

## **“Rescuers of Mass Atrocities in Latin America During and After the Cold War”**

**Marcia Esparza, Carla De Ycaza, Lina Rojas**

### **CALL FOR PAPERS**

This call for papers invites scholars and practitioners to submit papers focusing on the study of rescuers of mass atrocities in Latin America for a peer reviewed edited volume. We define rescuing efforts as organized and unorganized initiatives of sheltering and aiding targeted individuals and groups in the context of the Cold War in Latin America where state terrorism, war and genocide sought to eliminate political opposition. One such example of an act of “goodness” in the face of mass atrocity in the region is the case of the Santo Tomas Chichicastenango Municipal Firefighters, who collected the remains of victims from massacres in the highlands of Guatemala during the genocide of 1981-1983, with little compensation, within poor infrastructure and under great personal risks. We hope to shed light on the myriad tensions between the different roles, collaborators, perpetrators and victims found within existing literature. Our volume will serve as a critical resource for scholars examining human behavior under extreme forms of violence within the fields of genocide studies, sociology, peace and conflict studies, conflict resolution, human rights, criminology, psychology, and history.

Recent war and genocide literature produced in the region, or focused on the region and produced elsewhere, has centered on the study of collective trauma, resistance to repression, the recovery of the historical memory of survivors and criminal accountability. Yet the interdisciplinary examination of rescue and rescuers as study objects lags behind significantly. To fill this gap, we invite contributors to analyze the historical, political, socioeconomic and cultural context for fostering responses to mass atrocities in Latin America, such as collaboration and indifference, as well as the role of rescuers in helping to protect the lives of others. We find this topic of particular significance, for failure to account for the role of rescuers may lead to misleading perceptions about how people and collectivities find ways to help others, even under “extreme situations,” characterized as life-threatening events causing major personal and social readjustments (Wallace 1956).

There has been significant attention paid to rescuers during the Holocaust (Baum 2008, Todorov 2001). In the *Fragility of Goodness* (2001), Tzvetan Todorov explores the collective and individual action taken by representatives of parliament, intellectuals and Orthodox Church officials in Bulgaria to pressure the Sofia administration against the deportation of Jews during the Holocaust. Most recently, Jacques Semelin’s 2011 edited volume on rescuers in war-torn societies explores organized networks whose actions, letter writing and lobbying avoided or prevented the persecution of targeted populations in Armenia and Rwanda. Yet, this volume excludes discussion of the Latin American experience and thus the specificities of the region are left unexplored.

We contend that unless an account of the actions to save others in Latin America like this is included in the universality of rescue cases, the study of responses to mass violence will remain incomplete. We seek proposals that critically explore both organized and unorganized efforts to aid victims and survivors of mass atrocities raising some of the

following questions:

- What organized and unorganized efforts were made to protect victims of state violence and genocide in Latin America during and after the Cold War?
- How can this knowledge advance understanding of courage, heroism or acts of resistance during mass atrocity in the region?
- How did rescue efforts challenge state violence in Latin America?
- Why has the study of the “Righteous” in Latin America been largely excluded from scholarship and how can breaking this silence add to the study of the legacy of mass atrocities?
- How has the absence of critical analysis of the role of rescue shaped discussions of the culture of fear allegedly prevailing in the region?
- What, if any, are the similarities between the identities of political, social or cultural groups to which the rescuer belongs?
- What are the implications for the development of “cultures of goodness?”
- How can the study of the “Righteous” contribute to the analysis of the tensions found between resistance, rescue and collaboration and apathy in specific settings?

Contributors are invited to submit a 500-word abstract by September 1, 2013 to [latinamericarescuersbook@gmail.com](mailto:latinamericarescuersbook@gmail.com), along with a brief bio of no more than 300 words. All submissions must be sent electronically in Word or PDF format and may be submitted in English and Spanish. Notification of acceptance will be sent by November 1, 2013. Completed articles will be due by March 1, 2014 and should range from 7,000-7,500 words.