



the **JUST** word

Martín-Baró Initiative for Wellbeing & Human Rights at Grassroots International

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

Furthering Liberation Psychologies and Mutual Accompaniment: A Conversation with Mary Watkins

By *Lai Lai Liu and Ivana Wijedasa*

Professor Mary Watkins is a psychologist at the Pacifica Graduate Institute, and has worked with marginalized communities in numerous settings. This September, she joined us for a conversation about her work in furthering liberation psychologies and mutual accompaniment, the significance of the Martín-Baró Initiative, and her advice to those hoping to make a difference in ongoing struggles for wellbeing and human rights.

During our conversation, we were struck by the evolution of Watkins’ work, realizing almost immediately it would be impossible to capture the breadth and depth of her research and advocacy in a short article. Nevertheless, the following topics and stories stood out to us and are summarized here to introduce our readers to some of the many ways of rethinking wellbeing and liberation psychology in the 21st century.

Watkins has been involved in psychology for nearly fifty years, and the central questions she’s asked herself are about understanding psychology’s limitations, “having been constructed in Europe and America.” Her work to understand the discipline’s history and change its future has taken many forms, notably through her creation of the “Community, Liberation,

Indigenous and Eco-Psychologies” program at the Pacifica Graduate Institute, her participatory research with marginalized communities, and her efforts in grassroots and advocacy organizations.



She was particularly driven to address the issues of forced migration at the U.S.-Mexico border, and spoke to us about how her relocation to Santa Barbara, California in the 1990s shaped this focus for her. In California, she said, “I was confronted with a whole other set of dynamics, which I was unfamiliar with, [coming] from New York and Boston. And that had to do with the intensity of the way in which forced migration was affecting my community, and I really wanted to learn more about it.”

This confrontation led to involvement with organizations like New Sanctuary Coalition, and more recently, her work conducting forensic psychological evaluations of asylum-seekers in immigration detention centers. These developments came from a place of “figuring out how to use my psychological background to be of some help.”

We also spoke about what it meant to conduct research

Continued on page 2

INSIDE		Liberating U.S. Psychology 20 Years After 9/11 page 3
		Increased Gender-Based Violence in Latin America Due to COVID-19..... pages 4
		New Projects Funded in 2021..... pages 5-9
		Renewal Projects Funded in 2021 page 10-11

Our Mission & Values

Through grant-making and education, the Martín-Baró Initiative fosters psychological well-being, social consciousness, active resistance, and progressive social change in communities affected by institutional violence, repression, and social injustice.

OUR VALUES

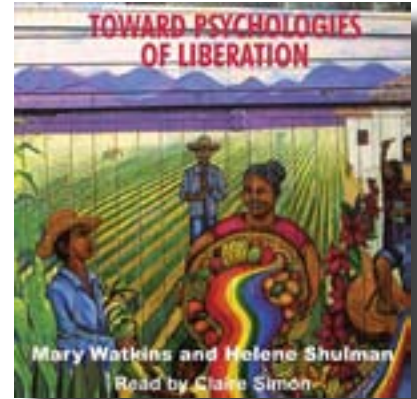
- ◆ We believe that the scars of such experiences are deeply seated both in the individual and in society.
- ◆ We believe in the power of the community collectively to heal these wounds, to move forward, and to create change.
- ◆ We believe in the importance of developing education and critical awareness 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 Initiative, its grantees, and its contributors for mutual education and social change.

FURTHERING LIBERATION PSYCHOLOGIES AND MUTUAL ACCOMPANIMENT: A CONVERSATION WITH MARY WATKINS continued from page 1

using a model of mutual accompaniment. Professor Watkins took us back further than her own work, saying she began to track the word “accompaniment” in psychology scholarship from writers like Paulo Freire, and that she felt like “it was the missing half of what I had been taught... his work led me into liberation theology and liberation psychology” in the 1970s. To her, accompaniment is a “beautiful word... to describe an essential change in the way that psychology was being conducted.” Meaning literally to *take bread with one another*, it is a powerful and hopeful aspiration for psychologists.



