

**REBEL COLLECTORS:  
HUMAN RIGHTS AND ARCHIVES IN CENTRAL AMERICA AND THE  
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION OF EL SALVADOR AND THE RESOURCE  
CENTER OF THE AMERICAS, 1978-2007**

by

**Graham Stinnett**

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**Department of History (Archival Studies)  
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University of Manitoba/University of Winnipeg  
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## **ABSTRACT**

The invaluable historical records of human rights non-governmental organizations have contributed to the protection of human rights and important social changes (such as the abolition of slavery in the West) at the local, national, and global levels over the last 200 years. This thesis stresses the importance of these records creators and their records in a case study of two human rights non-governmental organizations that responded to human rights violations in El Salvador in the late twentieth century: Comision de Derechos Humanos de El Salvador (San Salvador) and the Resource Center of the Americas (Minneapolis). The other primary and related concern of this thesis is to emphasize the role of the archivist as social justice activist through his or her efforts to include in the archive evidence of marginalized voices that can widen our understanding of peoples' history. As archivists are active shapers of historical memory through archival practice, they must forge alliances with those in the human rights non-governmental sphere to further the contribution of archives to social justice. By actively engaging the world's memory of the disenfranchised (the archive of justice) archives can play an increasingly important societal role.

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## INTRODUCTION

People have been empowered for social change by understanding their place in history. It is the archivist's role to help shape this process -- not as mere keepers of knowledge or the 'neutral' or 'objective' handmaiden to researchers, but as agents themselves of social change through their work.<sup>1</sup> On the Belgian slaughter in the Congo between 1890 and 1910, which cost the lives of roughly ten million Congolese, author Adam Hochschild writes, "...one hundred years ago, the idea of full human rights, political, social, and economic, was a profound threat to the established order of most countries on earth. It still is today."<sup>2</sup> Archivists must support this struggle by opening cracks in the documentary darkness for stories to be told.<sup>3</sup> By greater focus on records of those whose rights have been violated, archivists would wield their power *for* social justice. This thesis maintains that archives are a cornerstone in society of democracy, justice and empowerment through historical understanding.

Human Rights Non-Governmental Organizations (HRNGOs) have long been active in agitating for equality in society. Beginning with the oldest HRNGO in history, The Anti-Slavery Society (1783),<sup>4</sup> and the forty-two NGO's attending the founding conference of the United Nations (April 1945),<sup>5</sup> to the more recent organizations such as

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<sup>1</sup> Tom Nesmith, "Still Fuzzy, But More Accurate: Some Thoughts on the 'Ghosts' of Archival Theory," *Archivaria* 47 (Spring 1999).

<sup>2</sup> Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (New York: Mariner Books, 1998), p. 306.

<sup>3</sup> Verne Harris, "A Shaft of Darkness: Derrida in the Archive," in Carolyn Hamilton, Verne Harris, Jane Taylor, Michele Pickover, Graeme Reid & Razia Saleh, eds., *Refiguring the Archive* (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002), p. 61.

<sup>4</sup> William Korey, *NGOs and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: A Curious Grapevine* (Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (1991),<sup>6</sup> HRNGOs have continually made history. Very few archival institutions have collected HRNGO records, often for reasons of politics and economics. It is my contention that both HRNGOs and archival institutions stand to gain from collaboration in promoting historical memory, justice and human rights.

To begin this investigation into the necessity of archiving HRNGOs' records, it is essential to outline in brief the evolution of the relationship between human rights and archives. From here I will provide two case studies that discuss the two distinct types of HRNGOs: the exclusive and non-exclusive organization. The former, an organization dedicated to collecting field data and agitating locally on behalf of the victims of human rights abuses, will be examined in chapter two. That chapter describes the work of an HRNGO in El Salvador – the Non-Governmental Commission for Human Rights in El Salvador (Comisión) – and its passionate struggle to protect human rights there in the 1980s during the Cold War. The latter, an organization that often publicizes both locally and globally information on human rights violations as well as works to prevent such abuses, will be discussed in chapter three in a case study of the work in the 1980s and 1990s of the Resource Center of the Americas (RCTA), which was based in Minneapolis. The study will examine the records it kept, the political dangers it faced, and the economic pressures that ultimately caused its demise.

As will be explored, examples of archival outreach to HRNGOs such as these have greatly enhanced the documentary heritage of human rights struggles on a local, national and global scale. In order to address the strategic policies of how archives best

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<sup>6</sup> International Campaign to Ban Landmines, "Campaign History," 1998-2006 International Campaign to Ban Landmines, <http://www.icbl.org/campaign/history>. Visited 01/10/2009.

operate with human rights records, we must first look to successful examples of archival integration from non-traditional sites of knowledge such as HRNGOs. These precarious organizations display the impacts of private (societal) to public (state) mediation as well as an acute sensitivity to records and recordkeeping, making them important witnesses of the past, present and commitment to the future. To conclude this thesis, I will address the role the archivist must play in becoming the historically minded activist. Many opportunities exist to do so. Through archival awareness, documentation preservation projects, active collection policies and community partnerships, archivists can step beyond a traditional role as passive recipients of records to become activists who pursue social justice through their work. Through closer ties between human rights organizations, archival institutions, and the larger global activist movement, we can come closer to building the archive of justice.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Verne Harris, *Archives and Justice: A South African Perspective* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2007), p. 39.

## CHAPTER ONE

### *Archives and Human Rights: Perspectives and Praxis*

It is important to recognize the centrality of the record in the history of human rights in the West. Although the origins of human rights can be traced to ancient texts such as the Bible, Quran, and Hammurabi's Code, three important documents have had the greatest impact on the present conception of them in the West especially: the United States Declaration of Independence (1776), the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789), and the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). The Declaration of Independence provided for the right to life, property, male suffrage, and the right to rebel and create republican institutions.<sup>1</sup> Although these rights were exclusively reserved for white landowning men, they nevertheless prompted international admiration for colonial resistance to monarchs. Influenced by the US movement, France underwent its revolution thirteen years later and established a greatly expanded declaration of rights. The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen guaranteed the principles of the revolutionary state: universal law, equal individual citizenship, and collective sovereignty of the people – expressed in the slogan “*Liberté, Egalité, and Fraternité.*”<sup>2</sup> Cultural Historian Lynn Hunt emphasizes the revolutionary nature of this “peoples” document: “References to ‘men,’ ‘man,’ ‘everyman,’ ‘all men,’

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<sup>1</sup> Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007), p.73.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74. “Liberty, Equality, and Brotherhood.”

‘all citizens,’ ‘each citizen,’ ‘society,’ and ‘every society’ dwarfed the single reference to the French people.”<sup>3</sup>

Liberal notions of universal rights were born out of revolutionary upheaval. However the realities of these revolutionary ideas created horrific consequences as the Industrial Revolution made wage slaves of the peasantry and indentured servants of colonized peoples. Opponents of capitalism and others in the 1800s argued for the rights of the working classes, women's suffrage and freedom from bondage for the slave. Karl Marx became the most noteworthy opponent of the realities born out of these revolutionary documents and bourgeois capital accumulation:

The right of property only guaranteed the right to pursue one’s own self-interest with no regard for others. The rights of man guaranteed religious freedom when what men needed was freedom from religion; they confirmed the right to own property when what was needed was freedom from property; they included the right to engage in business when what was needed was liberation from business.<sup>4</sup>

The struggle for the rights of the lower classes and the disenfranchised, articulated through socialism, contributed greatly to the opposition of liberal notions of individual self-fulfillment. The most noteworthy socialist battle for human rights in the 1800s occurred at the Paris Commune where likeminded thinkers demanded rights for the working classes, the development of workers' cooperatives, reduction of working hours, free public education for all children, professional education for young workers, housing rights, women’s rights to equal pay for equal work and nurseries for single mothers.<sup>5</sup>

Though the Paris Commune of 1871 ended in the death of 15,000 *communards* at the

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<sup>3</sup> Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights*, p.16.

<sup>4</sup> Karl Marx in *Ibid.*, p.119.

<sup>5</sup> Micheline R. Ishay, *The History of Human Rights: From Ancient Times to the Globalization Era* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004), p.125.

hands of the National Guard, these notions of human rights have also contributed greatly to this ever-evolving discourse.<sup>6</sup>

The third document of significance, and most contemporary, in the evolution of human rights was born out of the ashes of World War II. The United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) was ethically grounded in the abhorrence to inhumane atrocities committed during the international conflict.<sup>7</sup> This declaration, owing its clauses on human rights to the efforts of human rights non-governmental organizations (HRNGOs),<sup>8</sup> furthered the liberal notion of universal rights with its first article stating: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights."<sup>9</sup> However, with the great powers embarking on a cold war between capitalism and communism, human rights were promoted as by-products of these respective economic systems by those who espoused them. A third way between these two systems originated in anti-colonial struggles in the third world out of opposition to colonial domination, capitalist exploitation and Stalinist oppression. Prominent figures like Frantz Fanon, Ho Chi Minh, Jawaharlal Nehru and Ernesto "Ché" Guevara espoused the importance of cultural rights as a mainstay against neo-colonial oppression.<sup>10</sup> These struggles gave way to particularistic doctrines that observed rights to self-determination and the respect of

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<sup>6</sup> Ishay, *The History of Human Rights*. See Benedict Anderson, *Under Three Flags: Anarchism and the Anti-Colonial Imagination* (New York: Verso, 2007).

<sup>7</sup> These atrocities include Japan's "rape" of Nanking, the Allied bombing of Dresden, and the Nazi-led Holocaust, to name a few. See Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000) and Jacques R. Pauwels, *The Myth of the Good War: America in the Second World War* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company Ltd. Publishers, 2002).

<sup>8</sup> Ishay, *The History of Human Rights*, p.224. See Korey, *NGO's and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: A Curious Grapevine*.

<sup>9</sup> Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights*, p.17.

<sup>10</sup> Ishay, *The History of Human Rights*, p.196.

indigenous cultures like the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1986).<sup>11</sup>

Despite the victory of neo-liberalism over Soviet communism, and given capitalism's assault on the environment, labor and immigration as well as Western culture's global penetration, human rights are as important today as they ever were,<sup>12</sup> and society depends upon archives to help uphold them, especially where rights have been denied. This is because protection of human rights now depends on far more than these three classic human rights manifestos. It now depends on masses of state records and other documentation. Indeed, these records can now be targets for destruction by those who would violate human rights (as in the immediate aftermath of apartheid in South Africa). Such records, many of them in archives, are now used to pursue criminal prosecution of human rights violations (Nazi war crimes) and to help redress human rights grievances such as in the case of Canadian Aboriginal Residential Schools.<sup>13</sup> As a result, state records, especially, and their archives, have taken on new importance in society, as crucial to the protection of the rights, interests, and well being of citizens. This contrasts with the traditional view of records and archives, which held that they were the property of rulers and their officials and existed to support state authority and interests. Records to be archives were chosen by the state and there was no public right of access to them. Influential British archivist Hilary Jenkinson gave voice to such views in the early twentieth century and maintained that the archivist must simply guard and retrieve the

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<sup>11</sup> Ishay, *The History of Human Rights*, p.181.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p.257.

<sup>13</sup> Richard Cox and David Wallace, eds., *Archives and the Public Good: Accountability and Records in Modern Society* (West Port, Connecticut: Quorum Books, 2002).

record in the archive selected by the state and had no further interest in its creation or use. The archivist was to be a strictly 'neutral' party in the formation and use of the archives.<sup>14</sup>

In early 1970s West Germany, archivist Hans Booms was one of the first prominent archivists to speak out against this view of the proper derivation of the archive and the role of the archivist in its creation. He argued that archives were societal creations. He was reacting against the state-driven East German Communist archival policies that warped the archival record through a rigid ideology. Booms spoke of the need for society to create its archives rather than leaving it to the state alone. He saw an active role for the archivist in the formation of the documentary heritage of society.<sup>15</sup>

Canadian archivist Hugh Taylor came to similar conclusions independently of Booms at about the same time. Taylor argued that the archivist's primary duty is to serve fundamental societal purposes such as preservation of the environment, peace, and social justice. He believed in the role of the archives as a cultural memory institution that stood as a critical foundation in society.<sup>16</sup> The Canadian origins of the archivist as activist arguably can be located in Taylor's ideas.<sup>17</sup> Taylor's progressive understanding of the archives influenced a new generation of Canadian and other archivists in the late

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<sup>14</sup> Terry Cook, "What is Past is Prologue: A History of Archival Ideas Since 1898, and the Future Paradigm Shift," *Archivaria* 43 (Spring 1997).

<sup>15</sup> Hans Booms, "Society and the Formation of a Documentary Heritage: Issues in the Appraisal of Archival Sources," in Hermina Joldersma and Richard Klumpenhower, eds. and trans., *Archivaria* 24 (Summer 1987).

<sup>16</sup> Terry Cook, "Obituary: Hugh A. Taylor, 1920-2005," *Archivaria* 60 (Fall 2005), p.277. "Total archives," as practiced at Library and Archives Canada, blends both acquisition of records of private origin and the Canadian government's institutional records, thus working towards a "total" archives.

<sup>17</sup> Hugh A. Taylor, "Recycling the Past: The Archivist in the Age of Ecology," *Archivaria* 35 (Spring 1993); "Transformation in the Archives: Technological Adjustment or Paradigm Shift?," *Archivaria* 25 (Winter 1987-1988); "The Archivist, the Letter and the Spirit," *Archivaria* 43 (Spring 1997). See Terry Cook and Gordon Dodds, eds., *Imagining Archives: Essays and Reflections* by Hugh A. Taylor (Landham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2003).

twentieth century such as Terry Cook, Tom Nesmith, and Helen Samuels. They incorporated Taylor's thinking into their "vision of archives, one sanctioned in and reflective of society at large rather than one shaped primarily by powerful interest groups of either users or creators, or the state."<sup>18</sup>

Cook argues that archives of the current period have reached a breaking point with archives of old whereby they "are now of the people, for the people, even by the people."<sup>19</sup> Cook's most notable contribution to archives, the development of the "macroappraisal" approach to identifying records for archival preservation, supports this societal purpose for archives. In short, he says, "the central theoretical tenet of macroappraisal is that the most sensitive part of... [citizen-state relationships], if appropriately researched and understood by archivists, will yield the clearest evidence of citizens, social dynamics, and public issues, and thus of 'society'."<sup>20</sup> Nesmith's contribution can be seen in his work on the mediating power of the archivist in the formation of knowledge derived from archives.<sup>21</sup> The archivist becomes a co-creator of the record, not just its passive keeper, through their acts of appraisal and description (or contextualization) when forming and making accessible the archive. This view of the archivist is also part of Samuels's reminder of the Orwellian insight that "who controls the past, controls the future," and thus the point that the archives must be formed and able to exercise their power over the record in democratic ways. The question remains of how to wield that power in an equitable way, primarily in documentation strategies and the

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<sup>18</sup> Cook, "What is Past is Prologue," p. 34.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p.44.

<sup>20</sup> Terry Cook, "Macroappraisal in Theory and Practice: Origins, Characteristics, and Implementation in Canada, 1950-2000," *Archival Science* 5 (2005), pp.126-127.

<sup>21</sup> Tom Nesmith, "Seeing Archives: Postmodernism and the Changing Intellectual Place of Archives," *The American Archivist* Vol. 65 (Spring/Summer 2002), p.38.

retention of records.<sup>22</sup> With postmodernism in archives, a notion that Cook defends as “[seeking] to emphasize the diversity of human experience by recovering marginalized voices,”<sup>23</sup> the historical notions of human rights become an integral context for addressing the archive of the ‘other.’

These ideas provide an intellectual basis for social activism by archivists in a variety of ways. As this thesis demonstrates, HRNGOs are but one area of human rights activism that archivists can engage, amongst a vast universe of issues that rely on records and memory. A number of current projects reflect archival activism in support of social responsibility, accountability and equality. Archival organizations have paved the way for outreach to HRNGOs. The most notable archival body that is addressing human rights issues is the International Council on Archives (ICA) and its benefactor, the United Nation’s Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The ICA is a non-governmental organization (NGO) founded in 1948 at the height of international solidarity for human rights following World War II by national archives to represent archival interests.<sup>24</sup> The ICA says at its website that “As the leading international [NGO] for archives and archivists, ICA continues to work in cooperation with UNESCO and NGOs in related areas to realize shared objectives.”<sup>25</sup> The ICA has a wide of array of

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<sup>22</sup> Helen Willa Samuels, “Who Controls the Past,” *The America Archivist* Vol. 49 issue 2 (Spring 1986), p.120.

<sup>23</sup> Terry Cook, “Fashionable Nonsense or Professional Rebirth: Postmodernism and the Practice of Archives,” *Archivaria* 51 (Spring 2001), p.17.

<sup>24</sup> Ishay, *The History of Human Rights*, p.179.

<sup>25</sup> “Background – ICA History,” <http://www.ica.org/en/node/37327> 2008 International Council on Archives. Global organizations such as UNESCO have supported activist archival projects. UNESCO’s Memory of the World project has established designation for rare and evidential archival collections that capture significant pasts in human history. As stated on their website “Documentary heritage reflects the diversity of languages, peoples and cultures. It is the mirror of the world and its memory. But this memory is fragile. Every day, irreplaceable parts of this memory disappear for ever.” Included in these designated collections include human rights collections from Latin American countries such as Paraguay, Chile and

electronic resources to support human rights work and has published scholarly periodicals and practical guides on human rights awareness and the archives.<sup>26</sup> The ICA has since 2003 maintained a Human Rights and Archives Working Group, formed by archivists and archives-supporters from around the world.<sup>27</sup> The working group has proven a beneficial resource for human rights awareness and archival advocacy through publications and conferences.<sup>28</sup>

Through the ICA Human Rights and Archives Working Group, the Archival Solidarity Committee (ASC) was established in 2005. The committee “aims to coordinate efforts in the international archives community to carry out foreign assistance projects to develop tools and expertise for developing communities and communities in transition.”<sup>29</sup> The ASC carries out international solidarity projects by providing three collaborative functions: to work with partners to share professional information, send experts to provide training and education, and provide expertise and/or materials to carry out archival projects.<sup>30</sup> A recent example of this archival solidarity occurred after the United Nations assumed control of the country in 1999 with the establishment of a National Archives and a truth commission in the recently independent state of East

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Argentina. 1995-2009 [http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=21260&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=21260&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html). Visited 09/24/2009.

<sup>26</sup> See, for example, Antonio Gonzales Quintana, “Políticas Archivísticas para la Protección de los Derechos Humanos,” (Paris, International Council on Archives, 2009). “Archival Policy for the Defense of Human Rights.” This Spanish work is currently being translated into English and French as of November, 2009.

<sup>27</sup> International Council on Archives, “Archives and Human Rights.” 2008 <http://www.ica.org/groups/en/node/37>. Visited 09/2009.

<sup>28</sup> See *Comma, International Journal on Archives* 1 (2003) and 2 (2004). *Comma* is an International Council on Archives publication.

<sup>29</sup> Nancy Marrelli, *Work Plan 2005-2008*, Archival Solidarity Committee (ASC). ICA Section for Professional Records Management and Archives Association (SPA), [http://archives3.concordia.ca/Solidarity/Work\\_Plan\\_05\\_08.pdf](http://archives3.concordia.ca/Solidarity/Work_Plan_05_08.pdf) p.1.

<sup>30</sup> Archival Solidarity, <http://archives3.concordia.ca/Solidarity/default.html> Visited 03/08/2007.

Timor,<sup>31</sup> which was strongly supported by the National Archives of Australia.<sup>32</sup> The National Archives of Australia has since provided archival materials, support staff and technical training to both the National Archives and Records Center of East Timor and the truth commission archives and library.

Another organization that participates in archival solidarity in locations where records are in danger is the non-profit organization Archivists without Borders (AwB). AwB prides itself on adherence to “the principles of identity, memory, right to information and defense of human rights as inherent elements in our daily work and [that] constitute universal values that inspire the way of acting of our organization.”<sup>33</sup> AwB carries out multiple functions in their outreach: to protect the identity and historical memory of nations in the context of cultural diversity, foster cooperation in the area of records management and public administration to promote modernization of institutions, promote and watch over the conservation of archives, foster the citizens’ right of access to records of public institutions, promote archivists’ training, cooperate with organizations and associations of the archival and documentary heritage field as well as entities related to human rights defense.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>A coup in Indonesia in 1965 brought to power T.N.J. Suharto, a pro-West free market anti-communist who subsequently carried out one of the most brutal massacres of the Cold War. In 1975 Suharto's troops invaded East Timor, though the incident received virtually no press coverage nor disapproval from the US. Conservative estimates of the resulting casualties range between 100,000 and 300,000 dead. See T.E. Vadney, *The World Since 1945*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, (Toronto: Penguin, 1998), p. 380.

<sup>32</sup> Nancy Marrelli, “Archival Solidarity-story from East Timor,” March, 28 2008. <http://archives3.concordia.ca/Solidarity/default.html>.

<sup>33</sup> Archivists without Borders, “What’s Archivists without Borders (AwB)?” <http://www.arxiv.org/en/quisom.php>. 2005, Visited 10/2007.

