The Martín-Baró Fund (MBF) welcomed Walberto Tejeda from the Centro Bartolomé de las Casas (CBC) in San Salvador to its 30th Anniversary Commemoration on November 21, 2019. Between 2004 and 2009, the MBF supported the CBC’s work with local communities in northeast Chalatenango (Arcatao and Nueva Trinidad), one of the major conflict zones in El Salvador’s 12-year civil war. At that time, they worked with survivors of massacres and human rights violations in their search for healing and remembrance. Participants in these early projects were later trained as community mental health facilitators and worked with other survivors, collecting testimonies and sharing relaxation techniques.

The CBC published many of these testimonies and in 2007 opened the Museo de la Memoria (Museum of Memory), housing documents, photographs, and objects related to the war. Extending this work, the CBC accompanies family members of victims during the difficult process of exhuming the bodies of their loved ones. They help them develop and deliver public testimonials, which are vital for community healing. This work is part of a wider community process toward the recovery of historical memory, incorporating survivors as protagonists seeking justice.

Walberto highlighted recent CBC developments, outlining how their work has been informed and inspired by Ignacio Martín-Baró (or “Nacho,” as he was commonly known). He noted that today, the CBC is “dedicated to the facilitation and accompaniment of comprehensive educational and research processes focused on regional, national, and international realities.” With offices in San Salvador and Arcatao, they function as a collective of people from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds who are committed to the social transformation of El Salvador and Central America. They collectively work toward social reconciliation and the recovery of a shared memory and promote civic participation and democracy-building for a dignified life.

Drawing on things that the people Nacho served remember about him, Walberto noted that after Mass Nacho invited parishioners to listen to his short-wave radio, tuning into world...
Walberto Tejeda: Living in Harmony with Survivors’ Memories

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news, which he kept at a low volume to avoid it being intercepted. Second, Nacho was never far from his typewriter. When parishioners heard keys clicking they knew to be quiet and not interrupt him, as they awaited what they knew would emerge: his reflections on their shared reality. Finally, he brought his guitar and sang at any and all gatherings, bringing people together.

Walberto noted parallels between Nacho’s character and behaviors and three focal points of the CBC’s work: methodology (observing + listening), systematization (interpreting + sharing through written work) and content (actions of youth, children, and adults towards social transformation). He noted that through their methodology they sought to challenge official versions of history that silence and invisibilize the people’s lived memories. Connecting with the community, sharing their deep feelings of hope, their struggles and their difficulties, have contributed to the efficacy of CBC’s mission. For example, their Masculinity Project engages boys and young men in actively promoting equity, equality, and gender justice. The Survivor’s Memory Committee of Arcatao and Nueva Trinidad “shines brightly today as an autonomous and cooperative group,” continuing the work the MBF supported over a decade ago around exhumations, testimonies, and a museum, a sanctuary containing the remains of many of their family members, and related artwork and murals. In describing the CBC’s systematization of its work, he noted that, like Nacho when he clacked away on his typewriter, they too have learned how to create pedagogical tools and to make them accessible to the vulnerable populations that they serve in order to return their stories and words to them, with care and respect.

Just as Nacho shared his voice and music with all he knew, Walberto emphasized that the CBC’s actions correspond to a compassionate view of reality: “we become one with it, we suffer with it, we struggle with it to transform history.” Despite many challenges – including the impact of social media, the migration north of many of their former participants, crime, and efforts to control social organizations – the CBC believes the theories and practices of Nacho and the other martyrs are very much present today. He noted that: “We need to keep hope alive and sustain the connection to the many struggles and the resistance that we are currently witnessing across and beyond our continent…Let us activate our trust and recognize that even the smallest contribution matters. All intentional actions that come from within the community matter.”

The MBF celebrates Walberto’s presence and thanks him for joining us, for commemorating Nacho and the other Salvadoran martyrs, and for his insightful analysis of the CBC’s work. We are delighted to have contributed to its early work as we learn more of its vibrant force in El Salvador today. We also thank Claire White for interpreting for Walberto and sharing her translation of his presentation towards developing this article.

