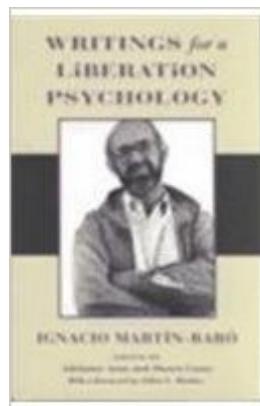


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Writings For A Liberation Psychology



Synopsis

"In your country," Ignacio Martínez-Bará remarked to a North American colleague, "it's publish or perish. In ours, it's publish and perish." In November 1989 a Salvadoran death squad extinguished his eloquent voice, raised so often and so passionately against oppression in his adopted country. A Spanish-born Jesuit priest trained in psychology at the University of Chicago, Martínez-Bará devoted much of his career to making psychology speak to the community as well as to the individual. This collection of his writings, the first in English translation, clarifies Martínez-Bará's importance in Latin American psychology and reveals a major force in the field of social theory. Gathering essays from an array of professional journals, this volume introduces readers to the questions and concerns that shaped Martínez-Bará's thinking over several decades: the psychological dimensions of political repression, the impact of violence and trauma on child development and mental health, the use of psychology for political ends, religion as a tool of ideology, and defining the "real" and the "normal" under conditions of state-sponsored violence and oppression, among others. Though grounded in the harsh realities of civil conflict in Central America, these essays have broad relevance in a world where political and social turmoil determines the conditions of daily life for so many. In them we encounter Martínez-Bará's humane, impassioned voice, reaffirming the essential connections among mental health, human rights, and the struggle against injustice. His analysis of contemporary social problems, and of the failure of the social sciences to address those problems, permits us to understand not only the substance of his contribution to social thought but also his lifelong commitment to the campesinos of El Salvador.

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Customer Reviews

Martin-Baro was a Spanish-born Jesuit priest and a University of Chicago-trained psychologist, teacher, and administrator at El Salvador's Universidad Centroamericana. Along with five other Jesuits, their housekeeper, and her teenaged daughter, he was murdered by soldiers in November 1989. The murders outraged the world. Having lived in a country where poverty and government oppression was the norm, Martin-Baro's aim in his work and writing was always human liberation. For the first translation of his writings into English, the editors have selected various journal articles from his long career. Most poignantly, Martin-Baro argues that traditional psychology's image of the human person is falsely abstract and fails to consider the real-life social and economic conditions that form people. Not in the line of traditional social psychology, these essays nonetheless offer an important argument from an important man. Recommended especially for academic collections in psychology or social theory. John Moryl, Yeshiva Univ. Lib., New York Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc.

These essays touch on religion as a tool of ideology, the meaning of work and the way in which reality becomes fragmented in a politically repressed society... Those who worked to bring forth these essays have added a measure of justice to his life. (Richard Higgins Boston Globe) Martín-Baró's essays are... characterized by a concreteness and a passion for justice, and they offer tremendous insights into Salvadoran society as well as the struggle for liberation. (Terry Coonan Human Rights Quarterly) Adrienne Aron and Shawn Corne's excellent introduction contextualizes the volume, both within the Salvadoran peasant communities with whom much of Martín-Baró's work was developed and within the academic/intellectual communities to whom it is addressed. The chapters are organized around three major themes, which are, arguably, the major dimensions along which Martín-Baró's work developed: political psychology, war and trauma, and "de-ideologizing" reality. The selections demonstrate his contributions to social psychology as well as his intense involvement in the social reality of his adoptive country, El Salvador... [This is an] excellent volume. It is required reading for psychologists seeking a more critical psychology--one that takes responsibility for its social position and privilege, and challenges the status quo. It is an equally important resource for those who seek ideas and examples for developing "indigenous psychology" from the base of marginalized people's lives, in coalition with them. (M. Brinton Lykes World Psychology)

A must have for social psychologists, sociologists, community organizers, and those trying to understand social dynamics. The author was a great scholar and a fallen hero assassinated by the death squads in El Salvador. Although the book was originally written a long time ago its content is universally relevant.

Book was in great condition.

Great Service, prompt response. Will definitely buy here again. Will come back next semester for my student accessory needs and other types of electronics.

Ignacio Martin-Baro is probably better known in the U.S. as one of the slain Jesuit priests of El Salvador than as the ingenious psychologist that he was. Aron and Corne do U.S. psychologists, who are more often than not barred by their lack of facility with the Spanish language from a large body of important psychological literature, a huge favor by editing this carefully chosen and lovingly prepared volume of his translated works. Because the writings they have selected span the period from 1974, shortly before Martin-Baro initiated graduate work at the University of Chicago, to 1989, when he was murdered, we as readers are able to observe the maturation of his perspective as well as the many ways he applied his psychological knowledge and training in what can only be described as a "limit situation"-- namely, El Salvador in the late 1970s through the mid 1980s. In these works, Martin-Baro addressed several themes of increasing global significance, including the effects political repression on the human psyche, the effects of war on children, the relation between religious ideology and political activity, and the nature of industrial psychology from the perspective of the under- and unemployed. Of greatest significance to psychologists, however, were his overarching themes, namely, the collusive role of mainstream psychology in human oppression and the necessary role of the psychologist in human liberation. Borrowing from Freire's famed concept of conscientizacao, Martin-Baro demonstrated how psychologists can act as agents of the development of critical consciousness, both through their nurturance of individuals in the process of psychological healing and development and through their interventions, as privileged and powerful members of society, upon the diseased socio-economic/political system itself. Through their insightful, passionate, and well-researched commentary, Aron and Corne demonstrate that Martin-Baro indeed lived and died by his praxis, proving that psychology's current state of critical inertia is not a necessary condition. In my opinion, Martin-Baro is destined to become the patron

saint of psychology--and, boy, does it need one.

