



the JUST word

The Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund for Mental Health & Human Rights

A Partner of Boston College Center for Human Rights & International Justice • A Project of The Funding Exchange

Amnesty and Accountability in the Struggle for Justice in El Salvador

M. Brinton Lykes¹

This year's annual Martín-Baró Fund event was co-sponsored by Boston College's Center for Human Rights and International Justice and featured José María "Chema" Tojeira, SJ, former rector of the Central American University in San Salvador, and Pamela Merchant, Executive Director of the Center for Justice and Accountability. Introducing the speakers, B.C. Chancellor J. Donald Monan, SJ, spoke about observing the 1991 trial of the soldiers who had confessed to the killings of six Jesuit faculty at the Central American University, along with their housekeeper and her daughter. Despite their confessions, the soldiers were acquitted, and Father Monan described them defiantly locking their arms after the verdict – a powerful image of impunity.

Photo by Chris Soldt



The MBF symposium in March was designed to explore issues of amnesty and accountability: where the moral meets the pragmatic. For over 20 years the priests' families, Jesuits throughout the world, human rights activists, and the people of El Salvador have sought justice – not only in this case but in the many cases of murders, rapes, and human rights violations during the more than 12-year conflict.

The case of the Jesuits has been widely investigated locally and internationally.

In addition to the Salvadoran trial in 1991, a commission mandated by the 1992 UN-brokered peace agreement that ended the war investigated and, for the first time, indicted members of the Salvadoran High Command for their roles in the

1. Special thanks to Ben Achtenberg, longtime member of the Martín-Baró Fund and an attendee at this event, for his very helpful comments on an earlier version of this article.

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Our Mission & Values

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.

AMNESTY AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE STRUGGLE FOR JUSTICE IN EL SALVADOR continued from page 1

assassinations. Unfortunately, the 1993 Salvadoran Amnesty declared by then-President Alfredo Cristiani forgave all those found guilty of human rights violations, including the UCA murders. In 1999, however, in a report documenting the Salvadoran government's failure to investigate the crimes against the Jesuits, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights declared the amnesty a violation of international law. Despite those findings there has been no progress within El Salvador to bring these crimes – and thousands of others – to justice.



Photo by Chris Soldt

Pamela Merchant

In his talk, Fr. Chema Tojeira recounted the events of November 16, 1989, and the subsequent efforts to identify those responsible for the murders. He noted that Jesuits in El Salvador had called repeatedly for the Salvadoran Army to recognize the responsibility of high-ranking military personnel, and to publicly ask for forgiveness. Those calls, he said, were “met by media silence,” and challenges to the Salvadoran judicial system were equally unavailing.

CJA attorney Pamela Merchant then picked up the narrative, detailing the efforts of some of the Jesuits' family members, along with human rights activists, to bring their case to justice in Spain under the doctrine of universal jurisdiction, which “holds that certain crimes are so egregious that the perpetrators may be held accountable wherever they are found. These crimes include genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and torture.” Merchant noted that five of the six Jesuits murdered at the university were Spanish citizens, and that Spanish courts have been particularly receptive to universal jurisdiction cases.

“On November 13, 2008,” Merchant explained, “CJA filed criminal charges in Spain against the former President of El Salvador and 14 former members of the military for the massacre, that is, for crimes against humanity; President Alfredo Cristiani is charged for his role in the cover up.” After many years and exceptional legal work by CJA, Spanish Judge Eloy Velasco issued indictments and arrest warrants last year, charging 20 Salvadoran ex-officers with crimes against humanity and state terrorism. Merchant gave an update on the status of the warrants and discussed several critical issues involved in pursuing this legal strategy.

Tojeira then talked about the differences between what he called “strong” and “weak” cases in the struggle for justice. He suggested that the Jesuits' case and that of Archbishop Romero (also murdered during the same period) are

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Editors: Esther Chen, M. Brinton Lykes, Nicholas Moffa, and Timothy Karcz. Contributing Authors to the 2012 Project Summaries - Thomas Kane, Timothy Karcz, Ramsay Liem, M. Brinton Lykes, Nicholas Moffa, Charu Stokes, and Barb Viechnicki. **PLEASE SUPPORT OUR WORK.** Letters, inquiries, contributions can be sent to: **Martín-Baró Fund**, P.O. Box 302122, Jamaica Plain, MA, 02130, www.martinbarofund.org. Checks payable to: **Funding Exchange/Martín-Baró Fund**; tax deductible to the fullest extent permitted by the IRS code. Please send any questions or comments to info@martinbarofund.org. Thank you.

strong cases by virtue of the attention they have received from the media and activists. He contrasted these cases to the massacre of peasants in El Mozote (by the same battalion whose members later killed the UCA Jesuits.) Nine hundred peasant farmers, women – many pregnant – and large numbers of children were killed. He argued that, sadly, due to the poverty and lack of status of the victims, this is a “weak case,” that is, it has received little attention internationally or even within El Salvador.

