



the JUST word

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

A Partner of Boston College Center for Human Rights & International Justice

Guatemalan Anthropologist and Jesuit Priest Ricardo Falla Visits the United States

Lilianna Quiroa-Crowell and Sergio Palencia, Members of the Mesoamerican Studies Group and anthropology students at the Graduate Center, City University of New York.

In October 2018, the Mesoamerican Studies Group, a City University of New York (CUNY) Graduate Center student founded and run organization, coordinated the east coast tour of Ricardo Falla, a prolific and dedicated author, anthropologist, and Jesuit priest from Guatemala. In collaboration with Boston College, CUNY and Georgetown University, Falla gave nine lectures and participated in several workshops and graduate and undergraduate seminars through which he put his work in conversation with young academics and advocates in the United States. Speaking from his deep and chronologically long work with indigenous communities in Guatemala, Falla touched many young scholars: he is both a critical voice for Latin American scholarship and wider Mesoamerican Anthropology, as well as one of the most important intellectuals of the 21st century.

The Mesoamerican Studies Group aims to foster interuniversity and transnational connections around topics and thinkers of wider Mesoamerica. As a group, we grew out of a commitment to move beyond the classroom and build dialogue regarding the critical issues and research taking place in Latin America. Falla's tour grew out of this spirit, as his work on violence and indigenous communities in Guatemala speaks to contemporary conversations regarding state violence.



Photo by Chris Soldt, BC MTS

After receiving his PhD in anthropology, Falla returned to Guatemala to study and live with the Maya people of Ixcán, Guatemala, in 1983. It was at this time that the violence of the armed conflict reached its peak, with the wholesale slaughter of the Maya indigenous people under the guise of military counterinsurgency strategies. Falla has been an important

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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.

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voice in bringing to light the atrocities of the Guatemalan state against its people, as he continued to accompany and live with the Quiché people in the jungle after their violent displacement and resistance to genocide. His work, in particular his attention to the position of the researcher in times of conflict and practice of “acompañamiento” (to walk alongside, solidarity, etc.) as an anthropological and political tool of resistance, documents the Maya communities in their struggles from a position of solidarity for justice and human rights, making him a key voice in the complicated aftermath of state violence in Latin America.

Our tour began in Boston, where Falla was enthusiastically received by Boston College's Center for Human Rights and International Justice. Over coffee with U.S. theologian Harvey Cox he discussed the relationship between theology and justice. Falla's two lectures in Boston were entitled “Research in a Context of Armed Conflict” and “Conceptualizing the Guatemalan Genocide.” He presented the newest volume of his large collection *At the sunset of life* [Al atardecer de la vida], which forms part of his current project of publishing and releasing books from his experiences during the internal armed conflict, works that previously had been censored. He provocatively and productively discussed the just war framework and the concept of genocide, challenging students and faculty alike to add complexity to these conceptualizations given the reality he experienced and continues to study in Guatemala. Furthermore, he held a seminar with graduate students, answering their methodological and personal questions about how a researcher can and must be in a position of solidarity.

In New York he continued giving lectures across the CUNY campuses, holding a workshop for Latin American researchers on anthropological work in zones of violence. Students from Colombia, Mexico and Guatemala shared their

The flyer is titled "Ricardo Falla Eastern Coast Book Tour and Lecture Series Oct 16-25". It lists the following events:

- BOSTON**
 - Oct 16: "Research in a context of armed conflict: Local Guatemalans" (Lecture) at Graduate Center - CUNY, Room CASB (transcourse level), 4:45 - 6:05 pm.
 - Oct 17: Book Presentation "Acompañamiento and solidarity in contexts of war: Experiences from the Ixil, Guatemala" at Boston College, Conquest Hall 228, 1:30 - 4 pm.
 - Oct 17: Book Presentation "Acompañamiento and solidarity in contexts of war: Experiences from the Ixil, Guatemala" (Lecture) at Boston College, Fulton Hall 501, 7 pm.
 - Oct 17: "Conceptualizing the Guatemalan Genocide" (Lecture) at Eastern College, Center for Human Rights and International Justice (D-104), 12 - 2 pm.
- NEW YORK CITY**
 - Oct 18: "Anthropological work in times of conflict" (Workshop) at The Graduate Center - CUNY, Room 5423, 9 am - 12:30 pm.
 - Oct 18: Book Presentation "Ixil: The Indigenous Peasant Rises Up, Ixil, Guatemala, 1983-1992" at The Graduate Center - CUNY, Room 5423, 6:30 - 8:30 pm.
- WASHINGTON, D.C.**
 - Oct 22: "Acompañamiento and solidarity in contexts of war: Experiences from Ixil, Guatemala" (Lecture) at Lehman College, CUNY, Room Library, 8 am.
 - Oct 23: "Human Rights and the Guatemalan Civil War: A Discussion" (Lecture) at Georgetown University, Room CCAS Boardroom (CC 11) Boardroom/Center, 12:30 - 1:45 pm.