<sup>34</sup> Archivists without Borders, “Main objectives of AwB,” [http://www.arxiv.org/en/quisom\\_objectius.php](http://www.arxiv.org/en/quisom_objectius.php).

The ICA sponsors the International Conference of the Round Table on Archives (CITRA), which has addressed the growing need for human rights-minded archivists. Since 2003, human rights have been a consistent topic of debate regarding retention of state, public, and private human rights records for political, legal, historical and memorial uses.<sup>35</sup> One such example is a 2004 article by Alan Divack on the Ford Foundation's support for HRNGOs and the preservation of their archives.<sup>36</sup> The Ford Foundation, a private philanthropic archival NGO, participates in the preservation of human rights archives by funding archival projects linked with HRNGOs. Divack's primary support for philanthropic funding for HRNGOs is due to the inability of the state – be it highly authoritarian, in transition or purportedly democratic – to effectively maintain or create full records on human rights:<sup>37</sup>

[HRNGOs] seek to reconstitute new national identities, based in respect for human rights, and on the memory of the realities of the abuses that had occurred under the old regimes. I would argue that while state archives are a necessary resource for access to information in a democratic and open society, they are not a sufficient resource. The voices and memories preserved by non-state actors, such as those in the archives of HRNGOs, are essential as well.<sup>38</sup>

Examples abound of the state's restrictions on freedom of information and secrecy.

Former Society of American Archivist President Timothy Ericson states, "Our [federal] secrecy apparatus is a hodgepodge of legislative actions, executive orders, and bureaucratic procedures that simply does not serve us in the way that it was intended.

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<sup>35</sup> Perrine Canavaggio, "Introduction," in *Comma, International Journal on Archives* 2 (2004), p.9.

<sup>36</sup> Alan Divack, "The Ford Foundation's Support for Human Rights Archives," *Comma, International Journal on Archives* 2 (2004), p. 119.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p.120.

<sup>38</sup> Divack, "The Ford Foundation's Support for Human Rights Archives," p.122.

Secrets have become ‘currency’ in the quest for power and influence, and this hinders policy making.”<sup>39</sup> Records of HRNGOs and other non-state archives fly directly in the face of outmoded cold warriors such as Henry Kissinger who argue that “history is the memory of states.”<sup>40</sup>

The National Security Archive (NSA) is also among the information advocacy groups funded by the Ford Foundation. The NSA is an NGO that collects documentation through the US Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) relating to US government policy.<sup>41</sup> Information legislation such as the FOIA (signed in 1966 by President Lyndon Johnson) allows citizens to access federal government records, many of which reveal moments in history when rights were denied as well as upheld.<sup>42</sup> Though the NSA is neither an archives nor a human rights organization per se, it is part of the memory infrastructure.<sup>43</sup> The NSA has gone to great lengths to acquire copies of documentation (utilizing the FOIA) to uncover human rights violations by the state both nationally and internationally. An example of this can be seen in an article by senior NSA analyst and director of the Guatemala Documentation Project, Kate Doyle, on the recent discovery of archives of atrocity in Guatemala City. In 2005 “residents of a crowded working-class neighborhood in Guatemala City sent a complaint to the country’s human-rights prosecutor about the

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<sup>39</sup> Timothy L. Ericson, “Building Our Own ‘Iron Curtain’: The Emergence of Secrecy in American Government,” *American Archivist* 68 (Spring/Summer 2005), p.40.

<sup>40</sup> Henry Kissinger in Howard Zinn, *The Future of History: Interviews with David Barsamian* (Monroe, Maine: Common Courage Press, 1999), p.137. Zinn describes this quote by Kissinger, which was in Kissinger’s doctoral dissertation, as an exact representation of his Machiavellian view of history, from the top down.

<sup>41</sup> United States Department of Justice, The Freedom of Information Act see <http://www.justice.gov/oip/index.html> Visited 11/2009.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Divack, p.123.

improper storage of explosives on a local police base...it was during that visit that they stumbled upon an archive of the Guatemalan National Police – an institution so entirely complicit in the atrocities of the [36 year] civil war that it was disbanded in 1997.”<sup>44</sup>

Examples such as this demonstrate the necessity of archival awareness regarding the inevitable loss of human rights records as well as informed organizations to advocate for those records. With collaborative entities like the NSA, Ford Foundation and legislation to provide access to information, HRNGOs still remain the primary record’s creators.

At the state level, national archives can highlight past injustices and legal battles for rights in exhibits and educational programs, as the US National Archives has done in regard to the Amistad affair.<sup>45</sup> They can also play a constructive role in support of research designed to pursue reconciliation in the aftermath of historical injustices such as occurred in the Canadian aboriginal residential schools. Since its creation in 2008, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in Canada has been accumulating records from archives such as Library and Archives Canada (LAC) and church archives relating to abuses suffered by aboriginal students and families in the residential school system. As stated in the TRC’s mandate, one of its primary goals is to “Identify sources and create as complete an historical record as possible of the IRS system and legacy. The

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<sup>44</sup> Kate Doyle, “The Atrocity Files: Deciphering the archives of Guatemala’s dirty war,” *Harper’s Magazine* (December 2007), p.52. See also Julie Smith, “Paper Trail,” *Smithsonian* 40, no. 7 (October 2009), p. 14.

<sup>45</sup> For example, the National Archives and Records Administration in the United States provides online resources for teachers to accompany an online exhibit of digitized records from the Amistad Case of 1839. This is a monumental case that examined the legal implications for American slavery of the seizure in American waters by the US Navy of a ship headed for Spanish-America carrying enslaved Africans who had gained control of the ship. “Teaching With Documents: The *Amistad* Case,” National Archives and Records Administration, <http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/amistad/>. Visited 09/2009.

record shall be preserved and made accessible to the public for future study and use.”<sup>46</sup>

Archivists can encourage the truth and reconciliation process by drawing connections to local records from their own collections regarding the residential schools.<sup>47</sup> In addition, archivists continue to contribute relevant archival perspectives regarding access to records and recording oral testimonies to further the credibility of the human rights record.<sup>48</sup>

Academic archives in universities and colleges also have supported human rights research. Archives at Columbia University, Duke University, the University of Connecticut and the University of Colorado at Boulder retain valuable human rights materials. Columbia University Library’s Center for Human Rights Documentation and Research (CHRDR) maintains a well established human rights collection.<sup>49</sup> Not only does the CHRDR house a number of HRNGO archives and e-records collections of Amnesty International USA and Human Rights Watch, but also provides several informative resources for archivists, human rights advocates, students and the larger

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<sup>46</sup> Indian Residential Schools-Truth and Reconciliation Commission. “Mandate,” September 11, 2009 <http://www.trc-cvr.ca/overview.html> . Visited 09/2009.

<sup>47</sup> This also includes providing information about relevant collections from various sources such as church archives, friendship centre archives, business archives, etc. For an archival analysis see Tom Nesmith’s “Archivists and Public Affairs: Toward a New Archival Public Programming.” In Cheryl Avery and Mona Holmlund, eds., *Better off Forgetting: Essays on Archives, Public Policy and Collecting Memory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press) (forthcoming). Kenora, Ontario’s Lake of the Woods Museum provides an example of an exhibit drawn from local collections relating to the IRS system entitled *We Were Taught Different*. See Mike Aiken, “Residential School Exhibit Opens at Museum.” *The Daily Miner*, September 18, 2008. <http://media.knet.ca/node/5141>. Visited 09/2009.

<sup>48</sup> See University of Montreal conference: *Breaking the Silence : International conference on the Indian residential schools commission of Canada*, September 26-27, 2009. <http://www.creum.umontreal.ca/spip.php?article900>. Also Lisa Klopfer’s “Oral History and Archives in the New South Africa: Methodological Issues,” *Archivaria* 52 (Fall 2001).

<sup>49</sup>Center for Human Rights Documentation and Research, Columbia University libraries. <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/indiv/humanrights/>.

public.<sup>50</sup> In addition to providing access to collections of HRNGOs, information on human rights such as guides, journal articles, books, directories, background information, annual reviews and information on advocacy organizations is also made available through the archives website. Of particular importance in support of the incorporation of HRNGOs into the archival discourse is University of Colorado at Boulder Archivist, Bruce Montgomery. His approach to records as both tools for change and evidence of the struggle for human rights provides a beneficial insight into how the archives address these sites of knowledge.

Montgomery spearheaded the Human Rights Initiative (HRI) in the early 1990s, which focused on collecting human rights materials at the University of Colorado at Boulder. During this project, Montgomery oversaw the temporary retention of the Iraqi secret police files after the Gulf War invasion in 1991. These archives provide evidence of former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's massacre of Kurdish people in Northern Iraq.<sup>51</sup> The records represented both the memory of human rights violations as well as documentation that was later used to indict Hussein for his crimes against humanity. Montgomery states,

The human rights archival record is important for historical accountability. Because of the past inability or unwillingness to bring perpetrators to justice, the historical verdict has often served as the only tribunal for human rights perpetrators. Even with the recent institution of the new International Criminal Court, the historical verdict will continue to play a pivotal role in preserving a record that has amply demonstrated the

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<sup>50</sup>Center for Human Rights Documentation and Research, Columbia University Libraries, "CHRDR Archives," [http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/indiv/humanrights/archive\\_collections/index.html](http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/indiv/humanrights/archive_collections/index.html).

<sup>51</sup>Bruce P. Montgomery, "Iraqi Secret Police Files: A Documentary Record of the Anfal Genocide," *Archivaria* 52 (Fall 2001).

international community's past reluctance in bringing many of this century's most notorious dictators to justice.<sup>52</sup>

In 2007, the original records were returned to the Kurdish people on behalf of the HRI and the US government, while the University of Colorado Archives retained digital copies of the 5.5 million records.<sup>53</sup>

Montgomery's work with human rights records, particularly those of HRNGOs, makes him an example for emulation in Western archival thinking. In addition to the Iraqi Anfal Genocide records, the HRI also obtained the archives of such notable HRNGOs as Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International USA, Physicians without Borders, Soviet Jewry Archives, multiple Salvadoran church-based HRNGOs, as well as the National Security Archives-El Salvador Collection. Montgomery has also written extensively on accountability issues regarding presidential papers (particularly regarding George W. Bush) and the increasing restrictions on government records since September 11, 2001.<sup>54</sup> Although the HRI was discontinued in 2005, Montgomery continues to show at the University of Colorado how archives can support justice and human rights in the matter of El Salvadoran HRNGO work, as will be discussed in the next chapters of this thesis.

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<sup>52</sup> Bruce P. Montgomery, "Fact-Finding by Human Rights Non-governmental Organizations: Challenges, Strategies, and the Shaping of Archival Evidence," *Archivaria* 58 (Fall 2004), p.23.

<sup>53</sup> University of Colorado at Boulder Archives, "International Projects: Iraqi Secret Police Files Seized by the Kurds during the 1991 Gulf War," 2008, <http://ucblibraries.colorado.edu/archives/collections/international.htm>.

<sup>54</sup> Bruce P. Montgomery, "Their Records, Our History." *The Washington Post*. 03/06/2005. p.B04. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A9094-2005Mar5.html>. For more on the secrecy surrounding American government records, see Ericson "Building Our Own 'Iron Curtain'", pp. 18-52.

Another leading activist arguing for a re-conceptualization of archives is Verne Harris. Harris, steeped in Derridean thought, states that archives open out of the future.<sup>55</sup> In other words, the very notion of the archive is always becoming, like democracy, changing with new contexts, remembering and forgetting, and interactions with power and powerlessness.<sup>56</sup> Harris's personal struggle for human rights began at the National Archives of South Africa where he was a staff member in the 1980s and early 1990s. There, he states, "Under apartheid, the terrain of social memory, as with all social space, was a site of struggle."<sup>57</sup> An adequate summation of the apartheid state archives can be seen in the review by Nesmith of Harris's book *Exploring Archives: An Introduction to Archival Ideas and Practice in South Africa*:

White South African archival practice has been strongly influenced by the European archival tradition, exemplified by the Dutch manual of 1898. This tradition maintains that the record is adequately managed when an archives keeps it inviolate, particularly by preserving a narrow range of its administrative history and diplomatic information (or 'recordness') intact, which then guarantees the record is reliable and authentic. Given the Orwellian world of apartheid South Africa, however, that information can hardly be taken at face value...The abuses of archives by the apartheid state also include the suppression, confiscation, destruction, and physical fragmentation of the archives of those who resisted it.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Verne Harris, "A Shaft of Darkness: Derrida in the Archive," p.61. For deeper insights to the use of Jacques Derrida in the archive, see Verne Harris' *Archives and Justice: A South African Perspective* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2007).

<sup>56</sup> Verne Harris, "The Archival Sliver: A Perspective on the Construction of Social Memory in Archives and the Transition from Apartheid to Democracy," in Carolyn Hamilton, Verne Harris, Jane Taylor, Michele Pickover, Graeme Reid & Razia Saleh, eds., *Refiguring the Archive* (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002), p.135.

<sup>57</sup> Verne Harris, "They Should Have Destroyed More: The Destruction of Public Records by the South African State in the Final Years of Apartheid, 1990-1994," in Cox and Wallace, eds., *Archives and the Public Good*, p.177.

<sup>58</sup> Tom Nesmith, "Book Review," of Verne Harris' *Exploring Archives: An Introduction to Archival Ideas and Practice in South Africa*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Pretoria: National Archives of South Africa, 2000), *Archival Science* 1 (2001), p. 228.

Working within this archival setting, Harris acted as a whistleblower regarding the destruction of records depicting abuses by the state in the closing days of the apartheid regime. Between 1996 and 1998, he also represented the National Archives in the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission investigation into the destruction of those records.<sup>59</sup> From that pivotal event in his archival career, Harris has continued to call for archives to pursue social justice while employed at the South African History Archive (which plays a role there similar to the NSA in the United States) and now as the head of the archival program at the Nelson Mandela Center of Memory and Dialogue.

As the work of these archivists and archives suggest, archival records are now central to protection of human rights. American archival educators Richard Cox and David Wallace underscore their importance by noting that their research suggests that "the recordkeeping dimensions [of human activities] – such as control and access, preservation, destruction, authenticity, and accuracy – demonstrate time and again that records are not mute observers and recordings of activity. Rather, they often actively constitute an activity in themselves and are frequently struggled over as objects of memory formation."<sup>60</sup>

The great power of the record to affect societal well being prompts a need for democratic thinking in society and by archivists about the formation of the archive through appraisal, access to the archive and what archives may say about societal issues such as human rights concerns in their public statements and outreach programming. By using this power in a way that acknowledges its connection to human rights, archivists

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<sup>59</sup> Harris, "They Should Have Destroyed More."

<sup>60</sup> Cox & Wallace, eds., *Archives and the Public Good*, p.2.

can move beyond the often limited conception of their role as receivers, guardians, and retrievers of records and become progressive and activist “builders of public memory.”<sup>61</sup>

The former Librarian and Archivist of Canada Ian Wilson states that “archivists cannot simply be spectators” in regard to social issues.<sup>62</sup> Wilson’s statement challenges the traditional role of archivist. The struggle for human rights will continue whether archivists address it or not. However, it is my view that the struggle will be greatly assisted if archivists play a greater role in promoting democracy and preserving records that fly in the face of the hegemonic narrative. It is the job of archivists to elaborate on how the now massive, widely scattered, and powerful records of today can be archived in ways that support the seminal human rights documents of old. This thesis maintains that this effort should include the records of HRNGOs. It is my contention that the next Paris Commune depends on it.

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<sup>61</sup> Ericson, “Building Our Own ‘Iron Curtain.’” And as Cox writes, “Archivists need to realize that appraisal is part of a larger process of building public memory and a process of connecting to other societal events related to the past.” in Richard J. Cox, *No Innocent Deposits: Forming Archives by Rethinking Appraisal* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2004), pp.40-41.

<sup>62</sup> Ian Wilson, “Foreword,” *Comma 2* (2004), p.5.

## CHAPTER TWO

### *To be Disappeared Twice: Human Rights Commission of El Salvador and the Archival Imperative*

“Forgetting one’s participation in mass murder is not something passive; it is an active deed.”

Adam Hochschild<sup>1</sup>

“Open your eyes and ears, remember every detail, every face, every sigh! The color of the clouds, the hissing of the wind in the trees, the executioner’s every gesture: the one who survives must forget nothing.”

Simon Dubnow<sup>2</sup>

Marianella García-Villas – lawyer, journalist and a founding member of the Non-Governmental Human Rights Commission of El Salvador (CDHES) – devoted her life to human rights.<sup>3</sup> Marianella’s grassroots work, including the examination of corpses, daily visits to the body dumps around San Salvador and recording testimonies from relatives of the disappeared, to name a few, was emotionally painful and physically dangerous. When her body was found in March of 1983, the Salvadoran armed forces press office (COPFRA) stated that she had been killed in combat as an alleged guerrilla combatant who operated under the nom-de-guerre: Comandante Lucia.<sup>4</sup> COPFRA later retracted this statement and declared that she was a human rights worker who had been caught in the crossfire. Fortunately, Marianella was an immensely active and passionate advocate for human rights, affording her friends of a similar persuasion. A delegation from the

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<sup>1</sup>Hochschild, *King Leopold’s Ghost*, p. 295.

<sup>2</sup> Simon Dubnow in Elie Wiesel, “The Holocaust as Literary Inspiration,” *Dimensions of the Holocaust*. Annotated by Elliot Lefkowitz, (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1990), p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Marilyn Thomson, *Women of El Salvador: The Price of Freedom* (London: Zed Books Ltd., 1986), p.137. *Women of El Salvador* was sponsored by CDHES and dedicated by its author to Marianella García-Villas, “President of El Salvador Commission for Human Rights, who was assassinated on the 14<sup>th</sup> March, 1983 for her work in defence of human rights.”

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p.138.

human rights organization International Federation of the Rights of Man (FIDH) embarked on an investigation into her murder and produced these findings:

Marianella was not injured in the cross-fire. A young woman who was with her hid when she heard the first shots and witnessed what happened. Marianella was taken alive by a group of soldiers and put into a helicopter. An official inquiry indicates that her body arrived at the Military Hospital at 16:20 the same day and came from the Military School. One must fear that Marianella was in their hands for 10 or 12 hours... I've never seen such a bullet ridden corpse. However, both the judge's report and the autopsy do not prove that her death was caused by those bullets. There are signs that she had been tortured: severe cuts, her legs broken, her right arm dislocated...I believe she was tortured to death. She was probably raped first as she had a horrible wound in the abdomen, undoubtedly caused by a grenade, as if to make an examination impossible.<sup>5</sup>

Marianella's horrific death characterizes the fate of over 40,000 Salvadoran civilians at the hands of the military, security forces and death squads during the Civil War period of 1980 to 1992.<sup>6</sup> However, Marianella's work as a human rights activist eclipses her typical, yet revealing, murder. Her struggle for human rights in El Salvador remains embedded in the records and history of the CDHES.

This chapter seeks to expand on Director of the International Center for Transitional Justice Lewis Bickford's conception of human rights and the archival imperative, which states that primary documentation of human rights abuse is a "key ingredient to deepening democracy and the long-term vibrancy of democratic practices in countries that have experienced traumatic pasts."<sup>7</sup> Because of the historical implications of these records, archives, among other sources of primary documentation from

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<sup>5</sup> Statement given by the Vice-President of the International Federation of the Rights of Man, Antonio García Barraja, as published in *Primer Semestre del Año de 1983: Los Derechos Humanos en El Salvador* (Comision de los Derechos Humanos de El Salvador, September 1983, Mexico City), pp. 25-27, in *ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Benjamin Keen and Keith Haynes, *A History of Latin American*, 7<sup>th</sup> Edition (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004), p.488.

<sup>7</sup> Louis Bickford, "The Archival Imperative: Human Rights and Historical Memory in Latin America's Southern Cone," *Human Rights Quarterly* 21 (1999), p. 1098. For the International Center for Transitional Justice, see <http://www.ictj.org/en/about/staff/188.html>.

authoritarian periods, remain in constant jeopardy. In addition to truth commissions, legal trials, apologies and monuments, archival preservation of human rights records is imperative.<sup>8</sup> Albeit a general call to action on behalf of good practice in recordkeeping, Bickford's assertions demand further extrapolation by recognizing the historical time/place in which HRNGOs have operated and how their legacy imparts social justice through archives. The archival imperative for HRNGOs, particularly those in the global South,<sup>9</sup> is dependent upon building relationships between them and organizations such as the ICA, Archival Solidarity and international bodies dedicated to building world memory. For archival institutions of the global North,<sup>10</sup> historicity is conferred through evidence, or maintenance and use of records. In approaching HRNGOs in Latin America – a region that needs no reminder of the consequences of imperialism<sup>11</sup> – cultural sensitivity to memory and societal value must inform a cooperative effort to promote history and human rights. Creating trust in an institution (archives) that has historically neglected human rights in the region requires reexamination of professional goals.<sup>12</sup> Thus, archives of the global North must do all that is necessary to accommodate HRNGOs and their need for sustainable archives. HRNGOs not only represent human rights issues in a given time/place, they also contribute to a historical understanding of

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<sup>8</sup> Bickford, "The Archival Imperative," p. 1098.