Tojeira urged those of us living in the North to remember and not to ignore such cases as El Mozote, even if they are less high-profile and harder to bring to justice. “To do otherwise,” he said, “would be to take center stage, erase the indifference with which Western society views the brutality that occurs in remote places, and ignore the developed nations’ share of responsibility – which remains unpunished – in keeping the world’s marginalized population in conditions of poverty and oppression.” He praised the position of the majority of Salvadoran Jesuits, who have sought to draw links between the UCA murders and massacres such as that in El Mozote. They reject a position that offers them an opportunity to pursue justice that is not available to the vast majority of Salvadorans.



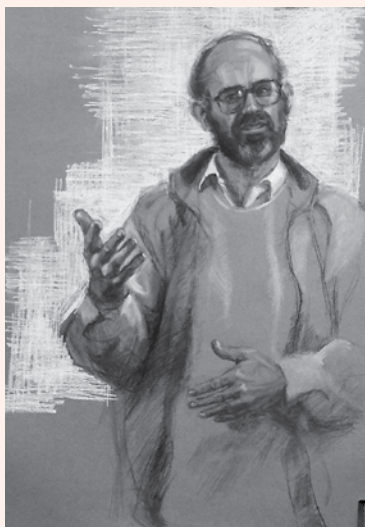
Photo by Chris Soldt

Chema Tojeira, SJ

Tojeira acknowledged the support of human rights activists for himself and other Jesuits since 1989. Yet he urged us not to feel satisfied for “having done something in the face of the terrible injustices that have been committed” but rather to see these moments as “opportunities for reflection about the international policies of the developed world,” and our own roles and responsibilities here in the United States. He argued that the responsibilities of peoples of the North toward those of the South include, for example, fulfilling our “commitments to ... the development of impoverished countries; and control[ing] the sale of firearms.” He suggested that the solidarity expressed by human rights defenders must be accompanied by “fair trade structures, with less protectionism of their own products by countries that demand free trade from the weakest countries.” Solidarity, in other words, demands that we critically examine our ongoing role in promoting – or at least not preventing – structural inequalities that perpetuate economic and social injustices. We should also, “help reveal the ambiguities, cowardice, and ethnocentrism that continue to exist in the developed North and that have caused so much damage to countries of the South.”

Martín-Baró’s Legacy Continues: Articles about Martín-Baró & the Fund Published

Nicholas Moffa



Drawing by Suzanne Ouellette

Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology recently published four articles on Ignacio Martín-Baró and the fund that bears his name. An introduction by Suzanne Ouellette reflected on her personal experiences with Ignacio at the University of Chicago and described the 20th anniversary commemoration that inspired the Special Section of the journal. Nelson Portillo traces Ignacio’s life, his decision-making as a social scientist and includes a photo journal. Joaquín Chávez describes the history of the Salvadoran Central American University, the Jesuits who worked there, and their impact through challenging the Salvadoran status quo of the 1980s. Almudena Bernabeu and Carolyn Patty Blum describe the difficulties in bringing the perpetrators of the assassinations to justice and a new opportunity to finally hold the intellectual authors of the crimes accountable. Finally, M. Brinton Lykes’ article on the Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund for Mental Health and Human Rights describes its 21 years of advocacy, education, and grant making, as well as its current challenges. See www.martinbarofund.org for copies of these articles. The Fund thanks journal editor, Susan Opotow, for this initiative.

Boston College School of Theology and Ministry Students Visit Two MBF Projects

Holly Bird, Nicholas Collura, Joe Lemme, and Katie Mahowski

Throughout our time in El Salvador we were struck by something that Ignacio Martín-Baró knew all too well. He wrote that in a post-war nation “the challenge is not limited to addressing the destruction and disorders caused by the war. The challenge is to construct a new person in a new society.” Our first stop, mass at the Dominican Church of the Rosary, intensely illustrated the beginning of Martín-Baró’s quote. We were captivated by the Church’s modernist-inspired Stations of the Cross. The mental and physical anguish of post-war Salvadorans symbolized in these Stations is what the Centro Bartolomé de las Casas* and the Dolores Medina Foundation** are working to heal.

At the Centro, Larry Madrigal and Walberto Tejeda discussed murals painted by survivors to commemorate war massacres and work through the stations of their own crosses. Both described watching survivors renew themselves by painting their mental anguish from witnessing the murders of their loved ones. A concluding outdoor meditation in a windy courtyard reminded us of the human right to protection against natural and human aggressors. Larry and Walberto accompany many Salvadorans who, denied this right during the civil war, are striving to reclaim it.

