



# Without Walls

## COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

Summer 2009



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### Statistics at a Glance:

- At the end of 2008, there were some 42 million forcibly displaced people worldwide.
- Nearly 25 million people were receiving protection or assistance from UNHCR at the end of 2008.
- More than 829,000 people submitted individual applications for asylum or refugee status in 2008.

## Network Providers to Help Survivors Seeking Asylum



Providers from Tampa Bay and South Florida attended a half-day workshop on June 24th about promising practices in conducting psychological evaluations for affidavits and expert testimonies for asylum seekers. The training, sponsored by the Florida Center for Survivors of Torture in honor of United Nations Day in Support of Victims of Torture, was held in Clearwater, FL at the Holiday Inn. Clinicians, attorneys, interpreters and case managers were trained. The event provided a wonderful networking opportunity for attendees, many of whom currently work together on shared cases and hope to grow collaborative efforts.

The trainer, Dr. Uwe Jacobs is the Clinical Director of Survivors International (SI), a San Francisco based torture treatment center. He is both a clinical neuropsychologist and a psychotherapist who drafted the chapters on the psychological and neuropsychological sequelae of torture for the Istanbul Protocol and for the handbook on assessment of asylum seekers by Physicians for Human Rights. Dr. Jacobs covered both theoretical and practical information necessary to conduct thorough and accurate assessments. Cultural, ethical and legal considerations were also discussed. This specialized training helped to underscore the importance of the multidisciplinary approach (clinical, legal and social service) while providing very concrete and tangible techniques to enhance the asylum cases facilitated through the FL Center.

At a reception held after the training on the evening of June 24th, three inspiring practitioners were recognized for their outstanding work and contributions to the lives of torture survivors living in Tampa Bay and Miami. Dr. Donald Mellman, Dr. Cecilia Yocum and Dr. Lori Kleinman have provided extensive support to many clients at the Florida Center. Services have included psychological evaluations, neurological examinations, expert court testimony, therapy and clinical supervision for Center staff, volunteers and interns. Additionally, they have contributed their expertise and professional perspectives through staff trainings for those working in the Refugee Services department at Gulf Coast Jewish Family Services. The United Nations Day in Support of Victims of Torture event was a fitting opportunity to share our appreciation and gratitude.

In addition to the special provider recognition, staff, advisory board members, providers and friends of the center participated in the Global Reading – a statement written by the International Rehabilitation Council for Victims of Torture’s President and Secretary General and read at UN Day events throughout the world – that condemns the use of torture and calls on global citizens for universal ratification of the UN Convention against Torture. Additionally, Shirely Miaoulis, the district representative for Congressman Bill Young, read a statement from the Congressman in support of the FL Center and the tremendous work by Gulf Coast Jewish Family Services to help vulnerable populations through the state of Florida.



Photograph by Andrea Lypka

## From the CEO

June 26<sup>th</sup> marks the day that we observe UN Day in Support of Victims of Torture. First commemorated in 1987 to mark the day that the UN General Assembly adopted the Convention Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. For more than nine years the Florida Center for Survivors of Torture and other centers around the world have commemorated the day with special events, speeches and marches. On June 26, 2009, FCST organized events in Tampa Bay and Miami. In Tampa, the Florida Center hosted a training seminar on Psychological Evaluations facilitated by Dr Uwe Jacobs, Clinical Director of Survivors International in San Francisco and contributor to the Istanbul Protocol, the international guidelines for documenting torture and its consequences on survivors.

This day provides torture treatment centers with an opportunity to speak out against torture, demand its eradication and express our unity with torture survivors and their families. It is a reminder that every day, people around the world are subjected to torture. Torture is a sobering reminder of the interrelationship between health and human rights. We are reminded of the darker side of humanity and the potential for cruelty in the world. But we are also reminded by the clients of the extraordinary resilience of the human spirit. It is in their honor and for the sake of all those who have suffered from torture or continue to face risk of being tortured, that we must commit ourselves to speaking out and with our collective voice, we stand together against torture.

The Florida Center for Survivors of Torture would not be able to do its work without the support and service of our key partners. These doctors, lawyers, mental health practitioners, social workers, spiritual leaders, interns and volunteers provide a variety of services that help each of our clients rebuild their lives. As we enter our 10<sup>th</sup> year, we thank you all for your continued support of our program and the clients we serve.

*Michael Bernstein, President & CEO*

## COMMUNITY PROVIDER KUDOS!!

The Florida Center for Survivor of Torture (FCST) Miami Springs office would like to recognize our new partner St Thomas University Human Rights Institute for their diligent pro bono help with assisting our clients in obtaining their residence status in the U.S.

St Thomas University Human Rights Institute offers free legal assistance with immigration matters to Cuban and Haitian entrants and also to refugees and asylees from any country. They also offer assistance with Residency, Parole (ORR Cuban), Renewal/ Extension of Parole, Work Permit, Attorney Representation (District and Asylum Offices of USCIS), Immigration Court Cases, Motion to reopen/ Reconsider for Cubans and Haitians and also Residency cases to Asylees and Refugees from any other country.

The Miami Springs FCST office is extremely thankful to the staff of St Thomas University Human Rights Institute and their willingness to assist our clients.