<sup>9</sup> South: A term used to denote the poorest countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

<sup>10</sup> David McNally, *Another World Is Possible: Globalization and Anti-Capitalism* (Winnipeg: Arbiter Ring Publishers, 2002), p.7. North: A term used to describe the wealthy capitalist countries of Europe, North America and Japan.

<sup>11</sup> "[Existing] since those remote times when Renaissance Europeans ventured across the ocean and buried their teeth in the throats of the Indian Civilizations." See Eduardo Galeano, *Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973), p.11.

<sup>12</sup> As Bickford mentions, in post-dictatorship Argentina (a conflict involving illegal repression by the military government - notoriously including disappearances, 1976-1983), a culture of mistrust has developed within the human rights sphere due to the trauma created and sustained from decades of impunity for the accused, leading to outright refusal to researchers by NGOs interested in archiving HRNGO records. Bickford, "The Archival Imperative." p. 1107.

social activism.<sup>13</sup> In this vein, history and context remain the archivist's primary entry point into understanding and promoting HRNGO records.

This chapter maintains that it is imperative to archive the records of the CDHES, one of the most prominent human rights organizations active in El Salvador during its Civil War and after, and thus also of similar HRNGOs. Doing so requires an activist stance by archives that is animated by a vision of an interconnected archive of justice maintained by archives around the world. I challenge formal archives to pursue this goal. Without an active stance from the archives on collecting such human rights records, a great many underrepresented voices will be lost to history, creating an imbalance in cultural memory and the perpetuation of hegemonic narratives. As Ian Wilson, former Librarian and Archivist of Canada, and current president of the International Council on Archives, says of the importance of human rights documentation, "...individuals, minorities and societies cannot achieve justice, validate their rights and carry through their efforts for reconciliation, unless the authoritative evidence of the violations which they have suffered is preserved and accessible."<sup>14</sup>

Preservation methods for HRNGOs and their records, or the lack thereof, are indicative of their *modus operandi*: the direct use-value of the record. From an archival perspective, records belong in archives so that they can be used by the public as active sites of memory. However, records of HRNGOs are predominantly used in building legal cases, dissemination campaigns and public protest. The record is often mislaid or allowed to deteriorate physically after the specific campaign ends. Louis Bickford helps

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<sup>13</sup> Paul D. Almeida, *Waves of Protest: Popular Struggle in El Salvador, 1925-2005* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), p. 12

<sup>14</sup> Ian Wilson, "Foreword" in *Comma, International Journal on Archives* 2 (2004), p. 5.

to define the archival immediacy in recognizing the precarious nature of HRNGO records:

Primary documents related to human rights abuses are rapidly disappearing and are in danger of being lost due to age, poor storage, natural disasters, or theft. The vast majority of documents have never been copied onto microfilm nor onto electronic or digital formats. Instead almost all of these documents sit in dusty boxes in storage areas in which they remain un-catalogued, poorly organized, and in [a] fragile and vulnerable state.<sup>15</sup>

In combination with political rebellion, economic tenuousness and overwhelming use, HRNGO records are indeed rapidly disappearing. HRNGO records demand archival preservation to ensure that the stories of human rights activism and those of the disappeared are granted a history.

Influential human rights and archival scholar Bruce Montgomery of the University of Colorado at Boulder has written some of the most important studies on HRNGOs and their recordkeeping traditions.<sup>16</sup> Montgomery acknowledges that HRNGOs often engage in a myriad of campaigns potentially complicating the job of the archivist: “NGOs active in human rights...represent not one, but a constellation of causes, purposes, ideologies, and constituencies with sometimes contradictory functions and goals.”<sup>17</sup> With this in mind, Montgomery divides human rights organizations into two categories, the exclusive and the non-exclusive. The exclusive HRNGO is directly involved in the record creation process by investigating “on the ground” where human

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<sup>15</sup> Bickford, “The Archival Imperative,” p.1098.

<sup>16</sup> Namely “Fact-Finding by Human Rights Non-Governmental Organizations,” “Iraqi Secret Police Files,” and “Archiving Human Rights: The Records of Amnesty International USA,” *Archivaria* 39 (Spring 1995). Not only has Montgomery written extensively on the subject, his archival activism (which he emphasizes to be apolitical) includes seeking to restore and preserve the records of CDHES.

<sup>17</sup> Montgomery, “Fact-Finding by Human Rights Non-Governmental Organizations,” p. 26.

rights violations occurred and identifying the evidence of these violations (i.e. CDHES and *Tutela Legal*).<sup>18</sup> The non-exclusive HRNGO most often collects reports from the exclusive organization and uses them in multiple ways, occasionally involving itself in investigative record creation (i.e. Marin Interfaith Task Force and the Resource Center of the Americas).<sup>19</sup>

HRNGOs, like most organizations, keep their records in the most logical and efficient way they can to promote accessibility. According to archival and human rights scholar David Block, the records of HRNGOs fall into three categories: documents created by the repressors, those created by opponents of repression, and those collected from survivors of repression after their liberation or otherwise.<sup>20</sup> Although this categorization model is not standard for all HRNGOs, it helps provide some general insight into the structure of their records. However, as Montgomery notes, careful organization of these records with appropriate regard for the archival principle of provenance is not always possible:

The vast cultural, social, and political differences among countries and the enormous variation in human rights situations have required NGOs to be flexible concerning their fact-finding and documentation strategies. The absence of uniform standards also has influenced the archival record by necessitating that NGOs find alternative ways to gather information on governments that cloak their crimes in secrecy, destroy evidence,

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<sup>18</sup> Like CDHES, *Tutela Legal* is a Catholic-sponsored HRNGO from El Salvador which also pursued and investigated human rights abuses during the Civil War.

<sup>19</sup> The Marin Interfaith Task Force is a non-exclusive HRNGO from Northern California which was actively involved in the Central America solidarity movement of the 1980s.

<sup>20</sup> David Block, "Broadcast and Archive: Human Rights Documentation in the Early Digital Age," (2005) paper presented at Florida State University Conference on Human Rights, Nov. 1-3, 2001. <http://ecommons.library.cornell.edu/bitstream/1813/2543/1/Broadcast%20Archive%20Final.pdf>.

intimidate or murder political opponents, and disseminate disinformation regarding their activities.<sup>21</sup>

For this reason, as well as the precarious nature of the HRNGO, standardization can become a hindrance to documenting atrocity. Block states that HRNGOs operating within countries where human rights violations occur tend to produce records that lack the care of formal archives, “Because these repositories were created outside the archival establishment, their physical conservation has not benefited from professional care and their organizations are often *sui generis*.”<sup>22</sup>

Various media are used in the documentation of human rights abuse. Often dependent upon the economic endowment of the HRNGO, outlets of expression vary from the technically advanced to the creatively rudimentary. Block, in a lecture on human rights documentation in the early digital age, identifies the multiple forms of media that the archivist must be familiar with in consulting human rights records:

Genres include: newspaper accounts, judicial proceedings, bureaucratic records and the documents prepared by various social service agencies – intake files, interviews, oral histories, psychological evaluations. Media are equally diverse, with documents stored on paper, film, digital media, audio and videotape and art, including therapeutic drawings and large collections of *arpilleras*,<sup>23</sup> the colorful appliqué that became a signature of women’s involvement in human rights movements.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Montgomery, “Fact-Finding by Human Rights Non-Governmental Organizations.” pp. 31-32.

<sup>22</sup> Block, “Broadcast and Archive”.

<sup>23</sup> The *arpillera*, originating as a human rights record during the Pinochet era in Chile, is a hand stitched three-dimensional picture made of fabric, used to relay messages relating to prison conditions and testimony of abuse. See <http://whipup.net/2007/06/04/arpilleras-from-chile-i/>.

<sup>24</sup> Block, “Broadcast and Archive.”

<http://ecommons.library.cornell.edu/bitstream/1813/2543/1/Broadcast%20Archive%20Final.pdf>.

These varieties of recordable medium require the archivist to be knowledgeable about both new and old technologies as well as able through contextual analysis to understand the ‘medium as message.’<sup>25</sup>

The broad context for understanding the records of CDHES is the turbulent history of El Salvador. Like most Latin American nations, it has suffered from prolonged conflicts along class, cultural, and ethnic lines. These conflicts, exacerbated by the highest population density in the region<sup>26</sup> and weak economy based on a few profitable exports (namely coffee and cheap labor<sup>27</sup>), have occurred throughout the nation’s history.<sup>28</sup> For most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, oligarchic power was concentrated in a handful of wealthy *finquero*<sup>29</sup> families who remained deeply entrenched with support from military and state structures.<sup>30</sup> Through perpetual *finca* land expansion, fueled by global market demand for coffee following World War I, the peasantry gradually lost much of the subsistence plots, which led to semi-

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<sup>25</sup> Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media* (London: Routledge, 1964).

<sup>26</sup> Keen and Haynes, *A History of Latin America*, p. 479: “Thanks to the eradication of yellow fever and malaria and to the successes of preventative medicine, [El Salvador’s] population shot up from 1,443,000 in 1930 to 2,500,000 in 1961 and 3,549,000 in 1969.” However, as Galeano notes, the Northern fear of the “human ant heaps of Latin America” must be placed in perspective as El Salvador has a lower population density than Belgium. He adds that vast portions of Latin America have little to no human population. *Open Veins of Latin America*, p. 16.

<sup>27</sup> See Export Processing Zones in Duncan Green, *Silent Revolution: The Rise and Fall of Market Economics in Latin America*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2003), pp.129-133.

<sup>28</sup> In hopes of detracting from what Aldo Lauria-Santiago and Leigh Binford describe in their book, *Landscapes of Struggle*, as “Academics and political actors...perpetuating unsubstantiated generalizations about Salvadoran history,” my goal is to take their advice by identifying a gap in Salvadoran historiography and addressing HRNGOs during the Civil War period, in hopes of escaping the atavistic grand narrative of the ‘Banana Republic.’ *Landscapes of Struggle: Politics, Society, and Community in El Salvador* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2004), p.13.

<sup>29</sup> *Finqueros* are coffee plantation owners who enclosed large plots of land and historically have profited hand over fist by employing peasant labor marginalized in this process.

<sup>30</sup> Keen and Haynes, p.478. These oligarchies emerged on the basis of nineteenth-century land reforms that undermined the power of the former Vice-Royalties of the Spanish crown after region-wide independence in 1821.

proletarianization and a drastic decline in standard of living.<sup>31</sup> Daniel Faber outlines the nature of this expansion, “Pristine forest land, unique wildlife habitats, and peasant communities were ‘cleared’ to make way for vast *latifundios* devoted to the production of traditional and nontraditional export crops.”<sup>32</sup>

In 1930, Arturo Araujo, an admirer of the British Labour Party, became the first elected president of El Salvador. Araujo attempted to undertake a gradual social platform, based on the British welfare state model. However, during the Great Depression urban labor unions adopted a radical stance due in part to the agitation of communist dissident Agustín Farabundo Martí. Revolutionary fervor was not restricted to industrial workers as peasant revolts against their draconian overseers also began to shake the status quo. Araujo reluctantly tried to remedy these tensions through social and agrarian reform; however his concessions were not enough to provide the masses with basic requirements and were too much for the landed elite and the subservient military.<sup>33</sup>

In the words of Galeano, “[The oligarchy being] unable to multiply the dinner, it does what it can to suppress the diners.”<sup>34</sup> In 1931, a *finquero*-backed military coup led by General Maximiliano Hernández Martínez overthrew Araujo. This assertion of military dominance effectively ended public participation in the state apparatus, which forced Martí’s urban followers and the indigenous peasantry into the rural areas and revolt. “Hundreds if not thousands,” according to historian Erik Ching, “attacked

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<sup>31</sup> Daniel Faber, *Environment Under Fire: Imperialism and the Ecological Crisis in Central America* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1993), p.59. Faber refers to this form of labor exploitation as functional-dualism, whereby the semi-proletarian peasantry could work on the distant *fincas* harvesting export crops during the dry season, then alternating back to their subsistence plots of grains during the rainy season. This functional-dualism, in addition to harmful large-scale farming practices in the region, forces the peasantry into over-exploitation of the subsistence plot rendering it unproductive.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p.48. *Latifundios* are large plantations.

<sup>33</sup> Keen and Haynes, p. 478.

<sup>34</sup> Galeano, p. 15.

roughly a dozen municipalities and occupied six of them for as long as four days before military units arrived.”<sup>35</sup> Faced down by a modern army, a virtual genocide followed with the death toll reaching as many as thirty-thousand peasants and indigenous peoples. The massacre effectively wiped out traditional indigenous culture, dress and language from El Salvador.<sup>36</sup> An era of military backbiting ensued amongst veteran and junior officers which ushered in successive coup d'états, aided by the United States and local capitalists.

In 1961, the Kennedy administration created the Alliance for Progress, a program which played a seminal role in shaping American dominance in the region. El Salvador, receiving millions of dollars in assistance (the largest amount in Central America), was to be the model state-alternative to “dictatorial regimes that seemed vulnerable to revolution from below.”<sup>37</sup> This included the establishment of two paramilitary groups by the State Department, Green Berets, CIA and USAID which would become the backbone of the country’s death squad network. Historian Greg Grandin remarks that all of this occurred without “even a whiff of rural insurrection”:

American advisors helped coordinate the work of the competing branches of a country’s security forces and supplied intelligence agencies with phones, teletype machines, radios, cars, guns, ammunition, surveillance equipment, explosives, cattle prods, cameras, typewriters, carbon paper and filing cabinets. They instructed their apprentices in the latest riot control, record keeping, surveillance, and mass-arrest techniques.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Erik Ching, “Patronage and Politics under General Maximiliano Hernández Martínez, 1931-1939: The Local Roots of Military Authoritarianism in El Salvador,” in Lauria-Santiago and Binford, eds., *Landscapes of Struggle*, p.52.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Almeida, p. 71.

<sup>38</sup> Greg Grandin, *Empires Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism*. (New York: Owl Books, 2007), pp. 95-96.

The Alliance for Progress was initiated as a response to the Cuban Revolution of 1959 in an attempt to create sustainable middle-classes in the region by aggressively injecting incentive capital into local economies.<sup>39</sup>

At the economic behest of the US, Colonel Julio Alberto Rivera established an electoral system in El Salvador whereby one political party, the *Alianza Republicana Nacionalista* (ARENA), would remain dominant through the very visible use of military coercion.<sup>40</sup> Though hardly a democratic system, this opening allowed opposition parties to take form and build constituencies. Among them were: the Christian Democratic Party (PDC) headed by the mayor of San Salvador, José Napoleon Duarte; the *Movimiento Nacional Revolucionario* (MNR), led by Guillermo Manuel Ungo; and the *Unión Democrática Nacionalista* (UDN).<sup>41</sup> By the late 1960s, any potentially moderate market outcomes were stunted as the Alliance for Progress changed its emphasis from democratization to national security. This shift in development tactics dumped vast amounts of military assistance on the region, perpetuating a dependence on foreign security and economic aid.

After a long decade of unproductive Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI),<sup>42</sup> the continuing population boom, and a bitter conflict with Honduras infamously known

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<sup>39</sup> Faber, p. 48.

<sup>40</sup> Almeida, p.71.

<sup>41</sup> Keen and Haynes, p. 479.

<sup>42</sup> Green, *Silent Revolution*, p. 25. Import Substitution Industrialization was an economic model prominent in Latin America from 1950 to 1980, whereby trade barriers were imposed by the state in order to strengthen local industry and replace imported products with national ones. The greatest conundrum of the economic model was the need to purchase the necessary capital intensive heavy-industrial goods from the North, which created inputs that were outstripping profits, leading to consumer prices that were often five times higher than international prices.

as the Soccer War,<sup>43</sup> Salvadorans demanded change. In 1972, the three opposition parties formed a coalition campaign and ran successfully against Colonel Arturo Molina, winning by a substantial 72,000 votes. However, the official vote counters reported a unanimous victory for Molina by 100,000 votes.<sup>44</sup> The electoral fraud provoked members of the junior officer class to challenge the results, but ultimately remained unsuccessful in changing the party line. As Paul D. Almeida discusses in *Waves of Protest: Popular Struggle in El Salvador 1925-2005*, two distinct conditions drive collective action in the South: (1) political opportunity and (2) threat;

Two dimensions of political opportunity relevant to collective action dynamics in the developing world include *institutional access* and *competitive elections*. These core political opportunities not only encourage multiple groups to mobilize for new advantages and benefits in semi-authoritarian and liberalizing states, but also encourage the formation of organizations that maintain the capacity to sustain waves of contention. Additionally, I employ three dimensions of threat: (1) state-attributed economic problems; (2) erosion of rights; and (3) state repression. All five elements of opportunity and threat can combine in multiple configurations producing distinct political environments enhancing or deterring the likelihood of mass collective action.<sup>45</sup>

With virtually all five of Almeida's elements of opportunity and threat occurring in 1970s El Salvador, conditions for collective action were ripe.

In 1977, after another fraudulent election resulting in the ascendancy of General Humberto Romero and the death of 200 protestors, guerrilla opposition groups began an aggressive campaign to overthrow the authoritarian ruling class. The clandestine guerrilla movement itself was fractured and non-cooperative for the majority of the

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<sup>43</sup> Though aptly named after several contested World Cup 1970 qualifying matches, this five-day war was prompted by Salvadoran population spillover across the border and economic tension brought on by unequal trade relations.

<sup>44</sup> Keen and Haynes, p. 480.

<sup>45</sup> Almeida, p. 14.

1970s. Containing varying degrees of the political left, five major radical organizations eventually joined forces in October of 1980 to form the *Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional* (Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front: FMLN) in homage to the legendary leader of the Salvadoran Communist party of the 1930s.<sup>46</sup> Bank robberies, kidnappings of wealthy magnates, seizure of communication outlets, and assassinations all marked the upsurge of militant revolt. In conjunction, the military grew increasingly brutal with crackdowns on protest and the detention and torture of opposition party leaders. In the rural areas, the National Guard and nationalist paramilitary groups began conducting raids, murders, abductions and *desapariciones* (disappearances) on peasant villages in attempts to instill fear in potential subversives.<sup>47</sup> Perpetuating this climate of fear was the increase of plainclothes officers conducting the abuses, and as Almeida states, “the bodies of victims were commonly placed strategically at bus stops and other highly visible public locations.”<sup>48</sup> These paramilitary organizations, namely *Organización Democrática Nacionalista* (ORDEN), the White Warrior Union, and Maximiliano Hernandez Martinez Anti-communist Brigade, became known as *Escuadrón de la Muerte* (death squad). Nationalistic and authoritarian groups specializing in brutal ‘purification’ campaigns which targeted civilians, are responsible for the most heinous of crimes committed during the Civil War.

The civilian sectors of society, namely students, labor unions, and several Bishops in the Catholic Church rebelled against the military and its repression in an overt way

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 168.

<sup>47</sup> Keen and Haynes, p. 481. To be *desaparecido* is a regionally historic term in Latin America originating in the Southern Cone of South America where military dictatorships would instill fear in the civilian population by kidnappings. The whereabouts of the “disappeared” victims or whether they lived or died or under what circumstances would not be disclosed.

<sup>48</sup> Almeida, p. 152.

through what Almeida calls “a viable multi-sectoral organizational structure.”<sup>49</sup> Drawing from the subversive concepts of liberation theology, inspired by the Vatican II (1962-1965) and the Second Vatican Council at Medellin (1968) conferences, then Archbishop Luis Chávez y Gonzáles began shifting the Salvadoran Catholic Church toward “the preferential option for the poor”:<sup>50</sup>

Going out to live among the rural masses, the practicing preachers of liberation theology plunged into the work of building self-governing peasant cooperatives, which tended to grow into combative mass organizations of farm laborers. Radically interpreting the Bible in the spirit of the early Christian communes, they preached to the peasants that their crushing poverty and suffering were *not* God’s will: God’s will was for them to inherit the earth. When the oligarchy’s forces cracked down against the aroused peasants and farm laborers, the radical priests and nuns would help shelter them and their guerrilla partisans from the white terror.<sup>51</sup>

One such priest was Oscar Arnulfo Romero. Since having been appointed Archbishop in 1977 by the Vatican, Romero has become recognized as El Salvador’s foremost human rights worker. His mantra to the congregation and oppressed people throughout Latin America was that “[Ours is] a God of Justice and love who acts on the side of the poor and oppressed [and that the people] have a basic human right to organize in order to begin taking control of their own lives.”<sup>52</sup> From his encouragement and philosophy sprang the HRNGO: *Comision de Derechos Humanos de El Salvador* (Non-governmental Human Rights Commission of El Salvador: CDHES).<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Almeida, p. 140.

<sup>50</sup> Keen and Haynes, p.481.

<sup>51</sup> Daniel Fogel, *Revolution in Central America* (San Francisco: Ism Press, 1985), p. 11.

<sup>52</sup> Keen and Haynes, p. 481.

