

the storycloth

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June 26: International Voices Speak Out Against Torture

“Our task today is not simply clinical, not simply to heal the wounds, not simply to prevent the new wounds from happening. Our task today is to end torture in the service of global civil society,” declared Steven Miles, M.D. on June 26. Miles, author of *Oath Betrayed: Torture, Medical Complicity, and the War on Terror* and a bioethicist, spoke at the Minneapolis Healing Center to commemorate United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture.

June 26 is the anniversary of the Convention Against Torture, and the day has been honored worldwide since 1998. The Center for Victims of Torture hosted events around the world to show solidarity with and support for torture survivors, and to promote the ultimate goal of a torture-free world.

At an event in Washington, D.C., Alberto Mora, former general counsel of the United States Navy, received

CVT’s Eclipse Award for his work in preventing torture of individuals held in American military detention facilities.

In his acceptance speech, Mora called on the public to stand firm in opposing the United States’ use of cruelty and inhuman treatment of detainees. “If we adopt the policy of cruelty, it is to say that we wish to live in a world that will be very different than the world we have wished to construct over the last half century. And this is because our country, our laws, our constitution, our foreign policy and our security strategy all pivot around the principle of individual human dignity protected as a matter of right, not as a matter of government’s grace or volition.”

Sierra Leone

Across the Atlantic, Sierra Leoneans joined together against torture in Tombodu, a site of mass killings in the Kono district. Carrying signs and wearing shirts



Sierra Leoneans march with CVT in solidarity against torture.

proclaiming the anti-torture message “Together Against Torture,” police officers, teachers, youth groups, women and military officers joined with other community members in a march to Tombodu town hall for speeches. School children performed skits dramatizing the events of the war, CVT psychosocial counselors sang songs denouncing torture and young people read poetry.

The group then walked in a candlelit procession to pay their

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Our mission: To heal the wounds of torture on individuals, their families and their communities, and to stop torture worldwide.

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Letter from the Executive Director

The Center for Victims of Torture is privileged to welcome Steven Miles, M.D., to our board of directors. Dr. Miles has made important contributions to improve medical care in prisons and refugee camps. You may know of his recent book, *Oath Betrayed: Torture, Medical Complicity, and the War on Terror*. It describes how health professionals failed to protect detainees, sometimes collaborating in the abuse, other times failing to report injuries or deaths resulting from abuse. Dr. Miles reminds us that torturing societies implicate many, not just a few “bad apples.”

The American Medical Association and the American Psychiatric Association have said their professionals are prohibited from directly participating in interrogations. But the American Psychological Association (APA) has not. A 2005 task force report said psychologists could assist in military interrogations and, disturbingly, defer to U.S. standards when international law conflicts with U.S. law.

The latter undermines the APA’s prohibition against torture because it allows military and intelligence psychologists to defer to the Bush Administration’s interpretation of U.S. law, an interpretation that allows for torture and cruelty.

The APA is holding its annual meeting as this letter goes to print. Many psychologists—including CVT staff and our colleagues in the torture treatment field—are urging the APA to correct the flaws in its policy.

The problems encountered by APA are not unique. Professional associations around the world struggle with how to enforce bans on torture. California is considering a way to help professionals. Pending legislation would require notifying all state licensed professionals that they are obligated to uphold the Convention Against Torture and the Geneva Conventions. It would also notify the military and CIA that California professionals are prohibited from direct involvement in interrogations to protect them from criminal liability.

This legislation is worthy of consideration by all states.



Douglas A. Johnson

Special Opportunities in Giving: Support CVT’s Work and Realize Tax Savings

More and more individuals are taking advantage of a new tax saving measure created last year by Congress. This special opportunity is scheduled to expire on December 31, 2007, so friends of CVT may want to talk now with their financial advisors to see if they can benefit from this legislation.

