

Christie, D. J., Wagner, R. V., & Winter, D. A. (Eds.). (2001). ***Peace, Conflict, and Violence: Peace Psychology for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century***. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

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## **CHAPTER 14**

# **HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AS STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE**

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Psychologists have been involved in multiple efforts to end war and other conditions that contribute to human rights violations (Smith, 1999). They have also worked extensively with survivors of human rights abuses (Graça Machel/*UN Study on the Effects of War on Children*, 1998; Lykes, Brabeck, Ferns, & Radan, 1993; Lykes & Liem, 1990). Much of the work has focused on the effects of direct violence and on the consequences of violating individuals' civil and political rights (called first-generation human rights).

In this chapter, however, I am concerned about later generations of human rights and their impact on the way we think and practice as peace psychologists. Whereas first-generation rights refer to civil and political rights, second-generation rights focus on social, economic, and cultural rights. Third-generation rights refer to “solidarity rights,” such as the right to development, self-determination, peace, and a clean environment. Fourth-generation rights refer to the rights of indigenous peoples. After discussing the historical formulations of these rights, I then show how several recent psychological theories, including liberation psychology, cultural psychology, and

social constructivism elucidate this extended thinking about human rights. I will argue that examining these extended human rights helps us illuminate the chronic and hidden structural violence produced by armed conflict. I will then describe how the cases of Argentina and Guatemala demonstrate a “shift toward the social and structural” within selected areas of psychological and human rights discourse. Finally, I will describe community peacebuilding that focuses on the structural violence produced by violations of these extended human rights.

## FOUR GENERATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Many human rights scholars and social scientists have adopted the language of “generations of rights”<sup>1</sup> to refer to the historical development of formulated rights (*No hiding place: Human rights—A world report*, 1998; Messer, 1995). Within this understanding, first-generation rights (civil-political rights) were developed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and second-generation rights (social, economic, and cultural rights) were developed in the nineteenth century. First-and second-generation rights were embodied by the original Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and made legally binding in the Conventions on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, both approved by the United Nations in 1966. In contrast, third-generation rights refer to “solidarity rights,” such as the right to development, self-determination, peace, and a clean environment; fourth-generation rights refer to the rights of indigenous peoples. These latter rights date from the twentieth century and are embodied in later

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<sup>1</sup> Those who critique the language of “generations of rights” argue, in contrast, that it is not a useful distinction because conventions such as the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (approved in 1979) and the Rights of the Child (approved in 1989) cut across these “supposed generations,” integrating individual and group rights (see, for example, Oloka-Onyango & Tamale, 1995). Despite this critique, in this chapter I have used the language of generations of rights to develop my argument.

declarations and conventions.

Differences in prioritizing among these various rights have persisted, as evidenced in the failure of the former Soviet Union and other socialist countries to accept individual political rights, despite their having signed the covenants (Messer, 1997). The United States, in contrast, has neither ratified nor implemented treaties on social or economic rights (Katz, 1998; Messer, 1997; Rosemont, 1998). As significantly, most Unitedstatesians<sup>2</sup>typically think of human rights abuses primarily in civil or political terms, that is, as violations of our rights to free speech, or as arbitrary arrest, or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment. Implicit within this articulation of rights is the assumption that it is the rights of individuals that are being asserted and/or protected. Few countries from Africa, Latin America, or Asia belonged to the United Nations during the period in which the initial human rights declaration was drafted. Many were still under colonial rule. It is not, therefore, surprising that the views of the “majority world” were not well represented in the initial documents (Messer, 1997).

The end of the Cold War has brought dramatic political changes, creating new alliances and giving voice to formerly marginalized and/or nonexistent states. Some of these countries achieved liberation from European colonial rule while new countries also formed as ethnic/national groups asserted their independence. Leaders within these countries, as well as women and indigenous groups throughout the world, have fought to expand the two original human rights covenants to include demands for the rights of women, children, and indigenous peoples

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<sup>2</sup> The term is a translation of the Spanish term “estadounidense” (see Gugelberger, 1996, p. 4, also Note 4, p. 119). It is used here rather than the more common “American” since this latter term includes reference to all citizens of the Americas, that is, of Canada, Mexico, Central and South America, and the United States of America.