<sup>53</sup> Romero is also responsible for organizing and supporting several other HRNGOs in El Salvador including: *Comité de Madres y Familiares de Presos, Desaparacidos y Asesinados Politicos de El Salvador* (Mothers of the Imprisoned, Assassinated, or Disappeared: COMADRES) established in 1977 and Socorro Jurídico Christiano (Christian Legal Aid) established in 1975.

The formation of CDHES in 1978 was an important response by Salvadorans to state-sanctioned violence, the impunity of the legal and police apparatus, and an apathetic or unaware US public. However, as Almeida suggests, HRNGOs and other social movements formed together out of the same anxieties about authoritarian rule.<sup>54</sup> HRNGOs must be acknowledged historically as part of the collective action that took form prior to the Civil War period, including those of the most militant to the most conciliatory sectors. CDHES is distinguished from the other aspects of the social movement by its dedication to the record. As discussed above, the HRNGO pursues its goals through investigation, recording, and reporting on human rights violations. Thanks to this recordkeeping culture, the human rights-oriented history of the civil war can be told through this archives. Although it is an incomplete history and largely quantitative, it nevertheless provides a snapshot of life as a Salvadoran, as a human rights worker and an advocate for those who could no longer speak for themselves.

CDHES received the initial support from Archbishop Romero in order to record and disseminate evidence of the increasingly violent atmosphere in El Salvador. Not only were protestors and guerrillas being pursued but also Archbishop Romero's fellow clergy were being targeted. Seven bishops were killed by death squads between 1977 and 1979.<sup>55</sup> Archbishop Romero, in what would be his last radio broadcast on March 23, 1980, addressed the armed forces with the following statement: "In the name of God and in the name of his suffering people whose laments rise to heaven each day more tumultuous, I beg you, I ask you, I command you, in the name of God, stop the

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<sup>54</sup> Almeida, p.12.

<sup>55</sup> Keen and Haynes, p. 481.

repression.”<sup>56</sup> The following morning he was shot at mass by a hired gunman linked with Major Robert d’Aubuisson.<sup>57</sup>

CDHES persisted in its efforts despite sustained terrorism. CDHES was founded by the then current and youngest congressional PDC party member Marianella García-Villas.<sup>58</sup> The organization established five primary objectives for promoting human rights in El Salvador:

(1) To promote the observance and respect for human rights; (2) to defend victims of human rights violations and bring to justice those responsible for abuses; (3) to denounce the human rights violations to the national and international communities; (4) to promote and coordinate activities aimed at preventing human rights abuses; (5) to inform the Salvadoran people about their fundamental rights, and to monitor the implementation of international human rights treaties and accords signed by the Salvadoran government.

In late 1978, the violent responses to Marianella’s activism, which would follow her for the rest of her life, had begun. On two separate occasions she was detained and tortured by security forces. Her name began to appear regularly on death squad lists, and her parent’s home was raided and destroyed, forcing them into exile.<sup>59</sup>

In light of the recurring violence, a coup d’état to replace Gen. Humberto Romero was agreed to by the US and to be carried out by the PDC and junior officers of the

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<sup>56</sup> Non-Governmental Human Rights Commission of El Salvador, *A Decade of Abuse: Human Rights in El Salvador* (San Anselmo, CA: Marin Interfaith Task Force on Central America, 1990), p. 20.

<sup>57</sup> Fogel, p. 13. According to Fogel, the following day the Carter Administration answered Romero’s plea by announcing a \$55 million dollar military aid package to the Salvadoran government. See United Nations Commission on the Truth, *From Madness to Hope: The 12-Year War in El Salvador*. (1993 UN Security Council, Annex). [http://www.usip.org/library/tc/doc/reports/el\\_salvador/tc\\_es\\_03151993\\_intro.html](http://www.usip.org/library/tc/doc/reports/el_salvador/tc_es_03151993_intro.html) United States Institute of Peace. Truth Commissions Digital Collection: Reports: El Salvador. (January 26, 2001). Visited 02/07/2009.

<sup>58</sup> Thomson, p.137.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

military on October 15, 1979.<sup>60</sup> However the junta that replaced the president had more militarists than civilian reformists. After a massive demonstration by the unarmed opposition at the Plaza Libertad some thirteen days later, the National Guard fired into the crowd killing twenty-five people. Most of the civilian members of the junta resigned following the massacre, leaving an already militant command post to begin what US chargé d'affaires James Cheek recommended as a “clean counterinsurgency war.”<sup>61</sup> The official Civil War began in March 1980 coinciding with a PDC façade of agrarian reform. Many Salvadorans criticized the rapidity of the reform’s three-phase implementation, enforced by the military no less, as an excuse for the Reagan Administration to continue its military aid to the junta.<sup>62</sup> The PDC, consistently running moderate political candidates, suffered a sixty-percent drop in party members – including CDHES President Marianella García-Villas – due to its cooperation with the military government and neglect of human rights. Between the October 1979 coup and December of 1983, CDHES recorded a total of 49,162 civilian assassinations and 3,896 disappeared.<sup>63</sup>

During that four-year period, the offices of the CDHES were raided and bombed twice by security forces, which cost the organization years of investigative work and the documentary records of the disappeared. As stated in the official CDHES document A

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<sup>60</sup>Keen and Haynes, p. 482. The revolutionary potential of an armed guerrilla force in neighboring Sandinista-controlled Nicaragua encouraged the coup plotters to opt for a reform-based appeasement of those who were radicalized by the repression by the Romero government.

<sup>61</sup> Keen and Haynes, p. 482.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Thomson, p. 1.

*Decade of Abuse*, the organization's staff also paid the highest price for its human rights work:<sup>64</sup>

- Maria Magdalena Enriquez, found dead in a shallow grave, shot in the face four times, reportedly raped, October 4, 1980.
- Ramon Valladares Perez, machine-gunned to death by "unidentified gunmen" as he drove through the city in a CDHES vehicle, October 26, 1980.
- Carlos Eduardo Vides, detained by a group of men, among whom were soldiers of the Fifth Infantry Regiment, disappeared, December, 1981.
- America Fernando Perdomo, arrested and driven to the headquarters of the Treasury Police, disappeared, August, 1982.
- Jose Roberto Rivera Martelli, detained by three men in civilian clothes on the main street of Soyapango, disappeared, August, 1982.
- Dr. Jose Guillermo Orellana Osorio, kidnapped from his workplace, apparently tortured and strangled, found on a roadside, October 4, 1983.<sup>65</sup>

The evidence of these abuses to the CDHES staff, including Marianella García-Villas, provide a tragic yet triumphant depiction of HRNGO records. Each member of CDHES was willing to risk his or her life for the cause of human rights for Salvadoran people. From the archivists' point of view, their records in interviews, case files, and investigative reports are imbued with the convictions that ultimately cost them their lives. In addition, the raids on and bombings of CDHES offices that destroyed records created another sort of death for these people. The activism of the disappeared is engraved upon these records; hence their voices and memory of their work in these records suffered and continues to suffer from a second disappearance. Thus the archival human rights imperative continues decades after the Civil War.

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<sup>64</sup> Non-Governmental Human Rights Commission of El Salvador, *A Decade of Abuse: Human Rights in El Salvador*, p.3.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p.3.

In 1981, Marianella García-Villas moved the head office of CDHES to Mexico City in an attempt to prevent further document destruction and harassment from the security forces in San Salvador. However, the work of investigating and interviewing victims and witnesses continued in urban and occasionally rural areas of El Salvador. It is important to note the non-governmental prefix to the CDHES title. After CDHES gained national and international notoriety as an advocate for victims of abuse, largely inflicted by the state, the junta established its own Governmental Human Rights Commission of El Salvador.<sup>66</sup> This organization's formation was intended to foster a positive image of state concern about human rights. In addition, the governmental-CDHES reported a conservative death toll attributed to the security forces and a much greater estimation of murders attributed to the FMLN.

The records created by the non-governmental CDHES prove, if nothing else, that there was a very high number of grievances against the military and death squads. CDHES offices were opened to witnesses and victims alike to report human rights abuses. The typical form on which CDHES would record its accounts of human rights abuse is called the case file: a standardized form containing fields for biographical information about the victim including the date and place of the event, whom is held responsible, and a description of the circumstances surrounding the report. Often the case file includes supplemental documents like personal statements of confidence, newspaper clippings related to the event or person, governmental and workplace

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<sup>66</sup> Gilberto García, "Comisión de Derechos Humanos de El Salvador, Cumple 30 Años." *UITA* - Secretaría Regional Latinoamericana, May 15, 2008. [http://www.rel-uita.org/internacional/ddhh/comision\\_ddhh\\_30\\_anios.htm](http://www.rel-uita.org/internacional/ddhh/comision_ddhh_30_anios.htm). Visited 03/26/2009.

vouchers, last known photographs and certifications of authenticity by CDHES staff.<sup>67</sup> These case files were then placed in folders and labeled according to the victim's name and the human rights abuse sustained.

A significant quality of the CDHES case files is that they do not solely document human rights abuses by the state. Abuses inflicted by the death squads, plain-clothes military agents, policemen, soldiers, FMLN and ERP guerillas, as well as other unidentifiable actors in human rights abuse were recorded in the CDHES case files. Information regarding state perpetrators was included in the case file; however, this information was not the defining purpose for CDHES. A predecessor HRNGO, *Socorro Juridico*, was discredited by prominent national and international human rights community spokesmen for only recording incidents linked to abuses committed by the state security apparatus. Although 95 percent of documented atrocities were committed by the state and death squads, *Socorro Juridico* became a secondary HRNGO to CDHES due to their narrower investigation.<sup>68</sup>

The eighth and final member of CDHES to be murdered during the Civil War, Herbert Anaya Sanabria, was also committed to speaking truth to power. Like Marianella's struggle, Herbert's achievements share a prominent place in the history of CDHES and its archives. Serving as President of CDHES in 1986, Herbert was arrested alongside succeeding CDHES President Reynaldo Blanco in May by Treasury Policemen

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<sup>67</sup> Comision De Derechos Humanos De El Salvador, Case Files, University of Colorado at Boulder Archives. Accessed 07/2008.

<sup>68</sup> Noam Chomsky, *World Orders Old and New* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 99. Other HRNGOs, namely the Catholic-based *Tutela Legal*, also collected information on all human rights abuses during the Civil War period and complemented the CDHES material in the 1993 Truth Commission Report.

dressed in plain clothes and heavily armed.<sup>69</sup> He was interrogated and imprisoned at *La Esperanza* (Hope) Mariona Prison in San Salvador and finally released in February 1987 in a prisoner exchange.<sup>70</sup> What became of his political detention would later lead to one of the most important investigations undertaken by CDHES during the Civil War. While imprisoned, Herbert was able to conduct and record interviews with 434 prisoners, which were then smuggled out of prison in September 1986.<sup>71</sup> The report, entitled *Torture in El Salvador*, begins: “Torture is practiced, but in a manner designed to obscure its existence under the shroud created by the stated policy of ‘respect for human rights,’ the object of which is to minimize, or diffuse, the impact produced on all civilized people by the discovery of the practice of torture, which results in a loss to the ‘democratic image’ of the State in national and international opinion.”<sup>72</sup> As CDHES reported, through assassinations, tortures, raids, and organizations created to promote disinformation, the state was going to great lengths to protect its ‘democratic’ image.

The act of torturing an individual, in this case someone accused of anti-state activities, is used as a means to extract confessions to crimes that may or may not have occurred. Herbert’s report – in its 160 pages of summarized and original field documents – details the varying techniques used by the security forces in order to extract the desired information. Three categories of torture are designated in the report: (1) physical torture; (2) psychological torture; and (3) physico-psychological torture. From these three

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<sup>69</sup> *From Madness to Hope: The 12-Year War in El Salvador* (1993 UN Security Council, Annex). [http://www.usip.org/library/tc/doc/reports/el\\_salvador/tc\\_es\\_03151993\\_intro.html](http://www.usip.org/library/tc/doc/reports/el_salvador/tc_es_03151993_intro.html) United States Institute of Peace.

<sup>70</sup> Noam Chomsky, *Chomsky on Miseducation*. Donald P. Macedo, ed., (Landham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), p. 91.

<sup>71</sup> Human Rights Commission of El Salvador, *Torture in El Salvador*, Marin Interfaith Task Force, trans., (San Anselmo, CA: Marin Interfaith Task Force, 1986).

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

categories, forty specific acts were observed. The distinctions are what human rights database designer Patrick Ball calls the “controlled vocabulary of violations”<sup>73</sup> whereby the HRNGO has designated categories of human rights violations into single words, and filed the victims of that violation under that designated category. From this categorization, a basic legend was prepared to correlate numbers with the act of torture (see Figure 1.1). As stated earlier, the ad hoc standardization and categorization of HRNGO records depends upon the locale and media present, exemplified in this case of prison interviews that resulted in transcribed oral testimony, signatures and fingerprints, as well as basic drawings of torture (see Figure 1.2). With limited materials and time, Herbert acquired the evidence available to determine the extent of prison torture. Although lacking the supporting documents found in case files, this example demonstrates the unique value of HRNGO records.

Several statistical charts that appear in the torture report serve to convey different types of information relating to the victims of prison torture. Figure 1.3 is an example of a statistical chart of political prisoners, divided into “social sectors” on the y-axis and months of 1986 on the x-axis. This information is gathered in order to describe the array of victims held in prison and receiving torture. Ultimately, this information seeks to convey the stratification in human rights abuse toward specific sectors of society. Moving from the general to the specific, Figure 1.4 includes raw data recorded through a prisoner survey listing names, dates of imprisonment, torture suffered and signature or fingerprint of the interviewee. The raw data recorded on site regarding accounts of

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<sup>73</sup>Patrick Ball, *Who did What to Whom?: planning and implementing a large scale human rights data project* (Washington D.C.: American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1996), Chapter 3.4.2 “Units of History: The Human Rights Violation Act,” [http://shr.aaas.org/Ball/ch\\_342.html](http://shr.aaas.org/Ball/ch_342.html) Visited 02/07/2009.

torture between January and August of 1986 was later compiled onto a composite statistical chart (Figure 1.5) which contains various fields of information relating to what, when, and how many experienced torture in prison.<sup>74</sup>

Not only was the torture investigation extremely dangerous for Herbert, it also brought with it severe implications for CDHES. The report was smuggled out of prison in September of 1986 and published in Spanish.<sup>75</sup> Upon his release from *La Esperanza* in 1987, he became even more vocal about human rights violations and the coordinated assaults of the security forces and death squads. In response, the US embassy and Salvadoran politicians denounced him as an FMLN guerrilla and the CDHES as a front-organization.<sup>76</sup> This disinformation continued into the 1990s when the US and the Salvadoran government proclaimed that both the FMLN and state-military committed similar acts of murder during the Civil War. Historian Carlos M. Vilas unabashedly rejects these falsehoods: “The claim by El Salvador and the United States that both sides committed human rights violations in equal measure was thoroughly discredited by the United Nations Truth Commission’s investigation, which laid almost 97 percent of violations to government forces.”<sup>77</sup> Although Herbert’s findings were eventually vindicated in the nationwide Truth Commission of 1993, he would not live to see it. On

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<sup>74</sup> Though Herbert was not imprisoned until May of 1986, he had interviewed prisoners since January 1986.

<sup>75</sup> It also indicated that torture methods being used were concurrent with the School of the America’s manual.

<sup>76</sup> Jose Gutierrez, “The Killing of Herbert Anaya Sanabria,” *Green Left Review* #95, 7 April 1993. <http://www.greenleft.org.au/1993/95/4265> Visited 04/05/2009.

<sup>77</sup> Carlos M. Vilas, *Between Earthquakes and Volcanoes: Market, State, and the Revolutions in Central America*, Ted Kuster, trans., (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1995), p. 135.

October 27, 1987 after returning to his apartment from driving his daughters to school, Herbert was shot to death in the parking lot by gunmen in civilian clothes.<sup>78</sup>

In 1992, Peace Accords were officially signed by President Alfredo Christiani and members of the FMLN, calling for: an end to the war, disbanding of the National Guard and Treasury Police and the disarming of the guerrillas, as well as the creation of a UN sanctioned Truth Commission.<sup>79</sup> Herbert's murder was thoroughly examined by the Truth Commission, which found that the state – having falsely arrested a leftist guerrilla who confessed under interrogation to having committed the murder – “failed in its duty under international law to protect human rights, [or] properly investigate the murder of Herbert Anaya and bring to trial and punish the culprits.”<sup>80</sup> Although Herbert's death – and many thousands more – would go unpunished, his work in the field of human rights ultimately contributed to the international condemnation of the Salvadoran state, its US accomplices and the ultra-right death squads.<sup>81</sup> One of the most important aspects of the CDHES struggle for human rights was that it maintained records. The Salvadoran HRNGO's records, which included some 18,000 cases found in the CDHES archives, became seminal sources behind the Truth Commission's findings.<sup>82</sup> Through proper recordkeeping and resourceful personnel, CDHES was able to prevent numerous attacks on its credibility by the Salvadoran state. Patrick Ball explains:

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<sup>78</sup> Non-Governmental Human Rights Commission of El Salvador, *A Decade of Abuse*, p. 3.

<sup>79</sup> Keen and Haynes, p. 487.

<sup>80</sup> *From Madness to Hope*.

<sup>81</sup> Garcia, “Comisión de Derechos Humanos de El Salvador, Cumple 30 Años.” After its translation into English with the help of Marin County Interfaith Taskforce, *Torture in El Salvador* was spread throughout the world in a dissemination campaign to help oppose the Salvadoran state and the US School of Americas training facility.

<sup>82</sup> Keen and Haynes, p. 487. Amongst these human rights violations are high-profile incidents such as the assassination of Archbishop Romero, the El Mozote massacre, and the murder of six Jesuit priests and their housekeeper and her daughter.

[The State] hoped that the CDHES methodology would be inadequate to withstand their legal challenge. Of course, human rights work is about much more than methodology. It is about right and wrong framed in the legal and moral dimensions of international human rights instruments. But by doing the technical work right, we can greatly strengthen our ability to make claims about human rights, and ultimately, to advocate for a more respectful world.<sup>83</sup>

This example of an HRNGO providing both legally binding documentation about human rights violations as well as maintaining a vital archive during a catastrophic Civil War genuinely depicts the possibility for seamless integration of HRNGOs and archives.

The struggle for human rights in El Salvador continues in the courts, in public space, in the archives and in non-traditional sites of knowledge like HRNGOs. After the Truth Commission, President Christiani passed the Amnesty Law of 1993, which forbids any legal proceedings against human rights violators during the Civil War.<sup>84</sup> As outlined in the Introduction to this thesis, the great documents of human rights in history have helped shape societies in both North and South. I contend that the formation of the Truth Commission in El Salvador at the end of the Civil War/Cold War is historically comparable to the great documents for the Salvadoran people. CDHES has continued its efforts to oppose what has become a culture of impunity through international speaking tours, UN participation, publications by other HRNGOs in solidarity with the cause, and annual conferences.<sup>85</sup> With the recent election of Mauricio Funes of the FMLN party as President of El Salvador in March 2009, only time will tell of shifting policies on human rights accountability.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Ball, chapter 5.

<sup>84</sup> Vilas, p.187.

<sup>85</sup> Garcia, "Comisión de Derechos Humanos de El Salvador, Cumple 30 Años."

<sup>86</sup> Stephen Gibbs, "El Salvador Rebels in from the Cold." *BBC NEWS*, 17 March 2009. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/7947378.stm> Visited 03/26/2009.

In regard to the terrorist attacks on 9/11, Daniel J. Walkowitz and Lisa Maya Knauer ask, “Who is authorized to interpret events that are viewed as national narratives?”<sup>87</sup> This question could well be asked of the history of the Salvadoran Civil War. The Salvadoran state has chosen not to pursue a formal legal accounting while force feeding a national narrative which promotes freeing oneself from the past. And while the Truth Commission did good work, it has not told and could not possibly tell the whole story. A fuller justice has not yet been achieved. The archival records remain as the basis of a larger truth and further justice yet to be sought. As Montgomery states, “the historical verdict has often served as the only tribunal for human rights perpetrators.”<sup>88</sup> Archivists, power-brokers in the world of history’s raw material, help determine what is entered into the historical/cultural/national debate. They share this influence with many others who affect what is recorded, kept, made available, and interpreted -- in this case with regard to El Salvador. National narratives require a range of voices, a constant dialogue. Looking to organizations like CDHES and their records sustains a pluralistic politics of memory as the basis of reconciliation in the future.

Coming full-circle to the activist archivist project of this thesis, ‘why should we collect records about human rights?’ If the archivist is selecting what gets entered into the historical record, is she falling into an academic trap of focusing on desires to save the ‘other’? Plainly put, as long as society remains stratified, hierarchical and fraught with disadvantage, institutions like the archives must tread a hazardous landscape. To

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid. Though referring to the discourse which developed following the events of September 11, 2001 in New York City and the ‘American exceptionalism’ that permeated throughout the major communications outlets, the predominant ahistorical analysis over memory and social space is one that must be confronted at the site of memory and in the place of its preservation – the archives.