Logos at the bottom include DSC, APELLA-CHRIJ, CSC, LEHMAN, and Baruch College.

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Editors: Martha Wendlandt and M. Brinton Lykes. **Contributing authors and editors:** Timothy Karcz, M. Brinton Lykes, Sergio Palencia, Nelson Portillo, Lilianna Quiroa-Crowell, and Martha Wendlandt. **PLEASE SUPPORT OUR WORK.** Contributions can be made on-line at: www.martinbarofund.org or by check made out to Peace Development Fund, noting on the memo line that it is for the Martín-Baró Fund and sent in the enclosed envelope to the **Martín-Baró Fund, PO Box 302122, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130**. Checks payable to Peace Development Fund are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by the IRS code. For questions or comments, please email us at info@martinbarofund.org or write us at **Martín-Baró Fund, P.O. Box 302122, Jamaica Plain, MA, 02130**.

Vanished but Not Forgotten: Helping Relatives of Disappeared Migrants

Nelson Portillo

In January of 2018, in a small office located near San Salvador's downtown, I met with the Board of Directors of the Committee for Families of Deceased and Disappeared Migrants (COFAMIDE), one of our grantees for the 2016-2018 funding cycles. As a member of the Grantmaking Committee, I welcomed this rare opportunity to meet a grantee group personally and to learn firsthand how they had invested the funds received from us. In total, they had conducted more than 20 workshops throughout the Salvadoran countryside, gathering relatives of immigrants who had disappeared or died en route to the U.S. In these workshops, relatives received legal advocacy, human rights training, psychosocial support, and psychoeducation to deal with the emotional aftermath of their loved one's disappearance or death. This is exactly what they had proposed to do when they sought a grant from the Martín-Baró Fund. But as we continued talking I soon realized that I had not been fully aware of the remarkable work that COFAMIDE was doing. As I continued asking questions, my hosts starting showering me with evaluation reports, case studies, books, CDs, posters, and more. In addition, they informed me about the DNA bank they had created to identify and match the remains of migrants and their surviving families. They described the law project that they had crafted with a team of legal experts to provide relatives of migrants with



the rights and legal mechanisms to seek reparations, repatriation of their deceased loved ones, and closure. Incredibly, they have achieved all this with less than three full-time staff members and with very modest resources. At the meeting I was assured that the Martín-Baró Fund support had been instrumental in furthering their work and the evidence seemed quite clear. The success of COFAMIDE should remind us that pragmatic solidarity in action through small donations continues to bring relief to those who have not lost hope.



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methodological concerns with Falla regarding their fieldwork. Later that same day, he presented his book *Ixcán, The Indigenous Peasant Rises Up* (2015) [Ixcán, el campesino indígena se levanta] where CUNY professors Dr. Marc Edelman and Dr. Patricia Tovar shared their comments. The following day Falla participated in the Graduate Center Anthropology Department Colloquium, sharing his research on massacres and survival with students and faculty. Falla also held a talk at Lehman College's Center for Human Rights and Peace Studies, where he analyzed the 1982 San Francisco massacre in Huehuetenango, diving into the testimony of survivor Mateo Ramos Paiz.

He also conversed with students at Baruch College telling the story of Guatemalan refugees in Mexico, the Cuarto Pueblo massacre, and passed around a small golden pocket watch holding three small bones. As he explained: "thirty years ago I stood in front of the exact place where the massacre occurred; I collected these bones;" he circulated the bones among the

students. Many looked surprised, others remained silent. He also shared them with students at the Center for Latin American Studies (CLAS) at Georgetown University, in Washington D.C. More than fifty years had passed since Falla had studied at this Jesuit university and during his time there he was able to visit many of the buildings along the Potomac River. The tour as a whole was an opportunity to share his experience, to visit family and old friends, and to revisit his own memories. Overall, we hope that critical social scientists felt stimulated by the work of this important and engaged Central American intellectual.

Editor's Note: For many within the Martín-Baró Fund community Ricardo Falla's visit and his research focus resonate with Ignacio's visit to the United States nearly three decades ago during the worst years of the Salvadoran armed conflict. At that time Ignacio spoke of the "normal abnormality" of war, of the Salvadoran peasants' resistance to their government's military attacks, and of their search for peace.

