



# THE SURVIVOR

## A Reason to Celebrate: 15 Years of Caring for Torture Survivors & their Families

Survivors of Torture, International (SURVIVORS) became the first torture treatment center in San Diego on February 27, 1997. Fifteen years have passed and our mission remains the same: to facilitate the healing of torture survivors and their families; to educate the public and professionals about torture and its consequences; and to advocate against torture.

The concept of SURVIVORS took form when Kathi Anderson, George Falk and Bill Radatz met with Darryl Solberg, Esq. to formally incorporate the organization. During the first year, SURVIVORS intentionally did not serve any clients but instead steadily developed a solid infrastructure. Fifteen years later, though, we are pleased to have served more than 1,300 clients from at least 70 different countries.

The Torture Victims Relief Act (TVRA) made possible increased funding and allowed SURVIVORS to open an office, hire staff, and serve more

people with much-needed services. The past fifteen years have seen great advancements in torture treatment and advocacy, with the continuing reauthorization and appropriation of the TVRA and the formation of the National Consortium of Torture Treatment Programs and the California Consortium of Torture Treatment Centers. SURVIVORS has been privileged to have made contributions to these efforts and to have learned and benefited from our many partnerships.

Although we share the same goals as other treatment centers, in some respects SURVIVORS is unique. We are a stand-alone facility (not embedded in another organization), and we are located on the border, with a large detention facility nearby. As a result, we serve many asylum seekers as well as refugees. We pride ourselves on welcoming a diverse group of people from many different coun-

*Anniversary, continued on page 4*

## A Visit with El Cajon Police Department

Several families were recently taken on a special field trip to learn about public safety. The torture these families survived often involves people in uniform in their home countries, making them and especially their children very unsure of our police officers. The children were able to visit El Cajon Police Department headquarters, meet the staff, explore patrol and SWAT cars, and spend time with Officer Sean Sayre. "For me, it's always great and very important to be connected with the community, especially when people are new to our country and culture. It's important to bridge that cultural gap so that they feel comfortable with us and know that they can come to us, that we are here to watch out for them, as opposed to being antagonistic," said Sayre.



*Officer Sean Sayre's visitors proudly display their junior badges.*

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## Save the Date: Helping Survivors Heal Fundraising Luncheon

SURVIVORS will host its second Helping Survivors Heal Fundraising Luncheon on Tuesday, September 12, 2012. The purpose of this one-hour, inspiring fundraising luncheon is to educate the public about the ways SURVIVORS is creating a safe haven, helping to rebuild lives, and building a welcoming community for torture survivors, as well as to raise unrestricted operating funds to continue SURVIVORS' healing services for torture survivors.

Please contact Suzanne at 619-278-2421 or [survivors@notorture.org](mailto:survivors@notorture.org) if you would like to be involved or to attend. •

## Mission Statement

### Survivors of Torture, International:

- Facilitates the healing of torture survivors and their families;
- Educates professionals and the public about torture and its consequences;
- Advocates for the abolition of torture.

## SURVIVORS: Looking Back on 15 Years

By Jeanette Barrack, board chairperson, and Kathi Anderson, executive director

Fifteen years ago, Survivors of Torture, International began. When you start an organization, you have hopes and dreams for the organization and for the people you will serve, but you don't know what will happen. At first, you celebrate the small or immediate successes: a client opens up to share his story; another client starts a new friendship; an asylum seeker is granted a chance at a new life. You hope for a long-term impact on the lives of torture survivors and on our community, but need time to see the effects of torture treatment.

Now, fifteen years later, our clients are beginning to tell stories of long-term, life-changing successes. Our clients' lives were torn apart in a variety of ways, torn from their country, from their families, from their careers and from all the comforts they had known. Healing from a traumatic event does not happen overnight. Rebuilding a life

in a new country and culture and overcoming torture is a journey.