Under provisions of the Pension Protection Act of 2006, individuals who are 70 ½ or older may make distributions from their IRAs to a nonprofit organization—without incurring the taxes that would apply to a normal with-

drawal from an IRA account. The limit on this distribution is \$100,000, and the funds must be *transferred directly from the IRA* to the nonprofit organization.

For some individuals, taking this step will be an added “gift” to their heirs who will have lower taxes to pay on inherited IRAs. And, of course, an IRA distribution would be a wonderful way to make a significant contribution to the Center for Victims of Torture. This is yet another creative way to provide hope and healing for those

who have suffered torture.

For CVT friends who are younger or with other types of retirement savings, there are many creative ways to make charitable contributions. The Center for Victims of Torture is prepared to help you explore planned gifts—including charitable gift annuities—and other ways you can make a valuable investment in CVT’s work.

The above information is not intended as legal or financial advice. Please talk with your professional advisor. However, if you have any questions, please contact Peter Dross, Director of Development, by calling toll-free 1-877-265-8775 or e-mail pdross@cvt.org.

International Voices Speak Out

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respects at the Tombodu War Memorial. Muslim and Christian leaders offered prayers for peace while a traditional religious leader offered prayers and libation for those killed in Tombodu. The commemoration ended with a video of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Sierra Leone.

Democratic Republic of Congo

In Pweto in the Democratic Republic of Congo, CVT staff coordinated a full day of events to honor the UN Convention Against Torture. The morning began with a motor parade that led to the local CVT office for a series of speeches by clinicians, local children and community members. To show their

commitment to human rights and decry the use of torture, guests were invited to sign a copy of Article 2 of the United Nations Convention Against Torture. Because CVT is new to the community, the audience had the opportunity to ask about trauma, CVT, and healing services. A team of psychosocial counselors answered in the three languages spoken in the community—Kiswahili, French, and Kibemba—so that all attendees could understand.

In the afternoon, CVT opened its doors to the returning refugees. Clinicians were available to lead support groups, offer individual counseling and conduct community education on torture and its results.

Liberia

Nearly 400 people attended the commemorations in three communities in Bong County, Liberia. Dressed in T-shirts printed with “Stand Up, Speak Out, Stop Torture Now,” community members and CVT staff marched on main thoroughfares and listened to speeches about the UN convention and the importance of respecting human rights. A moment of silence honored those who did not survive their torture. The programs concluded with a movie segment about human rights violations in South Africa during apartheid.

The entire June 26 commemoration in Gbarnga in Bong County was documented publicly on the radio in Monrovia, Liberia. The events were broadcast in the news headlines for two days. CVT healing services were featured on a morning

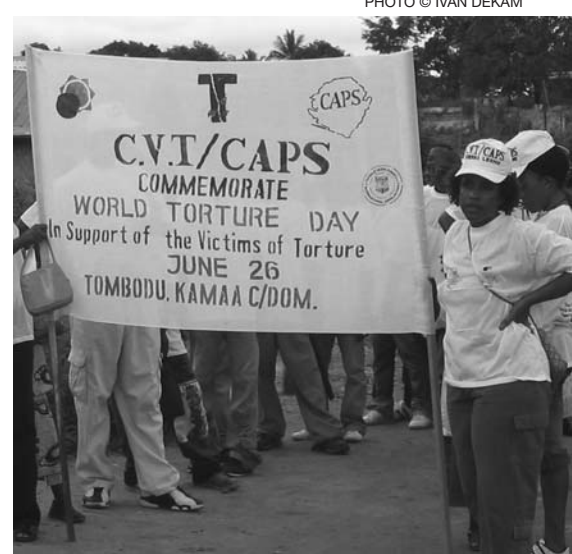


PHOTO © IVAN DEKAM

Sierra Leoneans march to the Tombodu War Memorial to offer their respects.

radio program, educating the community about the effects of torture and human rights.