The Jesuit priest, scholar, social psychologist and philosopher Ignacio Martin Baro wrote in the text "Religion as an instrument of psychological warfare which is a part of this book, about how religion can damage an individuals autonomy and self esteem. He wrote about how the evangelical protestant church grew at a great rate in El Salvador during the civil war that raged there during the 1980s. Some people argued the evangelical churches could quench the thirst of the people in a way that the catholic church couldnt. Baro researched what the political consequences of this were. He meant that the shift in aliegence of peoples faith was a political instrument used by those in power and that is was in fact a kind of political /psychological warfare. With this he meant that the government sought to change the mental climate of the people(the enemy). The American sponsored army in El Salvador, on the side of their regular military operations also waged a so called LIC (low intensity conflict) which was aimed at winning the people over to their side. The people often took the guerillas side and therefore it wasnt enough with a pure military victory, they were also forced to win an ideological one as well. Therefore it developed into a sociopolitical war instead of merley a military one. Propaganda and the spreading of lies and rumors where common place in this type of warfare which main purpose was to make the population insecure. Therefore it was important to tap into the religion since many people in the country looked to it for guidance in the hard times. The liberation theology that Ignacio Martin Baro represented , which was the theology that spoke for the poor and oppressed, gave the people a tool to use in the struggle against the army. It stated that it was not gods divine will that they should be oppressed but instead it prompted them to get organized both politically and religiously to fight back against the oppression. Therefore the more progressive catholic churches that taught liberation theology became a threat to those in power in El Salvador. Trying the tactics that the military usually used with a "dirty war" proved futile against these movements since it usually only ended up creating martys. Instead the military changed their strategy to psychological warfare that focused on trying to get as many people as possible to convert from these progressive churches and their theology of liberation to these evangelical churches. The government in El Salvador tried to channel the people into fundamental evangelical protestant churches that preached "the true faith", that was grounded in "the individuals salvation", and left it to god to transform "the sinful world" not man. These evangelical churches had sermons that contained strong anti communist sentiments. These evangelical churches had a theology that left it up to the holy spirit to intervene in the world and make changes, not man himself. Many North American evangelical churches who had close ties to

some of the most conservative american political movements where invited by the governmnet in El Salvador to conduct missionary activities within the country. So what it came down to was a war for the definiion of the god image. The government wanted to take away the immanent god image from the peasant. They wanted to take away the god who acted in the world and through people. This is usually described as a horisontal religiosity which leads to critical thinking and social liberation. Instead the government wanted to implement a god image that said that god was remote, far from earth and acted on the people. This can be described as a vertical religiosity which leads to alienation and social submissiveness. This was ultimatley done to marginalize people and drive them away from any type of social protest. In these fundamentalist evangelical protestant churches people where encouraged to cut the ties to their past political activities and instead engage in intense individualistic religioÃºs activities. When the government in El Salvador was confronted by liberation theology and the horizontal religious perspective their response was to try to get the people to convert to a form of religion that made them more passive. Tragically Ignacio Martin Baro, the Jesuit priest who made these findings public was assassinated by the El Salvadorian army. He was murdered together with five other Jesuit priests and their housekeeper and her 16 year old daughter in 1989. Living under a constant threat because of his subversive writing he foresaw his own death. He wrote about his possible assassination: "above all, the authorities try to create an official version of facts, an "official history", which ignores, distorts, falsifies and invents crucial aspects of reality. This official history is imposed to the public through an intense and aggressive propagandistic effort, which is supported through the weight of the highest official ranks... When facts that contradict the official history filter to public opinion, authorities raise a sanitary chord around them; these facts are then relegated to oblivion. The public expression of reality, and above all, the exposure of the official history... are considered subversive activities. But they are not. They only subvert the established order of falsehood. We come then to the paradox that those that dare to talk about reality or to denounce abuse, become at least culprits of justice". Noam Chomsky wrote of him the following: ...a mind that was probing and humane, wide-ranging in interests and passionate in concerns, and dedicated with a rare combination of intelligence and heroism to the challenge his work sets forth to construct a new person in a new society"

Yes. Canonize him. Martin-Baro gave his life to prove that psychology had more business than as an on-the-shelf academic discipline. Using its methods to highlight the misery of his El Salvadoran people, he demonstrated how powerful a psychology relevant to the needs of the oppressed can be. Very inspiring.

This unique work opened my eyes to a topic that most of us have no idea about. A must read for every political science major, and for everyone who cares about our world.

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