Protecting the vulnerable is also the mission of the Passionist sisters at the Dolores Medina Foundation. Street children living in environments where their human rights to security had been violated due to severe mental and physical abuse are served by Sister Claudia. Her face



Photos courtesy of Boston College School of Theology and Ministry

grew solemn as she reflected on her work. “If we can help just one child to live a better life,” she reasoned, “our work has been worthwhile.” After her talk, a few of us assisted David and Isaiah, two children in the project, with planting radish seeds. They were cultivating new life in the garden, just as the Foundation is striving to cultivate new life in them.

Our experience in El Salvador included witnessing small “resurrections” such as hand painted murals and home grown vegetables re-signifying Martín-Baró’s “new people” in a “new society.” Joy was never far from pain, but in that ambiguous middle ground there existed hope, the tremendous will of the Salvadorans to press forward.

*Funded by the MBF from 2004-2008

**Funded by the MBF in 2011

Eight Projects to be Supported in 2012

Asociación Centro de Educación y Formación Maya Ixil (ACEFOMI), Guatemala \$7,000

The Fund resumes its support of the Center for Mayan Ixil Education and Development, enabling ACEFOMI to extend its psychosocial and human rights work to new rural villages surrounding Chajul and develop training programs with and for youth. Workshops with village women will focus on self-esteem and personal hygiene; mental health and nutrition; and, women's human rights. Individual family visits will afford an opportunity to observe women's applications of the training and work with them to develop family gardens for growing nutritional foods.

ACEFOMI also plans workshops with 100 local youth focusing on self-esteem and personal growth; sexual education and preventative health care; work, social responsibility and solidarity; environmental and land challenges; and the legacies of the armed conflict in the context of globalization and migration. Workshops are designed to launch a local youth group that can continue outreach with youth and future program development.



Salvadoran Association of Torture Survivors (ASST), El Salvador \$7,000

The Salvadoran Association of Torture Survivors (ASST) is a volunteer group of 30 people from El Salvador, most of whom suffered torture at the hands of paramilitary groups supported by the Salvadoran government in the civil war in the 1980s and 1990s. The group's purpose is to seek three things: learn the truth about human rights violations during the civil war; demand justice from the Salvadoran government for the crimes committed; and seek moral, material, and social reparations for the human rights violations suffered.



With the grant, ASST will support a team of three torture survivors, who work as volunteers, in their project, *Know the Truth*. This project will research and document human rights abuses during the civil war that will be summarized in a multi-media report at the end of the project. The report will appear in a museum in Santa Tecla,

and will be submitted to relevant governmental bodies and used by the survivors as a basis to demand greater psychosocial reparations for the injustices done.

ASST will also convene participatory workshops with 20-25 survivors of torture and former political prisoners in the departments of Santa Ana, San Miguel, and San Salvador over the course of five months. These workshops, aimed at psychosocial reparation, will offer personalized medical attention to the participants as well, given the psychological effects of their experiences.

AWARE GIRLS, Pakistan \$7,000

Peshawar, Pakistan, has been a site of intense violence and terror resulting from ongoing fighting between the Taliban and government military forces. An AWARE Girls' survey "revealed that over 50% of respondents want to leave Peshawar..., 44%

"The moments were life changing for me. When I met with other women from my own community sharing the same pain and stories, I learnt to come over the pain and start a new life. By losing my husband, I thought my world was finished, but now I have learnt that there is so much in this world which I can celebrate, and there is so much which I can do for my community"

(Participant, AWARE GIRLS 2011 Mental Health Training Program)

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Eight Projects to be Supported in 2012

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are worried about their children and an astonishing 79% don't feel able to visit the market for shopping." Over the past two years the Martín-Baró Fund has supported AWARE Girls' development of a manual on trauma and torture treatment and the training of 10 counselors who use creative expression to promote recovery and community dialogue among women and child survivors including internally displaced women. This year's renewal grant will support training an additional 15 women and outreach to 50 women and 25 children of Peshawar District.



Comisión de Apoyo a la Unidad y Reconciliación Comunitaria (CORECO), Mexico

\$7,000

Since 1994, the state of Chiapas in Mexico has been the central base of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN). During this time, the people of Chiapas have suffered from a climate of insecurity and the decay of the social fabric of the communities due to the military occupation. The continual harassment, violence, and threats against the indigenous population have resulted in cycles of alcoholism, domestic violence, and the separation of families.



The Comisión de Apoyo a la Unidad y Reconciliación Comunitaria (CORECO) seeks to contribute to the positive mediation of conflicts through the spread of peace, nonviolence education, and psychosocial training. Community members will attend workshops where they will learn about developing self-esteem, managing one's emotions, and positive methods of conflict resolution. This will help community members become effective mediators, create safe spaces for dialogue, and help reweave the social fabric of communities. Community leaders will also attend workshops on strengthening

human and spiritual relations and recognizing individual potential. This will assist group leaders in creating healthier relationships both inside and outside of the community, learning new methods for human and spiritual growth, and encouraging community members to participate in serving their communities.