<sup>88</sup> Montgomery, “Fact-Finding by Human Rights Non-Governmental Organizations,” p. 22.

quote Herbert Anaya, “The agony of not working for justice is stronger than the certain possibility of my death; this latter is but one instant, the other is one's whole life.”<sup>89</sup>

Rather than bleeding-heart benevolence, the very act of collecting HRNGO records and placing them in the archives is designed to impart power to society and users of archives. Interpretation is the fundamental goal of the archives: by providing a collection that maintains voices that diverge from the traditional narrative and allows the voiceless to liberate themselves; and by taking archival information into the community, the workplace and the home. As Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara said, “it is not a matter of wishing success to the victim of aggression, but of sharing his fate; one must accompany him to his death or to victory.”<sup>90</sup>

The ongoing protection of the CDHES record thus remains important. University of Colorado at Boulder Archivist Bruce Montgomery has sought to build an archival relationship with HRNGOs like CDHES. Montgomery’s Human Rights Initiative program mandates an active collection policy which sought to incorporate HRNGOs such as CDHES into the archival fold. After being personally contacted by the Archdiocese of El Salvador regarding the deterioration of HRNGO records Montgomery and library assistant Yolanda Maloney traveled to San Salvador in 1997 to meet personally with CDHES as well as other HRNGOs. In a collaborative approach to preserving the archives of these HRNGOs, photocopiers and scanners were purchased by Montgomery so that a mirror database of their case files could be stored at the University of Colorado at Boulder Archives. It represents a total of thirty-six boxes of photocopied torture files.

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<sup>89</sup> Non-Governmental Human Rights Commission of El Salvador, *A Decade of Abuse: Human Rights in El Salvador*, p. 3.

<sup>90</sup> Ernesto “Che” Guevara in Tariq Ali, *Street Fighting Years: An Autobiography of the Sixties* (New York: Verso, 2005), p. 215.

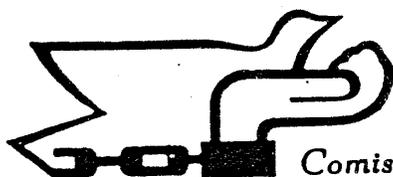
This initial step in preserving the reproductions of case files formed the basis of what grew into a larger collection at the archives as records were accessioned relating to these HRNGOs from Marin Interfaith Task Force in 1997 and the Resource Center of the Americas in 2008. From these further accessions, the CDHES collection also contains five boxes of audio visual materials on street demonstrations, exhumations, and proof of mutilated bodies. Currently Montgomery is undertaking a collaborative project with the HRNGO *Tutela Legal* in order to create a documentation centre in El Salvador for these HRNGOs. The documentation centre would provide sufficient space, storage and technological inputs to promote preservation and sustainable recordkeeping. A mirror electronic database would be provided for the archives in Boulder. Montgomery's work is an excellent example of an archivist's engagement in solidarity with HRNGOs to promote human rights and archives.

In conclusion, the exclusive HRNGO is at the forefront of the struggle to record human rights abuse. Their records, such as those created by CDHES, provide not only strong evidence of these abuses but also of the organizational culture, recordkeeping procedures, and the passionate activism of their members. Similarly, archives and archivists are at the forefront of promoting preservation of records. Thus we have the opportunity to build the archive of justice by actively collecting human rights records and establishing relationships with HRNGOs and many other sources of memory of marginalized and oppressed voices. I agree with Montgomery's view that "NGOs have become one of the most important chroniclers of our times."<sup>91</sup> As these chroniclers have committed themselves to the record, in the interests of those who can no longer speak of

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<sup>91</sup> Montgomery, "Fact-Finding by Human Rights Non-Governmental Organizations," p. 49.

violations perpetrated against them and the memory of their struggle, we too must commit ourselves to these remaining vestiges by preventing a second disappearance.



*Comisión de Derechos Humanos de El Salvador (CDHES)*

LISTING OF THE 40 TYPES OF TORTURE APPLIED BY  
THE SECURITY FORCES AND THE ARMY  
TO POLITICAL PRISONERS

PHYSICAL TORTURES

1. Blows to the head.
2. Blows to the ears.
3. Blows to the thorax.
4. Blows to the abdomen.
5. Blows to the back.
6. Blows to the extremities.
7. Blows to the testicles.
8. Forced to stand for long periods.
9. Injuries, wounds from torture.
10. Use of the "hood."
11. Attempt to asphyxiate.
12. Immersion in water.
13. Attempt to strangle.
14. Application of the "airplane."
15. Application of the "horse."
16. Application of the "hammock."
17. Application of the "piñata."
18. Protracted physical exercise.
19. Electric shock.
20. Burns.
21. Use of apparatus, spotlights, etc.
22. Bound, handcuffed, hand and/or foot.

26. Denial of food and water.
27. Ingestion of spoiled food.
28. Denial of access to sanitary facilities.
29. Use of drugs.
30. Rape; sexual violation.

PSYCHOLOGICAL TORTURES

31. Threatened rape.
32. Death threats.
33. Threats to family members.
34. Simulated assassination.
35. Verbal aggression.
36. Forced to listen to the torture of others.
37. Use of animals: dogs, snakes, ants, etc.
38. Isolation.
39. Presentation of false witness.
40. Other forms of torture.

PHYSICAL/PSYCHOLOGICAL TORTURES

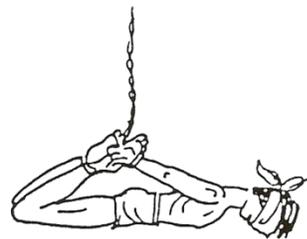
23. Blindfold.
24. Kept awake.
25. Physical nudity.

<sup>92</sup> Human Rights Commission of El Salvador, *Torture in El Salvador*, p. 45. Translated by Marin Interfaith Task Force.

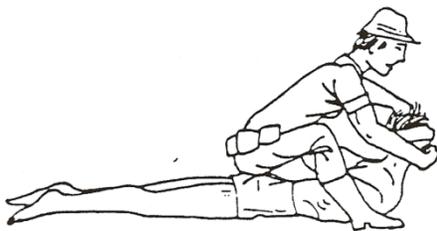
13. ATTEMPT TO STRANGLE: Placing a cord around the person's neck, with which they are sometimes suspended, or pressing the neck with a cloth. It is also sometimes done by exerting pressure on the throat with the hands, causing asphyxiation or fainting.



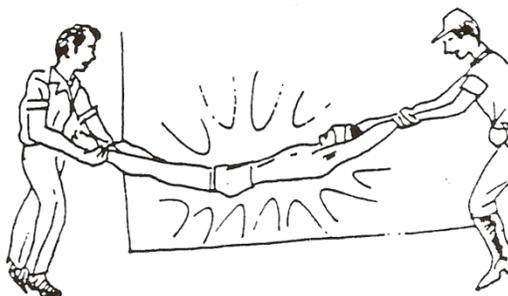
14. APPLICATION OF THE "AIRPLANE:" This type of torture consists of tying the person's hands and feet, or thumbs, with the hands behind the back, and suspending him, causing intense pain and dislocation of different parts of the body.



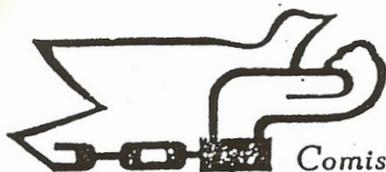
15. APPLICATION OF THE "HORSE:" The prisoner is placed face down on the floor, hands behind him, handcuffed or tied and blindfolded. Someone then gets on top of him, grabbing him by the hair or jawbone, or both, and pulling the head back.



16. APPLICATION OF THE "HAMMOCK:" This is done by two people, who take the victim by his hands and feet, swinging him in such a way that he strikes the wall, then throwing him with great force onto the floor.



<sup>93</sup> Human Rights Commission of El Salvador, *Torture in El Salvador*, p. 50.

(Figure 1.3)<sup>94</sup>

Comisión de Derechos Humanos de El Salvador (CDHES)  
 URBANIZACION "LA ESPERANZA" PASAJE 1, #117, SAN SALVADOR, TEL. 25-9232.

STATISTICAL CHART OF POLITICAL PRISONERS

BY SOCIAL SECTOR

PRISON "LA ESPERANZA" (MARIONA)

1986 -

SOCIAL S E C T O R	MONTH								TOTAL	% PERCENT
	JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST		
LABORERS	1	31	16	20	10	22	12	26	138	31.8
* SOLDIERS	17	6	14	15	18	9	16	5	100	23.1
FACTORY WORKERS	12	15	12	13	11	5	6	12	86	19.8
AGR. WORKERS/FARMERS	5	10	1	9	3	7	6	5	46	10.6
OFFICE WORKERS	5	1	4	4	-	7	4	4	29	6.7
TECHNICIANS	-	3	-	2	4	-	2	2	13	3.0
STUDENTS	1	1	3	1	2	-	2	1	11	2.5
TRADES PEOPLE	-	1	-	-	1	1	2	2	7	1.6
PROFESSIONALS	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	0.5
TEACHERS	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	0.2
SMALL BUSINESS PEOPLE	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	0.2
T O T A L	42	71	50	64	49	51	50	57	434	100.0

\* THE 100 SOLDIERS ALSO BELONG TO THE SECTOR OF LABORERS

<sup>94</sup> Human Rights Commission of El Salvador, *Torture in El Salvador*, p. 37.



(Figure 1.5)<sup>96</sup>

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Comisión de Derechos Humanos de El Salvador (CDHES)  
URBANIZACION LA ESPERANZA, PASAJE 1, 117, TEL. 25-9232

THE FORTY PRINCIPAL KINDS OF TORTURE UTILIZED  
BY THE SECURITY FORCES AND ARMED FORCES  
ON POLITICAL PRISONERS (NUMBER OF CASES PER MONTH)  
1986

PERSONS CONFINED	MONTH								TOTALS
	JAN.	FEB.	MAR.	APR.	MAY	JUN.	JUL.	AUG.	
42	71	50	64	49	51	50	57	434	
<b>PHYSICAL TORTURES</b>									
1. BLOWS TO THE HEAD	31	51	39	49	37	35	37	42	321
2. BLOWS TO THE EARS	25	34	30	35	19	25	25	31	224
3. BLOWS TO THE THORAX	35	58	45	55	36	39	40	46	354
4. BLOWS TO THE ABDOMEN	28	53	44	49	32	42	38	44	330
5. BLOWS TO THE BACK	25	41	35	32	31	27	31	31	253
6. BLOWS TO THE EXTREMITIES	27	40	33	32	26	26	30	31	245
7. BLOWS TO THE TESTICLES	9	17	13	13	6	10	9	8	85
8. FORCED TO STAND FOR LONG PERIODS	38	52	31	49	35	40	46	53	344
9. INJURIES SUSTAINED FROM BLOWS	7	5	2	17	6	8	2	10	57
10. APPLICATION OF THE "HOOD"	7	11	10	13	8	10	13	9	81
11. ATTEMPT TO ASPHYXIATE	20	27	25	24	13	19	21	25	174
12. IMMERSION IN WATER	12	15	12	9	8	3	6	9	74
13. ATTEMPT TO STRANGLE	24	37	28	37	13	21	19	24	203
14. SUBJECTION TO THE "AIRPLANE"	8	4	6	7	7	4	4	4	44
15. SUBJECTION TO THE "HORSE"	7	10	19	12	10	8	7	11	84
16. SUBJECTION TO THE "HAMMOCK"	7	6	5	10	4	5	4	1	42
17. SUBJECTION TO THE "PINATA"	10	12	10	14	8	6	2	10	72
18. PROLONGED PHYSICAL EXERCISES	23	26	40	34	22	18	26	30	219
19. ELECTRIC SHOCKS	8	8	10	12	5	2	8	6	59
20. BURNS	11	6	7	7	5	2	6	7	51
21. USE OF APPARATUS, REFLECTORS ETC.	17	34	20	22	11	6	18	13	141
22. BOUND - HANDCUFFED HAND &/OR FOOT	42	64	47	60	47	45	46	57	408
<b>PHYSICO / PSYCOLOGICAL TORTURES</b>									
23. BLINDFOLDED	40	70	50	63	49	49	49	57	427
24. NOT ALLOWED TO SLEEP	37	58	48	58	44	39	46	57	387
25. FORCED NUDITY	28	30	29	35	43	28	22	36	251
26. DENIAL OF FOOD AND DRINK	31	36	29	42	34	34	34	36	276
27. FORCED TO EAT SPOILED FOOD	21	32	21	31	24	16	32	27	204
28. NOT ALLOWED TO USE BATHROOM	35	30	32	42	26	31	30	34	260
29. USE OF DRUGS	16	36	16	25	25	24	34	26	202
30. RAPE - SEXUAL VIOLATION	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	2
<b>PSYCOLOGICAL TORTURES</b>									
31. THREATS OF SEXUAL VIOLATION	3	6	4	11	11	8	12	11	66
32. THREATS TO KILL	41	64	48	61	45	48	47	53	407
33. THREATS AGAINST FAMILY MEMBERS	36	52	42	47	41	33	36	42	329
34. SIMULATED ASSASSINATION	32	49	38	53	26	33	37	41	309
35. VERBAL AGGRESSION	39	63	50	61	48	42	49	56	408
36. HEAR OTHERS TORTURED	29	53	40	36	29	25	26	37	275
37. USE OF ANIMALS; DOGS, SNAKES, ETC.	4	5	4	2	0	6	5	1	27
38. ISOLATION	34	44	44	54	38	28	39	45	326
39. CONFRONTED BY FALSE WITNESS	18	24	21	31	11	22	4	20	151
40. OTHER TORTURES	10	3	7	9	21	11	32	14	107
<b>T O T A L</b>	<b>875</b>	<b>1266</b>	<b>1035</b>	<b>1253</b>	<b>904</b>	<b>879</b>	<b>872</b>	<b>1095</b>	<b>8,279</b>

<sup>96</sup> Human Rights Commission of El Salvador, *Torture in El Salvador*, p. 75.

## CHAPTER THREE

### *Life after Death: The Resource Center of the Americas and Archival Advocacy*

“El Salvador is Spanish for Vietnam” (1980s Protest Bumper Sticker)<sup>1</sup>

“The suffering inflicted by the present order invariably produces a struggle to overcome it.” David McNally<sup>2</sup>

In June 1986, Resource Center of the Americas (RCA) member Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer traveled to San Salvador to interview Herbert Anaya of the Human Rights Commission of El Salvador (CDHES). While listening to the veteran human rights activist discuss the situation in El Salvador, Nelson-Pallmeyer wrote in his notebook: “I feel like I am talking to a dead man.”<sup>3</sup> Anaya’s courageous investigations into human rights atrocities during the Civil War guaranteed his assassination in a country where even US citizens were subject to state terror.<sup>4</sup> More than a year later in December 1987, Anaya’s death reverberated through U.S. peace-activist channels. Public demonstrations, candlelight vigils, direct actions, petitions to Salvadoran President Duarte and President Reagan as well as widespread circulation of do-it-yourself (DIY) activist journals, newsletters and zines decrying the most recent atrocity in El Salvador typified the US solidarity movement. The traumatic death of Anaya not only affected the CDHES and

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<sup>1</sup> Christian Smith, *Resisting Reagan: The U.S. Central America Peace Movement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 93.

<sup>2</sup> McNally, *Another World is Possible*, p. 275.

<sup>3</sup> Central America Resource Center, *The Minnesota Central America Connection*. Vol. 4, No. 10. Dec. 1987/Jan. 1988, p. 1, 11. Resource Center of the Americas Collection (RCA Collection), University of Colorado at Boulder Archives (UCBA), processing collection in progress, temporary box.

<sup>4</sup> Rick Bragg, “Suit in Nuns’ 1980 Deaths in El Salvador Goes to Florida Jury,” *New York Times*. November 2, 2000. <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/11/02/world/suit-in-nuns-1980-deaths-in-el-salvador-goes-to-florida-jury.html> Visited 05/12/2009. The most prominent case of US citizen casualties occurred in December 1980 when three nuns and a lay worker were tortured, raped and killed by the Salvadoran National Guard.

the Salvadoran human rights movement, but also the transnational human rights network stretching to the northern climes of Minneapolis, Minnesota. The archives of the RCA document these global linkages as well as the local efforts to promote human rights. Nelson-Pallmeyer later conveyed what is ultimately the mandate of the RCA in stating his reaction to Anaya's murder, "[it] will shed light on U.S. policy and the political situation of El Salvador, the reasons for and our complicity in his death."<sup>5</sup>

Human rights non-governmental organizations (HRNGO) document violations and abuses that often have a marginalizing affect on those who suffer them. This chapter seeks to portray the archive of justice as a network that promotes human rights linkages between the global North and South. Through the archives of HRNGOs such as CDHES and the RCA, entry points into the human rights sphere open to a landscape of marginalized voices from the local to the global. By examining the RCA, a local non-exclusive HRNGO heavily influenced by global politics, I will demonstrate the importance of their archives for understanding and engaging in human rights activism, their perspectives on documentation, as well as the role of archivists in advocating for a dying organization. The RCA archives exemplifies the connection between the local human rights movement, specifically the Central America peace movement in the American upper mid-west, and the global context of historical change from Reaganite Cold War politics to the neo-liberal globalization projects of the 1990s and early 2000s. Like the archives of the CDHES, those of the RCA pertain to matters of life and death. The incorporation of HRNGOs into the archival sphere allows their work an ongoing life

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<sup>5</sup> Central America Resource Center, *The Minnesota Central America Connection*. Vol. 4, No. 10. Dec. 1987/Jan. 1988, p. 1, 11. RCA Collection, UCBA, processing collection in progress, temporary box.

when such organizations no longer exist. (The RCA, for example, disbanded in 2007.<sup>6</sup>) The preservation and exhibition of its records allow the activist archivist to continue to shape society with human rights purposes at the fore.

Through the acquisition and preservation of HRNGO archives, a mutually beneficial relationship develops between HRNGOs and archives that promotes human rights, accountability and the histories of the disenfranchised. In order to demonstrate why HRNGOs, such as the RCA, ought to be the subjects of archival advocacy several factors must first be addressed. This chapter will begin by detailing the political and historical context shaping the origins of the RCA. The contextual history of the RCA is necessary in order to understand the activities of the non-exclusive HRNGO. The chapter will then discuss the mandates of the RCA as well as the activism it engaged in on behalf of various causes. Archival analysis of the organization also provides insight into how non-exclusive HRNGOs depend on formation of precarious membership relations in order to protect the memory of the organization. Finally, the archival work that has sustained the legacy of the RCA and 'life after death' for HRNGOs that succumb to political, economic or societal backlash will demonstrate the role that archivists must play in the local and global archive of justice.

HRNGOs ultimately work outside the state apparatus to pressure the responsible regulatory bodies to protect human rights if they are denied or ignored. However, the methods and mandates of the non-exclusive HRNGO differ from those of CDHES.

Returning to Bruce Montgomery's classification of HRNGOs, the RCA is an exemplary non-exclusive organization. The non-exclusive HRNGO is a human rights organization

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<sup>6</sup> The organization retains an office location and provides outreach for the Latino community of East Lake Street, Minneapolis. However, the formal closing of the office in 2007 marks the historical boundary for my study of the organization.

involved in multiple campaigns and issues worldwide, garnering support from the public through distribution of secondary-source material, while providing outreach and advocacy for local issues at a grassroots level.<sup>7</sup> The vast majority of the archival documents produced by non-exclusive HRNGOs, as Louis Bickford states, are considered social movement literature.<sup>8</sup> Generally, as non-exclusive HRNGOs serve a broader function as resource centres than their exclusive counterparts who perform documented investigatory work, these archives are best recognized for their independent political activist nature. In addition, it should come as no surprise that the most prominent non-exclusive HRNGOs originate and are headquartered in the global North where rights have been relatively strong, whereas the exclusive HRNGO forms predominantly in locales where rights have perpetually been denied.

Interlinking spheres of regional and global human rights activism have historically formed in the wake of state intervention in the lives of the 'other.'<sup>9</sup> The case of the Central America peace movement in the US during the 1980s is no different. Rooted in the anti-Vietnam war movement and cultural rebellion of the 1960s, the networks of mobilization for the Central America peace movement were consolidated in the 1970s by the anti-nuclear "Freeze" movement. African-American "Freeze" activist and jazz musician Gil Scott-Heron effectively captures the sentiment of the movement in his song *We Almost Lost Detroit* about a near meltdown in 1966 of the Fermi 1 commercial breeder reactor – the first of its kind in the United States:

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<sup>7</sup> Montgomery, "Fact-Finding by Human Rights Non-Governmental Organizations," p. 26.

<sup>8</sup> Bickford, "The Archival Imperative," p. 1104.

<sup>9</sup> Responses to state mandates include the global anti-slavery movement of the 1780s, various civil rights movements including that of the United States and South Africa from 1865 onward, and presently to the anti-free trade movement. See *We Are Everywhere: The Irresistible Rise of Global Anti-Capitalism*, Notes from Nowhere, eds., (New York: Verso, 2003).

