive community-based health care interventions, community-based livelihood initiatives, and community peace dialogues. The Martín-Baró Fund grant will support these activities and the costs of training and support staff. 

project

Resuming the Exhumation Process in El Salvador

by Christine Glaser

Between 1980 and 1992, El Salvador experienced one of the most violent civil wars of the last century. Over 75,000 people were killed, and while it was commonly said that the majority of the dead were army guerillas, in most cases deaths were women, children, and the elderly. An Amnesty law passed in 1993, however, prevented many perpetrators from being brought to justice, and a significant percentage of those killed are still missing.

On January 18 2010, El Salvador delved into its painful past when work began to resume the exhumation of victims of the various massacres during the civil war. Specialists from the Community Forensic Anthropology Team from Guatemala carried out the fieldwork. Forensic teams began work in three villages: Cerro Grande, El Sitio, and Los Dubon, located in the Arcatao municipality bordering Honduras. The remains were then transferred to the Institute of Legal Medicine, an institution attached to the Supreme Court in El Salvador. Here, they were examined to establish the causes of death, the actions of the perpetrators, and the types of weapons used.


One of the Martín-Baró Fund's current grantees, the **Centro Bartolome de las Casas** (CBC), is involved in these proceedings. The organization accompanies families in Arcatao in the exhumation process and in developing and giving public testimonials about the injustice. These methods are powerful and vital experiences for the community healing process.

While this is not the first time an exhumation process has been undertaken, it marks the first occasion that the process has



CBC presentation on exhumations, photo courtesy CBC

been supported by the government, as both the Attorney General of the Republic and Justice have collaborated actively with the requests of organizations such as CBC that fight for the defense of human rights after the atrocities of the civil war. This is important, as there is a strong belief that the exhumations will lead to information regarding the truth commission, which may help correct some of the flaws originally made.

The exhumations have served to recover remains which are then given to families of the deceased to allow them to provide proper burials. With the government's support, the future of the process is more encouraging, as it aims to achieve truth, justice, and reparations within and beyond the communities directly affected by the war. 



Exhumations in process, photo courtesy El Mundo January 16, 2010

updates



Temporary tents amidst the devastation after earthquake in Haiti, photo courtesy Guerdie Nicolas

Psychosocial Trauma and Humanitarian Disasters: Challenges Facing Haiti Today


by Catherine Stamateris and M. Brinton Lykes

Haiti, a “land of mountains” between the Caribbean Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean, and the world’s oldest black republic, was hit by a devastating earthquake on January 12, 2010. The epicenter was about 15 miles west of Port-au-Prince, the country’s capital, and caused death and destruction for thousands of Haitians, as well as destroying many communities, schools, and hospitals. While the death toll was estimated by the Haitian government to have exceeded 200,000 (of a population of approximately 9 million), many escaped the rubble. It is estimated that more than 300,000 were injured and over 1 million left homeless. Many survivors are now without basic amenities, including food, health care, and clean water. Reports from the early weeks after the quake suggested that as many as one in five Haiti earthquake victims had suffered trauma including the multiple shocks of lost homes, jobs, and loved ones, and some suggest that many will not be able to cope without some form of mental health support. In short, the psychological impact of a natural disaster such as Haiti’s earthquake can be wounding and pervasive to any society, but one with as few material and infrastructural resources as Haiti presents particular challenges.

Responding to a humanitarian disaster of this dimension is a huge challenge. The International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies have been at the forefront of much of the psychosocial relief work in Haiti since the January quake. Many volunteers are receiving training in trauma counseling, and are utilizing those skills to support patients who are injured, homeless, or without families. A special emphasis is being placed on the psychological well-being of children, many of whom lost parents and other extended family members in the earthquake. Most notably, UNICEF, in coordination with its partners and the Ministry of

Health, have conducted training for local psychologists. Additionally, Haitian American psychologists, including Dr. Guerdie Nicolas of the University of Miami and formerly of Boston College, have been working with local teachers, mental health professionals, and community advocates to develop culturally and linguistically appropriate resources for training those working directly within the affected communities. They have posted resources at <http://disastermentalhealthessentials.com/> where there are also a wide range of links for work with children and adolescents.

The Martín-Baró Fund has been in contact with staff at **Komisyon Fanm Viktim pou Viktim** (KOFAVIV—The Commission of Women Victims for Victims), one of our 2006 grantees, in Port-au-Prince. Unfortunately some of the women lost their lives in the earthquake. Others are working together to support each other at a community level. Their model for psychosocial work for survivors of political violence and rape involved peer support groups that included “Reflection Circles” which encouraged non-hierarchical, participatory interaction and dialogue. KOFAVIV also sponsored “Open Space” sessions focusing on the mental health impact of violence on the community. These community-based participatory and democratic psychosocial strategies are particularly important models for responding to a catastrophe of this magnitude.