(see <http://www.un.org> for copies of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989; the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, 1979; and the Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 1994). The works of Kam (1998), Menchú Tum (1998), Nagengast (1997), Oloka-Onyango & Tamale (1995), Rao (1995), Wells (1998), and Zechenter (1997) describe important struggles at the grassroots level, and among academics and policy-makers, that concluded in the extension rights. For example, the draft declaration of indigenous rights establishes collective rights, that is, “a right that adheres to certain groups *because* it is not reducible to individuals” (Thompson, 1997, p. 789; italics in original). These collective rights are known as fourth-generation rights. Collective rights raise potential challenges for Westerners, whose assumptions about rights typically are grounded in the belief that the locus of rights is the autonomous individual.

Thompson (1997), an anthropologist, distinguishes between collective and group rights, recognizing that the latter have a long tradition within the U.S. legal system. He further distinguishes among ethnic minorities, the nation, and the state, hoping thus to clarify the declaration’s meaning of collective rights and its implications for international human rights. Thompson’s argument parallels similar developments within psychology that have emphasized the social and collective dimensions of individuality while critiquing assumptions of individualism underlying many Euro-American notions (Sampson, 1993). The Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples also raises critical concerns about the importance of the environment and the multiple ways in which indigenous identity is constructed in relationship with the earth (Menchú Tum, 1998).

In addition, third-and fourth-generation rights challenge the assumed universal character of

the initial human rights declarations. They emphasize the importance of social context, that is, of culture, the environment, and of history in the very definition of human rights and to whom they belong. Specifically, third-and fourth-generation rights affirm the collectivity as an important locus of rights. Debates about indigenous peoples' rights challenge the presumed universality of human rights by emphasizing the relative positions of different collectivities in relation to power and resources (see *Universal human rights vs. cultural relativity: Special issue*, 1997). This expanded understanding of human rights thus confirms that denial of civil-political rights as well as economic, cultural, social, and collective rights constitute human rights violations and abuses. It focuses attention on the individual and the collective and the systemic and structural forces in which they are socially embedded.

## **PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO AN EXPANDED UNDERSTANDING OF RIGHTS**

Although psychologists have not yet explicitly addressed the nature of human rights, several recent theoretical developments contribute to understanding the implications of expanded human rights for peace psychologists and others seeking to work with human rights violations. These developments complement the dominant assumptions in psychology, which are positivist, universalistic, objective, and laboratory-based. I briefly describe some of these ideas to elucidate how they help us understand extended human rights violations as structural violence.

### **Liberation Psychology in Contexts of War**

Ignacio Martín-Baró (1990), a Salvadoran social psychologist and Jesuit priest, argued that the aftereffects of political repression carried out by governments was one of the thorniest problems

confronting Latin American states hoping to establish democratic governments. He emphasized that in addition to damage to personal lives, harm had been done to the social structures themselves—to the norms, values, and principles by which people are educated, and to the institutions that govern the lives of citizens. “Social trauma affects individuals precisely in their social character; that is, as a totality, as a system” (Martín-Baró, 1994, p. 124).

Martín-Baró’s formulation of liberation psychology draws on Latin American liberation theology and pedagogy (Freire, 1970, 1973; Gutiérrez, 1973/1988) and includes (1) a focus on the liberation of a whole people (i.e., the collectivity), as well as personal liberation; (2) a new epistemology wherein the truth of the popular majority is not to be found, but created, that is, wherein truth is constructed “from below”; and (3) a new praxis, wherein we place ourselves within the research-action process alongside the dominated or oppressed rather than alongside the dominator or oppressor (Martín-Baró, 1994). He argued that taking sides is not bias but rather an ethical choice, grounded in the truths of reason and compassion. As is evident in his description, liberation psychology is clearly political in that it seeks to change power relations.

Martín-Baró’s psychology of liberation is not totally new within Western psychology and psychiatry. It echoes earlier work by Franz Fanon (1967; see Dawes, this volume, for a fuller description of Fanon’s liberation psychology/psychiatry). African American or Black psychology draws heavily on the works of Black liberation theology and/or Africanist traditions and is also echoed in Martín-Baró’s work. Thomas Gordon (1973) compared “White and Black psychology,” raising ethical and political concerns, conceptual limitations, and methodological weaknesses within White, i.e., Euro-American psychology. Gordon challenged Black psychology to give priority consideration to, among other things, developing research that proceeds “from real

life needs rather than from theoretical imperatives” (p. 94). He urged the development of collaborative relations with Black communities and suggested that psychologists would need new research competencies and roles, including those of advocates, lobbyists, information resource persons, and watchdogs that “facilitate the advancement of our collective interests” (p. 94). An important point of agreement among the liberation psychologies of Fanon and Martín-Baró and Black psychology is the shift of psychologists’ attention to the systemic or structural dimensions of the identified problem or concern, rather than its more typical focal point, the individual person abstracted from a multi-layered social, historical, and cultural context.