Just thirty miles from Detroit  
stands a giant power station.  
It ticks each night as the city sleeps  
seconds from annihilation.  
But no one stopped to think about the people  
or how they would survive,  
And we almost lost Detroit this time.  
How would we ever get over  
over losing our minds?<sup>10</sup>

Just as resistance to the Vietnam War ended concurrently with the war in the early 1970s, concern over US imperialism in the Third World garnered attention in the late 1970s.

The election of Ronald Reagan as president in 1980 became a major milestone for US involvement in Central American affairs.<sup>11</sup> The previous administrations of Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter had been widely regarded as ineffectual and unable to recover from multiple demoralizing blows to US hegemony such as the Vietnam War, economic downturns relating to the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries' (OPEC) 1973 intervention in the global oil market, Watergate, and the Iranian hostage crisis.<sup>12</sup> By rejecting a slow and steady course ahead, as the previous administrations attempted, the Reagan Administration made its audacious intentions in Central America well known.<sup>13</sup> Not only did the White House seek to restore US pride militarily, but also to segue towards a neo-conservative platform which perceived "war, not peace, [as] the norm in

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<sup>10</sup> Gil Scott-Heron and Brian Jackson, "We Almost Lost Detroit," *Bridges* (1977: Arista Records). The song refers to a book about the near disaster in Detroit, *We Almost Lost Detroit* by science journalist John G. Fuller published 1975.

<sup>11</sup> William Leogrande, *Our Own Backyard: The United States in Central America, 1977-1992*. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

<sup>12</sup> Smith, p. 20.

<sup>13</sup> Unlike Nixon's behind-closed-doors support for nefarious operations, namely the ousting of President Salvador Allende of Chile in 1973 and Jimmy Carter's return of the Panama Canal to the Panamanian government in 1977, Reagan's outright support for historically violent and undemocratic leaders in the region demonstrated his desire to maintain a firm hold on the region for US influence.

international relations.”<sup>14</sup> These approaches to foreign affairs were exemplified through the members of Reagan’s personal entourage. According to a popular document for the administration, the *New Inter-American Policy for the Eighties*, Central America was seen as “America’s Balkans,” an economically barren “exposed southern flank,” yet possessing a major ideological prize in the Cold War.<sup>15</sup> It is from this perspective that the Reagan Administration said that the region is “the most important place in the world for the United States.”<sup>16</sup>

Upon Reagan’s arrival in office, three major factors contributed to the tense political landscape between Central America peace activists and conservative foreign policy proponents.<sup>17</sup> First, the overwhelming military defeat in Vietnam and the solemn domestic atmosphere following the war led to the ‘Vietnam syndrome’: the American public's unwillingness to commit soldiers to fight in what were perceived as distant Cold War pet projects.<sup>18</sup> Second, national leaders in the Congress and Senate were unwilling to relive the social turmoil of the 1960s and 1970s, which was largely attributed to the aggressive response of the anti-Vietnam War movement. Third, the military itself was reluctant to engage in a war with no public support and bureaucratized restrictions on how it would be waged such as the limited incrementalism of the Vietnam War. These factors strengthened the Central America peace movement’s potential to appeal for public

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<sup>14</sup> Stated by the Committee of Santa Fe in *New Inter-American Policy for the Eighties*. Critiqued in Grandin, *Empire’s Workshop*, p. 70.

<sup>15</sup> This document was chartered by the Committee of Santa Fe, a conservative activist group in the 1970s whose members would later take mid-level positions in the Reagan White House, namely Roger Fontaine – director of Latin American affairs in the National Security Council, Lewis Tambs – Ambassador to Costa Rica, and Lt. General Gordon Sumner – special assistant to the assistant secretary of state for inter-American affairs. See Grandin, p. 70.

<sup>16</sup> Jeane Kirkpatrick, Foreign Policy Advisor to President Reagan and United Nations Ambassador, in Grandin. p. 71.

<sup>17</sup> Smith, p. 95.

<sup>18</sup> Also a general lack of knowledge about the region and racism towards its people persisted in the US. See *ibid.*

support and correspondingly to hamper the administration's foreign policy in Central America.

The RCA began as a small committee composed of members of various Central America solidarity groups in 1983. Their goal was to create a community space where alternative information could be provided primarily on the US sponsorship of proxy wars in Nicaragua, Guatemala, and El Salvador. Operating initially by volunteer activism, in 1984 the RCA received a grant from the American Lutheran Church in order to hire a paid staff member.<sup>19</sup> According to Pam Costain, Executive Director of the RCA from 1988 to 2002, the organization sought to coordinate the efforts of the Central America peace movement in Minneapolis:

We were concerned about the lack of accurate information concerning these wars in the media and elsewhere, and sought to be a place where truth would speak to power. We were closely aligned with a large and active solidarity movement that emerged among concerned people in churches and synagogues, high schools and colleges, labor unions and community groups. We took seriously the responsibility to hold our government accountable for actions it was taking in faraway lands.<sup>20</sup>

The ecumenical activist community played a seminal role in the Central America peace movement through such outlets as the Sanctuary movement and the numerous interfaith task force organizations that sprouted up throughout the United States.<sup>21</sup> The Sanctuary movement was initiated by Quakers in 1981, which was one of the first organizations to harbour refugees from El Salvador in church basements.<sup>22</sup> The RCA held information sessions with the Sanctuary movement where Salvadoran refugees spoke about the

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<sup>19</sup> Sara Green, "The Central America Resource Center," December 19, 1985, p. 2. RCA Collection, UCBA, processing collection in progress, temporary box.

<sup>20</sup> Pam Costain, "New Home, New Neighborhood, New Beginning" *Celebración*. (a publication of the Resource Center of the Americas), 1999, p. 5. RCA Collection, UCBA, processing collection in progress, temporary box.

<sup>21</sup> Smith, p. 60.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. The Quakers have long been involved in many humanitarian campaigns against violations of human rights, a tradition that began with their anti-slavery activities in the 1600s.

conditions in their country. That garnered further support for the peace activist community.<sup>23</sup>

The RCA's various founding committees amalgamated into one broad organization on March 22, 1984 as the Central America Resource Center, the first of its subsequent incarnations.<sup>24</sup> Its office in the Newman Center on the University of Minnesota campus served as a meeting place for the various solidarity committees, guest lecturers, video presentations, an annual *Fiesta de la Américas*, as well as storage for a growing archives and lending library.<sup>25</sup> In an open letter to all Central America activist groups dated August 1984, the RCA spoke of its burgeoning library and archives and invited contributions to it from its member organizations:

The Resource Center Library is now solid enough to be useful – we invite [sic] you to use it! We have approximately 100 books, periodical subscriptions and files on each country. These files include articles, pamphlets, booklets, etc. which are divided by subject [sic] (Labor, Health, Education, Women, etc.). Any tapes pamphlets, tapes [sic], books that you have for your organization's reference and literature tables we would like to have a copy. We need your help to make our collection on each subject and country as up to date and complete as possible.<sup>26</sup>

In January of 1985, the RCA ran its first issue of the monthly newsletter *The Minnesota Central America Connection*, as seen in Figure 2.1.<sup>27</sup> *The Connection* was the organization's primary vehicle for conveying information about human rights in Central

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<sup>23</sup> "Federal Bureau of Investigation," RCA Collection, UCBA, processing collection in progress, temporary box.

<sup>24</sup> "Official Declaration from the State of Minnesota's Department of State – Provisions under the Minnesota Nonprofit Corporation Act", 2007 *Board of Directors Manual*. Section 1. RCA Collection, UCBA, processing collection in progress, temporary box.

<sup>25</sup> Resource Center of the Americas, "Year After Year, Making a Difference," Resource Center of the Americas website: [www.americas.org](http://www.americas.org) 10/17/2006 and 2007 *Board of Directors Manual*. Section 3, p. 1. RCA Collection, UCBA, processing collection in progress, temporary box.

<sup>26</sup> Central American Resource Center, "Central American Resource Center – Background Mission Structure." RCA Collection, UCBA, processing collection in progress, temporary box.

<sup>27</sup> Central America Resource Center, *The Minnesota Central America Connection*. Vol. 1 #1, January 1985.p.1. RCA Collection, UCBA, processing collection in progress, temporary box.

America, in the state of Minnesota and the campaigns they were involved in. Information received from exclusive HRNGOs and other foreign correspondents about Central America was culled and compiled into one- and two-page spreads in *The Connection*.

Beginning with its first outreach project in 1984, the RCA offered educational materials to primary and secondary school teachers and students about Central America. Due to the success and positive response from teachers, education became a top priority for the organization and was utilized in the promotion of human rights and cross-cultural understanding. Reaching financial stability from donations, grants and book sales, the RCA was able to expand its operations as well as its membership to 700 in 1985.<sup>28</sup> By 1986, the RCA began printing its first major curriculum guide, *Directory of Central America Classroom Resources, K-12*, which helped create the organization's image as a major resource center on Central America for the Upper Midwest.<sup>29</sup> The lending library also became one of the organization's chief assets and was granted a full-time librarian staff member. It was named the Penny Lernoux Memorial Library after the American journalist and human rights advocate. By 1987 its growing collection had over 1000 titles on Latin American culture, literature and history. In addition to its books, the library also contained numerous newspaper clippings dating back to 1979 and vertical files on Latin American subjects available to the public.<sup>30</sup> By 1989, the RCA was holding regular Spanish language classes, which became one of its most important

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<sup>28</sup> Sara Green, "The Central America Resource Center," December 19, 1985. p. 10. RCA Collection, UCBA, processing collection in progress, temporary box.

<sup>29</sup> Resource Center of the Americas, "Year After Year, Making a Difference."

<sup>30</sup> Sara Green, "The Central America Resource Center," p. 9. RCA Collection, UCBA, processing collection in progress, temporary box.

services to the community. The RCA eventually offered thirty-five classes with enrollment at 500 annually.<sup>31</sup>

Due to major US involvement in Central America under the Reagan Administration,<sup>32</sup> as Montgomery states and the RCA records confirm, the vast majority of human rights organizations experienced extensive growth in the mid-1980s.<sup>33</sup> Partly owing to the deceptiveness of the administration and the horrific severity of human rights violations in the region, the RCA and other organizations gained a foothold as legitimate advocates for social change. This recognition provided publicity and economic improvements for the once destitute organization. Central America peace movement historian Christian Smith observes that a very specific set of circumstances allowed the movement to grow:

When the US Central American peace movement began to mobilize in the early 1980s it encountered a situation of divided government and elite defection[(the unwillingness of prominent politicians to take individual stands)] – precisely the kind of condition that fosters the successful emergence of movements contesting state policies. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the entire US federal government was moving rapidly into a period of low voter turnout, weakened political parties, and electoral deadlock. This new era brought an increasingly heavy reliance by political adversaries on institutional weapons of combat, such as congressional investigations, judicial battles, media revelations and political prosecutions.<sup>34</sup>

Perhaps the most notorious of these investigations was the Iran-Contra affair of 1986, whereby one of Reagan's top military aids to Central America, Colonel Oliver North and other "key advisers conducted an illegal covert action that bypassed existing law and

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<sup>31</sup> Resource Center of the Americas, "Year After Year, Making a Difference."

<sup>32</sup> US aid to Central America grew from \$10 million dollars annually in 1980 to \$283.2 million in 1984 (El Salvador received 69%, Honduras 27%, and Costa Rica 4%). Vilas, *Between Earthquakes and Volcanoes*, p. 133.

<sup>33</sup> Montgomery, "Fact-Finding by Human Rights Non-Governmental Organizations," p. 29.

<sup>34</sup> Smith, p. 98.

congressional notification requirements” by destroying records regarding their involvement in arms dealing in Iran and in sales of arms to the Nicaraguan Contras.<sup>35</sup> In addition, the US Senate Church Committee of 1975 and a similar committee chaired by then Vice-President Nelson Rockefeller shortly after, made clear the government's intentions by uncovering decades of illegal activity by the CIA and FBI respectively.<sup>36</sup>

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, collecting information and documenting human rights violations are dangerous forms of activism, particularly in 1980s El Salvador. And simply because non-exclusive HRNGOs such as the RCA operated in the global North, it cannot be assumed that their efforts went unrestricted. In past historical moments the US counter-intelligence apparatus has been utilized to curb dissent against both foreign and domestic state policies. Violent suppression of rights and freedoms in the low-intensity conflicts of 1980s Central America are but a few examples of the state imposing its will on its detractors.<sup>37</sup> Emerging on the domestic scene was what Noam Chomsky sarcastically refers to as a “Crisis of Democracy,” whereby too much freedom had led to a repeated scenario of college campus mobilization against the foreign affairs of the state.<sup>38</sup> Chomsky points to ideological institutions (for my purposes the archives) that did not actively promote public knowledge of domestic repression where “death

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<sup>35</sup> David A. Wallace, “Implausible Deniability: the Politics of Documents in the Iran-Contra Affair and its Investigations.” In Cox and Wallace, eds., *Archives and the Public Good*, p. 97.

<sup>36</sup> Grandin, p. 61. The United States Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities (the Church Committee), headed by Idaho Senator Frank Church, was established in 1975 in the aftermath of the Vietnam War and Watergate affair.

<sup>37</sup> The term low-intensity conflict refers to military engagements involving the recruitment of soldiers from the country in question who then receive training from a foreign country, in this case the US which trained hundreds of Latin American officers at the former School of Americas at Fort Benning, Georgia. The purpose of low-intensity warfare is to ensure a minimum risk to US soldiers while achieving the American desired goal of foreign intervention.

<sup>38</sup> Noam Chomsky, *Turning the Tide: U.S. Intervention in Central America and the Struggle for Peace* (Boston: South End Press, 1985), p. 223.

squads, torture and army massacres” are not “feasible options.”<sup>39</sup> Namely the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s (FBI) notorious Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) which officially began in 1956.<sup>40</sup>

Precursor operations to COINTELPRO began as early as 1919 with the Palmer Raids, headed by a young J. Edgar Hoover, who sought to contain a growing anarchist movement by repressing new European immigrants regardless of political persuasion.<sup>41</sup> During the 1940s and height of McCarthyism in the 1950s, the FBI encouraged ‘red baiting’ in many workplaces. As head of the Screen Actors Guild, actor Ronald Reagan provided the names of suspected communists among its members to the FBI and testified before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) to that effect in 1947.<sup>42</sup> In the 1960s, the FBI worked undercover to disrupt, infiltrate and corrupt the anti-Vietnam War movement; into the late 1960s and 1970s it conducted violent repression of the Black Panther Party, American Indian Movement and faith-based civil rights organizations.<sup>43</sup>

HRNGOs affiliated with the Central America peace movement also experienced intimidation and infiltration from the state security apparatus at home.<sup>44</sup> As the RCA archives demonstrate, beginning in 1981 a series of organizations were targeted by the FBI as potential terrorist-aiding cells in the US. The historical record of this action is

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> For more on COINTELPRO see Ward Churchill, *On the Justice of Roosting Chickens: Reflections on the Consequences of U.S. Imperial Arrogance and Criminality* (Oakland: AK Press, 2003), pp.145-146 and Bertram Gross, *Friendly Fascism: The New Face of Power in America* (Boston: South End Press, 1980), pp.306-307.

<sup>41</sup> Brian Glick, *War at Home: Covert Action against US Activists and what we can do about it.* (Boston: South End Press, 1989), p. 34.

<sup>42</sup> Ted Morgan, *Reds: McCarthyism in Twentieth-Century America.* (New York: Random House, 2003), pp.516-524.

<sup>43</sup> See David Cunningham, *The New Left, the Klan, and FBI Counterintelligence,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004) and Glick, *War at Home.*

<sup>44</sup> Ross Gelbspan, *Break Ins, Death Threats and the FBI: The Covert War Against the Central America Movement.* (Boston: South End Press, 1991).

greatly enhanced by the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador's (CISPES) requests for records under the US Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). They resulted in the disclosure of these and many other surveillance activities. According to author and activist Ross Gelbspan, the Reagan Administration mobilized the FBI, CIA, State Department and the National Security Council to pressure the peace movement in order to shore up public support for its concern about communism on America's doorstep.<sup>45</sup> The official mobilization was put into effect in 1981 when Reagan signed Executive Order 12333 which legalized many previously illegal actions in the name of intelligence gathering.<sup>46</sup> Gelbspan states that “the campaign not only drew upon the federal [government's] awesome intelligence and police powers, but, perhaps as significantly, it made full use of the government’s instruments of information control to neutralize opposing viewpoints, to bury uncomfortable facts under an avalanche of rhetoric, and to alter the public’s perception of domestic and international realities.”<sup>47</sup>

HRNGOs operate through networks of communication across state lines and national borders. For this reason, the FBI and CIA also pursued their investigation of the Central America peace movement across borders by monitoring travel and communication. Alliances between the FBI and Salvadoran security forces were formed to pressure and intimidate liberal North American activists as well as capture any fleeing Salvadorans who opposed the military’s authority.<sup>48</sup> Through its contacts with the Salvadoran National Guard, the CIA passed on forged and altered intelligence material to the FBI which used it as the basis for its investigations of liberal groups such as CISPES

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p.13.

<sup>46</sup> Smith, p. 315.

<sup>47</sup> Gelbspan, p. 13.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

and the RCA.<sup>49</sup> In return, FBI agents used their access to records of the US Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to provide the Salvadoran security forces with the names and flight numbers of Salvadoran refugees who had entered the US illegally -- only to be denied asylum and deported back to El Salvador. Some were assassinated on their return.<sup>50</sup>

Links between the Sanctuary movement and HRNGOs led to police investigations across the network intended to disrupt and deter Central America peace activism.<sup>51</sup> One such organization, CISPES, which maintained chapters all across the United States, became a primary target. The intrusive actions of the police apparatus against HRNGOs demonstrated that the Reagan administration was willing to justify its involvement in Central America at any cost.<sup>52</sup> During this time, Gelbspan states,

Political and religious activists around the country reported more than 100 break-ins and thefts of files at their homes, offices and churches. In virtually all cases, lists of names and organizational material were stolen or copied while valuable items were left untouched.<sup>53</sup>

Declassified documents released in 1988 by a CISPES lawsuit against the FBI, demonstrate major operations in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Dallas, Minneapolis and Chicago where wire taps, undercover agents, informants and physical surveillance were used to document and harass members of CISPES and attendees of CISPES sponsored

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<sup>49</sup> Smith, p. 316. According to the findings of the US Senate Committee on Intelligence of 1989, Gelbspan states "the CIA appears to have collaborated with the Salvadoran National Guard to fabricate a document -- purportedly captured from Shafik Handal, head of a Salvadoran communist party -- to implicate CISPES in a network of international terrorism, in order to initiate an FBI counterterrorist investigation of CISPES." p.15. This and many other actions were corroborated by documents from the Subcommittee on Civil and Constitutional Rights as well as personal testimony from paid FBI informant Frank Varelli regarding break ins, death threats and the involvement of officials connected to those as high in the Reagan Administration as Col. Oliver North and CIA Director William Casey.

<sup>50</sup> Gelbspan, p. 15.

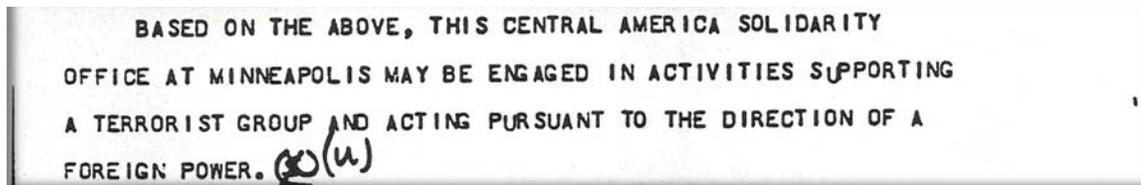
<sup>51</sup> Jerry J. Berman, "Mere trust of officials will not suffice to prevent FBI political probes." *Los Angeles Times*, 1986.

<sup>52</sup> Grandin, p. 139.

<sup>53</sup> Gelbspan, pp. 15-16.

functions. According to a Center for Constitutional Rights press release, “the investigation, which was originally intended to determine whether the Foreign Agents Registration Act was violated, quickly turned into a ‘Foreign Counter Intelligence/Terrorist’ inquiry which had no legal or factual basis.”<sup>54</sup>

During this turbulent period the RCA and its affiliated organizations were subjects of wiretaps and surveillance by the Minneapolis branch of the FBI from 1981 to 1985, as seen in Figure 2.2.<sup>55</sup> Contained within a folder marked ‘Federal Bureau of Investigation,’ the RCA archives contain redacted declassified reports by the FBI which identify the organizations under surveillance, the Salvadoran guests they had hosted, and the FBI’s suspicion that they intended to fund terrorism in El Salvador:<sup>56</sup>



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The FOIA request made these surveillances known to prominent politicians as seen in a signed letter, Figure 2.3, from former Minnesota Attorney General Hubert Humphrey III apologizing for the incident: “It is a sad commentary on this administration’s policy in Central America,” he wrote, “that the administration feels it necessary to use these tactics with groups that disagree with its position on the issue.”<sup>58</sup> Though the COINTELPRO days of the FBI were thought to be extinguished by the Congressional Committee

<sup>54</sup> Beth Perry, “FBI Files Reveal Massive Spying on Opponents of Central America Policy.” *Center for Constitutional Rights*. New York; 1/27/1988. p. 30. See “Federal Bureau of Investigation.” RCA Collection, UCBA, processing collection in progress, temporary box.

