Bad Apples or Bad Leaders: Explaining State Repression and Sexual Violence in El Salvador

Why do militaries engage in sexual violence? Through her examination of patterns of state-perpetrated sexual violence and other political violence during the civil war in El Salvador (1978-1992), Prof. Lieby concludes that sexual violence is not perpetrated randomly, but rather targeted against particular subgroups within the population who present a real or imagined threat to the regime. A comparison of data collected in the UCB Archives from two Salvadoran human rights organizations reveal the timing and locations of various forms of state violence and a demographic profile of the victims. This research, one of only two quantitatively-oriented analyses of first-hand accounts of sexual violence during the civil war, demonstrates many of the limitations of data on wartime sexual violence and makes an important contribution to the academic literature on wartime sexual violence as well as to the historical record of violence in El Salvador.

Michele Leiby
Assistant Professor, Political Science, College of Wooster, Ohio

Unearthing the El Salvador Human Rights Archive

Why is the archive at UCB?
How has it been used for research and class projects?
What is required to ensure, enhance, and promote access?
Learn how you can access and utilize this material in your research!

Fri 8 Feb, 12-1:30p. Gates Woodruff Cottage Library. Light lunch provided.

Michele Leiby, College of Wooster: Digging in the El Salvador Human Rights Archive
Asuncion Horno-Delgado, UCB Spanish and Portuguese: class projects using the Archive
Bruce Montgomery and Yolanda Maloney, UCB Archives and Special Collections: How the World's Largest El Salvador Human Rights Archive was Built: Travels of two archivists to a war-ravaged land to gain access to the secret archives of the Archdiocese of San Salvador.

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