

# New Beginnings

PROGRAM FOR TORTURE VICTIMS NEWSLETTER / WINTER EDITION 2010



*Like many torture survivors, Fredy must remain anonymous to protect his family.*

## Pursuing His Dream

*Fredy Survived Torture in Cameroon and Is Now On His Way to a New Life*

Growing up in Cameroon, Fredy lived a normal life. He played soccer with his friends and studied diligently in school in hope of one day becoming a doctor. He was raised by his single mother, a meteorologist, who worked hard to ensure that her six children stayed on the right track.

Politics played no part in Fredy's life until the day he was arrested and labeled a political dissident.

He was just 17 and in his last year of high school when friends from his neighborhood disappeared after being arrested by government officials.

Looking for answers, Fredy and some of his friends attended a large demonstration, hoping to hold government officials accountable.

"I had no idea about the political situation in my country. I was young and naïve and wanted justice for my friends," says Fredy, now 26.

At the march, Fredy was arrested by government officials and taken to a prison. For four months he was repeatedly tortured and questioned about his political affiliation.

Through the help of a family friend in the military, Fredy was able to escape his torturers. He went into hiding for several months, living with friends who would soon plan his escape to the United States. Police were constantly looking for him, making his stay more dangerous for his friends and family.

Fredy was finally able to leave the country, but his welcome to the United States was anything but cordial. He landed at LAX and then languished for the next two months in a Lancaster detention center, placed there by immigration officials.

*Continued on page 3*

## The Tree of Life

*By Julie Gutman, Executive Director*



In the Jewish tradition, there is a saying that if we save one life, we save the entire world. This teaching has taken on new meaning for me since I joined PTV earlier this year. In the span of just six months, I have met dozens of survivors who credit PTV with saving their lives.

These encounters are profound and deeply moving. What an extraordinary privilege it is for me — for all of us — to be part of an organization that offers the most priceless gift of all: the gift of life.

I am honored and humbled to be leading PTV, which rebuilds the lives of torture survivors from over 65 countries who have stood up for freedom, democracy and human dignity.

The first organization of its kind in the country, PTV has helped heal the wounds of thousands of survivors through comprehensive services, empowering them to reenter society, reclaim their identities, and work toward a world without torture.

With your help, 2010 has been a landmark year for PTV. We expanded our group work with survivors, strengthening a vital element of our treatment program.

*Continued on page 2*

*"What an extraordinary privilege it is to be part of an organization that offers the gift of life."*



*I hope that people around the city will join me in supporting the Program for Torture Victims, and in doing so will help heal the victims of torture who now call Los Angeles home.”*

*—Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa*

## SAVE THE DATE

# HUMAN DIGNITY AWARDS DINNER

april 12, 2011

[www.ptvla.org/dinner](http://www.ptvla.org/dinner)

### **The Tree of Life** *(continued from page 1)*

We received an award from the City of Los Angeles in recognition of PTV's 30 years of life-saving work. We launched the highly successful "Profits for Peace" campaign, raising more than \$10,000 through the generous donation of proceeds by participating businesses.

We partnered with the Geffen Playhouse and their production of the Pulitzer Prize-winning play "Ruined," highlighting the real-life stories of torture survivors from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Most importantly, this year we helped hundreds more survivors rebuild their lives in Los Angeles, the largest home for torture survivors in the country. Medical treatment, psychological counseling, legal assistance, help finding housing and employment – PTV offers all of this, along with a caring community that sustains survivors as they start again.

In the months and years ahead, we will take this heroic human rights organization to another level. In addition to offering more services and helping more survivors, one of our top priorities is to systematically document the challenges faced by our clients in the arduous asylum process, including those of particular groups including women, children, and gays and lesbians. By doing so we will create a powerful resource for lawmakers to address policy issues and advance needed reforms.