Traditionally, American and European psychology casts the researcher as an expert and “prematurely disavows” pre-existing lived knowledge in clinical and research domains. However, accompaniment challenges this framework and models what Professor Watkins called a “much more dialogical, much more participatory way of being with other people.” To her, mutual accompaniment represents “an ethics of respect and humility” that props up not the researcher’s expertise and control, but the importance and beauty of creating relationships and discovering a deeper sense of belonging through working alongside people.

Watkins also spoke to us about the particular significance of Ignacio Martín-Baró and the Martín-Baró Initiative in her discipline. During the late 1970s, Martín-Baró played a large role in one of the most important shifts in psychology, creating language and programs to address communities affected by “psychosocial trauma.”

In contrast with the paradigm of individualism in Euro-American psychology, Watkins commended Ignacio Martín-Baró’s utter clarity in challenging the social psychology he had studied at the University of Chicago. Once in San Salvador, he felt that entire communities’ suffering met with inapplicable, inadequate help and care. He pushed psychologists to critically evaluate oppressive systems that “place undue burdens on particular communities.” He fought for people to live without visible or invisible forms of violence. In this, Watkins believes the Martín-Baró Initiative is “a beautiful way to keep alive” his vision for a very different type of society by linking together people from around the world.

Toward the end of our conversation, we asked Watkins if she had any advice for young students and advocates who hoped to enter a similar field such as hers. She paused, telling us after a moment of reflection,

“There are a lot of roles that are needed in the world that have not yet been created and formalized. Do not restrict yourself to the roles that are already ‘givens’ if you feel they adversely and severely limit how you can work to embody your ... visions for the future that you hold with others.”

Contributing authors and editors: Roy Eidelson, Elizabeth Hargraves, Cat Hoff, Timothy Karcz, Lai Lai Liu, M. Brinton Lykes, Carol Schachet and Ivana Wijedasa. **PLEASE SUPPORT OUR WORK.** Contributions can be made on-line at: grassrootsonline.org/mbi-gift 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 Street, 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

Liberating U.S. Psychology 20 Years After 9/11

Roy Eidelson

The 20th anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States has brought renewed attention to the horrors of that day—and to the destructive “war on terror” that subsequently devastated millions of lives around the globe. I am also reminded of my own profession’s failures during this era, especially those of the American Psychological Association (APA), the world’s largest organization of psychologists. After 9/11, the APA could have joined concerned human rights groups in seeking to constrain a military-intelligence establishment that brutalized prisoners and diminished the country’s moral standing. But the association’s leaders chose a very different path.

Psychologists were key participants in designing and implementing barbaric detention and interrogation operations that caused grievous physical and psychological injuries. Nevertheless, casting aside the profession’s fundamental principles to “Do-No-Harm,” the APA denied any wrongdoing by psychologists, insisting that their participation helped to keep these operations safe, legal, ethical, and effective. Eventually, an independent investigation left no doubt that APA leaders had covertly collaborated with Pentagon representatives to ensure the continuing engagement of psychologists in activities that were routinely abusive and sometimes torturous.

To its credit, in recent years the APA has made headway in acknowledging and addressing past wrongdoing. Of particular note, the association’s leadership overwhelmingly approved a policy that now prohibits military psychologists from involvement with detainees at Guantánamo or other sites that United Nations authorities have determined violate international law. At the same time, official apologies to the victims or meaningful reparations for their suffering have not materialized from the APA. Moreover, even the limited reforms to date face opposition from influential actors with ties to the national security apparatus.