Now, fifteen years later, our organization is starting to reap the rewards that come with helping clients over a long period of time. Throughout the year, we want to share these successes with you and highlight stories that we think you will enjoy (see one such story on page 3). Whether it comes from a client who has been carrying our business card around for years and is finally ready to ask for services or the client who called after receiving services ten years ago to say thank you, the number of former clients is growing. They are now professionals in our community and other cities and are able to give back more to our community after receiving the care they needed at SURVIVORS.

We are thrilled that hopes and dreams are coming true. •

### *Survivors of Torture, International's*

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### *About Us*

## Survivors of Torture, International

Survivors of Torture, International was incorporated in February 1997 in response to a need in our community to bring assistance to the segment of the population that struggles with the wounds of politically motivated torture. It is estimated that at least 11,000 survivors of torture live in San Diego County and 500,000 live in the United States. Torture survivors may be left with lifelong physical and mental health problems if not treated by trained professionals.

Since 1997, SURVIVORS has engaged a caring network of professionals — board members, interpreters, therapists, physicians, dentists — and all of you in the community who give support and encouragement in many ways. Your support enables us to help torture survivors rebuild their lives. Treatment helps survivors heal, reconnect with their families, go back to school, and find employment.

**Ninety-one cents of every dollar raised goes directly to SURVIVORS' programs.**

Our Federal Tax ID Number is 33-0743869. Learn more at [www.notorture.org](http://www.notorture.org). •

### *Contact Information*

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## SURVIVORS' Writing Group Update

The Healing Club's Writing Group continues to take place at SURVIVORS and be co-led by staff and local author Judy Bernstein. This group began in August, 2010, after a client inquired about the possibility of a healing club that could assist survivors with the telling of their personal stories in a safe and supportive environment. After speaking with several other clients, it became clear that there was broad interest in the idea as many of our clients wished to document their stories for their own families' future generations that will never know life in their home countries.

Since that time, Ms. Bernstein has generously volunteered her time to teach our clients the basic writing skills necessary for capturing the details of their stories for others to read. In addition to providing mental health support and facilitating open sharing, we have begun to introduce mindfulness meditation with hopes of introducing new coping skills for the shared trauma experienced by all members of this group.

Many clients have begun creating their own books or short stories or have learned to share through poetry or song. We have begun to provide information to our clients about various writing or poetry contests, and others have asked to present here in this newsletter. We are so grateful this year to have a very brave young woman who wished to share a poem with all of you to welcome in the new year. May it be filled with peace and blessings. •



Author and SURVIVORS' volunteer Judith Bernstein

## *~The sound of silence~*

For many of us silence can be an uncomfortable experience. It has to be either quickly filled or promptly broken. It is not something we seek actively and our relationship to it is usually disconcerting or nothing at best. And yet silence has its place in prayer, poetry, therapy, meditation and nature. Silence can be deafening when words are needed, and it can be healing if one can learn to sit with it and follow its drift. Often times, our capacity to be alone and silent can serve as a good yardstick of our emotional health. Outer silence can sometimes put us in touch with the inner noise of our feelings and conflicts but it can also lead us out of them to an inner calm. It is no wonder, then, that in certain religions or spiritual practices, taking vows of silence is customary in order to turn inward and activate one's creative potential.

Creating opportunities to make silence a part of our daily life can be an effective way of combating stress, re-energizing our bodies and soothing our minds. Simple things like taking a walk alone during quiet hours, driving in silence, turning off the radio or the television to observe stillness for a few minutes daily are all practical ways of reaping some of the benefits of silence. Explore your connection to silence and discover if it is something that can be cultivated. You might just realize that you love the sound of silence! •

## The Healing Corner

### A Former Client Reconnects with SURVIVORS

Recently, SURVIVORS' executive director Kathi Anderson was at her desk, when the phone rang. "Hello?" The person on the line asked about some former staff members who hadn't worked at SURVIVORS for several years. "My name is Abdi\*, and I was a

client at SURVIVORS." He was a Somali man whose English was impeccable. Without even looking at his file, Anderson knew he had most likely been through a terrible time in Somalia's history, where majority groups were killing minority groups, and the dysfunctional government did nothing to stop them.