None of this would be possible without people like you. You are part of something truly sacred when you support PTV. In the words of Abdoulaye, a survivor from the Ivory Coast, "PTV planted a tree – the tree of life. With your contribution you act as gardeners to that tree, bringing refuge and renewal to shattered lives and hope for future generations." ♦

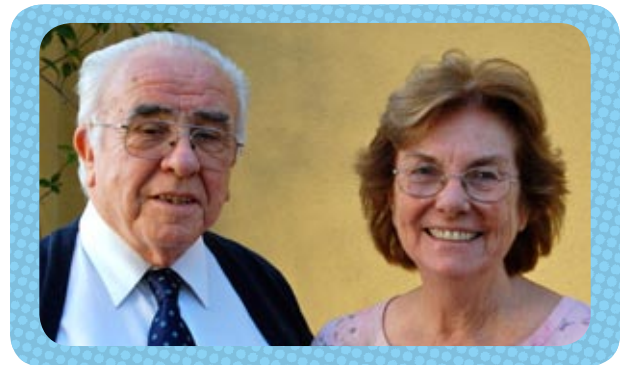
## **Pride and Sorrow**

*By Co-Founders Dr. Jose Quiroga and Ana Deutsch*

We mark the 30th anniversary of PTV with mixed emotions. The fact that PTV is more important than ever fills us with sorrow, for it means that we live in a world where torture has yet to be abolished. On the contrary, torture is embraced by governments and paramilitary organizations around the globe. Few nations, the United States included, are without guilt, and rarely does a week go by where torture is not in the headlines.

This is not the world any of us would choose. But it is the world that we inhabit.

Given this reality, we are filled with pride that PTV not only has endured but has grown into a vital organization that has served thousands of survivors. When we started out in 1980, we could not have imagined the scope of our work today.



Both of us fled war-torn countries and found a haven here in Los Angeles. We established PTV because there was no organization helping torture survivors cope with the horrors they had experienced. We knew that without specialized treatment and support, many survivors would not make it. The scars they carried were too great to handle alone.

But these wounds were not beyond repair. We have been witnesses to the resilience of the human spirit, and to the extraordinary courage of people who have suffered injuries that few of us can fathom.

This is why we founded PTV, and why, 30 years later, we are still here. Human life is precious, and if we have an opportunity to protect it, we must seize it.

Thank you for everything you have done, and will continue to do, to support PTV. Let us hope that one day we will no longer be needed. Until that day arrives, let's make sure we are here for those who need us. ♦

*We invite you to read about PTV's 30 years of existence by visiting [www.ptvla.org/history](http://www.ptvla.org/history).*



*You can chain me, you can torture me, you can even destroy this body, but you will never imprison my mind."*

—Mahatma Gandhi



*Rossana Perez, a survivor from El Salvador, holds City Council Resolution commemorating PTV and the United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture.*



*Ruzana (left), survivor from Georgia who had just won asylum, with PTV's Case Manager Shoshana Martinez-Kaplan.*



*Boniface, survivor from Cameroon, at PTV's summer Healing Club with his wife and son, after having been reunited.*

## Faces of Hope and Healing

### Pursuing His Dream *(continued from page 1)*

"I came to the U.S. to have a second chance, to flee the violence and persecution. I thought that I had left prison behind but when I came here I found myself in another prison."

With help from a family friend who hired a lawyer, Fredy was released from the detention center. His lawyer recognized that the quiet, withdrawn and obviously troubled young man in front of her needed treatment and referred him to PTV, where he found sympathy, understanding and the therapeutic and medical help he desperately needed.

"When I got there I still didn't really trust people, but the PTV staff made me feel safe," says Fredy. "They did that by the way they talked to me, always very kind words. You can tell when someone cares for you because it comes from the bottom of their hearts."

Now, almost nine years later, Fredy still finds it hard to talk about what happened. He is full of regret and grief, but feels lucky to be alive today.

- The remarkable progress he has made in rebuilding his life, learning to trust people again and finding the strength to finish high school and college is testament to his determination not to be destroyed by torture.
- It is also a transformation he credits to the long-term medical treatment, psychological care and financial support he received from PTV.