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PLEASE SUPPORT OUR WORK. Contributions can be made on-line at: www.martinbarofund.org or by check made out to Grassroots International, noting on the memo line that it is for the Martín-Baró Initiative and sent to Grassroots International, 179 Boylston St., 4th Floor, Boston, MA 02130. Checks payable to Grassroots International are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by the IRS code. For questions or comments, please email us at info@martinbarofund.org.
On November 21, 2019, the Boston College Center for Human Rights and International Justice (CHRIJ) and the Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund (MBF) for Mental Health and Human Rights co-hosted the 30th anniversary commemoration of the assassination of the martyrs of El Salvador. The event featured testimonies from Joan Liem, committee member of the Fund and Professor Emerita of Psychology at UMass Boston; Massachusetts 2nd District Congressman Jim McGovern; Walberto Tejeda, a representative from Centro Bartolomé de las Casas in El Salvador; a video greeting from Carlos Martín-Baró, brother of Ignacio Martín-Baró, SJ; Boston College Lynch School Professor of Community-Cultural Psychology, M. Brinton Lykes, co-founder of the MBF, co-director of the Boston College CHRIJ; Chung-Wha Hong, Executive Director of Grassroots International; and Professor Catherine M. Mooney, BC School of Theology and Ministry and longtime member of the MBF committee.

At thirty years, the Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund for Mental Health and Human Rights has raised over one million dollars in funding for grassroots projects around the world that engage in work that mirrors and carries on the legacy of the organization’s namesake. Words from Ignacio’s, “Nacho’s,” brother describing the Fund sum up the general theme of the anniversary commemoration event quite well. He said that the work of the Fund is serving to represent “la voz de Nacho adelante” or “the voice of Nacho moving forward.” This sentiment was brought forth by Congressman McGovern as well in his reflection of his time in El Salvador and the difficulty he has faced in coming to terms with the U.S. involvement in the violence, both historically and today, through his advocacy work as a government official representing the voices of the people of the U.S. Despite the pervasive indications that history may be repeating itself through the United States’ oppressive immigration policies towards Central American migrants or its violent war on drugs, he noted that those who support the MBF have served – and must continue to serve – as a reminder to the Salvadoran people, and to survivors of mass atrocities everywhere, that there is still hope in this world.

The 30th anniversary event featured stories of Nacho’s personal and professional accolades and philosophies from his friends and colleagues all while highlighting the Fund’s sustained commitment to the oppressed and to those who live Nacho’s understanding of the need to “liberate psychology” toward creating “a new person and a new society”. Walberto Tejeda, a representative from one of the Fund’s partners in El Salvador, Centro Bartolomé de las Casas (CBC), spoke about the embodied legacy of Nacho through the work and mission of CBC and its commitment to achieving social justice through first advocating for gendered justice and a sustained ideological praxis of accompaniment and critical reflection.

In partnering with organizations that foster wellbeing and critical social psychology through activism and accompaniment, the Martín-Baró Fund for Mental Health and Human Rights has maintained its roots in liberation psychology through walking with the popular majority against systems of oppression. The Jesuits embodied their faith through living intentionally through action and activism in the face of extreme oppression beneath the Salvadoran oligarchy. The Fund maintains this call to action and advocacy for human rights and community wellbeing through the accompaniment of grassroots organizations fighting for those harmed by political repression, structural violence, and social injustice around the world.

It was the hope of Nacho, and remains the hope of the Fund today as it transitions to an Initiative at Grassroots International, that through the fostering of psychosocial wellbeing and the pursuit of social reparations, society can begin to heal from its painful past and move towards a more equitable future.
Projects Funded in 2019

Al Zahraa Society, Palestine $7000

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 women and children who have been displaced from their homes by war. During its first year of funding Al Zahraa set out goals to help protect women and children from violence through supporting, empowering, and raising awareness of important psychological, social, legal, and economic issues.