But beyond the war-on-terror torture scandal, a broader concern remains: the APA will always be at risk of losing its moral compass, scientific rudder, and independent voice until it’s liberated from the lure of militarism. The Department of Defense is a valued employer of psychologists, a significant funder of psychological research, and a source of internships for psychology graduate students. Also, strong connections with the military-intelligence establishment can bring stature and a “seat at the table” for policy deliberations with national and international ramifications. Furthermore, under the banner of “patriotism,” the glorification of war and calls for action and obedience can be hard to resist.

Yet none of these considerations justifies the APA’s deference to political leaders and institutional agendas that promote violence, domination, and oppression as tools of U.S. foreign policy. After all, what does the APA’s mission of “advancing psychology to benefit society and improve people’s lives” truly mean if the association doesn’t oppose the manipulative nurturing of enemy images, fearmongering propaganda, and the misuse of military might? The consequences of our collective failure

to rein in these forces are stark: nearly 800 overseas U.S. military bases; assertions of exceptionalism that encourage disregard for the lives and well-being of non-Americans; and seemingly unencumbered power for defense contractors that find the spoils of war far more desirable than diplomatic success or lasting peace.



Before his assassination by U.S.-trained El Salvadoran counter-insurgency forces over 30 years ago, social psychologist and Jesuit priest Ignacio Martín-Baró emphasized the necessity of “de-ideologizing” the status-quo-defending narratives of dominant institutions that serve powerful interests rather than the common good. The APA should appropriately mark the 20th anniversary of 9/11 by acknowledging this reality and taking steps to break free from the controlling grasp of the military-intelligence establishment. There’s no shortage of worthwhile ways to accomplish this.

Demand an end to the indefinite detention of Guantánamo’s prisoners and closure of the infamous facility. Call for reductions in the enormous military budget that chokes off funding for domestic programs essential to our nation’s psychological health. Help the public understand how fostering fears of terrorism can jeopardize civil liberties—particularly for those already most vulnerable to prejudice and stereotyping. Raise concerns about the psychological strategies behind today’s military recruitment efforts, which increasingly target younger teens and those whose financial and educational circumstances make them especially susceptible to false assurances and misrepresentations. And implement strong policies of transparency and accountability within the APA to ensure that the association’s deliberations are not influenced by self-aggrandizing national security interests.

In no small measure, the two decades after 9/11—an undeniably painful and shameful chapter in the APA’s history—will be remembered in relation to what happens going forward. The enmeshment of psychologists in the worst of the so-called war on terror and the APA’s failure to tenaciously defend the profession’s Do-No-Harm principles will not soon be forgotten, nor can the damage be undone. But the APA and U.S. psychology more generally can use the difficult lessons learned as a constructive springboard in two ways. First, by prioritizing ethics and human rights over expediency and opportunity. Second, by finding solidarity not with the purveyors of militaristic “solutions” but with the people who inevitably suffer at their hands. Let’s get to work.

Roy Eidelson, PhD, is a licensed psychologist, a member of the Coalition for an Ethical Psychology, and a past president of Psychologists for Social Responsibility.

Increased Gender-Based Violence in Latin America Due to COVID-19

By Ivana Wijedasa

Gender-based violence is defined as violence that is “directed against a person on the basis of their sex or gender, and it includes acts that inflict emotional, physical, mental or sexual harm or suffering...” (Dlamini, 2021, p.583). In Latin America, “machismo” is the belief system that fosters specific attitudes and behaviors that are directly linked to the idea of men’s superiority. The ideology of “machismo” and gender inequality rooted in the culture of Latin America contributes to the prevalence of gender-based violence in the region evident before COVID-19. For example, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean registered 3,529 femicides in 2018, or one woman killed every two hours due to her gender (Prusa, García Nice, & Soledad, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated this violence and drew attention to the life-threatening dangers of a patriarchal society.