***"I am very proud of the life I've built here. But I couldn't have done it without PTV."***

- After seven years, Fredy was finally granted asylum this year and has just finished a radiology technology program at California State University Northridge. Next year, Fredy will be a fully licensed radiology technologist and hopes to give back to PTV as a professional medical volunteer.
- "I am very proud of the life I've built here," he says. "But I couldn't have done it without PTV." ✦



*The Pink family immigrated to the U.S. to escape the type of torture still inflicted on many in the world today. We fully appreciate the vital importance of supporting PTV.*

*—Gloria Pink, Pink's Famous Hot Dogs*

## Thank You...

*PTV warmly thanks the following businesses that have participated in our 30th Anniversary Profits for Peace campaign...*

- Alignment for Life: Life Coaching & Yoga
- Bo Balsim's Hair, Skin & Nail Salon
- Boutique Jasleen
- Burger Plaza Grill
- Chichen Itza Restaurant
- Corniche Entertainment
- The Fabiolus Cafe
- Geffen Playhouse
- Good Girl Dinette
- Handmade by Marieh
- Kreation Kafe
- La Maison de Creme
- Louise's Trattoria
- Mo-Chica Restaurant
- Oaxacalifornia Cafe & Juice Bar
- Pilates Studio City
- Pink's Famous Hot Dogs
- Rossana Perez
- Susan Feniger's STREET Restaurant
- Takami Sushi & Robata Restaurant
- Thai Corner Food Express
- Vista Hermosa Restaurant & Taqueria

## We would also like to thank all of our donors and volunteers.

*Your contributions allow us to continue to help survivors of torture rebuild their lives. Please visit our website for an extended expression of our gratitude*

[www.ptvla.org/acknowledgements](http://www.ptvla.org/acknowledgements)

**Don't miss exclusive holiday shopping and dining deals inside!**



**PROGRAM FOR TORTURE VICTIMS (PTV)**

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December 2010

Dear Friend,

I wasn't supposed to write this letter, because I wasn't supposed to be alive.

But I am alive, and now I am asking for your help so that others may live.

I was brutally tortured in my country, the Congo. My crime was trying to help those in need, including those of alternative lifestyles such as gays and lesbians.

Life in the Congo can be like a living hell, especially for women, who are used as a weapon of war. Women and children are violently raped and killed, and those that survive are ostracized by their own families.

I managed to escape and was able to come to the United States, where I arrived with nothing — no money, no family, no home and not speaking a word of English.

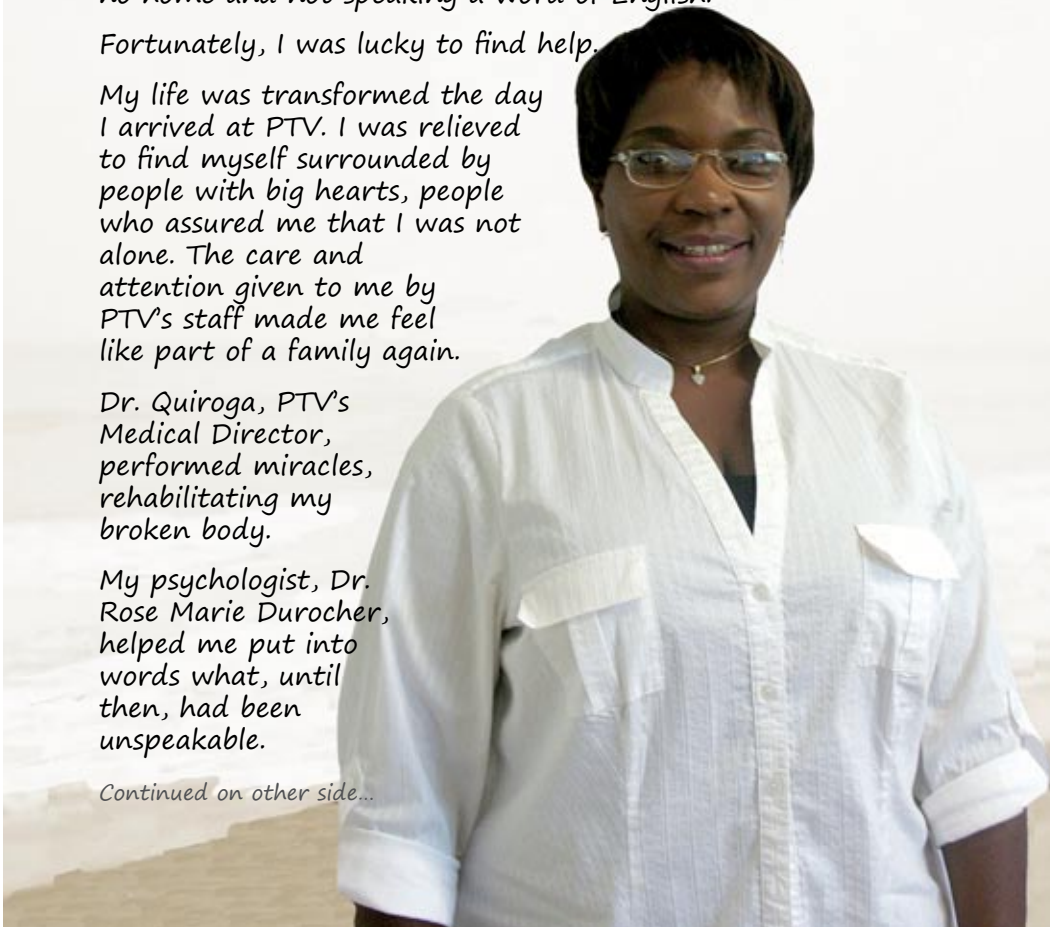
Fortunately, I was lucky to find help.