Abdi escaped to the United States and connected with SURVIVORS, where he received services to help him with his basic needs, such as food and access to shelter, and therapy to help him overcome the terrible things he had seen and experienced. He progressed in his new life and in his healing to the point where he earned a college degree in San Diego.

On the phone, he shared that he is embarking on what is a dream for many of our clients - the chance to give back. Abdi is in a Masters in Social Work program at a prestigious university, where he hopes to help juvenile victims of human trafficking. "Thank you. I would not be where I am today without SURVIVORS," he told Anderson. •

*\*Name changed to protect client's privacy*

### Freedom in Poetry

*by a SURVIVORS' client*

I write poetry  
 My hobby makes me  
 Different, happy and fulfilled  
 Like water it flows  
 With poetry I capture and release  
 To many I revile  
 Poetry is real  
 A being that exists in my world  
 Poetry listens to me  
 When I put down with pen and paper  
 I feel released  
 In my encounter with her  
 I get to express and address  
 I can accuse or accept  
 Then wait for judgement  
 From her I have the right  
 To choose and disapprove  
 When it's heavy for the lips to release  
 Pen and paper flows naturally  
 It is a gift, I can proudly declare  
 With her I have my share.

## Client Demographics

**31** new clients were served  
October 1, 2011 - December 31, 2011

### Geographic Origins

Africa	10
Asia	4
Eastern Europe	0
Latin America	5
Middle East	12

Ages	Gender		
0-20	7	Males	20
21-30	9	Females	11
31-40	8		
41-50	6	Detained	3
51-60	1	Non-detained	28
61 +	0		

*Anniversary, cont. from page 1*

tries. We also have a decentralized service delivery system. This allows us to refer clients to an outside network of therapists, physicians and other service providers, thereby allowing us to serve a large number of clients with few staff members.

Today's economic climate and the shifting political structures in the world present ongoing challenges. The decrease in services available to provide housing, food and other basic needs of our clients has increased their stress levels and has strained our ability to help them. At the same time, efforts to educate the public, students and professionals have resulted in greater awareness of the presence and needs of torture survivors.

This increased awareness is making a difference. Together along with our donors and partners we are creating a safe haven and a welcoming community for torture survivors as they rebuild their lives. •

## SURVIVORS Mourns the Passing of Dr. Victor Kovner



*Dr. Victor L. Kovner*

It is with great sadness that we note the passing of one of SURVIVORS' most beloved and esteemed volunteers, Dr. Victor L. Kovner. Dr. Kovner volunteered at SURVIVORS as a physician, and he exemplified not only the ideals and mission of SURVIVORS, but the medical profession itself. He volunteered on a regular basis for more than five years examining clients and writing more than 200 crucial medical affidavits that were presented before a judge in the asylum process. His efforts and expertise were a key factor in many asylum cases that helped SURVIVORS' clients avoid deportation to a country in which they had been tortured. Approximately 95% of the patients that he saw were granted asylum and afforded the opportunity of a new chance and a new life.

Dr. Kovner also served as an attending physician and mentor for

internal medicine residents at the University of California, San Diego's Medical School during their global health rotations at SURVIVORS.

Dr. Kovner traveled over an hour from his home in Bonsall, California, to SURVIVORS' office twice a month, and at times more often than that, to see clients for medical affidavits and for treatment of those who did not have access to medical care. Watching him work with patients was an uplifting and a very human experience. He was extremely kind with patients, and he gave them a sense of security, which for many of our clients had been absent for long periods of time. He was dedicated to improving the quality of our clinic out of his own pocket when resources were scarce, and he relished the opportunity to give a student or a young volunteer a chance to learn about the resiliency of the human spirit, and the work being done with torture survivors.