Within this alternative framework, trauma is not primarily or exclusively an intrapsychic phenomenon, but rather is conceived of as a psycho-social event. Psycho-social trauma reflects a dialectic process, that is, it “resides in the social relations of which the individual is only a part” (Martín-Baró, 1994, p. 124). Martín-Baró suggested further that “psychosocial trauma can be a normal consequence of a social system based on social relations of exploitation and dehumanizing oppression” such as those in wartime El Salvador (p. 125). Trauma becomes a usual event, not an aberration. In the context of war, trauma is an everyday part of life. During conditions of peace, the slaughter of individuals, the disappearance of loved ones, the inability to distinguish what is one’s experience from what others say it is (and, when one does, the fear to speak one’s point of view), the militarization of institutions, and the extreme polarization of social life are seen as abnormal. But in wartime El Salvador, for example, people came to accept these experiences as normal. Martín-Baró offers liberation psychology as one response for psychologists who seek to accompany local populations in responding to and redressing these extreme violations and their effects.

## **Constructivist and Cultural Interpretations: Symbolic Aspects of Terror**

Psychologists who have documented the effects of extreme trauma and torture in war, have typically focused on the events of direct violence and their immediate consequences for the individual. More specifically, those working with survivors of war have termed the constellation of symptoms suffered by many survivors as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and developed wide-ranging treatment and intervention strategies (Herman, 1992). In contrast, social constructivists argue that the meanings we make of a phenomenon are not adequately represented by this labeling of symptoms (Aron, Corne, Fursland, & Zewler, 1991). Rather, meanings are co-constructed by those who experience them in relationships in a particular socio-historical time, culture, and place (Agger, 1994; Gergen, 1994, 1997). Dialogue and engagement are critical strategies for constructing knowledge and understanding which are inherently value-laden, rather than value-neutral. This point of view is part of a post-modern emphasis on inquiry and action (Reason & Rowan, 1981) and calls our attention to the multiple meanings that are made of war and human rights violations by survivors. This meaning-making process is best understood through the thick descriptions of events constructed by the survivors in dialogue and/or interaction with those who accompany them (Lykes, 1996).

Anthropologists and cultural psychologists who have explored the meanings of human rights violations and their effects have suggested that in addition to the effect of terror on the immediate consequences for individuals, terror has symbolic effects on entire communities and across generations (Danieli, 1998). I have argued previously (Lykes, 1996) that terror not only destroys the present but forces a rethinking of the past and deeply threatens the future through its destructive effects on the next generation's capacity to culturally affirm itself. My field work in Guate-

mala, as well as the work of others in Argentina, further clarifies the implications of seeing extended human rights violations as structural violence.

## **ARGENTINA AND GUATEMALA: STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE AS HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS**

Human rights activists and social scientists who have worked with survivors of state-sponsored violence and war in Argentina and Guatemala argue that horrific violations of individual human rights in Argentina (Suárez-Orozco, 1992) and Guatemala (CEH, 1999; ODHAG, 1998; Schirmer, 1998) can be traced, in part, to the worldviews of the Latin American elite who controlled these countries. Institutionalization of political and economic structural violence sustained those views. More specifically, the military juntas that perpetrated human rights abuses were supported by wealthy landowners and a Roman Catholic hierarchy in Argentina from 1976 to 1983 and in Guatemala from 1954 to 1986. These military units developed counter-insurgent strategies against civilian populations and justified them in the name of preserving national identity and internal state security (CEH, 1999; *Nunca Más*, 1986; ODHAG, 1998). A brief discussion of life within each of these countries during the most intense periods of political repression suggests that the broader human rights of all citizens were consistently violated and that this structural violence was justified in the name of protecting the civil-political rights of a small elite.

