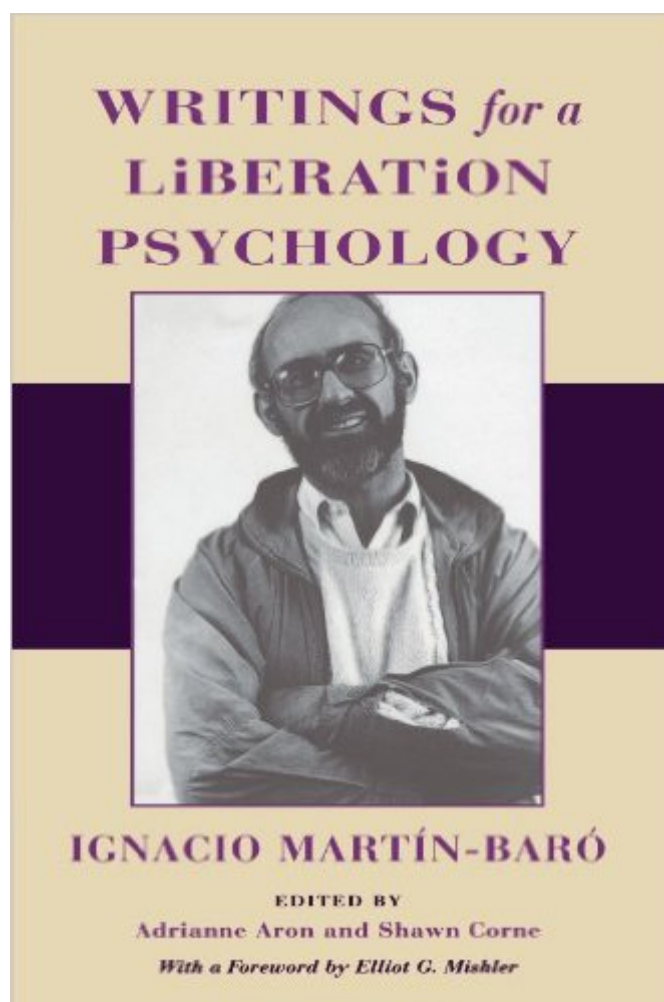


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# Writings For A Liberation Psychology



## Synopsis

"In your country," Ignacio Martín-Baró remarked to a North American colleague, "it's publish or perish. In ours, it's publish and perish." In November 1989 a Salvadoran death squad extinguished his eloquent voice, raised so often and so passionately against oppression in his adopted country. A Spanish-born Jesuit priest trained in psychology at the University of Chicago, Martín-Baró devoted much of his career to making psychology speak to the community as well as to the individual. This collection of his writings, the first in English translation, clarifies Martín-Baró's importance in Latin American psychology and reveals a major force in the field of social theory. Gathering essays from an array of professional journals, this volume introduces readers to the questions and concerns that shaped Martín-Baró's thinking over several decades: the psychological dimensions of political repression, the impact of violence and trauma on child development and mental health, the use of psychology for political ends, religion as a tool of ideology, and defining the "real" and the "normal" under conditions of state-sponsored violence and oppression, among others. Though grounded in the harsh realities of civil conflict in Central America, these essays have broad relevance in a world where political and social turmoil determines the conditions of daily life for so many. In them we encounter Martín-Baró's humane, impassioned voice, reaffirming the essential connections among mental health, human rights, and the struggle against injustice. His analysis of contemporary social problems, and of the failure of the social sciences to address those problems, permits us to understand not only the substance of his contribution to social thought but also his lifelong commitment to the campesinos of El Salvador.

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## Customer Reviews

Ignacio Martin-Baro is probably better known in the U.S. as one of the slain Jesuit priests of El Salvador than as the ingenious psychologist that he was. Aron and Corne do U.S. psychologists, who are more often than not barred by their lack of facility with the Spanish language from a large body of important psychological literature, a huge favor by editing this carefully chosen and lovingly prepared volume of his translated works. Because the writings they have selected span the period from 1974, shortly before Martin-Baro initiated graduate work at the University of Chicago, to 1989, when he was murdered, we as readers are able to observe the maturation of his perspective as well as the many ways he applied his psychological knowledge and training in what can only be described as a "limit situation"-- namely, El Salvador in the late 1970s through the mid 1980s. In these works, Martin-Baro addressed several themes of increasing global significance, including the effects political repression on the human psyche, the effects of war on children, the relation between religious ideology and political activity, and the nature of industrial psychology from the perspective of the under- and unemployed. Of greatest significance to psychologists, however, were his overarching themes, namely, the collusive role of mainstream psychology in human oppression and the necessary role of the psychologist in human liberation.

The Jesuit priest, scholar, social psychologist and philosopher Ignacio Martin Baro wrote in the text "Religion as an instrument of psychological warfare which is a part of this book, about how religion can damage an individuals autonomy and self esteem. He wrote about how the evangelical protestant church grew at a great rate in El Salvador during the civil war that raged there during the 1980s. Some people argued the evangelical churches could quench the thirst of the people in a way that the catholic church couldnt. Baro researched what the political consequences of this where. He meant that the shift in aliegence of peoples faith was a political instrument used by those in power and that is was in fact a kind of political /psychological warfare. With this he meant that the government sought to change the mental climate of the people(the enemy). The American sponsored army in El Salvador, on the side of their regular military operations also waged a so called LIC (low intensity conflict) which was aimed at winning the people over to their side. The people often took the guerillas side and therefore it wasnt enough with a pure military victory, they where also forced to win an ideological one as well. Therefore it developed into a sociopolitical war instead of merley a military one. Propaganda and the spreading of lies and rumors where common

place in this type of warfare which main purpose was to make the population insecure. Therefore it was important to tap into the religion since many people in the country looked to it for guidance in the hard times. The liberation theology that Ignacio Martin Baro represented, which was the theology that spoke for the poor and oppressed, gave the people a tool to use in the struggle against the army.

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