

Helen Mack Chang's Speech Translation

Thank you very much. Good morning, I truly appreciate your presence at this ceremony. Again, as I mentioned before, I consider myself only a circumstantial recipient and ambassador of this award, the 2005 Notre Dame Prize for Distinguished Public Service in Latin America.

I received this award with deep appreciation and I want to thank to the University of Notre Dame, the Kellogg Institute and the Coca Cola Foundation for considering me with this (consider me to be worthy (deserve)) (of this) prize. However, I insist that I receive it as a circumstantial subject, because if we are to talk about distinguished public service, we must agree that many Guatemalan men and women had given also an exemplary service to the justice, peace and the defense of human rights. But, as a result of the character of their work, they remain in the anonymity.

Painful circumstances in the life of my family led me to take part on an unexpected struggle, and to become a protagonist in the implementation of justice. It was not something that we planned. My family and I woke up with the need to unmask a crime committed by the State and with the resolution to test a system of justice that for many years has been underpinning impunity, which still covers up a cruel policy against insurgency, and was responsible for transforming us into a nation of victims.

As you all know, on September 11, almost fifteen years ago, one of the structures from the Presidency illegitimately executed my sister, because they considered her an "enemy of the government".

According to both, the National Court and the Inter-American Court, Myrna was a victim of an illegal intelligence operation. During the trials, some of the testimonies pointed out to the hypothesis that the Army identified Myrna as the alleged author of a publication from the Communities of Population in Resistance (Comunidades de Poblacion de Resistencia).

Today 15 years ago, on a 7th of September, the CPR left their land. They rose against injustice and the military forces, which had been persecuting them. Through their publication, the displaced people shared with us a reality amid hunger, misery and the terror generated by the army. In view of the State, the CPR was the social base of the guerrilla.

In her first work, *Institutional Policy toward the internal Displaced*, Myrna revealed how the Guatemalan government persecuted this group that was exposed to the contra insurgent actions of the army and yet, through resistance, found alternative forms of life.

Myrna had no responsibilities in the publication of the CPR and nonetheless, was eliminated. Her death did not silence the reality of these displaced groups. On the contrary, the worldwide academic circles, which knew Myrna's work, raised their voices and demanded justice. Many of these academics and scientists were closely linked to the

institution that today confers me this award. Again, my family and I appreciate this support because it motivated us in our search for the truth. After fourteen years, we were able to establish before the Court, the plan that ended with my sister's life.

The displaced communities followed a self-dynamic independent of the research conducted by Myrna with regard to these entities. Therefore, the communities continued with their daily life and gradually going vis a vis the peace negotiations, they were able to save their lives and return to their land. Now, it becomes evident that my sister's murder did not stop this process, because it was a response to a communitarian era not reliant of sole individuals.

Fifteen years ago, we saw a paradox. The exposure of the CPR gave birth to this group in the public sphere, but at the same time it meant Myrna's death. Therefore, there is an insoluble link among both, in which Myrna is present. For this reason, I dedicate this ceremony to my sister's work and memory, and to the struggle of all the individuals who stood on the way of injustice. And for all of us who keep working without rest, to find alternatives to the remaining problems.

Myrna's case concluded last January when the Supreme Court sentenced former Chief Juan Valencia Osorio, but who unfortunately remains fugitive from the justice and evidently, protected by the national structures of power.

At the international level, we achieved a historical sentence, because not only the Inter-American Court established the responsibility of the State in similar cases, but also it clearly exposed the process in the denial of justice and those judiciary structures responsible for this. In order to diminish the denial of justice and impunity, the Court demanded to the government the implementation of a series of political, judicial and social measures. Of course, this can only be reachable, if the governmental entities are willing to change the prevailing conditions.

In both trials, the situation of the displaced groups became the center of attention, since its sole existence and the characteristics of their survival, helped to find an explanation of why the contra insurgent forces identified Myrna as a military target and thus, planned her assassination.

At the personal level, I owe much to the displaced population. A deeper analysis of my sister's work, help me to discover the existence of this group, appreciate its value and courage, and to develop a feeling of immense solidarity toward its cause.

Myrna's assassination and the reality of the CPRs changed my life. Fifteen years ago, I was focused on business and educative activities without knowing that soon I would be facing a struggle against impunity. Suddenly, my life suffered an irreversible spin.

I fought fourteen years for justice, those were fourteen years of facing the military power and the clandestine structures which promote impunity, violence and crime. In my personal journal I keep special gratitude to the police investigators, judges, attorneys,

witnesses who risked their lives and permanence in the country, only to take part on this search for justice. I express my special gratitude to the investigator Jose Merida Escobar. The result of his inquiries showed that Myrna was a victim of an institutional crime and even though he was intimidated, he was not afraid to declare the truth before the Court.

At this point, I would like to make a parenthesis to share with you an important event. On May 1990, a delegation that was visiting El Salvador came to talk to us. Among its members was the representative from the University of Notre Dame. We went together to the Supreme Court and they informed us that Myrna's investigation will pass from the Police to the Public Ministry and thus, to the Supreme Court. This event changed the course of the case and as you can see, the University of Notre Dame shared with us this important news.