Dr. Kovner had many worthy causes that he championed, and he volunteered with several organizations. He was a great physician and a great man, and we will all miss him, not just his efforts, but his laughter and inspiration. His memory will live on at SURVIVORS not only with the staff, but with the clients whom he assisted and the families that he touched. •

## SURVIVORS Participates in WorldLink at USD

In January, the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice at the University of San Diego hosted WorldLink's 15th Annual Youth Town Meeting. More than 700 middle and high school students from Southern California and Mexico and international exchange students gathered to meet world leaders and experts on a theme selected by the students. This year's theme was "The Right to Be Human," which focused on the recognition of human rights and the correlation to culture and identity, disabilities, displacement, and international justice.

SURVIVORS' contract therapist Sol D'Urso and staff member Tricia Hilliard were invited to present information about their work with torture survivors to students. "It was such an honor to be part of this. I don't know of any other event that is organized, run, and led by youth, and that's what makes this conference so extraordinary. There is nothing like the energy of 700 youth coming together for a shared purpose. It was truly inspiring," said Hilliard. •

## Action Alert: Tell Congress to Reauthorize the Torture Victims Relief Act (TVRA)

The Torture Victims Relief Act provides urgently needed funds for torture rehabilitation programs in the United States and abroad to help torture survivors heal from their trauma and rebuild lives of dignity.

First passed in 1998, the TVRA has received bipartisan support throughout its legislative history from members of Congress. Please join us and other torture rehabilitation programs from around the country in advocating for continued support of this important work by contacting your representative to reauthorize the TVRA.

During this session of Congress, Representative Chris Smith (R-NJ) and Representative Jim McGovern (D-MA) have introduced H.R. 2404, the Torture Victims Relief Authorization Act of 2011.

To the right of this page is a sample letter you can send to your representative urging him or her to co-sponsor H.R. 2404. (This text is available online at [www.notorture.org/get\\_involved.php#advocate](http://www.notorture.org/get_involved.php#advocate).)

You can also call to express your support. When calling your representative to ask him or her to co-sponsor H.R. 2404, introduce yourself and tell the office that you are from the representative's district. State that you would like your representative to co-sponsor H.R. 2404, the Torture Victims Relief Reauthorization Act of 2011, which authorizes funds for torture rehabilitation programs in the United States and abroad.

Need the contact information for your federal representatives? Check with the League of Women Voters by visiting [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org).

## Sample Letter in Support of TVRA

Dear Representative \_\_\_\_\_:

As your constituent, I urge you to co-sponsor the bipartisan Torture Victims Relief Reauthorization Act of 2011 (H.R. 2404).

Torture is practiced around the world by governments and rebel groups to instill fear, destroy leadership, and abolish community and civil society. As a supporter of Survivors of Torture, International, I know that torture survivors can recover from their trauma and rebuild successful lives, becoming contributing members of our society.

The United States is currently home to more than 500,000 torture survivors and, by investing in the Torture Victims Relief Act, can demonstrate its strong commitment to healing the wounds of torture and advancing human rights.

The Torture Victims Relief Act authorizes the Office of Refugee Resettlement to fund U.S.-based torture rehabilitation programs for survivors of politically-motivated torture. It also authorizes the U.S. Agency for International Development to provide funds to assist torture rehabilitation centers in other countries.

H.R. 2404 would extend currently existing TVRA authorizations through the Office of Refugee Resettlement and through the U.S. Agency for International Development for an additional two years. I hope you will support this legislation to bring hope and healing to survivors of torture.

Thank you for considering my request. I look forward to hearing from you on this important issue.

Sincerely,  
[Your Name]  
[Your Home Address]

## Carlos Mauricio Visits SURVIVORS



*SURVIVORS' staff members Leilani Amiling, Kathi Anderson, Mahvash Alami, Suzanne Bacon, and Tricia Hilliard visit with Carlos Mauricio*

SURVIVORS staff was honored to have a visit from human rights activist and torture survivor Professor Carlos Mauricio. In 2002, supported by the Center for Justice and Accountability, he won a lawsuit against General Vides Casanova for Casanova's command responsibility in Mauricio's kidnapping and torture in El Salvador.