During this past year, with support of the Martín-Baró Fund, Al Zahraa was able reach 40 vulnerable women who faced multiple types of discrimination and abuse such as physical, psychological and sexual abuse from their husbands and others. Al Zahraa was able to provide structured group support sessions as well as individual sessions to these women, all while advising and educating them on legal issues and women’s rights. In addition, Al Zahraa provided training to these women in two different fields: Hairdressing and Fee Creativity which included working with various ceramic and recycled materials to make goods. The vocational training not only provided a new source of income for the women, but also worked as a stress reliever for the women by returning normalcy to their lives. For their second year of funding from the Martín-Baró Fund, Al Zahraa aims to further assist women with disabilities in their activities. Al Zahraa would also like to expand the vocational training it provides to the women they support. These new initiatives are in addition to its continued efforts to help women who are victims of sexual and domestic violence.

COPERMA, DRC $7000

COPERMA, the French acronym for Farmers’ and Breeders’ Community in the Cold Region, received new funding for the 2018 fiscal year from the Martín-Baró Fund after receiving funding from 2012-2014. COPERMA has been working in rural communities in the region since 1983 with the goal of fostering development and self-sufficiency in young mothers and in all survivors of sexual violence. Near-constant armed conflict in the region has contributed to large-scale sexual violence by soldiers, mainly against women.

With support from the Martín-Baró Fund last year, COPERMA was able to successfully intervene and assist survivors of sexual violence. This year with a new grant from the Fund, COPERMA will continue their work with women survivors of sexual violence while reaching out to others in need of help. In addition, COPERMA will equip their counseling centers with more materials that will assist in the education and comfort of women and children who have undergone traumatic experiences. In addition, COPERMA intends to create and give workshops aimed towards helping survivors reintegrate into society.

La Asociación Centro de Educación y Formación Maya Ixil, Guatemala $7000

La Asociación Centro de Educación y Formación Maya Ixil (ACEFOMI), or The Center for Mayan Ixil Education and Development in English, was founded in 2003 in Guatemala and has worked with individuals who have faced trauma from the internal armed conflicts. With support from the Martín-Baró Fund, ACEFOMI will work with vulnerable young people, most of them children of migrant parents and/or young people from educational centers. They will be divided into groups based on their support objective and the priority themes such as self-esteem and individual leadership, migration, sexual and reproductive health, human rights and women’s rights. Workshops will be held four times a month for the above-mentioned topics over the course of one year. The workshops will help youth who have dealt with family problems such as divorce, parents who migrate, their own desires to migrate, and parental drug addiction, through education on these topics.

The Regional Committee for the Promotion of Community Health (CRPSC), Guatemala $7000

The Regional Committee for the Promotion of Community Health (CRPSC) was established in 1975 in Guatemala and works with communities that have suffered massacres, “scorched earth”-type attacks, uprooting and other forms of repression, and subsequent migration and exile. Currently, research is being conducted for a book that details the history of communities dealing with mental health issues caused by the many violent events that occurred from the 1960s onward. Economic and military policies have caused violence and
armed conflicts, both of which have negatively affected the mental health of the communities. With support from the Martín-Baró Fund, the CRPSC will expand its research efforts into other countries such as Mexico, El Salvador, and Costa Rica. Additionally, the funds will support focus groups with people from the communities that have done community health work in the years of conflict. One other aspect of the project relates to the in-depth interviews that will be conducted with historical protagonists.

**The Justice Committee, New York City**

The Justice Committee’s newest project is titled “Families Leading Change.” This initiative includes the following components: Organizing Skill-Building Trainings, Emotional Release Workshops, Rapid Response System, and Organizing for Policy Change. The Organizing Skill-Building Trainings component will include three different trainings aimed at helping the families who have lost loved ones to the police to build the skills necessary to lead policy campaigns. The Emotional Release Workshops aim to help families process their trauma through half-day workshops led by skilled practitioners. They teach physical, mental, and spiritual techniques for understanding and letting go of trauma and its impacts. The Rapid Response System will conduct strategic meetings that will ultimately help establish an organized response for accompaniment and assistance following a killing by the police to help control the public narrative. This team will include mental health professionals as well as lawyers. The Justice Committee will work to strengthen police accountability as well as address the mental health impacts of police violence.