Now, that the case is closed, I cannot go back to where I started. I cannot remember my life before this event; either forget what I have learned in all these years. I keep a commitment with justice and have decided to confront a pending process with myself: reconciliation. I must face the fear and embark myself on the tunnel, which will lead me to discover my most intimate fears.

I would like to work to combat falsehood, injustice and the institutional weakness. This goes beyond the personal level and could be the beginning of a shared effort toward the eagerly reconciliation.

I must say that everyone, and not only the victims, should take part in this process, the communities, the government, the society and the powerful groups.

It is often said that since we have been victims of a painful event, it is our obligation to overcome the suffering, forgive, forget and undertake a normal life. This is nothing but a limited concept that does not consider the complexity of this issue or the deep damaged caused to the whole society.

Reconciliation is not a synonym of revenge. Neither implies deep forgiveness. Reconciliation is a constant search for the truth, justice and compensation; for social and economic justice within a strengthened democracy; judicial security, political stability, social advances and sustainable development. For this reason, the peace agreements offer ideal opportunities to promote the socio economic, political and judicial reforms and necessary for reconciliation.

In addition, it is fundamental to rescue from the peace process, the already negotiated commitments, since they will serve as a guideline to embark ourselves on a dynamic which promotes the trust, the rescue of credibility within our system and motives positive actions in the society.

I understand we all want a different Guatemala. We wish to reach a pacific and harmonic coexistence in which all the social conflicts, political concerns can be resolved not through violence, but through dialogue, consensus and negotiation.

In order to bring a real change and become a different Guatemala, we should work hard. Just as the CPR did, we should develop a plan to combat injustice and impunity. Those of us, who live, now, have the opportunity to expose the past, through our life, and to honor the memory of our victims. However, with the same love we must promote the institutional, personal and communitarian changes needed to bring new forms of coexistence.

This is our task. I want to invite you to break down with the prevailing conditions for love to ourselves, for the others and for the dream to live in a renewed country, we unite our efforts to combat injustice, hunger, misery, impunity and any criminal act.

I want to thank again the University of Notre Dame, the Kellogg Institute and the Coca Cola Foundation for this award, which I share with those who dare to resist and fight for a better institutional and social coexistence.

Thank you very much to my family and friends for their support during all these years. Without their support, this struggle against impunity in this case would have never been possible.

Thank you very much.

Entiendo que todos queremos una Guatemala diferente a la que tenemos. Deseamos.. a una convivencia pacífica y armónica donde los conflictos sociales, las preocupaciones políticas sean diluidos... no a través de la violencia sino del mecanismo del diálogo, consenso y negociación. Los invito a que tratemos de romper las condiciones imperantes por amor a nosotros mismos, por amor a los demás y por el amor a vivir en un país... unamos esfuerzos contra la injusticia, el hambre y la miseria. Contra la impunidad y las ... tribunales que nos están haciendo desvanecer. Agradezco la... de Notre Dame, al Instituto Kellogg y la Fundación Coca Cola este reconocimiento que comparto... y hoy por una .. lucha.. institucional. En especial, una vez más agradezco a mi familia y amigos por el apoyo y el... que me han brindado todos estos años. Sin ese apoyo toda la lucha contra la impunidad en este caso, no habría sido posible. Muchas gracias

.. Intemperie, el terror que se vivía contra ellos, a quienes el Estado consideraba la base social de la.... Mirna había documentado.... en su libro política institucional hacia los desplazados internos dejó en evidencia como el estado de Guatemala perseguía este conglomerado humano que en la resistencia encontraba formas alternativas de vida aunque en medio de un abandono total y expuestos a la acción contrainsurgente del ejército. Mirna no tuvo responsabilidad alguna en la elaboración del comunicado de la CPR pero igualmente fue eliminada. Su muerte no acalló el conocimiento de **la verdad** de los desplazados por el contrario los círculos académicos del mundo que conocían su primer trabajo en esta materia levantaron su voz de protesta y exigieron justicia. Muchos de estos académicos y científicos que en primer instancia **acudieron** al asesinato de mi hermana están o estuvieron vinculados a la casa de estudios que hoy me otorga este reconocimiento UN

una vez más mi familia y yo agradecemos este **empuje porque se reconozca la verdad** y así luego de casi 14 años logramos establecer judicialmente el plan siniestro que acabo con su vida. **Por una parte**, los desplazados tenían una dinámica propia que no atendía las investigaciones que sobre ellos realizaba Myrna. por esta razón ellos continuaron su ruta de vida y paulatinamente de la mano de las negociaciones de paz muchos lograron salvar la vida y reasentarse. ahora es evidente que el asesinato de mi hermana no detuvo este proceso porque este respondía a una época comunitaria no dependiente de persona alguna.