Communaute des Planteurs et Eleveurs dans la Region Marachaire (COPERMA), Congo

\$7,000

The Communaute des Planteurs et Eleveurs dans la Region Marachaire (COPERMA) founded in 1983 for agricultural development in the North Kivu province of the eastern Congo expanded its mission in the 1990s to include projects targeting victims of war, such as survivors of rape, demobilized child soldiers, orphans, and displaced persons, in response to the psychosocial upheaval caused by tribal warfare. Ten community centers established by COPERMA in ten villages facilitated this expansion of services.

COPERMA will further expand its psychosocial projects in 2012, thanks in part to a new grant by the Martín-Baró Fund. Its new efforts will be three-pronged. Two certified Congolese psychologists will train two community-elected officials in each of the ten communities in which COPERMA has established community centers. The community officials, called "listeners", will be trained in active



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listening and advocacy, and sensitized to the effects of sexual violence and of trauma due to stigmatization. Training of the listeners by the psychologists will be conducted on a bi-monthly basis. As a result, the listeners will be prepared to serve as the primary resource for this program's effort. In addition, the professional psychologists will run weekly group and individual counseling sessions for those survivors with severe trauma. A third prong of the project will provide vocational training – sewing, soap-making, and bread-baking.

Asociación Cooperativa de Servicios Múltiples Ignacio Martín-Baró (COOPERATIVA MARTÍN-BARÓ), El Salvador \$3,500

The Ignacio Martín-Baró Cooperative's *Project for Psychosocial Resources for the Communities of Jayaque* reports the successful completion of a needs assessment despite two weeks of challenging storms that destroyed half of the homes in two of their communities and the death of longtime pastor and community supporter, Father Dean Brackley, SJ. Needs identified reflected the effects of the storms as well as more structural poverty and violence. Thus staff and volunteers have juggled emergency services with longer term program development. The Cooperative continues to engage the legacy of Salvadoran civil war as well as the ongoing challenges of entrenched poverty and violence. The Fund looks forward to continuing to learn from this partnership as the Cooperative initiates new programs to respond to the needs of the young and the elderly.

LIVE WITH HOPE, Uganda \$7,000

Since 1991, the Live With Hope Foundation, located in the remote mountains of Eastern Uganda, has provided care and support to many women.

Committed to putting an end to stigma and discrimination from the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM), funds will support information dissemination to traditional cutters and elders to help stop this act. The United Nations categorizes FGM as a human rights violation because it damages a woman's sexuality and leads to various complications. It refers to the removal of a woman's sexual genitalia.

Women cutters will be provided with start-up funds to initiate their own projects and sustain their families and livelihoods. In addition, through family dialogue, training, and support supervision, this project will support girls affected by FGM who will be allowed to milk cows, climb the granary, and clear cow dung from the kraal like other community members.

Rural Missionaries of the Philippines, Northern Mindanao Sub-Region (RMP-NMR), Philippines \$7,000

With the grant from Martín-Baró Fund, RMP-NMR completed the project entitled, *SMALL VOICES FROM THE HINTERLANDS: Unleashing Children's Cultural Expressions* which brought healing to those affected by the militarization in Pantaron Range of Mindanao, Philippines.

This project reinforced the psychosocial "first aid" given to child victims of militarization through the 2010 project, *Healing the Hurt*:

- ❖ By assisting the mental health recuperation of 126 children from indigenous communities of Pantaron Range and involving them in BITAW (Basic Integrated Theatre Arts Workshop) as an artistic means to heal traumatic experiences; and
- ❖ By establishing community theatre groups—dubbed as *Teatro Pantaron* that held community theatre arts presentations and a joint gala presentation attended by communities victimized by militarization and displacement.

This year, RMP's goal is to integrate BITAW in the curriculum of 16 indigenous schools that they have established for children. A grant from the Martín-Baró Fund will assist RMP in training the para-teachers and hosting workshops for school staff to strategize the implementation of BITAW.



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STRIKE FOR JUSTICE in 2012

Nicholas Moffa



On Sunday, March 18, 2012 the Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund for Mental Health and Human Rights held its annual Bowl-a-thon fundraiser at Lanes 'n' Games in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Six teams participated in the successful fundraiser, representing the Boston College School of Theology and Ministry, the Boston College Lynch School of Education, the Boston College undergraduate student population, and the Martín-Baró Fund itself. Teams received awards based on overall highest and lowest team scores and the largest amount of money fundraised. Barb Viechnicki's team scored the most points, the Boston College undergraduates scored the least points, and teams captained by long-time Martín-Baró Fund activists raised the most funds. Overall, the Bowl-a-thon raised approximately \$15,000 from donors and sponsors across the world, successfully kicking off another year!



Photos courtesy of Bowl-a-thon Participants