### **The “Dirty War”: 1976 to 1983**

In Argentina as many as 30,000 people, over 80 percent of whom were between the ages of 16

and 35, were detained, tortured, and disappeared<sup>3</sup> (*Nunca Más* [*Never Again*], 1986) between 1976 and 1983. The military presented itself as defenders of tradition, family, and property; criticism of them through word or deed was deemed non-patriotic, subversive behavior that should be crushed to protect the nation (Frontalini & Caiati, 1984). Those who challenged dominant definitions of nationhood, often by simply seeking to feed, clothe, or house the poor (that is, the majority of Argentines), were defined as “subversive” and accused of threatening to destabilize national security; they were tortured, murdered, and/or disappeared. Although several guerrilla groups disrupted social life through kidnappings and bombings during the late 1960s and early 1970s, extensive documentation including the government’s own report (*Nunca Más*, 1986) demonstrate definitely that these groups were quashed long before the disappearances began. General Videla, one of the dictators at this time, claimed that the repression was directed against a minority that was not even Argentinean. He thereby justified violations of the human rights of his victims by defining them outside of the realm of citizenry (Frontalini & Caiati, 1984) all the while maintaining the rhetoric of rights when talking to the “good citizenry.” Doing so represents a good example of exclusionary justice (see Opatow, this volume).

The military also removed children of those considered subversives, subsequently gifting them to “good” families, that is, those of the military and upper class (Suárez-Orozco, 1987; also see Puenzo, 1985, *The Official Story*, for a film version). General Camps, head of the police of the province of Buenos Aires when numbers of children were kidnapped, justified this practice:

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<sup>3</sup> The term disappeared (*desaparecido*) refers to the process developed within Latin America during twentieth-century dictatorships whereby individuals were kidnapped by security forces or paramilitary organizations. They were often tortured and then brutally murdered and the bodies tossed into the seas or otherwise disposed of. However, because the bodies did not reappear, family members, friends, and colleagues did not know if they were alive or dead (*Nunca Más*, 1986; ODHAG, 1998).

“...Personally, I did not eliminate any children. What I did was to give some of them to beneficent organizations so that they would find new parents for them. Subversives educate their children into subversion. That has to be stopped” (cited in Barki, 1988, p. 241; see Arditti & Lykes, 1992; Arditti, 1999, for a fuller discussion of these points).

Such violations of human rights are direct acts of violence in that they are episodic and are perpetrated against individuals (see Wagner, this volume). However, if we situate the individuals affected within the historical, socio-political context described briefly above, the violations are reconfigured. They were not only acts against individuals, but embedded in and sustained by the linguistic and political systems of the state. National leaders used everyday language like rhetoric of rights to subvert their declared objectives and arrest the people they claimed to protect. (Graziano, 1992; Feitlowitz, 1998). As such, they not only deprived many of their civil-political rights but terrorized into silence the vast majority of the Argentinean population for nearly six years (Simpson & Bennett, 1985).

In Argentina, the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo, one of a small number of human rights organizations that did protest the violations described here, sought to recover their kidnapped grandchildren and to tell them the stories of their families of origin. Local psychologists accompanying them supported these efforts. However, François Dalto, a renowned French child psychiatrist, upon learning of the work of the Grandmothers, argued that they were provoking a second trauma in these children by taking them from the families that they had known, into which some had been adopted at infancy. In contrast, psychologists in Argentina working from the liberationist perspective described above, urged authorities to consider the meaning for these children of being raised by the murderers of their biological parents. These psychologists argued for

the children's rights to know their identities, that is, the stories of their birth parents and the history of Argentina for which their birth parents fought and/or were murdered (Fariña & Lykes, 1991). Such stories would only be shared if the Grandmothers succeeded. The Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo thus asserted a child's right to his or her identity within the Declaration on the Rights of the Child, and hoped to use Argentina's signing of the Declaration to support its work for the recovery of these abducted children (see Arditti & Lykes, 1992; Arditti, 1999).

Although these issues are very complex, the example suggests that a broadened understanding of the structural contexts in which abuses are embedded resituates the description of "the problem" from one focused on the rights of solitary individuals to one which engages consideration of the broader society and cultural context. Ironically, shortly before her death, Dalto, who had accepted an invitation of the Grandmothers to visit them and see their work, changed her position and supported their ongoing efforts to reconnect their grandchildren with their collective identity (Arditti, 1999; Fariña & Lykes, 1991).

### **Mayan Indigenous Rights in Guatemala**

The case of Guatemala further exemplifies the importance of collective rights. Both the Archdiocesan-sponsored report on violations of human rights (ODHAG, 1998) and the official U.N.-sponsored report of the Commission for Historical Clarification (CEH, 1999) have documented thousands of violations of human rights, including the murder of more than 100,000 people, the displacement of more than 1 million people at the peak of this violence, the disappearance of more than 60,000 people, and the destruction of hundreds of rural villages over the 36-year period of the war. In addition, between 100,000 and 250,000 Guatemalan children lost one or both parents between 1981 and 1984, the peak of the government's "scorched earth" policy

(see Melville & Lykes, 1992 and Lykes, 1994 for a more extensive discussion of these violations).