Projects Funded in 2018

CEDECOT Mexico

\$7,000



The Center for Experimentation for the Tzeltal Community (CEDECOT) will commence their third year of funding from the Martín-Baró Fund. Last year 60 Tzeltal indigenous women within three different municipalities in Chiapas, Mexico, were provided with various tools to combat gender inequality, strengthen their own voices as leaders, and exercise decision-making power within their families, community, and municipalities. The workshops facilitated participants' awareness of the consequences of violence against women and led to a greater openness and understanding about the importance of women's participation in family development. CEDECOT adapted the phrase "Lekilkuxlejalil" which means "if you do not suffer from any type of violence and your rights are respected, you will have a good life." The meetings served as a space for the participants to share successful experiences around violence prevention and

the promotion of mental health; this generated collaborative links and actions among the women of the group and were shared with those women from other communities who were not a part of the project for the year.

In this third year of funding, CEDECOT will be expanding their workshops and meetings including women and men with hopes of having 100 participants within the Tzeltal Norte Selva and Altos region located in San Juan Cancuc, Chilón, and Sitalá. The overall objective will now be shifted to training and raising awareness of gender-based violence, sexually transmitted diseases, and sexual and reproductive health through which they seek to prevent gender-based violence against women, violence that affects their mental health and violates their human rights.

COFAMIDE El Salvador

\$7,000

Committee for Families of Deceased and Disappeared Migrants (COFAMIDE) is an organization that continues to be led by family members of individuals who disappeared during migration from El Salvador to the United States. The family members advocate for recognition and aid from the Salvadoran government and the international community as they continue to provide psychological support and promote advocacy training for those families affected by the country's migration crises.

This is COFAMIDE's third and final grant year. Last year they developed technical training for the families of those who had disappeared, drawing on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international laws that can help defend Salvadoran migrants. Through this training family members learned about self-care and psychological assistance resources. The workshops also focused on personal self-esteem and leadership development. COFAMIDE's leadership is also engaged in the important work of helping families repatriate the remains of deceased family members who have been located and identified.



FAMDEGUA Guatemala

\$7,000



The Association of Relatives of Detained-Disappeared of Guatemala (FAMDEGUA) has received their third and final grant from the Martín-Baró Fund this year. FAMDEGUA has over 23 years of experience supporting and accompanying members of the Guatemalan Maya population who have been affected by regional poverty, forced migration, state violence, and the unresolved impacts of the nation's internal armed conflict. Last year FAMDEGUA expanded their workshops to include participants from the municipality of Panzós in Alta Verapaz. Through the workshops, the organization was able to address the participants' experiences of violence during the armed conflict by focusing on psychosocial support and human rights education. Male and female

participants shared that although they did not have everything necessary to live or enjoy stable lives, they now understood that remembering lived events does not mean that they should stop struggling for access to justice, truth, and dignified reparations. Their struggle signifies political, social, and cultural action which has the power to strengthen their family and community.

In this third year of funding, FAMDEGUA plans to implement a Mental Health and Human Rights program for witnesses and relatives of victims of human rights violations. This will consist in the development of home visits, socialization meetings, and additional workshops on mental health and human rights. The workshops focus on women from rural areas of Maya or mestiza descent, among the populations most directly affected during the internal armed conflict. Creating a balance between family members and their socio-cultural environment is another of FAMDEGUA's organizational goals towards which they work within their mental health workshops.

Proyecto Buena Semilla Guatemala

\$7,000

Proyecto Buena Semilla (PBS), "The Good Seed Project" in English, incorporates entrepreneurial activities, problem-based therapy, cognitive-behavioral therapy, and art-based activities that contribute to the empowerment of Maya women in the Western Highlands of Guatemala. The women participants learn to face the hardships accompanying child pregnancy and domestic violence, as well as other limitations on their economic well-being given the marginalized conditions of their communities.

In their second year of funding by the Martín-Baró Fund, PBS was able to compensate eight health facilitators throughout the year in order to form the "Leadership of Women Circle" in the community of Quetzaltenango. Through workshops and group meetings, they created a safe space where vulnerable indigenous women were able to empower themselves in ways that contributed to improvements in their mental health or psychosocial well-being. They became agents of change within their families and communities. The monthly workshops reinforced the women's leadership skills and knowledge in mental and maternal health and child health.



In their third and final year of funding, PBS plans to continue to support the "Women's Circle" held in the communities of Cuilco and Quetzaltenango as well as the "Circle Leaders" held in San Juan Ostuncalco, Quetzaltenango. The meetings, workshops, and activities that will be held within each site will be dedicated to continuing to address the mental health and well-being of marginalized Maya women in Guatemala.