Hace 15 años ... le dio vida pública a esta población pero al mismo tiempo significó la muerte de Myrna. Por eso hay un vínculo insoluble entre ambos. En donde Myrna está presente. Por esta razón, dedico esta ceremonia ... y a la lucha de todos aquellos que nos hemos resistido a las injusticias y que seguimos sin descanso buscando alternativas a través de la propuesta , la exigencia y el planteamiento de posibles condiciones a los problemas que nos aquejan .

El caso judicial sobre el asesinato de Myrna concluyó en el plano nacional cuando en enero del año pasado se emitió la sentencia de cárcel y se confirmó la condena de el coronel Juan Valencia Osorio quien sigue prófugo de la justicia encubierto muy evidentemente por la estructura del poder del país. En el plano internacional logramos una sentencia histórica porque la Corte Interamericana sentó los lineamientos sin precedentes sobre la responsabilidad estatal en casos como este y **deslindo** con todo

detalle como se propicio la delegacion de justicia y que estructuras del sistema de justicia contribuyeron a que esto ocurriera.

De esta forma, la Corte condeno al estado a ejecutar una serie de medidas politicas, juridicas y sociales que sin duda contribuirán a reducir paulatinamente la delegacion de justicia. Esto por su puesto siendo en parte,.. estatales... para introducir un cambio profundo en las condiciones.. del pais. Digamos... el nacional e interamericano la situación de los de los desplazados ayudo como un factor esencial **por cuanto..existencia ..** y las características ayudaron a encontrar una explicación a la.. con que los insurgente .. en el plano personal debo mucho a la población de desplazados .. bajo una nueva luz el trabajo de mi hermana me llevo a descubrir la existencia de esta población, apreciar su valor y resistencia y sentir una inmensa solidaridad con sus.. el asesinato de Myrna .. me cambio la vida.. todavía... hace 15 años yo estaba concentrada en tareas empresariales y educativas sin sospechar que pronto estaria enfrente de una lucha contra la impunidad.

De la noche a la mañana mi vida surgio una transformación total e irreversible. Fueron 14 años de esperar justicia... de a las estructuras clandestinas que fomentan la impunidad, violencia y... En mi bitácora personal tienen aprecio especial los investigadores policiales, jueces, fiscales, testigos que arriesgaron su vida y su permanencia en el pais solo por cumplir sus tareas en la carrera de justicia. Recuerdo con especial reconocimiento al investigador oficial Jose Escobar quien fue batido por comparecer ante el Tribunal ..sus pesquisas en cuya sustancia fue victima de un crimen intitucional..

aquí solamente quiero hacer un paréntesis en mayo de 1991 venia una delegacion que habia ido al Salvador precisamente a hablar de.... y entre ellos estaba precisamente el representante de la Universidad de Notre Dame y fuimos juntos a la corte de justicia a la dieccion de la policia y ellos esta delegacion .. informo que la investigación policial de ... pasaria al ministerio publico y por lo tanto a los tribunales de justicia. Eso hizo una gran diferencia en el caso por eso la Universidad de Notre Dame tambien ha compartido desde un principio pues lo que significo ese hecho. Hoy una vez cerrado el caso no puedo volver al punto de partida, no puedo recordar la vida pasada ni olvidar lo que he aprendido en el transcurso de estos años.

Mantengo un compromiso con la justicia y he decidido afrontar un proceso pendiente conmigo misma: la reconciliación. Afrontar el miedo y a sumarme a ese tunel profundo que me llevara al conocimiento del sufrimiento y temores mas intimos. Quisiera trabajar en el impulso de acciones y procesos para que algun dia podamos reencontrarnos, trabajar juntos contra la mentira, la injusticia y la... institucional. Esto es algo que va a pasar en el plano personal y que podria ser el principio de una marcha profunda hacia la reconciliación. Debo advertir que en mi opinión este proceso no atane solamente a las victimas sino a todos, a las comunidades, al estado, a la sociedad en general y a las elites que controlan el flujo de poder en este pais. Mucho se piensa **que el que hemos sido** victimas de un hecho doloroso tenemos la obligación de superar el sufrimiento perdonar, olvidar y el emprender un rumbo normal de la vida. Esto no es mas que un concepto limitado y escaso que no cubre la complejidad del tema ni vislumbra el danio profundo

que estos hechos de horror causaron a toda la sociedad. La reconciliación no ha sido .. tampoco implica perdon profundo.

La reconciliación es a fin de cuentas la búsqueda infatigable de verdad, justicia en un marco de justicia social y económica en un contexto de solidez democrática, de seguridad jurídica, de certeza y estabilidad en lo político, avance social y desarrollo sostenible. Por eso, el conjunto de los acuerdos de paz, brindan oportunidades idóneas para impulsar las reformas socioeconómicas, políticas y jurídicas que podría tener el horizonte de un proceso de reconciliación. De esa cuenta, es fundamental rescatar el proceso de paz, también los compromisos enunciados, pues dan la pauta para emprender una dinámica que promuevan la... de la confianza el rescate de la ... de nuestro sistema y motive acciones positivas en el centro de la sociedad.