Although the violence affected rural and urban populations throughout the country, the weight of its impact was experienced by indigenous groups living within rural communities of the Guatemalan Highlands (Americas Watch Committee, 1984; Amnesty International, 1987). These groups have historically been discriminated against and marginalized from power, resources, and decision-making within Guatemala; the gross violations of this 36-year war are the most recent manifestation of such violence (see, e.g., Amnesty International, 1992; Carmack, 1988).

Michael Richards (1985) interviewed a group of Guatemalan military officers in 1983 and 1984 who were stationed in the Ixil triangle, a remote area within the Guatemalan countryside (Carmack, 1988; Stoll, 1993). Richards quotes officers and soldiers describing the Maya in subhuman categories, such as “lacking reasoning capacity,” “lost,” “not able to progress,” and having “closed thinking” (1985, p. 101). Military personnel that he interviewed concluded that the Maya had been duped by the guerrillas. By labeling these indigenous peasants subhuman, military personnel legitimated their mass murder, extensive enough to become a “partial extermination” of the rural indigenous peoples (Falla, 1984).

After the massive destruction described above, the Guatemalan military’s counterinsurgent strategy (ODHAG, 1998; Richards, 1985) shifted to a “guns and beans” program. Survivors of the extermination plan were organized into strategic villages and provided food. The movement of nearly 60,000 people (approximately 12.5 percent of the Highland population, ODHAG, 1998) was controlled in these villages, where they also experienced indoctrination programs that

sought to legitimate the army's repressive techniques and convert the civilian population to their side. Analyses of military documents and testimonies gathered by peasants forced into these hamlets confirm the racism implicit in the military's beliefs about the Maya described by Richards (ODHAG, 1998).

To control the rural population through direct and indirect militarization, the army organized men between 18 and 60 years old into the country's civilian defense patrol in the final days of 1981 (America's Watch Committee, 1990; Jay, 1993; ODHAG, 1998). Although alleged to be voluntary, failure to perform weekly duties, which included military and intelligence tasks of the army, had potential deadly consequences for rural boys and men. ODHAG (1998) estimates that by 1982 to 1983 more than 900,000 men were organized in the civilian defense patrols comprising approximately "80 percent of the male populations in rural indigenous zones" at the time. Suárez-Orozco (1990) described the Guatemalan situation as a "culture of terror (Taussig, 1986/1987), with its own vocabulary of sorrow (*desaparecidos* [disappeared]; *torturados* [torture victims]; *huérfanos* [orphans]) and underlying structure [that] managed consensus through violence and intimidation" (p. 361). An America's Watch Report added that Guatemala in the first half of the 1980s was a country where "political terror has firmly established itself as the principal means of governance" (Brown, 1985, cited in Suárez-Orozco, 1990, p. 361). In the cases of both Argentina and Guatemala the protection of the civil-political rights of an elite citizenry were invoked to legitimate the killing of others, defined as threats to the security of the nation and/or as non-citizens or, in the case of Guatemala, non-humans. Worse, these clearly repressive policies were legitimated and presented as humanitarian using a rhetoric of human rights manipulated by the state.

Amnesty International (1992), among others, has characterized violations of human rights within Guatemala as abuses of Mayan civil and political rights. But I argue here that these direct acts of violence were rooted in ideologies which denied the Maya their humanity. Rhetoric which institutionalized and normalized violence made possible these gross violations of human rights, that as such, illustrate structural violence. The massacres had an impact beyond the sum total of the individuals whose rights were violated. The Maya as a people were violated, in their character as a collectivity. Violence against collective identity also occurs when the environment of traditional peoples is destroyed, because their very identity is rooted in the land, as evidenced in the Maya's self-naming as "people of corn" (Lykes, 1996; see also Winter, 1998).

Messer (1995) has argued that Guatemala "seems to illustrate most vividly the synergisms of political violence, socioeconomic marginalization, and cultural discrimination" (p. 56). The assertion of indigenous rights and the pressure to establish the Draft Declaration as part of the U.N. covenants are important strategies that, if successful, could offer critical protections to the beliefs and social organizations of indigenous people, as well as safeguarding the lands which define who they are.