*James Jean, MSW*

## Evaluation Resources

### Readings and references for evaluating survivors of political and/or state-sponsored torture

Jacobs, U. and Incopino, V. (2001) Torture and its consequences: a challenge to clinical neuropsychology. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*. 32 (5), 458-464

Jacobs, U., Evans, F.B., and Patsalides, B. (2001) Principles of documenting psychological evidence of torture: Part I. *Journal of Torture Rehabilitation*. 11(3), 85-89

Jacobs, U., Evans, F.B., and Patsalides, B. (2001) Principles of documenting psychological evidence of torture: Part II. *Journal of Torture Rehabilitation*. 11(4), 100-102

Jacobs, U. (2000) Psycho-political challenges in the forensic documentation of torture: the role psychological evidence. *Journal of Torture Rehabilitation*. 10(3): 68-71.

Physicians for Human Rights (2001) *Examining Asylum Seekers: A Health Professional's Guide to Medical and Psychological Evaluations of Torture*.

Physicians for Human Rights (1999) *Manual on Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment – Istanbul Protocol*.

## A Day to Support Survivors of Torture Globally

June 26th is UN Day in Support of Victims of Torture and has been chosen as a day to pay respects to those who have endured the unimaginable. This is an occasion for the world to speak up against the unspeakable. It was 11 years ago, that the Convention against Torture came into force. June 26th is also known as the day, 53 years ago, that the United Nations Charter was signed -- the first international instrument to embody obligations for Member States to promote and encourage respect for human rights.

Each year on June 26th the Florida Center joins approximately 200 other centers around the world to honor and support survivors of torture's resilience, strength and courage. Twenty-five years ago, on June 26th in 1987, the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment was enacted. The purpose of this document was to give the world a legally binding tool to abolish torture and to support survivors of political and state-sponsored torture. To date, 146 countries have ratified the Convention.

June 26th is a significant day for the FL Center offices in Tampa Bay and Miami. Each year we honor this day with a special event. This year, we focused on the asylum process for survivors and the critical case coordination for these very sensitive and difficult legal cases. Dr. Uwe Jacobs from Survivors International in San Francisco, CA trained FL Center staff and providers. A reception followed the training where key providers were recognized for their incredible commitment to the Center and the clients we are privileged to serve.



Drawing by James Boyle

## World Refugee Day

In 2001, the United Nations General Assembly designated June 20th as World Refugee Day to recognize and celebrate the contribution of refugees throughout the world. Since then, World Refugee Day has become an annual commemoration marked by a variety of events in over a hundred countries.

This year's World Refugee Day theme is "Real People, Real Needs". Despite the efforts of many, the needs of refugees worldwide are far from being met. Behind the unmet needs are not just numbers but real people with real stories.

This World Refugee Day the United Nations asks us to remember the millions of forcibly displaced and stateless people under their care who are struggling with their day-to-day lives. One thing connects them all: basic needs that must be met so they have a chance to rebuild their lives.

The Florida Center, the Refugee Youth Program and the other refugee service providers in Miami, under the leadership of the Department of Children & Families, held a celebration in honor of World Refugee Day at Amelia Earhart Park on June 20th, 2009. Several speakers attended and a multitude of activities were enjoyed by all. Art made by refugee children was showcased and there was music, games for the children and even a petting zoo.

What seemed to have been a usual weekend for some was not common for most of the people congregated there. Coming from countries with a severe lack of

liberties, it was a very special day for many. Miami's refugees got the opportunity to feel that they are at home. Their kids could not only enjoy the sense of freedom, but revived the hope and faith that their parents had lost. They learned that here in America it's not strange to talk or even to sing about freedom.

The community came together as a whole that day; showing its face as the "melting pot". The land of opportunity shined, as people from the Caribbean, South America, and other countries came together. Many were able to experience for the first time that they are a big part of this community and that it does not matter where they are from, but that in fact they have more in common than expected. Their story is what makes them stronger, their will to survive is what gives them hope and their determination for a bright future is what unites them.

The Florida Center and the Refugee Youth Program participated in celebrations throughout the state with festivities in both Tampa and Palm Beach County taking place that week.

These commemorative events seek to bring hope to refugee families who have left their countries, families, jobs and friends in search of peace and security in their new home.

Mitsouko Chatelain/James P. Boyle

## Where can I access information about my clients' human experience?

### Florida Center for **SURVIVORS** of Torture

*Inspiring Hope and  
Understanding*

**We at the Florida Center for Survivors of Torture envision a world in which every person enjoys human rights and every community torn apart by crisis is given the opportunity for healing and hope.**

Amnesty International Country Reports

<http://www.amnesty.org/ailib>

<http://www.amnestyusa.org/>

CIA World Factbook

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2194.html>

Doctors Without Borders

[http://doctorswithoutborders.org/index\\_alt.cfm](http://doctorswithoutborders.org/index_alt.cfm)

ICRC Country Reports

[http://www.icrc.org/eng/operations\\_country](http://www.icrc.org/eng/operations_country)

Foreign Governments Country Background

<http://www.lib.umich.edu/govdocs/forcoun.html>

U.S. Dept of State Country Reports on Human Rights Practices

[http://www.state.gov/www/global/human\\_rights/hrp\\_reports\\_mainhp.html](http://www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights/hrp_reports_mainhp.html)

U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants

[www.refugees.org](http://www.refugees.org)

Visit our Website at [www.gcjfs.org/fcst](http://www.gcjfs.org/fcst)

Join the eCommunity Supporting Survivors of Torture (eCSST) at  
<http://groups.google.com/group/ecsst1>

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### KEY PARTNERS

- Church World Services—Miami
- Lutheran Services Florida
- Jewish Community Services of South Florida
- Catholic Charities Diocese of St. Petersburg
- University of South Florida
- NOVA Southeastern University
- Argosy University