The Martín-Baró Fund stands in solidarity with the people of Haiti and has communicated its willingness to receive proposals from community-based organizations within Haiti who are responding to earthquake survivors and working within a human rights and mental health framework. 


CUNY Celebration of the Life and Work of Ignacio Martín-Baró

by Suzanne Oulette

On February 24 2010, the Graduate Center of The City University of New York (CUNY) held an event to commemorate the life and work of Ignacio Martín-Baró. The day included research presentations, film showings, roundtable discussions and celebration through food, drink, and music. More than 70 people attended and represented a rich and diverse set of backgrounds, skills, and gifts.

Reverend Luis Barrios, professor of psychology and chair of the Department of Latin American and Latina/o Studies at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY, spoke on "Gangs and the Spirituality of Liberation." Nelson Portillo, University of Illinois at Chicago, spoke about his biographical research on Martín-Baró. Joaquin M. Chavez, soon to receive his Ph.D. from the history department of New York University, compellingly presented documentation of changes experienced by the Jesuits, Roman Catholicism, and the broader political context in El Salvador during the 1970s and 1980s.

Professor M. Brinton Lykes of Boston College and co-founder of the Martín-Baró Fund presented the beautiful and stirring new video "A New Person, A New Society: A Human Rights Legacy of Ignacio Martín-Baró." The film profiles some of the projects for social justice in Central America and the Philippines, supported by the Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund for Mental Health and Human Rights. To emphasize Martín-Baró's point that research needs to begin with the people, a roundtable discussion on contemporary research that has been done in deeply collaborative and participatory ways followed. The panel included comments by María Torre and Rafi Torruella who will soon receive their doctoral degrees in Social/Personality Psychology from the CUNY Graduate Center, and Yanira Arias, Vice-President of the Salvadoran American National Network.

The day closed with a blessing of the new Ignacio Martín-Baró Thesis Room at the CUNY Graduate Center. The event included Salvadoran music and singing with Aracely Sanchez. Participants shared *pupusas* wonderfully prepared by friends from the Latino AIDS Commission. 



City University of New York, photo courtesy <http://www.cuny.edu/>



Living Legacies panel, from left to right M. Brinton Lykes, Daniel Kanstroom, Elizabeth Lira, Rodolfo Cardenal SJ, and Donald Monan SJ, photo courtesy Chris Soldt

Commemorating Twenty Years *continued from page 1*


Father Monan discussed the effects of the murders in El Salvador on him, and on the Boston College community over the years. Specifically, he recounted the experience of traveling to El Salvador with a group of international witnesses, to the trial of the soldiers who had confessed to the murders. Father Monan spoke of the shock and disbelief he felt when he heard the verdict read for each of the convicted killers—not responsible. With this flaunting of justice in mind, Father Monan called for peace and reconciliation efforts.

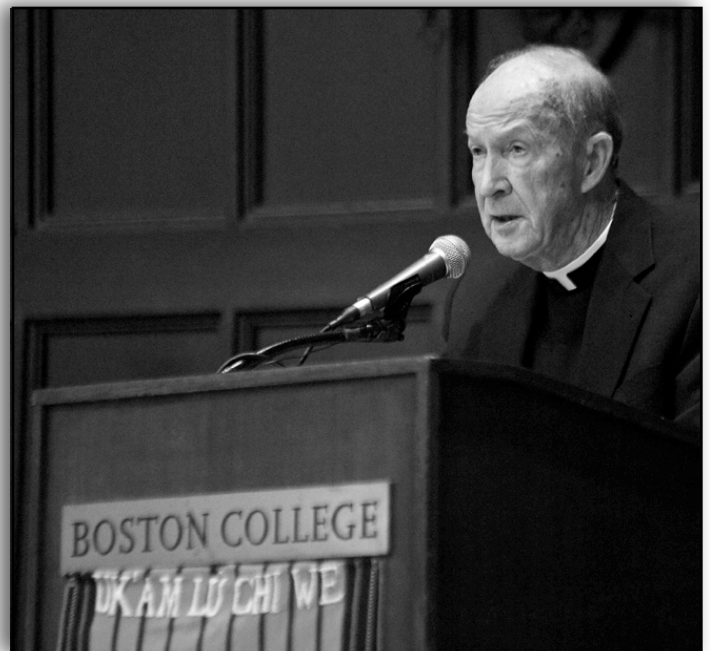
The second speaker, Father Sobrino, discussed the grave poverty still widespread in Latin America. He highlighted the mother and daughter killed along with the Jesuit Martyrs. He described these women as suffering servants, and two among many thousands similarly killed, yet unknown. Father Sobrino argued that the solutions being offered by the powerful governments of the world were not helping people in poverty, in situations compromised by economic globalization.

Finally, Professor Chomsky discussed the pervasive culture of imperialism in the US, and the accompanying hypocrisy of exposing the sins of other nations, while hiding our own. The murder of the Jesuits happened within a matter of weeks of the fall of the Berlin wall, and Chomsky called attention to the intensive media coverage commemorating the fall of that wall, and utter lack of coverage remembering the murder of the Jesuits. Chomsky noted that extensive work must be done in the US around awareness and education.