Mauricio has played an important role in the rights and justice for torture survivors by publicly sharing his experiences. You can hear him speak in SURVIVORS' video at [www.youtube.com/survivorsoftorture](http://www.youtube.com/survivorsoftorture)

Mauricio stopped by the SURVIVORS' office during his trip to San Diego from Washington, D.C. to participate in the University of San Diego's World-Link program (see article on page 4). He is the executive director of The Stop Impunity Project, a group which was founded by and for Salvadoran torture survivors and their supporters. Carlos gave SURVIVORS' staff an update on his efforts to establish a Museum of Historical Memory in the former headquarters of the National Police, where he was tortured. "This is part of my healing," he said. •

## Organizations That Financially Support SURVIVORS



*Active Voice*  
*Alliance Healthcare Foundation*  
*American Immigration Lawyers Association, San Diego Chapter*  
*Buddha Badges*  
*California State Employees Charitable Campaign (CSECC)*  
*Change A Life Foundation*  
*County of San Diego, Health and Human Services*  
*GoodSearch*  
*Human & Civil Rights Organizations of America, a Federation in the Combined*

*Federal Campaign*  
*Intuit Foundation Donation Matching Program*  
*Law Office of Kate Yavenditti*  
*Law Office of Schoenleber & Waltermire*  
*Lawyers Club of San Diego Fund for Justice at The San Diego Foundation*  
*Price Family Charitable Fund*  
*San Diego County Employees Charitable Organization (CECO)*  
*The Kroger Company*  
*The William H. Donner Foundation*  
*Thrivent Financial for Lutherans Foundation*

*United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture*  
*U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement*  
*Weingart Foundation*

We are grateful for your generous support. These lists cover support received **October 1 - December 31, 2011**. We apologize for any errors or omissions and extend our gratitude for support that may not have been recognized. (Please contact us at 619-278-2400 with corrections.) •

## Thank you to all of our community supporters who donate their time, skills, and goods

### Individual Supporters

*Anonymous*  
*Joyce Anderson*  
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*Amy Zhu*

SURVIVORS is now accepting donations. Use the enclosed envelope, visit our website at [www.notorture.org](http://www.notorture.org), or contact us at 619-278-2400 to make a financial donation or to donate your time, services, or goods. Thank you for your support!

### Organizations

*American Immigration Lawyers Association, San Diego Chapter*  
*Google, Incorporated*  
*Minuteman Press-Midway, San Diego*  
*California Institute for Mental Health*  
*Japanese Friendship Garden, San Diego*

*Museum of Photographic Arts, San Diego*  
*St. Martin of Tours Academy Moms' Group, La Mesa*  
*The Meeting Place, San Diego*  
*Trader Joe's, San Diego*

### Pro Bono Physicians

*Ollie Biederman*  
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### Pro Bono Dentists

*Bradley Bourcy*  
*David Irwin*

*Bruce Jordan*  
*Laurel Morello*  
*Suzanne Popp*

## Healing Club Visits Balboa Park

Survivors of Torture, International's staff would like to express our gratitude to Balboa Park for supporting our Healing Club. Each month SURVIVORS hosts a Healing Club activity that is part of our therapeutic services. Our goal is to decrease the isolation among our clients while increasing their social and peer support networks, while also introducing clients to new resources available in the San Diego community each month.

In November, we were given the opportunity to explore the Japanese Friendship Garden and Museum of Photographic Arts at San Diego's amazing Balboa Park. More than 20 clients and their families attended the Healing Club and learned about the history of the park and all that it has to offer. It was a wonderful and enjoyable experience, and we thank Balboa Park for making this possible. •



The Japanese Friendship Garden is a relaxing and tranquil place to reflect.