**The Victim’s Association for Peace and Development (ASVIPAD), Colombia**

The Victim’s Association for Peace and Development (ASVIPAD) was founded in 2005 in Colombia. Its project “Promoting the Human Rights of Conflict Affected Population with a Psychological Approach in Southwestern Colombia” aims to guarantee the rights to truth and reparation. This is done through implementing a documentation process to collect, analyze and systematize cases of forced disappearance in connection with armed conflicts. ASVIPAD will accomplish this through workshops that will teach subjects such as documentation training for the missing as well as a “search unit” for the missing. The overall goals of ASVIPAD include promoting the rights to the truth of the conflict-affected populations as well as reparation to the relatives of the missing.

**The Palestine Youth Action Center for Community Development (LAYLAC), Palestine**

The Palestine Youth Action Center for Community Development (LAYLAC) is a youth action center for community development in Palestine. During the 2018 year, with support from the Martín-Baró Fund, LAYLAC was able to conduct various exercises which benefited the community greatly. First, they held nine training workshops for 25 volunteers that included: the mission and ideology of LAYLAC, volunteerism in Palestine and its application in LAYLAC, organizational environmental assessment (SWOT), leadership skills, planning and problem-solving skills. In addition LAYLAC realized two community projects which enhanced community solidarity and strengthened the collective identity among the residents of underserved neighborhoods in Dhesheh camp. These projects included 10 university social work students who were trained in community organization, as well as 20-30 who were actively engaged. A graduation ceremony was also organized to celebrate the success of the volunteer’s training.

With a new grant from the Martín-Baró Fund in 2019, LAYLAC will continue its educational efforts by holding an educational summer camp for 40 social workers and psychologists inside the Bethlehem Mental Health Hospital located in the West Bank. The summer camp will expose the participants to the challenges facing the mental health services in Palestine. Additionally, all the activities of the educational summer camp will be covered by the local media to promote the public awareness about the challenges facing the mental health services.
Ramsay Liem, now professor emeritus of Boston College and Visiting Scholar at the BC Center for Human Rights and International Justice, and I were on our way to BC to meet online with friends and colleagues in California, Santiago, Chile, Buenos Aires, Argentina, and, we thought, San Salvador, El Salvador. We had met each other in various venues throughout the 1980s and forged a loosely affiliated group of what today might be called critical psychologists. Our hope was to learn more from our southern colleagues who were working in the midst of violent conflict and exploitation, the product of collusion among U.S. military and corporate interests and entrenched local dictators. Our plan was to have our first internet exchange that fateful morning of November 16, 1989.

Casually listening to National Public Radio on our drive to BC, our lives were upended when a news bulletin announced that our friend, social psychologist and Jesuit priest, Ignacio Martín-Baró and his colleagues had been assassinated at their university, the latest of the many brutal violations in El Salvador since the launch of the Salvadoran armed conflict. Ignacio, or “Nacho” as we called him, was killed by the Atlacatl Battalion that had been trained in what was then called the School of the Americas in Ft. Benning, Georgia, paid for by U.S. taxes that we now know totaled more than $4.5 billion in aid to El Salvador between 1980 and 1992.

Commemorating Nacho. Two thousand nineteen marks the 30th anniversary of that brutal act in 1989. We gathered recently to remember Nacho and others who lost their lives during those 12 years of armed conflict as well as so many others globally who have been killed as they struggle for their and their communities’ rights to a good life or buen vivir. We also commemorated one initiative launched in the U.S. that drew on Ignacio’s early challenge to “liberate psychology” through supporting his vision of “a new people, a new society” – the Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund for Mental Health and Human Rights (MBF). The Fund partners with those organizing and resisting the horrific effects of state-sponsored violence in El Salvador and beyond and raises funds to support their efforts to foster psychosocial wellbeing and social transformation. We draw on our own activist scholarship and work as psychologists closely aligned with Ignacio’s understanding that mental health is “... a dimension of the relations between persons and groups more than an individual state … the manifestation, in a person or group, of the humanizing or alienating character of a framework of historical relationships. .... [psychosocial] treatment must address itself to relationships between social groups which constitute the ‘normal abnormality’ that dehumanizes the... oppressor and the oppressed, soldier and victim, dominator and dominated, alike” (Martín-Baró, 1994, pp.109-111).