At both events, all of the speakers addressed the attempts to silence liberation theology and their struggles to sustain the resistance to these. Their comments on the past were inspiring and offered guidance for the future.

In keeping with the mission each raised, the Fund continues to generate awareness and consciousness in ever-widening publics, never forgetting those horrific moments of loss while reinvigorating the Fund’s mission through supporting grassroots projects that mirror the work of Ignacio Martín-Baró around the world.

The Fund would like to express great appreciation to the many sponsors of these events: Boston College’s Center for Human Rights and International Justice, the Jesuit Institute, the Latin American Studies program, Lynch School of Education, Owen M. Kupferschmid Holocaust/Human Rights Project, School of Theology and Ministry, Theology Department and University Mission and Ministry. 



Donald Monan SJ, photo courtesy Chris Soldt



Bowl-a-thon 2010: All Teams Strike Again!

by Kathleen Sellers

On March 28, 2010 I was fortunate to participate in the Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund's Strike for Justice annual bowl-a-thon.

This event raised \$16,000 in pledges from 8 teams of bowlers—among whom were several professors and students.

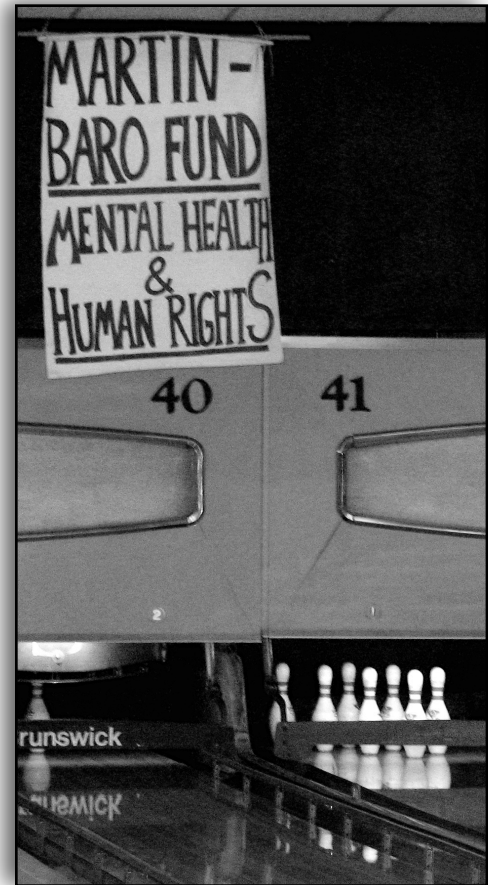
Two of my own professors, other faculty (and their friends and family) from Assumption College, Boston College, Harvard Business Publishing, and University of Massachusetts-

Boston, and long time members of the Fund were present.

When I saw my professors were wearing "Strike for Justice" t-shirts—prizes from previous years' events—I knew they were serious. (For all the students reading this: *it is worth participating in the bowl-a-thon for the chance to see your professors in multi-colored bowling shoes, dancing, twirling, and otherwise bursting with excitement after a strike.*)

Now, I must admit that I was a bit nervous to be collecting pledges (let alone competing with my professors!) based on any of my bowling "skills." I buried those skills after the last time I bowled in high school. Learning this, one of my friends actually decided to make her pledge based on the number of pins I *didn't* knock over! But much to my surprise, my skills resurfaced during my first game, when I actually made a number of strikes! Though, it might also have helped that I was getting tips from members of the highest scoring team.

In the end, my team "Regan" ended up with 709 points, the lowest score of the day. But at an event with team names like "Splitz Happenz" and "Rad in Plaid," it was obvious competition wasn't the most important thing, but rather supporting the community. Both the highest and lowest scoring team received prizes. (Three cheers for Team Regan! We won, sort of.) Next year, I hope to participate again and support the Fund, and then, maybe, I'll be the one wearing an intimidating t-shirt. 🍷



Fund banner at Lanes n' Games bowling alley, photo courtesy Ahjané Billingsley



Boston College School of Theology and Ministry students and faculty team, photo courtesy Ahjané Billingsley



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

O U R M I S S I O N

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.

O U R V A L U E S

- ▶ 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.

O U R G O A L S

- ▶ 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.

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Designer: Zac Willette

PLEASE SUPPORT OUR WORK.

Letters, inquiries, contributions can be sent to priority@martinbarofund.org

or 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.

a new person, a new society

Ms. Jenny Alexander of Northern Light Productions joined the Martín-Baró Fund to produce a short film "A New Person, a New Society;" featuring some of the many legacies of Ignacio Martín-Baró, embodied through our work.

To request a copy, or schedule a screening of of the film please contact us at priority@martinbarofund.org




Ignacio Martín-Baró, photo courtesy Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund

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

-- Ignacio Martín-Baró, 1994



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