Due to COVID-19 and some of its protocols, gender-based violence has increased significantly. Several countries in Latin America experienced substantial increases in calls to emergency hotlines after stay-at-home measures were enforced. Argentina reported a 39% increase in calls after March 2020 and Colombia saw a 90% rise (Prusa et al, 2020). During the first 18 days of stay-at-home measures, phone calls to Colombia’s domestic violence helpline increased by 130% (Vassanelli, 2020). Additionally, femicides in Brazil increased by 22% and there were 71 femicides in El Salvador between January and August of 2020. During the first three months of stay-at-home measures in Peru, 915 women were reported as missing by authorities (Wilson Center, 2020). This increase in gender-based violence is due at least in part to COVID-19 protocols including lockdown and stay at home orders that were implemented to mitigate the transmission of the virus. Although these orders were developed to protect the health of their society, they also contributed to the endangerment of the life and health of women who were forced to remain in enclosed spaces with their abusers. COVID-19 protocols to stay home left women with fewer options to escape domestic violence as 70% of femicides in Latin America occur in a victim’s home (Wilson Center, 2020).

It is also very likely that these statistics do not present the entire picture of gender-based violence in Latin America because less than 40% of women who experience violence report it (Dlamini, 2021). Therefore, the statistics above probably underestimate the occurrences of violence that women endure. Additionally, the increased targeted violence during COVID-19 does not impact all women equally. The concept of intersectionality is ever important with this situation as certain groups of women including domestic workers, older women, and women with disabilities are more susceptible to gender-based violence than other women.

The effects of gender-based violence emphasize the need to address it. After experiencing such violence, women are more likely to suffer from depression, anxiety, and other life-

long psychological effects. The self-esteem of women also tends to decrease and prevents them from realizing their full rights as human beings and equal citizens. Organizations that would typically aid in addressing these issues have experienced obstacles due to COVID-19. Many women’s shelters in Latin America shut down because of social distancing requirements and funding for women’s shelters in places such as Mexico have decreased despite the increase in violence.

As a result, the need to support organizations in combating gender-based violence has increased with COVID-19. To provide its support, the Martín Baró Initiative (MBI) has dedicated itself to funding projects that aim to alleviate the consequences of gender-based violence. Two organizations that have received funding from the MBI that are dedicated to promoting the well-being of women experiencing violence specifically in Guatemala are Buena Semilla and Colectiva Actores de Cambio. Buena Semilla’s project, *Women’s Circles*, is aimed at women who experience psychosocial adversity such as survivors of gender-based violence and builds a community for these women to express themselves. This community initiative provides psychosocial support for many Indigenous women and has adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic by using cell phones to sustain connections among the women. Colectiva Actores de Cambio promotes healing and justice for Maya and mestizo women who are survivors of sexual crimes and gendered racialized violence. The project funded by the MBI trains female organization leaders and integrates them into healing circles that work to empower women.

To do your part in supporting women and combatting the effects of gender-based violence, you can support the MBI thereby contributing to these organizations and to others doing similar work to that of Buena Semilla and Colectiva Actores de Cambio.

References

- Dlamini, N.J. (2021). Gender-Based Violence, Twin Pandemic to COVID-19. *Critical Sociology* 47(4-5), 583-590.
- Prusa, A., García Nice, B., and Soledad, O. (2020, May 27). “Pandemic of Violence: Protecting Women during COVID-19.” *New Security Beat*. Retrieved from <https://www.newsecuritybeat.org/2020/05/pandemic-violence-protecting-women-covid-19/>
- Vassanelli, E. (2020). “Gender Violence in Latin America During Covid-19.” *Crossfire KM*. Retrieved from <https://www.crossfirekm.org/articles/gender-violence-in-latin-america-during-covid-19>
- Wilson Center. (2020, November 24). *The Shadow Pandemic in Latin American: The Impact of COVID-19 on Gender-Based Violence* [Video]. Youtube. <https://youtu.be/SBjPQtZSAK8>

NEW GRANTEES

We are delighted to announce the first round of grants awarded from the Martín-Baró Initiative for Wellbeing and Human Rights (MBI). A vital initiative of Grassroots International, the MBI provides a way to integrate human rights with community health and wellbeing, particularly among those severely harmed by political repression, structural violence, and social injustice. Grants from the MBI support community-led efforts that promote education, psychosocial wellbeing, and the pursuit of social reparations and a more just and equitable world. This is a way of engaging in what our partners call “buen vivir,” or living well.