The MBF began grantmaking in 1990 and has supported 217 projects in 32 different countries distributing more than $1.3 million dollars in small grants ranging from $2,000 annually in our first years to 2019 grants of $7,000 yearly for each project, renewable for up to three years. The MBF prioritizes projects in countries negatively affected by U.S. political and military policies and practices, thus striving to critically educate the U.S. public about the use of its taxes and resources abroad. Although small and limited in resources, the MBF is one of the few sources of support for organizations in the global South whose understanding of and engagement with the effects of state-sponsored violence and gross violations of human rights is systemic and structural.

Ignacio’s liberation psychology deeply informs that political education and guides the decisions we make during our grantmaking where priority is given to underfunded local groups who integrate human rights with community health, wellbeing, and active resistance to political repression and social injustice. Our work is one small but critical initiative through which we in the North, drawing on the words of Carlos Martín-Baró (see insert in this issue), seek to sustain and extend Nacho’s voice.

Next Steps in our Journey. Through its education and grantmaking the MBF crafts a praxis that shifts the reductionistic focus of psychological paradigms from...
intraindividual processes to social relations that sustain or rupture the “normal abnormality” of ongoing “limit situations” – guided by Ignacio’s insights into and unrelenting opposition to the Salvadoran counterinsurgency war that took so many lives including his own. The Peace Development Fund (www.peacedevelopmentfund.org/) has served as our fiscal sponsor and avid supporter over much of our third decade. We thank their staff, most particularly Kathy Sharkey, Ray Santiago, and Delia Kovac, for the multiple ways in which they enhanced our fundraising and administered our grantmaking.

Through these 30 years of solidarity and financial support, we at the MBF have seen more and more of the small community-based groups that we have supported build networks through new partnerships that generate broader social movements who can more effectively represent their interests in our increasingly global community. Towards increasing the breadth and depth of our activism and solidarity, the MBF announces our transition to a new partnership with Grassroots International (see below, this page). We welcome this new relationship through which we will continue to raise funds and recommend grants to community-led efforts that promote education, psychosocial wellbeing, and the pursuit of social reparations and a more just and equitable world. As importantly, we welcome new opportunities to extend our reach through accompanying human rights activists who daily risk their lives as they, in the words of Nacho, construct new persons in a new society.

Finally, we invite you to support our next steps through making a generous end of the year contribution to us at Grassroots International, noting in the memo that it is for the Martín-Baró Initiative.

Grassroots International is honored to join with and carry forward the mission of the Martín-Baró Fund in establishing a new initiative to advance human rights, mental health and community-engaged wellbeing: The Martín-Baró Initiative for Wellbeing and Human Rights.

The Initiative builds on three decades of remarkable work on the part of the MBF, and more than 35 years of global grantmaking and advocacy for human rights on the part of Grassroots International. Perhaps even more important, the collaboration comes at a time of increased aggression, violence, repression and dehumanization of vulnerable communities throughout the world. Those on the forefront of organizing to advance human rights, climate justice and social change face relentless attacks. Their courage and commitment require a solidarity response that nurtures community wellbeing, education and liberation.

Since 1983, Grassroots International has connected people in the US with global movements that defend land, territory, water, food, seeds and the earth. Together, Grassroots and its movement partners address the root causes of injustice and oppression, and build alternatives that nurture human rights, ecological justice, and liberation through grantmaking, social action, and philanthropic leadership. The Martín-Baró Initiative at Grassroots International helps to connect the energy and resources of donors and activists in the US with global grantmaking to advance social reparations and a more just and equitable world.
Two years ago, I began working as the Graduate Assistant for the Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund while studying at Boston College. From the very first meeting, it was clear that the dedicated committee members all had the same mission, that is, to persist in pursuing the mental health and social justice commitment first initiated by Ignacio Martín-Baró. I continue to be enlightened while discussing alongside all the members how different projects and community-based organizations around the world best represent, mirror, and carry out Nacho’s work. I began graduate school with what I thought was a fair understanding of mental health psychology, but left with another perspective thanks to Ignacio Martín-Baró and all the members that have multiplied his work around the world for over 30 years.

