



Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Briefing

Honoring the Victims- The U.S. Response to Torture

Thursday, June 23, 2016

11:00 AM

2255 Rayburn House Office Building

Panelists



Claudio Grossman is a Professor of Law and Dean of American University Washington College of Law, and the Raymond Geraldson Scholar for International and Humanitarian Law. Dean Grossman served as Chairperson of the United Nations Committee against Torture (April 2008-December 2015), as a Committee member (November 2003-December 2015), and as chair of the ten United Nations Human Rights Treaty Bodies (2013). He is a member of numerous associations, including the American Law Institute and the Inter-American Institute for Human Rights (IHR), and in January 2014 was elected as the IHR's President. He previously served as a member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (1993-2001) and was twice elected its President (1996 and 2001). Dean Grossman has written numerous publications on international law and human rights, and has received numerous awards for his contributions to these fields and to legal education. He is graduate of the law school of the University of Chile and received a Doctor of the Science of Law (*Doctor in de Rechtsgeleerdheid*) from the University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands.



Dr. Lin Piwowarczyk is Co-Founder and Director of the Boston Center for Refugee Health and Human Rights in Boston, Massachusetts. She has served on the Executive Committee of the National Consortium of Torture Treatment Programs since 2002, and is its current President. An Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at the Boston University School of Medicine, Dr. Piwowarczyk is a Distinguished Fellow of the American Psychiatric Association and recipient of the Sarah Haley Memorial Award for Clinical Excellence from the International Society of Traumatic Stress Studies.



Ann Willhoite is a Clinical Advisor for Mental Health for the Center for Victims of Torture, where she oversees capacity building of mental health and psychosocial support services in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe, provides clinical supervision for embedded psychologists, and works on global mental health advocacy in Washington, DC. She has served in this post for the past five years, providing clinical expertise for mental health work in Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Moldova, Bosnia, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Sudan, and Cote d'Ivoire. Previously, Ms. Willhoite served as CVT's mental health Clinician/Trainer for client care and training projects in Freetown, Sierra Leone and Dadaab, Kenya. Prior to working with CVT, Ms. Willhoite worked with Harvard University's Francois-Xavier Bagnoud Center for Health and Human rights in Sierra Leone on the Youth Readiness Intervention, Jesuit Refugee Services in Malawi developing a new trauma-focused counseling program for refugees from The Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, Somalia, Eritrea, and as a Clinical Consultant for locally-based mental health organizations in Africa and Asia. Ann holds a MA in Counseling Psychology from Northwestern University.



Merga Gelgelo is a survivor of torture from Ethiopia, where he was a biomedical engineering student at Jimma University. He is young innovator who won third place in an international competition organized by Rice University in Houston, Texas. The Ethiopian government used the notorious Agazi Special Forces to torture him under the so-called "Anti-Terrorism Proclamation" because of his leadership of a student organization that advocated for Oromo students, farmers and other vulnerable people. Merga was inspired by his late father, a Pentecostal pastor. He actively participates in advocacy initiatives of the Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition (TASSC) and published a "Letter to the Editor" in the *Washington Post* on July 28, 2015 (with TASSC advocacy consultant Andrea Barron). Merga is volunteering in the biomedical department at MedStar Georgetown University Hospital. He hopes to continue his education and work on innovative medical equipment projects in the United States.

Moderator



Andrea Barron directs the Advocacy and Outreach Program at the Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition (TASSC) International in Washington, DC. TASSC provides psychological counseling, medical care, pro bono legal aid, advocacy training, and other services to torture survivors in the Washington DC metropolitan area. Before joining TASSC, Andrea was Senior Program Manager for Civic Engagement at The Washington Center for Internships and Academic Seminars, where she organized volunteer and advocacy projects for college students. She is an Adjunct Professor at George Mason University, where she has taught classes on Middle East history and global women's issues. She holds a Master's Degree in History from Boston College and completed doctoral courses in government at the University of Maryland, College Park.