



The Blindfold's Eyes: My Journey from Torture to Truth

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Sister Dianna Ortiz, an American Ursuline nun working in Guatemala, was abducted and tortured by government security forces. She escaped and lived to tell of her ordeal, and her subsequent quest for truth and healing, in this memoir.

The Blindfold's Eyes: My Journey from Torture to Truth Details

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From Reader Review The Blindfold's Eyes: My Journey from Torture to Truth for online ebook

Matteo says

If you ever had questions about the role the US plays in the world, this book will answer them in a terrifying way.

Nancy says

It has been awhile and many books since I read this book. It was on my church's book club list. It was frightening to read what humans can do to other humans. Dianna's abduction was only approximately 24 hours but she saw people who had been tortured physically and mentally for long periods of time. Their only crimes were for not believing in the "regime of the day." Not an easy read but thought provoking. After reading this book, I said a prayer for sister Ortiz complete recovery from the haunting images she was still experiencing.
Nancy Roberts

XO says

piercing tale of the effects of US policy in a good hearted nun that is serving in guate

Heather Fineisen says

Powerful and heart wrenching. You will not think the same way you did about anything before reading Dianna Ortiz's account of her torture in Guatemala.

Karin Mitchell says

This book will make you angry. It made me angry with foreign policy and with the general mistreatment of human rights, and with lawyers, and with everyone. It is powerful and well written. The details of her case became difficult for me to follow in the last third of the book. An overwhelming impression is left on any reader of this book.

Laura Vanzo says

The beginning was great. But towards the end it dragged a little. Very graphic.

Nicole says

Extremely difficult to read given the content, but so important for understanding part of the recent history and current reality of Guatemala.

Jill Dobbe says

A great deal of historical background including how much the U.S. was involved in the atrocities carried out in Guatemala. Heartbreaking reading about what the author and others went through at the hands of the Guatemalan military. Honest and gut-wrenching story of what evil people can do to others. The author is a strong woman who never gave up in finding out the truth about who was involved in her abduction, torture, and rape. I greatly admire her strong spirit and forgiving heart.

Pam says

Incredibly moving. Sister Diana delivers a powerful and emotional recollection of her experience being tortured and the years she has spent recovering. I knew very little about Central American politics before reading this book, and what I learned from it made me interested enough to seek out more info. A very valuable book for anyone seeking to understand either the politics that can lead a government to condone torture or the experience of surviving torture.

Cassie says

This is the story of a catholic nun who was raped and tortured in Guatemala and became an activist to try to get the US to admit it's involvement in atrocities in Guatemala.

Her story is very famous...and I just learned that my housemate lived in community w/ her for several years!! They're friends! Amazing. So i have to add her book to my list.

Her memoir is said to be one of the finest of the genre.

Maureen says

This book is not for the faint of heart. While working with children as member of the Ursuline Order in rural Guatemala, Sister Dianna was kidnapped and taken to the police headquarters in Guatemala City, where she

was raped and tortured in multiple ways. Her struggle to work her way back from trauma that was so severe that she could not recognize her family to becoming strong enough to fight for information about what happened to her and scores of others is hard to read at times. It is well worth the effort to become educated about victims of torture and their fights with every level of government to expose the truth behind their terrible ordeals.

Sarah says

I feel the need to tread lightly here, since of course I have to sympathize with the horrible ordeal that Dianna Ortiz went through at the hands of the Guatemalan military (and with the possible involvement in that torture by the CIA), and respect the fact that she has had a long, slow, and continually ongoing process of personal, emotional, and spiritual recovery to go through. And I believe ultimately she has a strong message to share: that America's government needs to be held accountable for their part in the injustice that takes place around the world with U.S. complicity and that torture is absolutely unacceptable.

Nevertheless, I did not like her book much, and would not recommend it to others. The title is a little misleading, for one thing. I was envisioning a book where this nun rises up from a horrific experience and heals, finds peace, forgiveness, love -- along with a burning desire to continue pressing for justice and advocate for the weak and oppressed of the world -- in short, discovers real TRUTH. Instead I found a woman who has been broken by her experience of torture and has emerged from that experience with a new awareness of the horror that exists in our world and a burning anger towards the United States government and her rapists/torturers. Which is justifiable and expected, even, given the circumstance, but I don't think she has found a new truth.