Below are brief descriptions of the organizations and their vital work.

The MBI is supported entirely by contributions, so please add your support to this work at grassrootsonline.org/mbi-gift.

Afaq Jadeeda, Gaza, Palestine

Afaq Jadeeda (New Horizons), founded in 2000 in Gaza, is one of the first grantees of the Martín-Baró Initiative (MBI) at Grassroots International. The organization is in the Nuseirat Camp, home to tens of thousands of Palestinian refugees. Afaq Jadeeda’s mission focuses on community development by providing services to children and women.

The MBI grant will resource Afaq Jadeeda as they seek to support the psychosocial wellbeing of over 200 children, ages 10-16, who live in the Nuseirat Camp. These children alongside thousands of others across Gaza are living through extreme violence and an occupation that negatively impacts their psychosocial wellbeing. Afaq Jadeeda will engage them in creative activities, encouraging participation in hobbies and crafts, and developing their ability to express their feelings to family and friends.

The project will also concentrate on educating family members, teachers, and other community members on how to physically and psychosocially support these children as they continue to be challenged to respond to the ongoing violence against Palestinians.



Buena Semilla: Women’s Circles, Guatemala



The Martín-Baró Initiative for Wellbeing and Human Rights (MBI) at Grassroots International is partnering with Buena Semilla to engage with Indigenous and other marginalized groups in Guatemala to create psychosocial health services that nurture their health, wellbeing, and self-determination.

The project, *Women’s Circles*, has been created by local Maya rural women of Guatemala to promote their wellbeing and empowerment. They creatively adapted their work during the COVID pandemic through using cell phones for sustaining connections among women. *Women’s Circles* target women who experience psychosocial adversity such as those with low self-esteem, single mothers, and survivors of gender-based violence. Through *Women’s Circles*, the women build community, learn new skills, strengthen their sense of agency, and find a safe space to express themselves.

The funding provided by the MBI will facilitate the grassroots multiplication of *Women’s Circles* as current circle leaders will mentor apprentice circle leaders creating 17 additional circles that will provide psychosocial support for over 200 local Indigenous women. In the end, over 2,000 family members and their communities will be indirectly impacted by the services provided by Buena Semilla.

Continued on page 6

New Projects Funded in 2021

continued from page 5

Centros de Apoyo Mutuo Jíbaro de Lares (CAMS), Plataforma Agro-Cultural para el Empoderamiento Comunitario (PACEC), Puerto Rico



The MBI is funding the Jíbaros Mutual Support Centers (CAMS) as part of a larger network of mutual aid and support centers within Puerto Rico. This grassroots movement was developed to facilitate a more community-based disaster response and self management to Hurricane María and the political climate disaster that ensued. Local communities are organizing to determine their needs and rebuild in a way that promotes their long-term autonomy. This particular project centers around claiming medical sovereignty through the formation of a multifaceted holistic health program to address the injustices of colonial trauma. It includes the collection of data from rural communities about their mental, emotional, and physical health needs, training and preparing staff, and conducting community outreach. Specific programs will include individual and group therapy, community space for dance and therapy, a medicinal garden, and other ceremonial and cultural healing practices.

Fundación Centro Bartolomé de Las Casas, San Salvador (CBC), El Salvador

The Bartolomé de las Casas Center and Foundation (CBC) was created in El Salvador to help heal communities affected by political, social, and historical trauma. The treatment of these communities, many of whose members survived war and armed conflict, has been facilitated through the affirmation and inclusion of intercultural and ancestral practices.

