

The
CENTER for
VICTIMS of
TORTURE

THE
storycloth

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In His Own Words: Blaise's Journey to Healing

After peacefully protesting the authoritarian government's shutdown of his university in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Blaise was detained and tortured before escaping to South Africa and, eventually, making his way to the United States. The courageous story he shares below is adapted from remarks he delivered during CVT's Restoring Hope Breakfast this month.

Life has been tough for me. But looking back, I see so many places where, because of the compassion of others, I was never really alone.

When I escaped to South Africa after being tortured in the Congo twenty years ago, I was a scared and lonely young man. It was through the kindness of a stranger I met on the plane that I was able to find a place to stay and have food to eat.

And when I made it to Minneapolis after being tortured again after speaking out for what is right, I was distraught, separated from my wife and children in South Africa. I even considered ending my own life. But through

the kindness of another good Samaritan, I found my way to CVT and its community of caring supporters.

So I know the helping power of strangers. I will never meet most CVT supporters, but your kindness and generosity has forged an unbreakable bond between us. It is how I found the therapy I needed. It is why I am alive today, making more of my dreams come true.

On the day I graduated from CVT, I went for my final session. Sitting in the waiting room were four survivors of torture waiting for their appointments. One young man looked to be the same state I was in when I first came to CVT. His eyes were fixed on the floor,



his shoulders hunched as though he was carrying the weight of the world on his back. I could feel his weariness.

My mind went back to my own first day at CVT. I asked him why he came here. He started telling me his story in French. And do you know what? He was from the Congo too. I quietly cried as he told me in a low voice about how

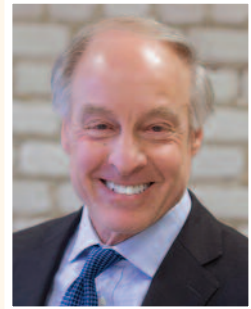
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Restoring
the Dignity of
the Human Spirit

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Letter from the Executive Director



Curt Goering

Dear Friends,

As I write this, we're nearing the end of one of the most contentious elections in American history.

I don't know how these next few days will play out. I don't know which candidate will win the White House, or which party will control Congress ... or even how long it may be before we know the answers to those questions as the unprecedented number of mailed-in ballots are counted.

But there's one thing I do know. No matter what changes Election Day may usher in, the vision you and I share will never change:

A world free of torture. A world where all survivors hurting in body and mind and spirit get the healing care they so desperately need. A world where families forced to flee violence and persecution are treated with compassion and assistance rather than cruelty and contempt.

In some areas, of course, the outcome of the election will affect our tactics and immediate objectives, especially in our critical advocacy work to restore just and humane systems through which refugees and asylum seekers can seek protection in the United States.

But no matter who wins the election, that advocacy work will face tough challenges in the coming year—either in the hard work of rebuilding our asylum and refugee systems after years of attack, or in protecting them against even greater dismantling.

No matter who wins the election, we will continue to confront the immediate crisis of COVID-19, which is dramatically compounding many of our clients' sense of isolation and fear, and creating severe obstacles in our ability to give them healing care, especially at our projects in refugee camps.

And no matter who wins the election, CVT will still be overwhelmed by the number of torture survivors reaching out for our help, as the worst refugee crisis since the Second World War drags on.

That's why I am so deeply grateful for your caring support ... and hopeful that even more torture survivors like Blaise, who shares his story with you in this newsletter, will be able to count on you in the weeks and months ahead. No matter who wins the election.

With my deepest appreciation,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Curt Goering". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Curt Goering
Executive Director

Fierce Intolerance for Injustice

Phyllis Owen remembers when she first heard about the Center for Victims of Torture.

It was June of 1989 and she was reading the newspaper comments made by Minnesota's then-Governor Rudy Perpich about this new organization — an organization doing such wonderful work helping torture survivors in the state's growing refugee population. Phyllis sat down immediately and wrote out a check for \$10.

That was the beginning of a long partnership that comes naturally to Phyllis, whose entire life has been defined by a fierce intolerance for injustice and a passion for helping others. That's why she chose nursing as a profession. That's why she and her husband, Greg, helped sponsor a Bosnian family forced to flee civil war in their home country. That's

why she was sick with outrage when our own government tortured people in the wake of 9/11.

And that's why she and her husband have not only supported the Center for Victims of Torture over the years but also decided to create a lasting legacy by including CVT in their estate plans. As she says, *"What you put in your will is an expression of your values and heart."*

She knows that CVT gives her a powerful way to put her values into action: *"CVT is able to do what individuals can't do on their own. You have to be part of a community, taking action together to make the work happen."*

The legacy gift they're making through their will ensures that Phyllis and Greg will be a part of that community for many years to come.