My life was transformed the day I arrived at PTV. I was relieved to find myself surrounded by people with big hearts, people who assured me that I was not alone. The care and attention given to me by PTV's staff made me feel like part of a family again.

Dr. Quiroga, PTV's Medical Director, performed miracles, rehabilitating my broken body.

My psychologist, Dr. Rose Marie Durocher, helped me put into words what, until then, had been unspeakable.

Continued on other side...



*PTV's therapy helped me cope with the overwhelming anxiety and pain of my condition.*

*Slowly my body and my mind were healed. My scars were old. I could breathe again.*

*Now I have found some form of freedom and I am able to make a living for myself. One day in the near future, I will be reunited with my children.*

*I owe these miracles to PTV, just like thousands of other people like me.*

*This holiday season, I ask you to support PTV and give the gift of life.*

*Sincerely,*

*Bibianne*

*"I wasn't supposed to be alive. But I am alive, and now I am asking for your help so that others may live."*

### **REBUILDING LIVES**

**\$5,000** can reunite a survivor of torture with family.

**\$2,500** can provide one year of therapy sessions and medical services for a survivor of torture.

**\$1,000** can provide emergency services for our homeless clients.

**\$500** can provide a survivor of torture with an interpreter for one year of therapy sessions.

**\$250** can provide a month's worth of bus tokens for our clients.

**\$100** can provide school books for children of PTV clients.

**\$50** can provide life-saving prescriptions to help PTV clients regain their health.

To donate, either visit our website  
<http://www.ptvla.org/how-to-help-donations.html>,  
email us at [lchandler@ptvla.org](mailto:lchandler@ptvla.org),  
call us at (213)747-4944 x256,  
or mail the enclosed envelope. Please reference "PTV Newsletter."

## HOLIDAY DINING

Receive a **\$30 Gift Certificate to Pink's Famous Hot Dogs** when you donate \$300 or more to PTV.\*



\*Offer available to the first thirty (30) end-of-year donations of \$300 or more.

[www.pinkshollywood.com](http://www.pinkshollywood.com)

## HOLIDAY SHOPPING

As a gift to PTV supporters, **Boutique Jasleen is offering 15% off all items in the store.\***

\*Offer valid through December 31, 2010  
Must present this coupon to receive discount.  
Not valid for sale items.



[www.boutiquejasleen.com](http://www.boutiquejasleen.com)  
1020-A Mission St, South Pasadena 91030

## HOLIDAY DINING

Receive a **\$100 Gift Certificate to Takami Sushi & Robata Restaurant** when you donate \$1,000 or more to PTV.\*

\*Offer available to the first five (5) end-of-year donations of \$1,000 or more.



[www.takamisushi.com](http://www.takamisushi.com)  
811 Wilshire Blvd. Suite 2100, Los Angeles 90017

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<http://www.ptvla.org/how-to-help-donations.html>,  
email us at [lchandler@ptvla.org](mailto:lchandler@ptvla.org),  
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