



THE SURVIVOR

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.

"I can't believe a place such as SURVIVORS exists. I know God or someone must be looking out for me."

- SURVIVORS' client from South America, who wishes to be anonymous

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Clients Proud to Be New Americans

** Client's name has been changed to protect her identity.*

Arwa* is a young woman from the Middle East. Due to her religious identity, a minority in her home country, she was targeted by military officials who tried to force her to convert. On several occasions she was taken against her will to prisons where she was brutally tortured for days. Each time after she was released, Arwa would pray that they would leave her alone. She would promise she would convert, but never did. Finally, she and her family decided it was time she flee the country and ask for political asylum in the United States in order to save her life.

When Arwa arrived in San Diego, she felt broken. Her immigration attorney referred her to SURVIVORS for mental health services and forensic documentation to support her case for asylum. When she first came to the office, she was suffering from symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder and major depressive disorder. She had daily crying spells "for no reason" and was experiencing daily debilitating flashbacks and nightmares of being beaten and tied up. She

said, "When I wake up in the middle of the night from a nightmare I always think I'm back there, trapped." She became very angry. In talking about her torturers she said, "They have stolen my future. They have shortened my life. They have degraded me. I feel numb."

After completing her intake for services, Arwa benefited from attending our women's group and weekly individual therapy. She learned coping skills such as deep-breathing. "It's the only thing that brings me back from a memory that feels too real." Once Arwa developed what she called a "sense of control," her symptoms were significantly reduced and she was able to enroll in classes at a local university. When she graduated, she was offered a management job in finance. She told us, "On my first day I was so nervous that they would ask me questions about what happened to me in my home country.



Malia, from Africa, holding an American flag and her Certificate of Citizenship is another client who is proud to be a new American.

So I started my breathing exercises that I learned in therapy and relaxed. My first day was great. It was the first time I felt like I belonged."

Today, Arwa is most excited by a recent accomplishment – she became a naturalized U.S. citizen. She invited her "SURVIVORS' family" to the ceremony. She is proud to be an American, smiling widely and saying, "Now that I am an American and I've learned how to take care of myself, I want to give back and take care of other people."

How Does SURVIVORS Measure Impact?

Since 1997, SURVIVORS has helped torture survivors to recover from their traumas through a holistic program including mental health care, psychiatry, social services, and medical case management. SURVIVORS empowers torture survivors to reclaim the strength and vitality that were stolen from them by brutal dictators and governments. The specialized care SURVIVORS provides these individuals helps them to become self-sufficient and

healthy members of their families and of our society.

The impact of SURVIVORS' services is measured, in part, by surveys and assessments, reported both by clients and clinicians every six months. Assessments evaluate the level of needs of torture survivors and the effectiveness of our addressing those needs. Clients report being either *in crisis*, *vulnerable*, *stable*, or *safe*. For example, within the first six months of treatment

at SURVIVORS:

- **95%** of clients improved or stabilized their mental symptoms
- **89%** of clients improved or stabilized their physical health symptoms
- **91%** of clients improved or stabilized their housing situation (for example, when SURVIVORS connects an unsheltered client to low-cost housing a client will report going from *in crisis* to *stable*).

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July 2018 / volume 21, issue 1

Mindfulness, Creative Expression, & Healing

Taking medications and talking with a therapist – these are the traditional methods that come to mind when we think about healing. But healing can happen in a variety of ways. At SURVIVORS, clients can learn several innovative therapeutic techniques; mindfulness-based stress reduction and creative expression are two of them. SURVIVORS' group therapy and after-school support groups offer therapeutic community events where clients can meet one another and share a healing experience. Recently, clients have made their own story books, practiced Tai Chi, and learned some techniques of improvisational comedy (improv).

Lisa Palmer, one of SURVIVORS' Master of Social Work interns, is also a long-time student of Tai Chi, a mindfulness-based stress reduction technique. She led Tai Chi in both SURVIVORS' women's therapy group and healing club. With Lisa, clients focused on breathing and establishing a connection between their minds and bodies. After just one hour, clients reported a reduction in mental health symptoms. Trauma often prevents survivors from connecting with emotions. Studies show that practicing mindfulness helps people reconnect with positive emotional and social experiences. Over time, a mindfulness meditation practice increases body awareness and slows down emotional reactivity which can lead to greater emotional regulation. One client said, "I feel like my heart

is more open. I feel more relaxed and have something I can practice at home." A few months later, clients are still talking about Tai Chi. Many are using the breathing techniques they learned to this day when they become symptomatic.

Niki Kalmus, SURVIVORS' community relations manager, is also an improv comedian. She facilitated an improv comedy workshop for the women's therapy group. Improv creates a nurturing environment where it is okay to make mistakes because each person supports the other. Improv is also a great tool for building community because it asks participants to connect with one another by making eye contact and listening. The group spent the morning together playing, being silly, and experiencing joy. The women enjoyed the teamwork and laughter. All participants reported feeling more confident after the workshop. "I don't usually joke or have fun with other people, but today I had fun and I smiled. I forgot all my worries!" one woman exclaimed.