## Healing Society Members

Members of the Healing Society make generous five-year pledges

### Advocate Level (\$1,000 - 4,999 per year)

*Kathi Anderson & Jesse Rivera  
Jane & Dale Bacon  
Jeanette Barrack  
Ann & Richard Durham  
James & Denise Francis  
Jean M. Greaves & Greg Olmstead  
James & Sylvia Grisham  
Mark J. Gunn  
Jim Hanson*

*Dr. Jim Jaranson Fund of the  
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Patrick & Melissa Maigler  
St. Andrew's Lutheran Church,  
San Diego  
Stephen W. McCallion  
Howard & Lianne Moseley  
Pat Olafson*

*Thank you to all of our  
financial supporters!*

Because of you, survivors are rebuilding their lives. We are grateful. **These lists cover the period of October 1 - December 31, 2011.** We apologize for any errors or omissions and extend our gratitude for support that may not have been recognized. (Please contact us at 619-278-2400 with corrections.)•

If you would like a copy of our annual report, contact our office and we would be happy to mail one to you. •

## Individual Financial Supporters

*Anonymous  
William & Seema Aceves  
Dee Aker & William Smith  
Paul & Joyce Anderson  
Ronald & Enriqueta Bauer  
Susanna A. Beaudieu  
Mark Berger & Jacquelyn Tolley  
Judith & Paul Bernstein  
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Natalie Pearl  
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Susanna Thompson  
Cheryl Walczak  
Lillian Wang, in memory of Victor Kovner  
Lowell Waxman  
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John C. Wheeler  
Lauren Worth  
Mary Zahller*

## Help Support SURVIVORS Through Planned Giving

Survivors of Torture, International is able to offer valuable services to our clients thanks to the financial support of organizations and individuals like you. Have you ever thought about how you can help SURVIVORS continue to provide these services well into the future? SURVIVORS will be hosting an educational workshop about charitable giving financial tools that may decrease your taxes and/or supplement your retirement income, as well as ways to leave a lasting charitable legacy. If you are interested in being involved, please contact us at 619-278-2400 or survivors@notorture. •



Members of the St. Martin of Tours Academy Moms' Group helped with our last newsletter mailing

## Letter From a Detained Client

Staff and volunteers regularly send letters to our clients who are being detained while awaiting their asylum hearings. These letters mean a lot to people who may feel very isolated and hopeless about their situation. Sometimes we receive letters back from the clients, and this is always a treat for our staff. We wanted to share this with you, to see what your support helps make possible. •

*Dear: friends of "Survivors of Torture International."*  
*Thank you for the greeting Card.*  
*I Really Appreciate your Support.*  
*It Really helps me With My Mental Stress and Everything else That's Going on Right Now.*  
*Your Advice gives me Inspiration To keep on fighting My Case.*  
*I Don't loose hope that I will be Triumph.*  
*I am Really looking Forward on Meeting all the Staff From Survivors of Torture International.*  
*Thank you, and God Bless your Office.*  
*Sincerely, L*

## SURVIVORS' Wish List

- Tickets to outings or events for clients
- Volunteer drivers to take clients to appointments
- Blank books or journals for our client writing group
- Volunteer locksmith to rekey cabinets
- "Befrienders" (especially men) in our Friendship Circle (where San Diegans meet in social settings with our clients)
- Arrange for speaking engagements at your organization, church, club, etc.
- "Ambassadors" to help us invite people to our Journey to Healing Tours
- Specialist dentists (probono)
- Clinicians, especially in East County of San Diego (psychologists, LCSWs and MFTs)
- Owning rather than renting space for our programs & services

Please contact Suzanne if you can help at 619-278-2421 or sbacon@notorture.org.

## The Strength to Survive. The Power to Heal

Learn more about SURVIVORS at our Journey to Healing Tours. Upcoming dates: March 15, 5:30-6:30 p.m., March 28, 8:00-9:00 a.m., April 12, 5:30-6:30 p.m., and April 25, 8:00-9:00 a.m. For more information go to [www.notorture.org/events](http://www.notorture.org/events) or call 619-278-2400.

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Change Service Requested