



SANTA BARBARA RAPE CRISIS CENTER
CENTRO CONTRA LA VIOLACION SEXUAL

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ARGENTINE EXPERTS STUDY JUAREZ MURDER REMAINS

By Theresa Braine, WeNews Correspondent

In May a team of Argentine forensic experts is expected to identify the remains of some of the 400 women murdered in Juarez, Mexico, since 1993. Survivors of the dead, however, are losing hope that official complicity will ever be thoroughly probed.

In late March, Irma Monreal Jaime was given proof that her daughter Esmeralda had been killed in the wave of mysterious and notorious slayings that have claimed hundreds of women since 1993 in the border city of Juarez. Monreal received an analysis of dental records by state authorities, identifying Esmeralda's body as one of eight that were dumped in a former cotton field in a busy area of Juarez in 2001. "I'm a bit more tranquil, a bit more at peace," says Monreal. But she is not yet fully accepting that the remains are that of her daughter. Once she does that, the investigation of the remains will be closed, and she wants to be certain.

Like a number of other families who don't entirely trust the Mexican identification process, she is waiting until May, when results are due from DNA tests being conducted by a team of Argentine forensic experts. The team--which gained fame by using advanced DNA-study techniques to identify people killed in Argentina's "dirty war" of the 1970s--is studying the remains of about 60 women, including those believed to be of Esmeralda, for either first-time identification or to verify previous identifications by state authorities.

As many as 400 women in Ciudad Juarez--just across the border from El Paso, Texas--have been slain since 1993, and their deaths are considered unsolved murder cases. More than 100 have been found dumped in the desert with signs of sexual torture. Esther Chavez, founder and head of Casa Amiga, a Juarez center for abused women, also hopes that positive identifications could give victims' families the ammunition to keep pushing for prosecution of the authorities who haven't found any credible suspects. If the identifications of the bodies from the cotton field, which are among those being studied, turn out to be different from what the Chihuahua state

authorities initially said they were, there's a chance that these cases could be started from scratch as new cases, says Chavez. "We have to keep insisting that the authorities be prosecuted," Chavez says. "With this we could demand the punishment of the authorities, because now after so many years, it's very difficult."

The murders have continued. Twenty-two females, including an infant, were killed in 2005, according to Amigos de las Mujeres de Juarez (Friends of the Women of Juarez), a Las Cruces, N.M., advocacy group for victims' families that was formed in 2001. So have killings of people involved in the cases. In January, a prominent human rights lawyer, Sergio Dante Almaraz, was shot to death in broad daylight in downtown Juarez. Dante had defended two bus drivers who claimed they were tortured into confessing to the murders of the eight women found in the cotton field, which today is marked by eight pink crosses bearing the names of those found there. The attorney's murder remains unsolved.

For years Chavez, victims' families and other advocates have been fighting to get the cases investigated, accusing the investigating authorities of complicity in the crimes when nothing was done. Pressure from international human-rights organizations such as New-York-based V-Day, which works against gender-based violence, and London-based human-rights advocate Amnesty International, spurred the appointment of a special prosecutor in 2004 who reviewed police files and found no evidence of serial murder.

U.S. officials have also become involved; in 2003 four members of the House of Representatives visited Juarez and today a resolution calling for action is making its way through Congress. In February, a report by the Mexican government enraged relatives and advocates hoping for something approaching an explanation. The report attributed the Juarez slayings to cultural and social violence against women throughout the country; Juarez ranks fourth among Mexican cities in the number of women murdered, the report noted. After three government reports over the past two years failed to generate action, victims' families and advocates had not held out much hope that this one would break new ground. But they were enraged at the complete dismissal of what they say is the central issue: a lack of regard by the authorities for the victims and the potential for a cover-up.

Two years ago the Mexican government appointed a special prosecutor, Maria Lopez Urbina, to revisit the investigations of 380 women who have been murdered. Those investigations found everything from gross negligence to corruption and abuse among dozens of officials involved in the case, and Lopez recommended that charges be filed against dozens of state investigators,

police and other authorities. But only a handful has gone before a judge and no one has yet been punished. Given that much of the evidence is long since lost or compromised, the hope of actually solving the murders is growing dim. Most of the cases have passed the statute of limitations and can no longer be prosecuted.

GIRLCOTT PUTS ABERCROMBIE TEES IN COLD STORAGE

(from PCAR Spring 2006 newsletter)

A clothing retailer's nightmare unfolded on national television in November 2005. Teenage girls, Abercrombie and Fitch's (A&F) target demographic were on the "Today Show" asking all girls to stop shopping in A&F stores. The appearance was the result of a "girlcott" staged by 23 young women from the Allegheny County Girls as Grantmakers program to express outrage over tee shirts that degraded girls and women. Within the week, shirts bearing slogans like, "With these, who needs brains..." and "Last night I had a nightmare I was a brunette..." were pulled from A&F's shelves and removed from their Internet catalog. Girls everywhere learned that they had the power to make a difference. Upon invitation, 11 girls from the grant making program presented their ideas to the A&F board at the company's Ohio headquarters in early December. The girls are hopeful that A&F will sell their tee shirts and share the profits with a women's organization.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

MONTHLY ADVOCATE MEETING – MAY 8TH AT 6 PM

Thank you all for participating in the Human Relations Training back in April. For those of you who were unable to attend the HRT, please be aware that Yesenia will be distributing make-up work very soon. This month, we will resume our meetings on the second Monday of each month, meeting on Monday, May 8th. We will be joined by a representative from the Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse from 6:00PM – 7:00PM. See you then!