I now represent a new generation of psychologists and intend to carry with me the work I observed and learned while being at the Martín-Baró Fund. I encourage young colleagues entering the field to think of mental health not only as personal or rooted in the individual but to look further than oneself and fight for justice for one’s community – and for the new person and the new society that Ignacio urged us to create. Thank you to Brinton and Ramsay, our devoted co-founders of the Martín-Baró Fund and thank you to Joan, Nelson, Pat, Dorothy, Tim, Ben, and Cathy, all of whom gave me a new sense of what it means to be a part of something bigger than myself and engaged me in carrying on the lasting work of Ignacio Martín-Baró.
Your Voice in My Memory

Carlos Martín-Baró, November 16th, 2019

That death of yours, Nacho, so savage and cowardly, at the hands of the Salvadoran military, left your body lying on the lawn of the garden of the Universidad Centroamericana José Simeón Cañas (UCA), next to the bodies of your companions and those of the two collaborators of the Jesuit residence, mother and daughter. It was an individual and collective death that composed a macabre puzzle of scattered bodies. From your skull, pierced by a bullet, still came a stream of fresh blood. Your face was hidden by your arms that showed their last signs of strength. An inconsolable family tenderness spread from them: you wore the same blue polo shirt that, days before, we had ironed for you at home. That image traveled unexpectedly around the world, as one more sign of human barbarism.

Today, thirty years later, my memory has been dissipating that horror and now, in the midst of the confusion of having aged, I only seem to hear your voice, serene and vital, summoning me to an impossible new existence without limits of time and space.

What was your voice like, Nacho, in that childhood and adolescence we both shared? An uncontrollable physical force arose from your lungs and it became a gale in your throat, filling all the rooms of the house. Your voice did not fit in your body as a child. It was thundering and clear, with clear Castilian resonance. One day you abruptly pulled yourself up from the big table on which all of us siblings were eating with our parents and you shouted without thinking: “We must stop coddling this girl; nothing of 'nena,' we must call her by her name: Cristina.” All of us brothers chanted your cry with a cowardly boo directed to our little sister. Cristina had no choice but to take refuge in our mother’s lap. “Wow,” said mother sadly, “you’ve managed to make her cry.” But since that meal, Cristina stopped being “the baby,” becoming Cristina.

If your voice was impetuous, you also knew how to modulate it with persuasive nuances. In the evenings of your early childhood, you whispered to Lucero, the largest cardboard horse the Three Wise Men found on January 6. And you said patiently and seriously, “Let’s go to bed, Lucero, it’s too late.”

Your voice also picked up the echo of the street vendors. The pineapple vendors arrived in the city and stopped their cars, nets full of their produce, on the cobblestones of Simón Aranda Street, on the near south side of our house. They shouted in the air “Pineapples!” At that time, you opened the windows of the balcony and mockingly repeated: “Pineapples!”

In the summer garden, the voice of the town crier of El Espinar, seemed to suddenly stop the air, to launch his cries: “Announcement, the person who has found...” the words erupted in shorter or longer bursts. You waited for the proclamation to end. You put your hands as a loudspeaker around your mouth and repeated the municipal announcement. On one occasion, your voice surprised our grandfather Fernando, who was walking among the acacias of the garden with shorter, quickened paces. He stared at you and with a certain Granadian charm he restrained himself, saying: “Wow, Nacho, what a voice!”

But that powerful voice of yours suddenly began a long silence when you embarked on the adventure of reading Jules Verne’s novels or the comic books of the Masked Warrior. Nothing could interrupt your silence. Even your head seemed to become bigger with pure joy. What an ability you had to concentrate!

Later in your childhood, you decided to become a magician, but a real magician. Your voice settled into a happy silence, while you spent hours in solitude rehearsing tricks and learning to shuffle cards like a master. Between your hands, the cards opened and closed as if they were an accordion. In a few months you started to perform magic shows at birthday parties of the young children of our parents’ friends and within a year, you became a member of the Spanish Society of Illusionism. Your voice already possessed the complicity of children’s illusion. You smiled full of satisfaction when you took the card you were looking for out of a child’s ear or, as a final number, pulled letters from the deck of cards, colorful handkerchiefs or paper streamers from your father’s hat. I don’t know if you ever pulled out a white rabbit ...