"What you put in your will is an expression of your values and heart."

In His Own Words: Blaise's Journey to Healing

(from page 1)

he had been beaten and felt fear through his entire body.

It was a fear I knew all too well. And it's why I told my social worker that day, *"This is not the end for me and CVT. It is the beginning of something else. I will do what I can so that those men and women in the waiting room will not be forgotten."*

The work done by CVT helps save lives. It helped save my life. I am a living witness to what happens when you choose to stand up for

what is right and support CVT.

When there is a waiting list it doesn't mean that CVT doesn't want to help, it means that they don't have the resources to say yes to everyone. I went through awful things—things which you don't want to know. But there is always another person behind me. And another behind that person. We cannot simply ignore these people.

For me, I have big dreams to make a difference for others. I am graduating this fall with a degree in business and community develop-

ment. I've started a new foundation, *Bon Samaritain*, located in the Congo, to help young people, like me, who were tortured for standing up for what is right.

And I have some joyful news: my wife and I reunited after four years of being separated! We are so happy being back together, raising our children in Minnesota.

Life is short, and I believe we have to make a difference so that when our time is up we can look and say to ourselves, *"Okay I did something for someone."*

Ways You Can Help More Survivors Rediscover Hope

Your caring generosity helps CVT give torture survivors the care they need to heal their wounds, rebuild their lives and rediscover joy and hope in the future. Here are some ways you can magnify your impact and help even more survivors.

Employer-Matching. Many employers will match charitable giving from their employees, doubling or even tripling their contributions. Contact your employer's human resources department to find out whether this is a way you can leverage your impact.

Monthly Giving. Rather than donating once a year, or a few times throughout the year, many of our supporters choose instead to join the CVT *Circle of Hope* by having a smaller gift charged every month to a credit card or transferred electronically from a checking account.

As a *Circle of Hope* member, you will help provide a stable source of reliable funding, reduce our administrative costs and ensure that even more of your donation supports life-changing rehabilitative care. You will receive an annual statement in January with all of your donations for the previous year. And, of course, you can change, suspend, or cancel your giving at any time. To join the *Circle of Hope*, contact Anna Zaros, at azaros@cvt.org or 651-436-4859.

Legacy Giving. Many donors who do not have the resources to make substantial gifts during their lifetimes find it possible to be extraordinarily generous through their estate planning. A gift of this kind will extend your

legacy of hope to future torture survivors while also offering potential financial benefits to you and your loved ones, including sparing them complex probate procedures and costly taxes.

- **Bequest** — Making a bequest to CVT through your will or living trust is one of the simplest ways to create a legacy gift to CVT. A bequest can be modified or canceled at any time, and it can be for a specified amount or percentage of your estate.
- **Life Insurance or Retirement Plan Beneficiary** — Another simple way to leave a lasting impact to survivors of torture is by naming CVT a beneficiary of your life insurance, IRA, or other retirement account.
- **Qualified Charitable Distribution from an IRA** — If you are 70½ years of age, you can make a qualified charitable distribution to CVT from your Individual Retirement Account (IRA).

For more information on any of these options or other ways to make a legacy gift to the Center for Victims of Torture, please contact Anna Zaros at (612) 436-4859 or azaros@cvt.org. Of course, you should always consult with your attorney, accountant, or financial planner to ensure that your gift fits your personal situation.

To make an immediate gift, visit us online at www.cvt.org, send a check to 2356 University Avenue W, Suite 430, St. Paul, MN 55114, or call (612) 436-4808. Thank you for your ongoing commitment to healing the wounds of torture.

Important Tax Changes to Charitable Giving in 2020

1 Required minimum distributions (RMDs) from certain retirement plans and accounts, including traditional IRAs, are suspended for 2020. If you are 70½ years of age, you can still make a qualified charitable distribution (QCD), which lowers the fair market value of your IRA and can have the benefit of lowering your RMD amount for future years.

2 For taxpayers who *do not* itemize, if you make a \$300 charitable contribution you can add it as a

deduction on top of the standard deduction. This is for cash gifts only.

3 The adjusted gross income limitation for charitable gifts is lifted for 2020. Typically you can deduct up to 60% of your adjusted gross income for cash gifts given to charity. This year, you can deduct up to 100% of your adjusted gross income for gifts to charity on your 2020 tax return. This only applies to cash gifts given directly to charities.



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