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.

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Conversation with Adebe*

*Client’s name has been changed to protect his identity.

SURVIVORS is the only torture treatment in San Diego. This February, SURVIVORS will be 20 years old. Torture survivors who come to San Diego become a part of the SURVIVORS’ family, and many keep in touch with us long after they stop receiving treatment. Today our clients and former clients are going to school, starting their own businesses, working full-time, and becoming U.S. citizens. Here is a Q&A with a former client who shares his story and his successes that many other SURVIVORS’ clients ultimately achieve.

Question: Where are you from and why did you leave your home country?
Abebe: I am from Ethiopia. I fled because I was active in a political party against the corrupt government in power that was oppressing people and violating human rights. They imprisoned and tortured me and they killed many people. That’s why I left Ethiopia.

Q: What was it like when you first arrived here?
A: At the beginning it was very difficult because I didn’t have any documents and I was not able to work or study. I didn’t have a community and I only knew a few people. I was not stable financially. It was stressful.

Q: What services did you participate in?
A: Besides the documentation for my case I went to counseling for three years; it was, of course, free of charge. I also went to group therapy where we painted, told stories, and learned to write. I was matched with a volunteer family. It was very nice for me. We used to go hiking and go to the beach. SURVIVORS also helped me get a scholarship to attend a GRE preparatory course and pay for the test. SURVIVORS helped me meet people too, so I became more relaxed and more focused. Now I’m studying to get my master’s degree in nonprofit management and leadership and SURVIVORS helped me find the program and information on how to apply.

Q: What are your goals for the future?
A: Of course, I want to finish my education and find a job in my field in the United States. One day I plan to go back to Ethiopia to open a nonprofit organization.

Q: What are your goals for the future?
A: I’d like to work for the United Nations or an international organization. Otherwise, I’d like to work for the United Nations or an international organization.

Q: What services did you participate in?
A: A: I worked as a case manager for three years as a case manager for three years as an interpreter. I also volunteer for Casa Cornelia with interpretation to help other Ethiopians those who are asylum seekers.

Q: What are your goals for the future?
A: Of course, I want to finish my education and find a job in my field in the United States. One day I plan to go back to Ethiopia to open a nonprofit because there is a lot of need for that. Otherwise, I’d like to work for the United Nations or an international organization.

Q: Anything else you’d like readers to know?
A: I’d like people to know that the work SURVIVORS does is really amazing and a person like me has been helped to become productive. They are open-minded, trusting, and friendly, but also professional and help us and guide us to become the people we want to be. I still continue to feel like a part of the SURVIVORS’ community and I really enjoy it. Whenever I think about SURVIVORS I always feel safe. I hope and pray that the mission of SURVIVORS will spread all over the world so that they can help more people - people like me.
The International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT) is the umbrella organization for more than 140 independent torture rehabilitation centers, including SURVIVORS. This December the IRCT Symposium will be held in Mexico City, Mexico. The event, which is the largest gathering of torture rehabilitation experts in over a decade, will bring together clinicians, researchers, lawyers, funders, and policy-makers to discuss challenges and ideas for solutions. It will feature 100 abstracts from professionals from the field of torture rehabilitation and mental health, including SURVIVORS’ senior mental health clinician, Erika Hess, and SURVIVORS’ contracted therapist, Dawn Stary.

Dawn facilitates the women’s therapy group at SURVIVORS, and Erika coordinates the Healing Club, a monthly coed therapeutic group outing. Together they have researched the benefits of community and group therapy for torture survivors. Their presentation, Building Community and Sharing Knowledge from the Mental Health Field: Healing from Torture in the Face of Ongoing Obstacles, will be presented by Dawn at the symposium in December. It demonstrates the impact community-based group therapy can have on asylum seekers and refugees who have endured torture in their home countries, and who continue to face obstacles to healing in the United States.

Torture survivors, despite living under safer conditions in San Diego, continue to endure hurdles that discourage healing and limit their ability to recover from symptoms resulting from torture. However, Dawn and Erika found that community-based group therapy allows survivors to manage and overcome mental health concerns even while facing ongoing stressors as they adjust to their new homes.

Kathi Anderson, SURVIVORS’ executive director and elected U.S. representative to the IRCT, will also be in attendance at the IRCT Symposium. SURVIVORS would like to thank IRCT, for funding Kathi’s and Dawn’s participation.

Asylum seekers are different from refugees. Refugees are assigned their legal status as a refugee abroad, while asylum seekers apply for their legal status as an asylee in the United States and must demonstrate that their fear of persecution in their home country is well-founded. Of SURVIVORS’ clients, 72% are asylum seekers.

According to Trac Immigration, as of August 2016, California has the highest number of pending defensive asylum court cases in the nation at 95,101. San Diego County has 4,249 of those cases currently pending in court. Another way to apply for asylum is to apply to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) affirmative asylum office. According to USCIS’ scheduling bulletin, as of March 2016, there is a national backlog of 144,500 cases. In the Anaheim office, where asylum seekers from San Diego are interviewed, there is a five-year wait. Currently, they are just now inter-

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Healing Society Members who have made generous five-year pledges. Thank you!

Kathi Anderson & Jesse Rivera
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Grant Reeder & Scott Willford
Marlene Ruiz
St. Andrew's Lutheran Church
Nancy Sweeney

Many thanks to our supportive donors!

Because of you, survivors are rebuilding their lives. We are grateful. 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.)

Individual Financial Supporters who gave May 1 - Sept. 30, 2016. Thank you!

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U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement
United Bank
United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture
United Way of Greater Los Angeles
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Thank you!
Client Demographics

125 new and 122 ongoing clients were served during fiscal year 2016 (Oct. 1, 2015 - Sept. 30, 2016). An additional 254 refugee children in Cajon Valley Union School District were served.

Our clients were tortured in their home countries due to race, religion, nationality, social group, or political opinion.

<table>
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<th>Geographic Origin</th>
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<th>Gender</th>
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<td>Males 124</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Females 123</td>
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Congratulations Kathi!

SURVIVORS’ executive director, Kathi Anderson, was awarded the Wendell Cutting Humanitarian Real Hero Award by the American Red Cross San Diego/Imperial Counties Chapter.

SURVIVORS Becomes a LiveWell San Diego Partner

SURVIVORS is pleased to announce our official proclamation of becoming one of five behavioral health organizations in San Diego to become a LiveWell San Diego partner. Pictured below is Kathi Anderson accepting the LiveWell San Diego proclamation from Alfredo Aguirre, Behavioral Health director of San Diego County.

American Psychiatric Association Convention Coming to San Diego

In May 2017, the American Psychiatric Association annual convention will be held in San Diego. SURVIVORS will be offering Journey to Healing tours to participants from all over the nation to hear about the welcoming community we are building in San Diego for torture survivors. If you are interested in attending a Journey to Healing tour, please go to www.notorture.org.

The Strength to Survive. The Power to Heal.

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For more information go to www.notorture.org or call 619-278-2400.

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