## **PEACEBUILDING WITH EXTENDED HUMAN RIGHTS**

Peace negotiations culminating in accords signed between the Guatemalan government and Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG/guerrilla forces) on December 29, 1996 "ended" more than 36 years of war in Guatemala. The 13 documents that make up the accords confirmed in December, 1996, include agreements on human rights, identity and indigenous rights, procedures for resettling and protecting those uprooted by the armed conflict, socioeconomic and political reforms, and the establishment of a commission to "clarify with objectivity, equity and im-

partiality, the past human rights violations and acts of violence connected with the armed confrontation that have caused suffering among the Guatemalan people (CEH, 1999). Each accord reflects important negotiations between the former opposition groups, and taken as a whole, they seek to create the conditions necessary for a more democratic political order within Guatemala. The accords have afforded new spaces in which survivors can voice their versions of the horrific violence they experienced, including massacres, military occupation, internal displacement, extreme poverty, and exile to religious and human rights-based commissions established to take these testimonies.

Others, such as women of the Association of Maya Ixil Women—*Ak'saqb'eb'al* [New Dawn] in Chajul, Guatemala, seek more local strategies for telling their stories, hoping to do so within the context of ongoing community programs that will not only heal the psychological wounds from 36 years of war and state-sponsored repression but also establish new social structures to improve their lives and the lives of their children. Within this rural context where I have worked for eight years, I have been challenged by local women not only to contribute to clarifying contemporary, culturally situated meanings of human rights violations, but to join them in implementing strategies that transform their material and social realities, including extreme poverty and psychosocial trauma. The association's current activities are running a corn mill and community store; conducting an afterschool program in language acquisition and psychosocial assistance for local children ages six to twelve; administering a revolving loan fund in the association; developing a local library; and developing a participatory action research project using photographic and interview techniques. These projects emerged through cross-cultural and transnational interethnic organizing and leadership (see Lykes et al., 1999).

As rural indigenous women, their efforts to redress social injustice and marginalization are embedded in creative workshops that respond directly to their psychosocial trauma, and those of their children (Lykes, 1994). They have also developed a project that combines photography and interview techniques (Wang & Burris, 1994) which actively assists the co-construction of meanings about their experiences of violence and the roots of their oppression. This work includes the development of action plans for change in the local community while facilitating increased control over representations about local community life among the Ixil, thereby enhancing their sense of agency. These women are creating opportunities for sharing among themselves and in ever-widening circles of Maya women, rupturing years of silence, and developing skills and resources to confront some of the individual and collective effects of war, terror, and violence. This work also transforms traditional gender roles within the community. It exemplifies psychological work that creates experiences of material, social, and psychological healing and reparation.

The four generations of human rights described at the outset of this chapter are affirmed by this work of the Association of Maya Ixil Women—*Ak'saqb'eb'al* [New Dawn]. Narrating their stories of the multiple violations of their civil, political, economic, and cultural rights through storytelling, dramatization, and photography, these women heal themselves, their children, and their community. This work constitutes a new praxis, focusing on their actions and their critical reflections upon these actions, which promotes healing, enhances their self-esteem, and rebuilds and transforms Mayan community. These Ixil women are reclaiming the past while creating community-based economic and educational programs in the present. As an “outsider” psychologist, I am privileged to “stand-under” these experiences, accompany these women as they cross cultural, educational, ethnic, linguistic, and geographic borders to envision new understandings

of violence and its wake.

There are many other examples of concrete experiences among indigenous peoples that challenge us to explore more carefully the intersection of the four generations of human rights and what it means to harmonize them in theory and through practice. The rights to economic development and a safe environment are clearly evident in the community-based work described which assumes the worldviews of indigenous communities. Future work by psychologists in these contexts could fruitfully explore indigenous and collective rights and how they might inform the reparatory processes that follow peace accords at the end of overt conflict (see Winter, 1998, for a further discussion of the environment and war's effects).

Although the perspectives and experiences presented here offer no easy solutions to violations of human rights described in this chapter, they do sketch promising psychological theories and practices that have contributed alongside an expanded understanding of human rights to clarify how they constitute structural violence. I have argued that a developing liberation psychology, cultural and constructivist perspectives, and praxis with local communities shifts the object of psychological reflection to a social and community level. Recognizing and responding to the abuse of these rights as structural violence is critical if psychologists want to contribute to peacebuilding among the majority of the world's peoples. I am not recommending deserting the important work of defending civil-political rights and protesting their violation. Rather, I have drawn on psychological theory and my own field practice to argue a broader understanding of rights violations as structural violence. My hope is that this analysis will promote work which would improve the social, psychological, and material well-being in communities throughout the world, particularly in zones of ongoing or recent armed conflict.