SPEAKER'S BUREAU TRAINING IN SPANISH

Here's your chance to overcome your fear of public speaking and help dismantle rape culture at the same time! If you're interested in becoming a member of SBRCC's Speaker's Bureau, please come to a Scheduling Meeting before the Advocate Meeting in Spanish on **Friday, May 12th, at 6:30pm**. Bring your calendar so that we can try to schedule training in a way that works for everyone interested! Speaker's Bureau Training is open to all certified Rape Crisis Advocates. After the 12 hour training, you will be ready to give presentations about Sexual Assault Awareness and Rape Prevention to middle and high schools, colleges and universities, parenting cooperatives, faith-based organizations, and other community groups.

This training will take place in Spanish. The next training in English will be scheduled soon, depending on participant availability! If you would be interested in taking the next Speaker's Bureau training in English, please contact Alena at alena@sbrcc.net or 963-6832 ext. 29.

POSITION AVAILABLE AT SBRCC: TRAINING COORDINATOR

Training Coordinator (Full-time position): Provide direct services and case management to clients, prepare and facilitate three 60-hour Crisis Intervention Trainings per year in English according to certification requirements, recruit and screen training applicants, and prepare and facilitate Human Relations Training and medical in-service trainings. **Bilingual English/Spanish required.** *If you or anyone you know may be interested in this position, please submit a resume, cover letter and three references to Alana at alana@sbrcc.net*

A FOND FAREWELL FROM HEATHER

I have some exciting and bittersweet news to share with all of you Advocates. After being with SBRCC for over a year and a half, I have decided that the time has come for me to begin transitioning out of my position as Training Coordinator and into a different position within the community. I do not have a definitive leave date as of yet, but am in the process of searching for other jobs that will allow me to continue to work with social justice and make a positive impact in our community. My time spent with SBRCC has been invaluable for my professional and personal growth, and my fondest memories of working here include training all of you. Thank you for continuing to inspire me, and for continually reminding me that we are making a difference. I will cherish the time that I have left with all of you.

SHINING STAR BENEFIT LUNCHEON 2006

The 2006 Shining Star Luncheon will be held **Thursday May 11th, 2006 at the Loggia Ballroom, Four Seasons Biltmore 11:30 am- 2pm**. The annual event honors those who have had a significant impact on the lives of sexual assault survivors. This year's Shining Star Honorees are Bruce Anticouni and Bill and Diane Wineland. Please join us as we honor them as well as all of SBRCC's supporters. The Master of Ceremonies is Catherine Remak, KLITE 101.7 Radio Personality, who was awarded a Shining Star award in 2004. Geoff Green, Executive Director, The Fund for Santa Barbara, will auction off vacations and other great gifts to raise funds for SBRCC's vital programs and services. Tickets are \$100 each and tables

of 8 are \$1,000. Please call Hilary at 963-6832 x 35 or email at hilary@sbrcc.net to RSVP or for more information.

KAUAI VACATION FOR 2 RAFFLE: ONE-WEEK KAUAI VACATION FOR TWO WITH AIR!
\$20 per Ticket OR \$100 for 6

Enjoy the ultimate Hawaiian Vacation at the Grand Hyatt Kauai Resort & Spa for Seven Days and Six Nights, including air on American Airlines. Step into a world of timeless elegance and luxury at Grand Hyatt Kauai Resort & Spa, which just completed a multi-million dollar renovation. Delight in the spacious guestrooms, each with private lanai or balcony, stunning views and marble baths. Float effortlessly along the lagoons, indulge in a reviving treatment at the award-winning 25,000 square foot ANARA Spa & Fitness Center, play a round of golf on the Robert Trent Jones Jr. Golf Course, or simply take in the refreshing ocean breezes from the beautiful white-sand beach.

Drawing will be held at Shining Star Luncheon. Winner need not be present to win. Raffle Participants must be at least 18 years to participate. For the trip to be awarded, a minimum of 150 tickets must be sold. If the minimum amount is not sold, winner will receive an amount equaling 40% of funds raised.

MAY OFFICE CLOSURE

SBRCC's office will be closed on Monday, May 29th in observance of Memorial Day. Of course, the 24-hour hotline will still be operational throughout the holiday.



Happy Birthday to:



- Cindy on May 3rd
- Cheryl on May 6th
- Jennifer B. on May 10th
- Deisi on May 17th
- Chauntel on May 18th
- Bonnie on May 25th
- Charlotte on May 28th