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The Martyrs

by Dennis Kalob, Ph.D.

*The struggle against injustice
and the pursuit of truth
cannot be separated nor can one
work for one independent of the other.*

- Fr. Ignacio Ellacuria, S.J.



Just Released:
[Just South Index 2018](#)

JSRI Future Activities

November 26

Today, JSRI releases the report [The Privilege of Plenty: Educational Inequity in Mississippi](#), authored by Dr. Nik Mitchell, assisted by Research Assistant Millicent Eib.

JSRI Recent Activities

October 17

At the College of Law, Former Mayor Mitch Landrieu delivered the first annual lecture in a new series named for Father Louis J. Twomey, SJ, Loyola pioneer for racial and social justice. The topic was *Race, Poverty, and Politics*.

October 24

Dr. Weishar participated in a meeting of the Board of Directors of El Pueblo, a Biloxi, Mississippi, nonprofit that provides immigration legal services to vulnerable immigrants.

October 29-31

Dr. Weishar participated in the annual meeting of the Jesuit Network on Migration for Central and North America at Iberoamericana University in Tijuana, Mexico.

October 30-November 3

Dr. Dennis Kalob presented on the *JustSouth Index 2018* at the annual meeting of the Association for Humanist Sociology in El Paso.

November 4-8

Fr. Kammer and Mary Baudouin participated in the Justice and Ecology conference at the Jesuit Curia in Rome, Italy, marking the fiftieth anniversary of the Justice and Ecology Secretariat.

November 7

Dr. Weishar attended a Congressional hearing on the August, 2019, ICE raids in central Mississippi, held at Tougaloo College in Tougaloo, Mississippi.

November 11-17

JSRI was a co-sponsor of a week of events at Loyola commemorating the 30th anniversary of the assassination of six Jesuit priests and two companions in El Salvador.

November 16-18

Dr. Kalob co-presented a workshop titled *Teaching and Living Laudato Si': Caring for Our Common Home* at the Ignatian Family Teach-In for Justice in Washington, D.C.

November 21

Dr. Kalob and Fr. Kammer presented the *JustSouth Index 2018* at a JSRI press conference held in the Audubon Room on campus. This was the third such annual report.



Artwork by Mary Pimmel-Freeman (Rockhurst University '07).

These eight martyrs are among the 75,000 who died in the brutal civil war El Salvador endured for well over a decade, from the late 1970s to the eventual peace agreement in 1992. These additional victims included four U.S. Churchwomen (Sr. Maura Clarke, Sr. Ita Ford, Sr. Dorothy Kazel, and lay missionary Jean Donovan), Archbishop (and now Saint) Oscar Romero, labor and peasant leaders, and journalists. Catholic religious who advocated for the poor and for an end to oppression and violence were particularly targeted by the far right and the military. On walls and on flyers it was announced: "Be a Patriot, Kill a Priest."

These priests, sisters, and anyone else speaking out against the extreme inequality, poverty, and political repression that defined El Salvador were identified as threats to the established order. They were considered by the elite and the military command to be nothing but "communists" who needed to be exterminated.

The Jesuits, with their emphasis on education and as the leaders of UCA, were especially despised by the elite. Educating youth about structural injustice was a significant threat to the status quo.

Fr. Ignacio Ellacuria, S.J., the rector of UCA and one of the martyrs (in fact, the main target), gave a powerful commencement address at Santa Clara University, seven years before his assassination. In it, he said the "university is inescapably a social force: it must transform and enlighten the society in which it lives." It must "[d]o everything possible so that liberty is victorious over oppression, justice over injustice, and love over hate." Fr. Ellacuria made clear that the Church also must advocate for social transformation.

Here, in brief, are the eight martyrs:

- Ignacio Ellacuria, S.J. – theologian, philosopher, and Rector of the University of Central America (UCA)
- Amando Lopez, S.J. – theologian and philosopher. Had previously served as Rector of UCA for more than 10 years.
- Joaquin Lopez y Lopez, S.J. – Helped to found and was the first director of *Faith and Joy*, an organization that runs educational centers across El Salvador.
- Ignacio Martin-Baro, S.J. – social psychologist and philosopher. His work inspired the development of liberation psychology.
- Segundo Montes, S.J. – sociologist, philosopher, and educator. He led the Human Rights Institute at UCA.
- Juan Ramon Moreno, S.J. – theologian and scholar. He served at the Center for Theological Reflection.
- Elba and Celina Ramos – Elba was the Jesuits' housekeeper and married mother of four children (two died young). Celina was Elba's 16-year-old daughter. They were staying together in a vacant room in the Jesuit residence thinking it safer than their home. They were both murdered that night, Elba's arms wrapped around Celina trying to protect her daughter from the bullets.

As we remember and honor these servants of God and humanity, we must realize that remembering is not enough. To truly honor them requires that we take action to build a more just and peaceful world. Whether it be in our personal lives, professional work, or in our political acts we must embrace truth and social justice, even if it comes at a cost.

Sources: Bole, William. *Remembering the El Salvador Martyrs*. News of the Jesuits Central and Southern Province. Retrieved, November 12, 2019: <https://jesuitscentralsouthern.org/news-detail?TN=NEWS-20171115084503>; The Center for Justice and Accountability. *El Salvador*. Retrieved November 12, 2019: <https://cja.org/where-we-work/el-salvador/>; Ellacuria, Ignacio. Commencement Address Delivered at Santa Clara University, June, 1982. Retrieved November 12, 2019: <https://legacy.scu.edu/Jesuits/ellacuria.html>; Reiser, William. November 16, 2009. *The Road From Aguilares: Twenty Years Later: Remembering the Martyrs of El Salvador*. America Magazine: <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2009/11/16/road-aguilares-twenty-years-later-remembering-martyrs-el-salvador>.

Monthly articles reflect the opinions of the authors and not necessarily those of Loyola University New Orleans.

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