With financial support from the MBI, the CBC will support *Nuku Yolb'e*, a dialogue and exchange with survivors from two different areas: Chalatenango, El Salvador, and Quiché, Guatemala. The project aims to link the two communities, both with pasts of military dictatorships and grave structural injustices, in conversation to explore and redefine collective memory in pursuit of strengthening mental health, supporting resilience, and centering human rights. The ongoing conversation will be multigenerational, including young people, survivors, grandparents, and leaders of these communities. The CBC will create the space for an exchange of experience and wisdom in a community radio format.



Colectiva Actores de Cambio, Guatemala



The Actors of Change Collective, founded in Guatemala in 2009, promotes healing and justice for Maya and mestizo women who are survivors of sexual crimes and gendered racialized violence committed during the Guatemalan civil war and beyond. The voices, memories, bodies, and histories of these women are reaffirmed through the collective's work, and the networks woven amongst survivors and allies have positioned them to generate action against sexual violence and the injustices faced by women in their region.

The MBI is supporting the Collective's *Healing Action for the Recovery of Power and Life to Build Territories Free of Sexual Violence*. This project is a continuation of action-healing-training processes that the Collective has been developing since 2009. They will train 40 additional female organization leaders from the areas of Solola and Sacatepequez in Guatemala and integrate them into preexisting healing circles in these areas. The Collective will provide methodological and logistical support to these groups, with support from the funds granted by the MBI. In addition, they will hold meetings between healing groups and facilitators to encourage and sustain networking that contributes to the empowerment of women in these areas.

Comissão Pastoral da Terra-Maranhão, Brazil



The Pastoral Land Commission (Comissão Pastoral da Terra - CPT) accompanies peoples of the land and waters of Maranhão, Brazil, as they engage in collective struggles for land, territories, and human rights through sustainable food production and organized resistance. The CPT supports their political formation, centering their motivation, values, and spirituality while also celebrating their successes in struggles against injustice.

With funding from the MBI, they are launching their newest project, *From Banzo to Healing: Facing Pain through the Eyes of Women*. *From Banzo to Healing* will work with women from communities accompanied by the CPT, using psychological care and group experiences to strengthen their community autonomy and resistance. This project will hopefully

include 120 women from eight traditional communities in Maranhão, embodying the healing and transformative processes the CPT has long supported.

Connecting with Life, Santa Marta, El Salvador

This project in Santa Marta is part of Doctors for Global Health (Médicos para la Salud Global), a not-for-profit organization founded in 1995 by volunteers in El Salvador. The organization aims to promote human rights by building long-term relationships between its volunteers and communities around the world. Their mission is to improve health and foster human rights for those most in need by accompanying communities.

Funding from the MBI will support the community's work to intervene in the psychological and psychosocial effects of the Salvadoran civil war on its survivors and their descendants. *Connecting with Life* aims to promote the mental health of the survivors of armed conflict through the development of a radio campaign and the creation of self-help and self-care groups. The project targets women survivors of gender-based violence and men with drug use problems. With this project, Doctors for Global Health emphasizes the importance of mental health and self-care especially in response to traumatic events such as social violence, gender violence, and forced migration.



Domestic Workers United, Brooklyn, NY, USA

Domestic Workers United (DWU) is a largely Caribbean Black non-profit organization run by Caribbean Black and Latina worker leaders and volunteers. DWU organizes to end the exploitation and oppression of all workers whose labor is based mainly in homes and is not protected by most labor laws in New York City.

The MBI funding for DWU will be used to support a project called *Collective Self Caring as Resistance*. The project aims to impact a total of 70 domestic workers and their families through Town Halls that educate excluded workers on their rights and related programs such as DWU's food justice CSA program that currently distributes free bags of organic produce and herbs to 70 members. The project consists of virtual self-care presentations and exercises for the organizations' members who include Caribbean Black nannies, house cleaners, and elder care

New Projects Funded in 2021

continued from page 7

workers. These presentations started during 2020 and included free telemedicine consultations and sessions on meditation for mental health by a practicing psychologist. With funding from the MBI, DWU hopes to host a “retreat day” with previous health presenters in order to address the concerns and physical and emotional wellness of their members.