I found myself--while in the process of reading this (excessively long) account--getting repeatedly frustrated and irritated with Ms. Ortiz (and then feeling guilty for feeling this way). She admits that she is really naive and kind of an artistic and sensitive spirit, but sometimes it gets a little out of hand. Like when she relates that as a young nun she didn't wear a seatbelt because God would protect her from harm. And she is incredibly frustrated at the justice system for failing to prosecute her case correctly and for daring to suggest that she needs to provide evidence other than her word and her tears. The fact is, even if you have gone through a devastating traumatic experience, such as a rape, you MUST MUST MUST get documented evidence, medical evidence -- otherwise it's he said/she said and when the stakes are high for the government to act (diplomatically), "she said so" just isn't good enough. If you are too fragile after your experience to see a doctor and get documented evidence, and to come forward and tell your story to investigators and be questioned, I don't know what to tell you. It's got to be hard even for the best intentioned investigators to have patience and not get frustrated by this, much less government authorities that have a huge stake in the proceedings. I feel like if you are going to take on the government, you have to be prepared to TAKE ON THE GOVERNMENT. And she obviously wasn't.

Ortiz speaks out, she says, for the Guatemalan people and those being tortured, and against the military support that the United States provided. But I don't see her doing this at all except as asides to her own story. She focuses much more on her own story, her trial experiences and how hard that was for her and how mean everybody in the government was to her during the process and how victimized she was by everything and everyone. Perhaps my sympathy was reduced by the fact that she continued throughout the book to defend her decision to have an abortion after her rape and torture and her up front saying she does not forgive her torturers and her strange rituals that she used to help her heal from the experience. I don't know, and I know I'm being unfair, but that's how I felt reading it.

The literary problem with the book was that it was far too long and meandering, mostly because she does not remember anything that happened before her torture and she blacks out through much of the more traumatizing experiences afterwards, so much has to be recounted by other people retold or quoted by Dianna, and that encumbered and lengthened the book considerably. Perhaps someone else should have told this story -- someone close to Dianna might have been able to tell it more effectively.

I can say that Dianna Ortiz was confronted by an evil and that nobody should ever go through anything like that at the hands of another human being, and I hope that I am spared from any similar experience, because I doubt I could handle the aftermath any better. Ultimately my problem with the book has to be that I expected something else from it.

Misla Barco says

A must!

Tim says

I remember, on the ride back from the panel discussion, mentioning to our local DC director of TASSC that it seemed so pointless for Katherine Gallagher of the Center for Constitutional Rights to continue to pursue indictments against American officials in foreign courts. Gallagher and the CCR have been attempting to prosecute members of the Bush and Obama administrations for their involvement in torture carried out during the 10 year "War on Terror". There is a legal opening pertaining to torture that allows international jurisdiction. But does it really matter? What is the point of attempting to take down members of the most powerful empire on earth? Who would enforce it? The panel discussion was held on June 1 in Washington, and featured the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, Juan Mendez, himself a survivor of torture from Argentina.

The pointlessness that I felt, and heard in Gallagher's tired voice, was the same feeling I had while reading of Sister Dianna Ortiz's attempts at obtaining justice for her torture in Guatemala in 1989. She had, unfortunately, been in the wrong place at the wrong time, and had fallen under the dark umbrella of "CIA assets". She takes us through an account that undoubtedly has been repeated thousands of times: the reality of walking through the dog and pony show that victims receive when coming up against a government bent on protecting its controversial "interests", regardless of who the victims are.

The US government commits torture today. We know that now, and official documents state this fact. I doubt that there has ever been a time when the US has not supported torture in some way. Any amount of reading and critical thinking will raise questions about our domestic and foreign policy and will uncover nightmares if one digs far enough. Ortiz own investigation and interviews of Guatemalan and American officials, along with the work of her lawyers and the review of declassified documents was enough to tell her that there was some serious American support of torture and murder going on in Guatemala, and that was continuing to go on when the book was published in 2002. That is without seeing the many additional classified documents about her case that remain closed to the public.

Ortiz was subjected to abduction, burns, gang-rape and the forced torture/murder of another woman during her ordeal in 1989. Her story is only one of thousands quite similar that have come out of Latin America and all over the world. The question in my mind when reading accounts like this is what can we do about it? It was the same question that Ortiz struggled with, and the “doing something about it” was for a long time her only motivation to continue living.

As I was talking about the panel discussion with our director, it was obvious to me that the most effective action we could take begins from the ground up, not from the other direction as Gallagher was attempting. Maybe Katherine Gallagher and others like her are doing some good by continuing to be active on the international level. However, reading a book written by someone like Dianna Ortiz, and listening to similar tearful accounts in my daily work at TASSC, puts a human face on all of the madness that our government practices in the world today. It is hard to be involved in this work. It drains a person emotionally and physically, and will drive one insane with anger if they allow it. However, the victims more than anything need someone to be there to listen; to validate; to point out the way to healing and purpose. To simply stand beside them as they try to piece their lives back together. This is where the real difference can be made: at the grassroots. We practice the principles of love in our world through the individual contacts we make. As power grows, it moves further and further from humanity. To return to that humanity, we focus on the micro, on the person, the individual. Then we see our own humanity reflected in the other, and realize, like Ortiz, that power doesn't have to be all pervasive. Faith in humanity can be restored in others by the way we choose to live our own lives.
