

Exhibit displays work of Latin American women

By: Amanda Del Balso

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The Center for Human Rights and International Justice at Boston College sponsored an evening of photography presented in honor of the Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund for Mental Health and Human Rights on Wednesday. The photography exhibit was titled Women Warriors: Our Stories, Our Lives as Immigrant Women, and featured the work of six Latin American women who are members of the Center for Immigrant Families in New York.

The Center, established in 1997, helps immigrant women of color come together to reflect on the experiences and challenges that they face in their communities. As a creative approach to teaching English language skills, photography was incorporated as a means for the women to express themselves.

Immigrant women in the United States are often portrayed as victims, but the photographs in the exhibition correct that generalization by focusing on the ways in which the women struggle to keep their families and communities healthy, strong, and united. All of the photographs were in black and white, and many contained images of the women carrying out daily activities with their children and relatives.

Hilda Yulan de Villavicencio, an Ecuadorian woman whose photography was exhibited said, "I am very happy to be part of the Center of Women Fighters because I have met many good and caring people. I have acquired new experiences to help me in my life."

"I like to see what is really valuable to the women. It's clear from the pictures that the importance of family plays an important role in their lives," said Kate Englund, LSOE '08.

Representatives from the Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund for Mental Health and Human Rights were also present at the event to posthumously dedicate an award to Ignacio Martín-Baró, S.J., for his commitment to bringing peace and justice to the world. Martín-Baró was one of the several Jesuits murdered in the 1989 massacre in San Salvador, El Salvador. Before his death, Martín-Baró worked and lived among the Salvadorian people, researching and supporting advocacy programs with the goal of healing the individual and the collective problems associated with war and with oppression.

Dr. Herbert Kelman, a social psychology professor from Harvard University, attended the exhibition and spoke about his personal friendship with Martín-Baró. "In the short time that I knew him, Ignacio touched my life in the same profound way that he touched the

lives of so many others," said Kelman. "He was killed because he was carrying out his job as a peace practitioner."

The Ignacio Martín-Baró Fund was created in Martín-Baró's memory to foster psychological well-being, social consciousness, and active resistance in communities affected by institutional violence, repression, and social injustice. The Fund's goals are to encourage the development of grassroots community projects that promote progressive social change and community mental health by providing grants, networking, and technical support.

Donald Hafner, a professor in the political science department and associate director for the Center for Human Rights and International Justice, stated that the Martín-Baró Fund and BC's Center for Human Rights have similar mission statements and goals. Hafner said, "The Center's vision is action research."

After a brief presentation dedicated to Martín-Baró, guests were invited to view the photography of the six Latin American women from the Center for Immigrant Families. Four of the women whose photography was being exhibited answered questions from the BC students and faculty who attended the event. Professor Brinton Lykes, associate director for the Center for Human Rights, stated that this event, in which people from many disciplines come together to support a common cause, is critical to the Center for Human Rights' mission. "The Center thinks about forming the next generation of scholars and activists," she said.

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