Kebetkache Women Development and Resource Center, Nigeria



The Kebetkache Women Development and Resource Center is a grassroots organization founded in 2003 working in Nigeria and the West Africa subregion to promote women’s rights and environmental justice through education, advocacy, and community action. Kebetkache works to support, center, and mobilize women in the region, to speak out against violence and injustice specifically in the highly militarized Niger Delta. Additionally, Kebetkache conducts research, outreach, and awareness raising in order to further promote their mission.

In collaboration with the MBI, Kebeethache has created the project *Building Women’s Resilience Through Trauma Healing*. The project aims to promote holistic health through trauma healing processes in three areas that have endured violence and conflict in the last five years. The project will build upon the risk and safety assessment that Kebetkache piloted in three local government areas in 2020. The funds will go to the trauma healing sessions of 40 women which will be held in a resort area and include counseling and storytelling sessions to heal shared trauma as well as various social, mental, emotional and physical health treatments.

KOURAJ, Haiti

KOURAJ is a group of masisi activists, fighting for the fundamental human rights of LGBTI+ persons in Haiti. KOURAJ defines *masisi* as “all persons who were, are, or will be potentially or actually discriminated against and/or stigmatized due to his or her sexual orientation or gender identity.” By empowering and mobilizing a veritable masisi community, unimposed by outsiders, KOURAJ seeks to change Haitian society through a Haitian rights-based movement.

Through funding from the MBI, KOURAJ will provide mental health support for people in the Haitian LGBTI+ community who are HIV positive. While providing psychological support, they will also provide training on knowing one’s rights. The daily denial of basic human rights damages this vulnerable population’s mental health immensely. Having found a local psychologist who can facilitate culturally grounded mental health and well-being counselling, KOURAJ will now identify participants in this project and provide them with the type of support they need.



Lajee Center, Aida and Al-Azza Refugee Camps, Palestine



The Lajee Center is a community-based grassroots center that engages creatively with new generations of Palestinians as they continue their ongoing struggle for justice and rights for Palestine. It was established in the Aida Refugee Camp in 2001, with active members also mobilizing from the Dheisheh and Al-Azza Refugee Camps, as well as the cities of Bethlehem, Beit Jala, Beit Sahour, and Ad-Doha. The Center's overarching goal is to provide refugee youth with cultural, educational, social, and developmental opportunities.

With funding from the MBI, the Lajee Center will launch their latest coalition, the *Palestinian Resilience Research Collective*. This is a collaboration involving Palestinian community health workers who will develop and publish a training manual for locally-based community health workers called *Existing in the Crossfires: Cultivating*

Trees of Sumoud Beyond the Wall - a Psychosocial Workbook. As a workbook containing lessons from years of communal lived experiences and fieldwork, *Existing in the Crossfires* will become an invaluable resource for knowledge and solidarity.



In describing well-being Ignacio Martín-Baró wrote that it is "... a dimension of the relations between persons and groups more than an individual state, even though this dimension may take root differently in the body of each of the individuals in these relations ... we want to emphasize how enlightening it is to change the lens and see mental health or illness not ... as the result of an individual's internal functioning but as the manifestation, in a person or group, of the humanizing or alienating character of a framework of historical relationships. We cannot be satisfied with treating post-traumatic stress...it is of primary importance that treatment 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."