<sup>55</sup> “Federal Bureau of Investigation.” RCA Collection, UCBA, processing collection in progress, temporary box..

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. The “Central America Solidarity office” mentioned refers to the Central America Resource Center office in the Newman Center, University of Minnesota.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

findings of the 1970s, comparisons can be drawn along the same lines as these examples suggest.

The end of the 1980s signaled dramatic political changes not only in Central America but throughout the world. President Reagan was succeeded by his vice-president George H. W. Bush in January of 1989. Ten months later the wall between East and West Germany fell, and by 1991 the Cold War finally ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Cold War-inspired conflicts in Central America ended or were curtailed by 1990, most notably observed by the electoral defeat of the Sandinista government in Nicaragua.<sup>59</sup> That same year the RCA led a large scale media campaign to combat the disinformation portrayed by the corporate media regarding the national election.

In 1991 the organization broadened its focus from Central America to the Americas as a whole, becoming the Resource Center of the Americas.<sup>60</sup> This name change reflected the growing needs of local communities in a globalized world as well as the evident economic links throughout the region as demonstrated in their revised mandate: “The Resource Center of the Americas informs, educates and organizes to promote human rights, democratic participation, economic justice and cross-cultural understanding in the context of globalization in the Americas.”<sup>61</sup> By 1992 the RCA had become a leader in the fair trade movement in Minnesota, educating thousands on the effect of Western consumers on economic conditions elsewhere and the direct effect of

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<sup>59</sup> Vilas, p. 133. Only Guatemala continued its embittered civil war until its 1996 peace accords were signed.

<sup>60</sup> Resource Center of the Americas “Articles of Incorporation of Resource Center of the Americas”, (Revised May 21, 1992) *2007 Board of Directors Manual* p. 1 Section 1. RCA Collection, UCBA, processing collection in progress, temporary box.

<sup>61</sup> Resource Center of the Americas *2007 Board of Directors Manual*. p. 1. RCA Collection, UCBA, processing collection in progress, temporary box.

free trade on the Latino migrant labor communities throughout the US. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was signed on January 1, 1994 by Canada, Mexico, and the United States as a way to achieve continental economic progress. Ultimately, the free market fundamentalism of the Reagan period was codified in NAFTA and became, in effect, a new economic assault on the global South.<sup>62</sup> In 1995, the RCA was awarded the Bronze Apple by the National Education Media Network for its public television documentary relating to free trade, "Central American Children Speak: Our Lives and Our Dreams."<sup>63</sup> Thanks to its award-winning success, the RCA received the first of many grants from philanthropic foundations, which amounted to an annual budget of \$500,000 for staff and an eventual move into a new off-campus facility in 1999. In 1998 the RCA created its first webpage *Americas.org*, which ushered in the organization's international popularity as an independent human rights information source.<sup>64</sup> That same year the RCA formed its first youth-oriented program, *YO!* – Youth Organization on Child Labor and Sweatshops – which experienced its greatest achievement in 2002 when students successfully petitioned the Minneapolis Public Schools Board to adopt a policy against buying or renting apparel or equipment made in sweatshops.<sup>65</sup>

In 2000, the RCA's primary resources were directed at advocating for solidarity with migrant Mexican laborers working in Minnesota and throughout the US. In 2001

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<sup>62</sup> McNally, *Another World is Possible*, p.167. It is important to mention the Zapatista rebellion in Chiapas, Mexico in 1994, which coincided with the signing of NAFTA, as a resurgence of Central American guerrilla activity. See George Allan Collier and Elizabeth Lowery Quaratiello's *Basta!: Land and the Zapatista Rebellion in Chiapas* (Oakland: Food First Books, 2005).

<sup>63</sup> Resource Center of the Americas, "Year After Year, Making a Difference," Section 3 p. 2 . RCA Collection, UCBA, processing collection in progress, temporary box.

<sup>64</sup> Resource Center of the Americas , [www.americas.org](http://www.americas.org), 2009. Visited 08/02/ 2009.

<sup>65</sup> Resource Center of the Americas , "Year After Year, Making a Difference," Section 3, p. 3. RCA Collection, UCBA, processing collection in progress, temporary box.

the RCA opened the *Centro de Derechos Laborales* (Labor Rights Center), which promoted wage labor rights for migrant laborers. The *Centro* was largely effective because of the growing Latino population on East Lake Street, a Minneapolis neighborhood in which the RCA worked in attempts to further integrate itself with the community. However by 2003, minutes from the “Meetings of the Board of Directors” records indicate a downward trend in the organization’s budget.<sup>66</sup> The eventual bankruptcy of the RCA can be seen as a result of the shift in regional concern for Latin America to the post-9/11 interest in the Middle East. As described in this historical sketch, a decade of intense proxy wars in the 1980s followed by a decade of free trade with Mexico in the 1990s played an integral part in the RCAs relevance to Minnesotans and human rights activists. On August 16, 2007, the last web entry on the RCA website communicated its closing and temporary postponement of operation:

The Board of Directors of the Resource Center of the Americas announced today that due to continuing and insurmountable financial challenges, the Resource Center will suspend operations effective today... Over the last five years, the Resource Center endured difficult cycles of funding instability requiring program cutbacks and staff layoffs. After pursuing many avenues, it became clear immediate action was needed to suspend operations in order to responsibly fulfill payroll and creditor obligations.<sup>67</sup>

With twenty-five years of operation to its credit, the RCA ended its existence as an award-winning advocate for human rights and education.

The archives of the RCA reflects the nature of this organization as well as contains other valuable historical evidence. McLuhan’s idea that “the medium is the message” is helpful when analyzing the RCA's use of certain administrative records,

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<sup>66</sup> “Minutes: Meeting of the Board of Directors August 16, 2006”, *2007 Board of Directors Manual*, Section 7. RCA Collection, UCBA, processing collection in progress, temporary box.

<sup>67</sup> “Resource Center of the Americas to Cease Operations on August 16<sup>th</sup> 2007”, [www.americas.org](http://www.americas.org) last updated 08/16/2007, Visited 12/11/2007.

which were contained in a binder to be shared and handled frequently. The operations binder, titled *2007 Board of Directors Manual*, held records relating to basic operating procedures for staff, board of directors' meeting minutes, budget reports, volunteer staffing charts and historical sketches of the organization. It suited the needs of an organization with a small staff and frequent volunteer turnover. It is also a reflection of how the RCA staff placed a high value on standardization of procedures conducive to operating an effective non-exclusive HRNGO.

Non-exclusive HRNGOs, particularly those operating as resource centers like the RCA, offer an interesting combination of both library and archival material in their collections. Because the RCA works to publicize human rights violations gleaned and compiled from the efforts of others throughout the world, its archives contains a mixture of published material and archival records. Both are intended for public use. For this reason, the majority of the RCA archives can be found in the 11.42 meters of records that were contained in vertical file shelving as part of its resource holdings. These files include records of both primary and secondary-source material relating to every issue the RCA was involved in or sought to promote. Materials in these files were not originally gathered *by* the person or group named on the file. Rather, the materials contained within are *about* those named in the file title and were compiled over time from various sources by the HRNGO. For example, the file titled “Human Rights – Paraguay” includes both a report entitled “Paraguay: New Outbursts of Violence in Land Disputes”<sup>68</sup> from America's Watch in New York City as well as a personally typed letter to former Paraguayan President Alfredo Stroessner from a Hamline University Professor requesting

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<sup>68</sup> Patricia Pittman, “Paraguay: New Outbursts of Violence in Land Disputes,” *News from Americas Watch*. February 10, 1991, New York. “Human Rights – Paraguay.” RCA Collection, UCBA, processing collection in progress, temporary box.

the release of a colleague from a detention center.<sup>69</sup> The file names range from countries to cultures, from individuals to organizations, and acts of abuse to commissions that prosecuted them.

Through a *selection* appraisal process of the RCA archives – employed “to obtain a qualitative reflection of some predetermined significant characteristic of the whole,” – I examined all files of the RCA related to human rights.<sup>70</sup> This type of selection process, known as the *exemplary selection*, is intended to examine the records relating to the RCA’s primary ideological motivation. In total, thirteen files included the title ‘Human Rights’ (this being the majority of all titles aside from countries comprising Latin America), all varying in size depending on the work or literature produced on the subject. Files selected in this process include: Human Rights-Peru, Human Rights-Chile, Human Rights-United Nations Declaration, Human Rights-Honduras-1980-1998, and Human Rights-El Salvador-1990-1993 among others. These folders comparatively varied in size, “Human Rights-United Nations Declaration” contained the fewest records – a single secondary report on human rights and gender<sup>71</sup> – conversely “Human Rights-Peru” was the largest containing over thirty records ranging from newspaper articles to petitions from senators regarding human rights in Peru.<sup>72</sup>

In addition to this selection used to identify human rights, I also employed an *exceptional selection*, which “takes from the whole the individual cases judged to have value, using some subjective criterion: unusual, controversial, famous or precedent-

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<sup>69</sup> “Human Rights – Paraguay.” RCA Collection, UCBA, processing collection in progress, temporary box.

<sup>70</sup> Terry Cook, “‘Many are called, but few are chosen’: Appraisal Guidelines for Sampling and Selecting Case Files,” *Archivaria* 32 (Summer 1991), p. 27.

<sup>71</sup> “Human Rights-United Nations Declaration.” RCA Collection, UCBA, processing collection in progress, temporary box.

<sup>72</sup> “Human Rights-Peru.” RCA Collection, UCBA, processing collection in progress, temporary box.

setting cases.”<sup>73</sup> Of these exceptions, files included: Federal Bureau of Investigation, Correspondence, November 1989 El Salvador Ecumenical Service, CARC-Background Mission Structure, Psychological Warfare, Archive-Photos, and several others with outstanding titles and thickness. For example, the file titled “Correspondence” relates to a prominent RCA campaign promoting Central America education in Minnesota public schools in 1988 and the Minnesota Department of Education’s initiative in global education. “Correspondence” is an outstandingly large file because the campaign generated state-wide media attention with pundits and intellectuals from the left and right weighing in on the issue.<sup>74</sup>

A characteristic of non-exclusive HRNGO archives is the large quantity of records used in the creation of digest newsletters and pamphlets. Newspaper clippings, transcripts of interviews, secondary-source material from exclusive HRNGOs and audio/visual materials all contribute to the finished product. The political nature of voluntary staffing in HRNGOs and limits in funding result in "do-it-yourself" (DIY) publishing techniques. Through a structural-functional approach, espoused by management theorist Henry Mintzberg as assessing an organization by how division of labour occurs (structuring the organization) and how that labour functions to complete the objectives, organizations can be understood by their structural-functional configuration.<sup>75</sup> Of his seven organizational configurations, Mintzberg would describe the RCA as a

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<sup>73</sup> Cook, “‘Many are called, but few are chosen’: Appraisal Guidelines for Sampling and Selecting Case Files,” p. 27. As Cook states, neither of these ‘sampling’ methods accurately reflects the whole body of records, but provide an acceptable guideline when a statistically valid sample cannot be made. The records I examined were those that were accessible in the short time I had with them.

<sup>74</sup> See Kathy Kersten, “The Radicalization of Minnesota Public School Curriculum: The Case of Central America,” (1988) and Mary C. Turck and Ronald P. Salzberger “Deligitimating Progressive Education, A Minnesota Case Study: CARC and the New Right,” (1989) in “Correspondence.” RCA Collection, UCBA, processing collection in progress, temporary box.

<sup>75</sup> Victoria Lemieux. “Applying Mintzberg’s Theories on Organizational Configuration to Appraisal,” *Archivaria* 46 (Fall 1998), p. 37.

Missionary configuration: one that is highly decentralized, primarily ideological in motivation, and coordinated by a small leadership (if any) in order to protect and enhance that ideology.<sup>76</sup> A structural-functional appraisal of the RCA records, with its missionary configuration in mind, would work to identify and preserve records documenting programs that seek to influence or change the organization's external environment.<sup>77</sup> Not only is the configuration of the RCA reflected in its archives, but so also the political stance that the organization maintained against corporate media. The RCA records used to create its own independent news vessel, *The Connection*, stand as the primary evidential resource of the organizations missionary configuration. As archivist Bruce Montgomery implies, "NGOs have built their prestige and influence on their ability to investigate, document, and publicize violations of human rights and humanitarian law."<sup>78</sup> Thus, the archives of resource center non-exclusive HRNGOs like the RCA must be viewed through a structural-functional analysis.

By using any means necessary to share information that falls well below the proscribed radar of sound bites and headline news (an unofficial credo of HRNGOs), the archives of the RCA provide an important contribution to DIY history. Modern DIY publishing of political zines can be traced back to the 1940s with the 'beat' generation's remedy for a monopolized literary-art scene; however the philosophy and medium gained a strong foothold with the counter-culture movement of the 1960s.<sup>79</sup> The anti-Vietnam war politics, "free love," and expressive art-forms of the period were the inspiration for this creative activist outlet – taking individual journalistic ideas and putting them to the

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>78</sup> Montgomery, "Fact-Finding by Human Rights Non-Governmental Organizations," p. 21.

<sup>79</sup> Amy Spencer. *DIY: The Rise of Lo-Fi Culture* (New York: Marion Boyers, 2005), p. 99.

typewriter for distribution.<sup>80</sup> Though the RCA increasingly produced polished and structured print media, its humble beginnings can be directly linked to the grassroots activist publishing of earlier generations. As demonstrated in an issue of *The Connection* (Figure 2.4), a mixture of both handwritten and typed text convey the information in a basic yet reproducible format. DIY artwork, termed “Xerox art” by pioneer design artist and activist Rini Templeton, is a signature of HRNGO archives and the independent publications they created.<sup>81</sup> Located in the lower right- and lower left-hand corners of Figure 2.4 and 2.5, respectively, are examples of the small decorative style featuring a contrasted heavy black line that was intended for multiple reproductions through photocopying, as the name suggests.<sup>82</sup>

The importance of recognizing independent publishing lends itself to further archival advocacy of archiving of non-traditional sites of knowledge, which DIY historian Amy Spencer heralds as a burgeoning approach: “Viewing independent publications as historic documents that need to be preserved and researched is an idea that is growing in momentum.”<sup>83</sup> Spencer states that because independent zines and newspapers such as *The Connection* have short precarious lifetimes, libraries and archives have rarely acquired them.<sup>84</sup> The printed media of HRNGOs are occasionally found in libraries such as the New York Public Library that have acquired large numbers of zines and independent newspapers, to say nothing of the digital form.<sup>85</sup> However, a growing trend in the digital world (existing itself out of a desire for independent non-

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 142.

<sup>81</sup> Rini Templeton, *The Art of Rini Templeton: Where there is Life and Struggle*. (Seattle: Real Comet Press, 1989). See <http://riniart.org> copyright 2002, Rini Templeton Memorial Fund, Visited 07/06/2009.

<sup>82</sup> Central America Resource Center, *The Minnesota Central America Connection*. Vol.1 #2, February 1985. RCA Collection, UCBA, processing collection in progress, temporary box.

<sup>83</sup> Spencer, p. 37.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 37.

hierarchical information sharing<sup>86</sup>) is the advent of blogging, file sharing, and guerrilla journalism – ultimately a move toward digitally recreating the DIY spirit from print into digital pastiche.

The role of key HRNGO volunteer members must also be included in any assessment of the records an HRNGO like the RCA created and archived. If a researcher even half-heartedly sifts through the RCA archives, the name Donald P. Irish would be readily noticed. A graduate of the University of Colorado at Boulder and Professor of Sociology for over thirty years at the University of Minnesota and Hamline University in St. Paul, Dr. Irish was a member of the RCA throughout its existence. Dr. Irish has not only had an impressive career in Sociology but has also been active in the Central America peace movement and civil rights efforts on various campuses across the US.<sup>87</sup> Beginning in the 1960s he led students annually to Central America for research. In the 1970s he became a prominent activist from the intellectual community in Minnesota. After retiring from teaching in 1985 he worked for Paul Wellstone on his successful campaign bid for a US Senate seat from Minnesota, and in 1990 was an official observer, most notably with Jimmy Carter, during the Nicaraguan elections and the subsequent United Nations demobilization of the Contras.

Not only has Dr. Irish made his mark on the human rights front, he is also responsible for preserving a large portion of the RCA archives. As a self-described

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<sup>86</sup> Lewis Call, *Postmodern Anarchism* (Boulder: Lexington Books, 2002), p. 9. Call states: "...the postmodern matrix becomes truly rhizomatic; in other words, it becomes a cognitive model in which every node can be linked to every other, *and must be*. The model now becomes quite analogous to the decentralized network architecture of the Internet, an architecture in which every IP node is joined to every other in a remarkably nonhierarchical way."

<sup>87</sup> According to David Hays, Archivist at the University of Colorado at Boulder Archives, Don Irish was involved in the first desegregation and anti-discrimination effort at the University of Colorado, as a member and officer in the Cosmopolitan Club (a student group formed to promote civil rights on the CU campus) between 1939 and 1941. For more on this club see the Cosmopolitan Club Collection, UCBA.

recycler, collector and contributor, Dr. Irish periodically returned the RCA's own published materials to them long after the originals had been misplaced or destroyed. Economically precarious organizations like the RCA, dependent on volunteers, can rarely maintain stable records.<sup>88</sup> In the case of Dr. Irish, this non-exclusive HRNGO invested its energies in creating and using documentation for its immediate needs and had to count on members like him to attend to its preservation after the fact. The RCA's lack of much attention to archiving was complicated by its bankruptcy and the resulting reduced storage space available to its members for such donations of materials at what remained of the RCA office. Dr. Irish's individual archival initiative, literally imparted on the record (via his mailing address on every repatriated record), resounds through what remains of the historical memory of the RCA.

In this context of limited and fragile resources and other pressing immediate priorities, the activist archivist can play a valuable role in protecting the archives of HRNGOs. Both are contributors to the evolving history of human rights. As South African archivist Verne Harris elaborates, archivists too are among contextual factors shaping records and social memory: "We need to broaden our concept of context to accommodate our own intervention, the interdependence of the many fields and institutions making up the arena of social memory, and the importance of disclosing what is absent from the archival sliver."<sup>89</sup> It is in this way that the 'life after the death' of the RCA can be sustained. Its work and impact on human rights and society can continue if its records survive.

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<sup>88</sup> This statement is not to imply that wage labor versus volunteer labor amounts to better archives; rather, turnover of volunteers, lack of education regarding preservation practices and varying approaches to cataloging permeate HRNGO collections.

<sup>89</sup> Harris, *Archives and Justice*, p. 19.

As the RCA's doors closed to the public in August 2007 a new stage in its history began to unfold. By November, staff numbers were reduced to a handful, language classes ceased and a weeklong closing sale of resource materials and ephemera was held, as the organization downsized to a single office space in the basement of the three-level building it once occupied entirely. I visited the RCA's East Lake Street home during the final day of the closing sale and, moved by the fact that the materials once used to educate the community about Latin American issues were being dispersed and perhaps lost for human rights work and research, I began to think of how an archives could play a role in protecting the organization's legacy. After explaining that I was a master's level archival studies student from Minneapolis at the University of Manitoba and deeply interested in the archives of social justice I was allowed to briefly appraise their archival holdings in the poorly lit, cluttered remains of the RCA library. I received permission to borrow the materials for further examination. After some deliberation and temporary retention in my possession of several boxes of files for safekeeping, I returned the records in hope that the entire collection would be acquired in the near future by an established archives. My archiving concern increased because my personal contact within the RCA, Joy Nelson, could not be sure that the files would be included in the move to the new office due to the required space for minimal operations. The RCA staff's initial reaction to my suggestion of archival donation was understandably apprehensive as the societal knowledge of archives and its function still remains unknown to a large sector of HRNGOs.

While pursuing my studies in the winter of 2007-08, I remained in contact with the RCA regarding its plans for the files. I had offered to retain the hanging files

collection at all costs in the event that the material would not be looked after during the move. The RCA maintained that it would keep the records in a basement closet until a decision was made by the Board of Directors. To my surprise, no inquiry had been made by the local Minnesota archival community into the fate of the organization's records. I remained concerned that the records may not find an appropriate archival home. To fulfill one of my archival studies program requirements at the University of Manitoba, I interned in the summer of 2008 at the University of Colorado at Boulder Archives under the supervision of Bruce Montgomery. I wanted to work with him in order to develop my understanding of the role of archives in social justice work since he is an archivist with substantial HRNGO archives experience. He and Verne Harris are the leading human rights-oriented archivists. My work with the various collections at the University of Colorado at Boulder Archives that Montgomery had acquired, including those of CDHES, *Tutela Legal*, CISPES, Amnesty International (USA), and many others, gave me a broader sense of the importance of the RCA records in relation to this wider social justice archive and a growing sense of responsibility for the RCA archives and these related records. I felt that the RCA would make an important addition to the already substantial collection in Boulder. After receiving Montgomery's approval, I began the process of facilitating the transfer of the RCA archives from Minneapolis to the archives at Boulder.