But your plans were different from your work as a magician. You entered the Society of Jesus and went to El Salvador, a country that would become your true home. Your voice reached us in recordings, sweetened by the sounds of the tropics. You sang and recited your own poems and spoke to us about your daily chores.

You completed your Jesuit studies and became a professor. Your voice began to sound with a clear depth of thought in American and European universities. You received your doctorate in social psychology from the University of Chicago and began to write. It was your same old voice now focused on writing that brought to life the pressing problems of the peoples of Latin America.

At the same time as you wrote, you taught and served as vice-rector to the students at UCA. And on weekends, you took your gear and a guitar and went to Jayaque to share the lives of the peasants. Your voice became action and was warmly poured on people who had nothing more than their own existence to count on.
After many years you came a few times to Spain, on short trips, invited to social psychology conventions or meetings. You came home and, like a big boy, you took our little children in your magician’s hands and threw them into the air laughing with them while calling them in Salvadoran slang cipotes [children] or cachimbones [awesome].

The war definitely made you real. From the Salvadoran UCA, your presence and your work – your voice! – spread to American and European universities. You gave lectures in Boston, Chicago, Bogotá, Havana and Madrid. Your thought was centered on the helplessness of the children of war, so distant and yet so close to those other happy children of your sessions as an illusionist.

You created the first university institute of public opinion in El Salvador. The reach of your voice multiplied, as if you felt urged by the premonition that your time was running out.

In what would be your last stay in Madrid, your voice, without losing its vitality, had acquired an apprehensive tonality. Any sound seemed to you to be an alarm. You told us about that brutal and unjust war. It was hard for you to fall asleep. Did you already sense the nearness of your death?

In the early morning of November 16, 1989, the Salvadoran military surrounded the house you shared with your Jesuit colleagues and violently entered all of your rooms. They forced all of you into the garden while stabbing you and began shooting at each of you at point-blank range. You were given time to raise your voice, the most surprising and accusing, to say to those military commanders: “This is an injustice, you are carrion [dead meat].” Your voice could be heard in the neighboring houses. Then, the lieutenant who was directing the massacre, unloaded several shots at you. Immediately after, the total darkness and a final silence were accompanied by the irony that the soldier who ended your life had been a student at the Jesuit high school in San Salvador.

As a result of your death, your ideas spread. People were interested in your vision of the problems and the methodology through which you noted that action is an essential prerequisite for thought. Endowed professorships were created with your name; professional meetings were focused on you as a person, scholar, priest.

As time unfolded your voice was displaced by the voices of other people who added hasty labels motivated by ill-intentioned motives, or worse, pure ignorance.

Yet, today your voice is a splendid reality in institutions like the The Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund for Mental Health and Human Rights, created in Boston, or the Guernica 37, a group of attorneys who continue to fight for justice from San Francisco and Madrid and to ensure that those military murderers, no matter where they may be, appear before international tribunals.

Every November 16, the people of El Salvador raise their voices and those of their comrades along the wide avenues of San Salvador, in a unanimous procession with lanterns.

Meanwhile, dear Nacho, in the backward gazing that accompanies aging, my memory continues to search for that voice of yours from our shared childhood. Are we children again in the loneliness of the world? Is everything yet to be discovered? Perhaps in that voice of yours is found the last mystery of being alive.

And, as in the nights of childhood, I still hear your voice, persuasive and somewhat tired, saying to your cardboard horse while you take him to the edge of your bed: “Let’s go to sleep, Lucero, it is already very late.” This is enough for me.

Carlos Martín-Baró, Ignacio’s brother, is a professor of English. Together with his sisters he has been supporting the judicial processes in Spain and the USA to bring those intellectual authors of the assassinations to trial in search of justice. He is the author of “Memoria de tu muerte” (Spanish, 2002, “Memory of Your Death”). This text was translated from the Spanish by Nelson Portillo. The collage was designed by Meredith Hawkins with photographs from MBF members and the Martín-Baró Family and the drawing of Ignacio is by Suzanne Ouellette (http://www.souellette.com/)