(Ignacio Martín-Baró, 1994, *Writings for a Liberation Psychology*, pp.109-111)



Renewal Projects Funded in 2021

Renewed after being first funded by the Martín-Baró Fund and prior to its association with Grassroots International

Asociación Centro de Educación y Formación Maya Ixil, Guatemala



Center for Maya Ixil Education and Development was founded in 2003 in Chajul, Guatemala, and works with Maya women and their families who have been affected by the armed conflict. ACEFOMI is in its third year of funding and over the past two years ACEFOMI was able to engage 50 participants in its Mental Health and Human Rights program in 2019 and maintained 40 participants in the program despite the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

ACEFOMI will continue developing their mental health program through creating a series of workshops to more actively combat the sexism and gender-based violence that many women in Guatemala face. Topics will include self-esteem, women's rights, gender-based violence, human rights, processes for filing complaints, and prevention of violence against women. The programming continues to promote ACEFOMI's mission of caring for the psychosocial wellbeing of women, empowering women and promoting human rights.

The Justice Committee, New York City, USA

The Justice Committee (JC) is a grassroots organization located in New York City that has created a movement against police brutality and structural racism through empowering communities of color. They prioritize developing the leadership of both youth and elders in order to make their organizing a multi-generational effort and to create a broad-based movement for social justice.

The Justice Committee is in its third year of funding. In 2019, they organized workshops and developed a Rapid Response System to streamline reactions in the aftermath of police violence. In 2020, our funding helped the JC to organize for systemic change through passing the PoliceStat Act and a campaign to #DefundNYPD and remove police from mental health responses. The JC has also hosted Leadership Development and Organizing Skill-Building trainings to develop the leadership abilities of their members in the Families Leading Change program. This project has included workshops on emotional wellness and mobilizing able members to bring needed supplies to members and their families who are struggling. This year, the JC will continue their past projects including advocating for the removal of police from the mental health sector and to pursue a new goal of supporting the members of Families Leading Change materially and emotionally during the pandemic.



Renewal Projects Funded in 2021

La Asociación de Víctimas por la Paz y el Desarrollo (ASVIPAD), Colombia



The Victim's Association for Peace and Development (ASVIPAD) was founded in 2005 in Colombia and is in its third year of support. ASVIPAD's mission is to support, empower, and teach women who have been affected by the armed conflict in Colombia.

Over the past two years, the MBF has funded ASVIPAD's projects to promote human rights and provide reparations for the relatives of those who have disappeared. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the existing issues relating to women in the wake of armed conflict and has also created new challenges. ASVIPAD has developed four different programs to address the extensive toll the pandemic has had on the psychosocial wellbeing of many Colombian women and with this third year of funding they will be able to facilitate: (1) group sessions teaching self-care; (2) workshops, group sessions, and individual sessions focusing on healing and restorative practices for women who have experienced armed conflict; (3) review and activate comprehensive care pathways for female

victims; and (4) preparation for an analysis on the psychosocial and legal effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. ASVIPAD continues to prioritize the psychosocial wellbeing of women who have experienced armed conflict in Colombia and the MBI is proud to support their work.



Grassroots International's annual report is now available online at GrassrootsOnline.org/annualreport or via email upon request

Grassroots International Vision Statement

We envision a world in which a universal commitment to the health and well-being of the earth and all its peoples, fueled by successful global movements for social, economic, and ecological justice, has transformed production practices, consumption patterns, and economic and social relations to ones based on sustainability, equity, and dignity.

HEALING AT THE CENTER OF TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE: Community wellbeing in Palestine and Guatemala

Tuesday, Nov. 16

6:00PM-7:30PM EST ♦ Online via Zoom



The Martin-Baró Initiative
for Wellbeing and Human Rights



With **Devin Atallah** and colleagues, from a psychosocial wellness collective in Palestine and **Anne Marie Chomat** and colleagues, Buena Semilla Project, Guatemala, a Martín-Baró Initiative-supported project. Commemorating the assassination of Ignacio Martín-Baró and his seven companions on November 16, 1989.

Register: tinyurl.com/Nov16MBI

♻️ Printed on recycled paper.

Grassroots International
Martin-Baró Initiative
179 Boylston Street, 4th floor
Jamaica Plain, MA 02130



PRST STD
U.S. Postage
PAID
Boston, MA
Permit # 55294