Accordingly, my interaction with and intervention in the RCA archives must be discussed as an example of co-creation of the historical record. My view of the important place of the RCA in the history of Minnesota-Latino community building, the Central America peace movement, and the ongoing work of HRNGOs, resulted in the

preservation of the organization's memory and is an exercise of power and co-creation of the record. If I had not done so, the record might not exist at all today or different (perhaps scattered) portions of it might have survived in configurations that might amount to a different overall record than the one I perceived and acted to preserve. My actions to protect the archives also shaped the records by facilitating the transfer of some records and not others. For example, the RCA's hanging files were well categorized and filed in an accessible and user-friendly manner, demonstrating the one-time importance these records once had and making them perfect candidates for transfer to the Boulder Archives. On the other hand, several boxes of miscellaneous uncategorized materials of unknown origin, and file cabinets containing currently used administrative files have not been discussed or declared for future archival retention. Thus, an exclusive segment of the RCA archives was spoken for, in this case the ideological resource of the HRNGO, leaving the technical database materials (primarily all electronic records relating to finances and legal operations) out of the historical record at present. Records such as these, being immensely relevant to archives, remain invaluable to the RCA's daily operations and were not made available to me and subsequently the University of Colorado at Boulder Archives. My intentions were to build a relationship between the archives and the HRNGO to create a continued dialogue about social justice in order to further the stake in history which HRNGOs claim as well the archives ability to offer society a range of voices within its collections. There is unrestricted public access to the records (once they are processed). However the current donor agreement between the RCA and the University of Colorado at Boulder Archives does not stipulate annual donations.

Understandably, a struggling organization such as the RCA has not initiated any further contractual dealings with the Boulder Archives as their interests lie in maintaining an organization at present focused on outreach. Similarly, the University of Colorado at Boulder Archives has an enormous backlog of collections needing attention, currently leaving the RCA collection unprocessed. Ostensibly, the RCA's 'past' is secure, but as Derrida states, "the archive as being not simply a recording of the past, but also something which is shaped by a certain power, a selective power, and shaped by the future...."<sup>90</sup> The potential uses for the RCA archives, particularly when enhanced by inclusion among other important human rights collections at the University of Colorado at Boulder Archives, arise from the growing awareness of HRNGOs and their unique efforts as advocates for social justice. On August 7, 2008, in the current basement office of the RCA, Joy Nelson and I taped and labeled the final box of the collection to be delivered to the archives in Boulder. What began as a general inquiry into the fate of a Minneapolis community organization, led to archival advocacy for the memory of a local non-exclusive HRNGO. Although the RCA continues as a mere shadow of its former self, its historical legacy now opens out of the future.<sup>91</sup>

The non-exclusive HRNGO is at the forefront of disseminating information about human rights issues of the past and present. The RCA, a typical example of a non-exclusive HRNGO, has maintained an important documentary resource which will benefit human rights research and work because of its archival preservation. However, rigid economic and political structures impose great constraint on the activity of non-governmental organizations, leading to their often unstable existence. Sometimes they are

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<sup>90</sup> Jacques Derrida, "Archive Fever," (Seminar, University of Witwatersrand, August 1998). Transcribed by Verne Harris in *Refiguring the Archive*. p. 40.

<sup>91</sup> Harris, *Archives and Justice*, p. 15.

weakened through the intimidation and 'cloud' over their activities caused by state-sponsored counterintelligence activities. The quality and usefulness of their archives is adversely affected as a result. But archiving these RCA and CDHES records with the larger body of human rights documentation that makes up the archive of justice in archives such as the University of Colorado's can help compensate for those limitations. The records of one can supplement the records of the other, helping to fill gaps in our understanding. Better descriptions of such records across archives worldwide would help do so even more. By analyzing this RCA and CDHES 'sliver' of the archive of justice, I have demonstrated the hazards shaping human rights records as well as their value as evidence of local, national and international human rights work.<sup>92</sup> As discussed in this chapter, the records created by the exclusive HRNGO (such as the CDHES in El Salvador) reinforce the archives of non-exclusive HRNGOs (such as the RCA) by adding international dimensions and records to seemingly isolated distant Central American human rights campaigns in Minnesota. For organizations like the RCA and the CDHES, which depend on mutual aid for survival, archives can provide valuable support for the recorded memory of human rights activism. How the archival profession meets this challenge remains an increasingly important question.

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<sup>92</sup> Harris, "Archival Sliver," p. 135. Harris describes the archival sliver as follows: "The archival record, both oral and documentary, is but a sliver of social memory, and the archival residue in documents is but a sliver of the documentary record."

(Figure 2.1)<sup>93</sup>

MINNESOTA  
CENTRAL AMERICA



THE  
CONNECTION

A Monthly Newsletter for Members of the Central America Resource Center  
Second Edition

February 1985

Co Editors:  
Sara McDonnell  
Anne Winkler

Central America Resource Center  
1701 University Avenue S.E.  
Minneapolis Minnesota 55414  
(612) 379-8799

Contributors:  
Roberta Dale  
Marcus Faillettaz  
Mark Garner  
Lynn Henderson  
Rarb Rudquist  
Jim Stromseth  
Jack Wiczorek

Vol 1 # 1  
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NOTE TO READERS

This is the second edition of the  
Minnesota, Central America Connection

Our aim is to provide you with the  
information you want, about what is  
nappening in the Central America move-  
ment, locally and on a national level.  
Please let us know if we are providing  
you with what you need to know.

We welcome letters to the Editor,  
and will publish them if space is  
available.

The Eds.

\*\*\*\*\*  
IF YOU ARE NOT A MEMBER.... and you  
would like to continue to recieve  
this newsletter, please fill out the  
attached membership form. Future  
editions of the newsletter will be  
sent to members only. \*\*\*\*\*

SUPPORT THE WORK OF THE CENTRAL AMERICA  
RESOURCE CENTER, BECOME A MEMBER !!!!

\*\*\*\*\*  
Central America News- January 1985

- Covert Journalism Award  
For news that hides the truth.

CONTENTS OF THIS ISSUE

- What's Up at the Resource Center

A concise update on the Center's acti-  
vities. This month features reports on  
our CURRICULUM, HIGHSCHOOL, and MEDIA  
projects.

- Central America Movement in Mimesota

Short updates on organizations around  
the state. This month's theme is look-  
ing at SANCTUARY

- Feature Organizations

A more indepthhlook at oneTwin Cities  
organization , and one from around the  
state. This month it's the LABOR COMMI-  
TTEE on CENTRAL AMERICA/CARRIBEAN, and  
the ST. CLOUD INTERFAITH COMMITTEE on  
CENTRAL AMERICA

- The National Scene

A report on nationalorganizations. This  
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RPRESSIVE LEGISLATION, the PROGRESSIVE  
STUDENT NETWORK, and the SANCTUARY MOVE-  
MENT.

- Organizing Stratagies, Pro and Con

This month features a debate on the role  
of national organizations in local orga-  
nizing.

- Book Report

On " Salvador Witness" by Ana Carrigan

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<sup>93</sup> Central America Resource Center, *The Minnesota Central America Connection*. Vol. 1 #1, January 1985.p.1. RCA Collection, UCBA, processing collection in progress, temporary box.

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TO DIRECTOR, FBI ROUTINE

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FBI NEW YORK ROUTINE

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[COMMITTEE IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE PEOPLE OF EL SALVADOR (CISPES)] (u)

[IT-EL SALVADOR] OO: DALLAS (u)

THE ENTIRE CONTENTS OF THIS COMMUNICATION ARE CLASSIFIED

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b1

[redacted] INVESTIGATION AT MINNEAPOLIS HAS DETERMINED THE EL SALVADOR SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE PUBLICLY ADVISES IT IS AFFILIATED WITH CISPES. IT LISTS A POST OFFICE BOX NUMBER 14574, MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA 55414, WHICH WAS OPENED OCTOBER 30, 1980, 1701 UNIVERSITY AVENUE SOUTHEAST, MINNEAPOLIS. THE EL SALVADOR

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED EXCEPT WHERE SHOWN OTHERWISE

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<sup>94</sup> "Federal Bureau of Investigation." RCA Collection, UCBA, processing collection in progress, temporary box.

(Figure 2.3)<sup>95</sup>

USA - 9



HUBERT H. HUMPHREY, III  
ATTORNEY GENERAL

**STATE OF MINNESOTA**  
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

ST. PAUL 55155

February 2, 1988

ADDRESS REPLY TO:  
102 CAPITOL BUILDING  
ST. PAUL, MN 55155  
TELEPHONE: (612) 296-6196

CISPES  
1701 University Avenue S.E.  
Minneapolis, MN 55414

Dear CISPES Members:

As Attorney General, I am sworn to uphold the laws of Minnesota and the United States Constitution. It is in that role that I feel compelled to comment on the recent discovery that your office was wire-tapped by the FBI.

Although I cannot comment on the legality or illegality of this action, it certainly appears that the FBI acted with a blatant disregard and disrespect of your organization's privacy and constitutional rights. This concerns me deeply.

It is a sad commentary on this administration's policy in Central America that the administration feels it necessary to use these tactics with groups that disagree with its position on the issue.

There is nothing more central to our government than the freedom of speech and association. I am saddened that your rights to these freedoms were ignored in this instance.

You have my full support.

Best regards,

HUBERT H. HUMPHREY, III,  
Attorney General

HHH:III:mp

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER



<sup>95</sup> "Federal Bureau of Investigation." RCA Collection, UCBA, processing collection in progress, temporary box.

## Whats Up at the Resource Center....

P. 2

### HIGH SCHOOL OUTREACH PROJECT

Are you available and qualified to speak in high schools on Central America? We are embarking on a project to get speakers, films, and curriculums into the high schools. It is a project that will use the human resources in every Central American organization, and those of any individuals as well.

To supplement this project we will be putting together fact sheets and quizzes for high school students, sponsoring speaker training sessions geared toward the particular task of speaking to high school students, and putting together evaluations for students/teachers and speakers so that we can discover what works and what doesn't. Anyone interested in assisting in these projects in any way, please give us a call.

#### NEW ITEMS IN THE BOOKSTORE:

- "Dollars and Dictators"
- Cartoons from Nicaragua
- "Salvador Witness"

### MEDIA PROJECT

The Resource Center is embarking on a three month media project with three goals in mind. One, to compile a roladex file including all Twin Cities area and pertinent outstate and national media contacts. The media file will be available to C.A. organizations as needed for their media work. We encourage the addition of new listings to make the file as complete as possible. Two, to begin building a more visible and amicable relationship with the various Twin Cities medias. This will include sending the media's bi-monthly mailings of useful information on the Twin Cities C.A. movement, C.A. literature and the regular news releases on speakers and events as they arise. Third, the Resource Center will be compiling and editing a 20-30 page Media Handbook with information on how to perform basic media tasks (i.e. news releases, news conferences, PSA's, etc.) and how to build a media campaign for your organization. We plan to have the handbook available for purchase by Central America week (March 16). We welcome any suggestions or other useful information for this project. Contact: Marcus 379-8799 or 377-2111.

### CURRICULUM PROJECT

We are attempting to compile all available curriculums and study guides on Central America, including guides for children, high school students, adult education, and ones with a church orientation. The work that is being done nationwide is tremendous, but we are not aware of anyone compiling a list of these resources. Our task is before us. In the next few months we will be researching what study guides are available, reviewing them, ascertaining where the gaps are, and if necessary, writing some study guides ourselves.

Are you working with a study guide you think is good?

Do you need a study guide curriculum for your class, book club, union, or church group?

Do you know of teachers (grade school and high school) who would be interested in a study guide on C.A. for their class?

Is there a curriculum project you think ought to be done?

Please let Joanne Anderson at the Center know. The listing of study units we now have available will be a part of the Minnesota Guide to C.A. Resources (see back order form). The list is also available separately.

*Created especially for the Resource Center by  
Spanish Productions*

*Politically Correct Valentines*  
Available Now  
at the Resource Center.

*\* Cards can be used for all occasions.  
(See design below)*

*HAVE A HEART-  
OPPOSE U.S. INTERVENTION  
IN CENTRAL AMERICA.*



<sup>96</sup> Central America Resource Center, *The Minnesota Central America Connection*. Vol.1 #2, February 1985.p. 2. RCA Collection, UCBA, processing collection in progress, temporary box.

## Central America Movement in Minnesota

### MINNESOTA SANCTUARY MOVEMENT

#### Around the State:

- Interfaith Sanctuary Committee - Duluth  
The Committee held an open meeting in Dec. to gather ideas for future actions... Committee decided to look into the over-ground railroad and formed subcommittee to study possibility of future involvement in railroad...sending 2 local people to participate in Sanctuary Border Tour in Texas in Feb...sent 2 people to the National Sanctuary Movement conference in Tucson... continue to offer sanctuary to a refugee who maintains a busy schedule of speaking engagements. Group plans a response to the INS arrests at the January meeting.
- Peacemaking Committee of 1st Presby. Church Stillwater, MN.  
Peacemaking Committee decided not to have a sanctuary project because issue had become too divisive amongst congregation members...continuing efforts to persuade church elders to endorse Contingency Plan or issue a statement of support for those who have signed Pledge of Resistance... studying "Adventures in Hope: Christians and the Crises in Central America," report to the 196th Presby. Church in 1984.
- 1st United Church of Christ - Northfield  
A number of members of the congregation have expressed an interest in forming a sanctuary for refugees from Cent. America.. plan to discuss idea of sanctuary program as well as other C. American projects and try to form committees to coordinate projects at meeting on Jan 29, featuring presentation by Elizabeth Sander on well-digging project in Nicaragua sponsored jointly by church and C. America subcommittee of the Northfield Peace Network.
- Grand Rapids C.A. Group  
A petition is being circulated across the US in which people are showing their support for Jack Elder and Stacy Merkt. These petitions will be sent to Texas for their upcoming trial Feb 4.

#### Twin Cities Area:

- St. Luke's Presby. Church - Minnetonka  
Recently held church service to express solidarity with arrested sanctuary workers and Central Americans...got signatures for petition stating opposition to INS arrests ...helped organize Jan 19 demonstration to protest INS actions...plans to follow upcoming refugee legislation particularly as it concerns Guatemalans...will base future actions on results of national sanctuary conference...continuing efforts to encourage other churches to join sanctuary movement.
- Walker United Methodist Church - Mpls.  
Currently provides sanctuary to 2 individuals...helped organize Jan 24 demonstration against INS actions...has circulated petitions to protest arrests in Texas... sent representatives to National Sanctuary Conference...continues to print monthly newsletter and sponsor educational programs on C. American and sanctuary movement.

Walker Church is in the process of hiring an individual to fill the position of Coordinator of MN Sanctuary Coalition from which Otto Hiller recently resigned.

- 1st Universalist Church - Mpls  
Former refugees on program now have gone underground...helped organize Jan 24 Mpls demonstration in protest of INS actions... signed petition to be presented at National Sanctuary Conference stating that sanctuary committee members in MN are unindicted co-conspirators in providing aid to illegal aliens...continuing educational outreach programs mainly through speaking engagements.

#### +++ Rio Grande Border Witness Tour +++

The Madison Sanctuary Committee has organized an "Ecumenical Seminar On Border Issues" a special tour of the Rio Grande Valley area of Texas from Feb.2-17. The tour will include interviews with rep.'s of the religious groups and attorneys engaged in refugee support services as well as with INS officials. There will also be visits to underground refugee communities, immigrant detention facilities and work with the Rio Grande Border Witness Program.



<sup>97</sup> Central America Resource Center, *The Minnesota Central America Connection*. Vol.1 #2, February 1985.p. 3. RCA Collection, UCBA, processing collection in progress, temporary box.

## CONCLUSION

The goal of using archives to study and expand on human rights and social justice depends on the archival profession's commitment to archival activism. Progressive librarian Edgardo Civallero's appeal to librarians to be activists applies equally well to archivists:

The librarian should spread solidarity and brotherhood, tell the story of those who were defeated, express admiration for every little example of our wonderful human diversity and bring back seemingly insignificant memories that prove to be invaluable as time passes... They should be able to achieve some sort of equilibrium by demolishing certain walls and building new bridges. The librarian should help people to look in each other's eyes on an equal footing. The librarian should do it not because it is a good idea but because this *is* the idea.<sup>1</sup>

Archival work needs to be guided by this call to action. Archivists can respond by building relationships with the human rights community to determine how and what records are being created and which ones should be protected. At the same time archivists should survey their holdings to identify better the records that are related to human rights and what they currently lack. This is vital to building complete collections and establishing sustainable documentation strategies. Through such human rights community support and archival initiative nationally and internationally, extensive networks of collaboration for the preservation of the human rights record can be created. This can not only include relationships and collaborations with HRNGOs, but also independent media operations and community resource centres.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Edgardo Civallero, "Foreword." In Toni Samek, *Librarianship and Human Rights: A Twenty-First Century Guide*. (Oxford: Chandos Publishing, 2007), p. xii.

<sup>2</sup> Armelle Goff & ICA, *The Records of NGOs, Memory...To Be Shared: A Practical Guide in 60 Questions* (Paris: International Council on Archives, 2004). Question #13 states: Can we...talk about a 'shared

Archivists must also advocate for human rights and social justice archiving with the public. They need to inform public discourse on these matters but also to critically engage that often charged discourse. A key question for archivists is how cautious or audacious can the archivist be in her encouragement of societal memory in this regard.<sup>3</sup> Appraisal policies such as macroappraisal -- that seek to protect an inclusive state archival record -- can support human rights and social justice with records relevant to this public discourse.<sup>4</sup> But much greater attention to appraisal strategies for non-state records is also needed. Public programming is also essential. It is the chief means of disseminating information about the roles that archives play in society.<sup>5</sup> Archivists have tended not to enter the public issues debates. As Tom Nesmith states, "Archives still focus on mounting basic descriptions of records, exhibits of documents on particular historical themes, without much discussion of their relevance to contemporary concerns, and certain digitized documents for the casual web browser, rather than records of broader public affairs interest." He urges "more active pursuit of a wider role for archives in public affairs."<sup>6</sup>

Archivists can also lobby for appropriate legislative authority over the identification, protection, and accessibility of archival records. Governments depend on

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memory' in the context of the archives of an NGO? Answer: The activities of NGOs have created links between peoples, individuals and societies. In preserving their archives, they serve a universal function as preservers of memory, and as contributors to the development of new friendships. By making archives accessible they will contribute to the process of memory, even of mourning, for those populations who have either been 'forgotten by history', or who have been victims of natural or civil catastrophes on which the archives of official bodies may be silent, suspected of bias, or no longer in existence. p.14.

<sup>3</sup> Kenneth E. Foote, "To Remember and Forget: Archives, Memory and Culture," *American Archivist* Vol. 53, Summer 1990, p. 380.

<sup>4</sup> Terry Cook, "Macroappraisal in Theory and Practice."

<sup>5</sup> Tom Nesmith, "Archivists and Public Affairs: Toward a New Archival Public Programming," in Cheryl Avery and Mona Holmlund, eds., *Better off Forgetting? Essays on Archives, Public Policy, & Collecting Memory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, forthcoming).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3, 5.

legislation and public pressure to divulge the records of forgotten histories such as those of the United States' COINTELPRO and El Salvador's *Desaparecidos*. On the other hand, archivists such as Verne Harris have gone further (while a state archives employee) by whistleblowing on the destruction of government records in South Africa relating to the abuses of Apartheid.<sup>7</sup>

As discussed in Chapter One, archival organizations must step in as well, especially since individual archivists cannot be expected to take extreme risks. The ongoing work of the International Council on Archives – Human Rights Working Group has set an important example for national archival associations. Professional organizations such the Society of American Archivists (SAA) and the Association of Canadian Archivists (ACA) have disseminated and encouraged the human rights discourse through publishing, lobbying, educational opportunities, and organizing conferences around the issue.

As demonstrated throughout this thesis, human rights have had important documentary expressions throughout history. From ancient religious and secular dictums, through to the American and French Revolutionary declarations, and on to the modern United Nations declaration and various truth and reconciliation commission reports, records have served to buttress the struggle for rights. For this reason, archives and archivists have an important role to play by not only improving the longevity of these records but more importantly, advocating for records that depict the human rights struggle.<sup>8</sup> As Ian Wilson and others have said, archivists need to play an active role

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<sup>7</sup> Harris, “‘They should have destroyed more’.”

<sup>8</sup> Samek, *Librarianship and Human Rights*, p. 4.

building bridges with friends of the archives as well as those who have not been exposed to the benefits of memory institutions.<sup>9</sup> This effort is, has been and always will be a fundamental imperative for archives. Archivists and rebel collectors such as HRNGOs can continue to work together against oppression for the archive of justice.

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<sup>9</sup> Wilson, "Foreword," p.5.

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