In Lofa County, residents marched through the community to raise awareness of the day. Attendees joined in song and prayer and were reminded of the importance of the day through speeches and a visit to a mass grave site. In his keynote address, Michael Kamau, a CVT clinician/trainer rallied the community. “Let’s all join hands with CVT and support survivors of torture, and strive to prevent torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishments in Tenebu community, Lofa County and in other counties of Liberia.”

Kamau’s words, spoken in Liberia, were echoed on June 26 in many languages and communities around the world, instilling hope for the healing of survivors and for a world that respects human dignity.



PHOTO © CHUCK KENNEDY

Alberto Mora accepts the Eclipse Award from CVT Executive Director Doug Johnson at an event in Washington, D.C.

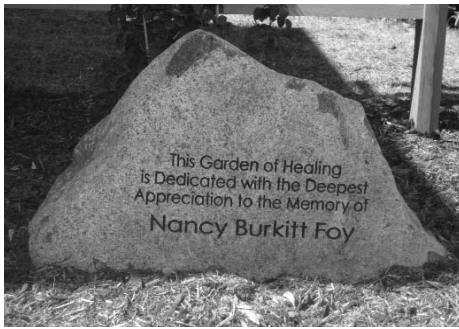
The Foys: Cultivating Gardens and the Healing Process

By Patricia Drey

When garden enthusiasts Rob Foy and Nancy Burkitt Foy went on a garden tour fundraiser for CVT in 1995, they saw an event that had yet to blossom.

“Nancy decided right then and there she wanted to become involved in the Center, and especially in the garden tour,” Rob Foy said of his wife, who died in 2002.

Nancy volunteered to help organize the 1996 tour, and she helped change



Nancy Foy commemorative rock in the St. Paul Healing Center garden honoring Nancy's longtime volunteer service.

a few things, Rob said. She suggested clustering the gardens so it didn't take so long to get from one to the next, she drove the entire tour to make sure the tour guidebook was accurate and she became chair of the St. Paul selection committee to ensure the gardens showcased were first-rate.

“Really and truly it was something she was good at, and it was a good cause,” Rob said.

Rob, a retired English professor, had an idea of his own. He wanted to see more detailed descriptions of each garden on the program so attendees could have a better idea of which ones they wanted to see. Both Rob and Nancy were pretty tough critics when it came to gardens, he said. They'd visited gardens all over the world including England and Japan. In the six years Nancy was involved in the Healing Gardens Tour, it became well known throughout the gardening community, he said.

Nancy's commitment to gardens and CVT was recently memorialized at the CVT Healing Center in St. Paul,



PHOTOS © AMY-JO VERSOLATO

Rob Foy with his daughters Elizabeth Bergman (left) and Malinda Foy (right) and granddaughter Helena Bergman.

Minnesota. The garden at the Center was dedicated to her on July 7 and provides survivors with a place for reflection and solace.

In 2006, Rob combined his loves of words and gardening into a book of garden poems called *Landskips* and donated all proceeds from the book to CVT. With their work and donation of time, the Foys helped raise awareness of CVT and the healing power of gardens.

Walk for Survivors on September 16

Join the Center for Victims of Torture on the Walk for Justice September 16. This 5K walk in Minneapolis raises funds and awareness of social justice issues. You can help by joining in the walk, sponsoring the CVT team, or being a “virtual walker” by contributing on-line at www.walkforjustice.org. Or visit www.cvt.org and look for a link to the Walk for Justice site. There is no cost for CVT to participate so all proceeds are used to heal the wounds of torture.

The Center for Victims of Torture is Part of the 2007 Combined Federal Campaign

Federal employees can make a hassle-free, pre-tax contribution by selecting CVT on their donation ballot. Look for CVT in the section of Human and Civil Rights Organizations of America, under organization number 11943.

If you are not a federal employee, but are interested in making problem-free contributions to CVT, you can authorize automatic and secure monthly gifts from your credit card or bank account. Please contact us at 1-877-265-8775 or cvt@cvt.org to find out how you can become part of CVT's Circle of Hope monthly giving program.

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