Al Zahraa Society Palestine

\$7,000

Al Zahraa (The Flower) Society is an organization that promotes women's rights and empowerment. It is dedicated to providing psychological support to women who are survivors of sexual and domestic violence as well as to the women and children who have been displaced from their homes by war. Al Zahraa plans to help protect women and children from violence through supporting, empowering, and raising awareness of important psychological, social, legal, and economic issues.



This first year of funding from the Martín-Baró Fund will be used by Al Zahraa to implement group sessions and individual counseling with survivors. The program also plans to encourage women to attend awareness sessions that include (1) information and skills for starting an income-generating business; (2) civic knowledge; (3) life skills; (4) public health knowledge; and, (5) nutrition information. Such courses for Palestinian women and children promote participatory educational processes that contribute to vulnerable populations' self-empowerment.

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Projects Funded in 2018

LAYLAC Palestine

\$7,000

The Palestine Youth Action Center for Community Development (LAYLAC) is a youth action center for community development in Palestine. The youth sector has been systematically marginalized from the process of addressing many of the issues confronting Palestinian refugees. LAYLAC works to fill the gap of local government and local NGOs wherein the needs of youth are not being met. This organization mobilizes the youth sector and empowers it to advocate for its rights.

LAYLAC organizes and executes educational programs for the children and youth of the community in the Dheisheh Camp. The workshops draw on the creative arts to facilitate processes through which children and youth learn about their community's history, political culture, volunteerism, and Palestine's political future. Throughout this first year of funding by the Martín-Baró Fund, LAYLAC seeks to have 15 to 25 children be a part of bi-monthly workshops. Through the workshops, LAYLAC aims to create a safe place for Palestinian children and youth to be able to discuss present day social and political issues that affect them. LAYLAC's goal is to provide tools for discussing and coping with mental health challenges as well as to create safe avenues for participants' expression of their concerns and desires.



COPERMA Democratic Republic of Congo

\$7,000



COPERMA, the French acronym for Farmers' and Breeders' Community in the Cold Region, was once again funded by the MBF after previously being a grantee from 2012-2014. COPERMA has been working in rural communities in the region since 1983 with the goal to foster development and self-sufficiency within young mothers and survivors of sexual violence. Near-constant armed conflict in the region has contributed to large-scale sexual violence by soldiers, mainly against women.

With this new grant, two certified Congolese psychologists will train two female village elected community leaders in each of ten villages where COPERMA has an established presence, to act as urgent and available support for new and old cases of sexual violence. These "listeners" will be trained in active listening skills and sensitized on sexual violence and stigmatization issues to be able to effectively hear and respond to survivors. They will also be trained in advocacy to assist in accompanying survivors to often overburdened healthcare facilities.

The project also features weekly group and individual counseling sessions. Working in groups is believed to decrease survivor isolation and strengthen their perceived roles in the community. A vocational training component will also be part of the project, involving sewing, soap-making, and bread-making, to help integrate the survivor into the community both socially and financially, combatting stigmatization and ostracism which is common in Congolese communities. COPERMA maintains that the ability to support oneself and one's family is vital for community acceptance and thus the survivors' quality of life and mental health.

The Just Word: Extending our Educational and Fundraising through the Printed Word

Martha Wendlandt

The first issue of our annual newsletter, *The Just Word*, was published in the spring of 1999. This was the beginning of a rich and significant tradition of extending the reach of the Martín-Baró Fund to English speaking audiences. Since the first publication, our newsletter has been able to bi-annually and then annually inform our dedicated and faithful members and all others of the work the Martín-Baró Fund. Specifically, we have written about our grantmaking and educational efforts as well as important topics related to mental health and human rights. These accomplishments continue to be made possible and are contingent upon our members' generous contributions. An essential component of each issue of our newsletter is the report about the projects with whom we collaborate who are awarded our grants; for twenty-nine years, the MBF has supported organizations around the world who demonstrate a critical commitment and dedication towards human rights issues and towards grounding their mental health interventions in realizing or improving social justice within their communities. Part of the Martín-Baró Fund mission is to foster psychological well-being, social consciousness, active resistance, and progressive social change in communities affected by institutional violence, repression, and social injustice. Year after year, our grantees exemplify this work and carry out projects that align with Ignacio Martín Baró's liberation psychology. We dedicate this year's newsletter to our members, our generous supporters and volunteers without whom we could not continue this work. We thank you for reading about our work year after year and for the support you continue to make. **We invite you to join us in sustaining this work by making a generous contribution in 2018. Contributions can be made on-line at: www.martinbarofund.org or by check made out to Peace Development Fund and sent in the enclosed envelope.**



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