Lastly, refugee youth at SURVIVORS' after-school program made their own story books after reading *The Keeping Quilt* by Patricia Polacco. They wrote stories about their own family traditions that they want to remember, crafted their front covers, and shared with the group. Students left the group feeling connected to their homes, both San Diego, and the ones they were forced to leave behind.

Commemorating Torture Awareness Month

Each year, SURVIVORS recognizes June as Torture Awareness Month. We also commemorate June 26, the United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture.

SURVIVORS commemorated June 26 this year with a picnic, a drum circle, and an art project at Mission Bay. Clients talked about the significance of June 26, and many commented on how grateful they were for the community they had found at SURVIVORS. One client shared, "I cannot forget my family. I miss all of them and I hope they will be able to join me soon. Now, everyone at SURVIVORS is my family. We help and encourage each other, just like families do. I like that I have family and friends at SURVIVORS."

In the evening, SURVIVORS hosted

the annual Torture Awareness Month Ice Cream Social. Approximately two hundred people attended to show their support for torture survivors and advocate for their rights. Thank you to all who joined and are a part of the safe haven we are building together in San Diego.



Left: Clients make a "Tree of Life" on June 26.
Right: SURVIVORS' supporters advocate for torture survivors at the 2018 Ice Cream Social.

You Are Invited SURVIVORS' 9th Annual Helping Survivors Heal Fundraising Luncheon

September 20, 2018 12:00 - 1:00 pm
DoubleTree Hotel - in Hazard Center
RSVP to 619-278-2400
survivors@notorture.org

Your support is imperative to the mission of SURVIVORS. Please consider making a donation in the attached envelope.

Eighty-seven cents out of every dollar raised goes directly to SURVIVORS' programs. Our Federal Tax ID Number is 33-0743869.



Thank You to Our 2017 Helping Survivors Heal Fundraising Luncheon Underwriters!

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"I am lonely. I don't like to go out and be with people. Except for SURVIVORS. I feel safe at SURVIVORS. I feel love from you."

- SURVIVORS' client from Syria, who wished to remain anonymous

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

Kathi Anderson & Jesse Rivera
Jerry Baird & Linda Stark
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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 & Family Financial Supporters who gave October 1, 2017 - May 31, 2018. *Thank you!*

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Organizations That Financially Support SURVIVORS who gave May 1, 2017 - May 31, 2018. *Thank you!*

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

The Strength to Survive. The Power to Heal.

Do you have a service club, book club, or a group of friends, co-workers, or family members who you think would like to learn more about how Survivors of Torture, International is providing hope for torture survivors, helping them to rebuild their lives, and building a welcoming community for all survivors?

Become a Volunteer Ambassador.

Invite and host a *Journey to Healing* tour at our office.

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

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Survivors of Torture, International

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Change Service Requested

Client Demographics	Geographic Origin	Age	Gender
56 new and 101 ongoing clients were served between October 1, 2017 - March 31, 2018. 105 refugee children in Cajon Valley and Grossmont High Union School Districts were also supported by SURVIVORS.	Africa 41	0-4 7	Males 72
Our clients were tortured in their home countries due to race, religion, nationality, social group, or political opinion.	Middle East 64	5-13 21	Females 85
	Latin America 46	14-17 5	
	Asia 2	18-24 19	
	Eastern Europe 4	25-44 78	
		45-64 26	
		65+ 1	

Creating a Welcoming Community

SURVIVORS creates a welcoming community by training professionals and the public about torture and its consequences. In the past six months, SURVIVORS has trained 979 people.

Recent trainings:

Executive Director Kathi Anderson moderated a plenary session titled, "Refugee and Immigrant Health," at UC Global Health Day. Program Coordinator Jessica Roach and Clinical Case Manager Rachel Mahoney provided trauma-informed care trainings for the Homie UP Youth Empowerment Program of California State University San Marco's National Latino Research Center and for the Behavioral Health Education & Training Academy for Professional Excellence. Medical Case Manager Brittney Willis presented at the San Diego Refugee Forum's Health Task Force meeting. *Please contact us if you are interested in a training for your staff or office.*



Rachel Mahoney and Jessica Roach at the HomieUp training displaying mental health awareness materials.

Recent Awards & Recognitions

2017 Community Recognition Award
San Diego County Social Services Advisory Board

2018 Commitment to Social Justice Award
Network for Social Work Management

2018 Community Partner: Promoting Behavioral Health through Enrichment Programs
San Diego Women's Foundation



SURVIVORS has published our audited financial statements, completed by Sonnenberg & Co. CPAs, for fiscal year 2017, found at GuideStar.com.