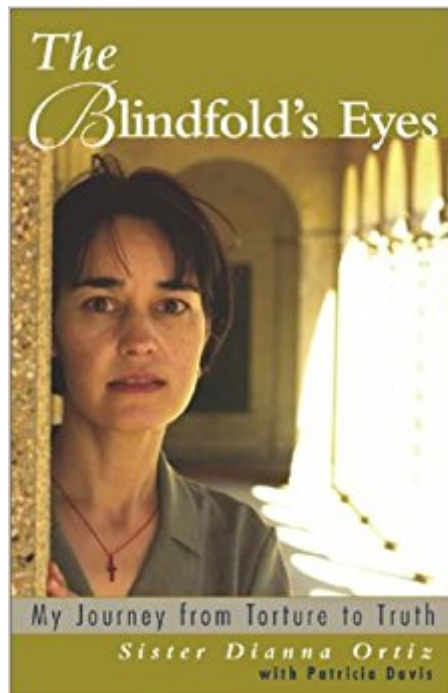




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The Blindfold's Eyes: My Journey From Torture To Truth (Guatemala)



Synopsis

In 1989, while working as a missionary in Guatemala, Sister Dianna Ortiz, an American Ursuline, was abducted by security forces and brutally tortured. Her case attracted international attention -- not because it was so unusual, but because she escaped to reveal the details, and because of the explosive charge that one of her captors -- a mysterious "Alejandro, " may have had connections with the U.S. Embassy. In this haunting memoir, Ortiz offers an unforgettable portrait of the psychological and spiritual impact of torture. Her efforts to publicize her case and to uncover the truth in the face of official stonewalling, lies, and slander, is a portrait of courage and stubborn hope. But it also a story of faith, friendship, and the quest to prove that at the core of the human spirit there is a force stronger than violence and fear.

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Customer Reviews

In 1989, Sister Dianna Ortiz, an American-born nun, was abducted from the compound where she worked in Guatemala. Twenty-four hours later, she escaped, but within that brief period, her body had been burned with cigarettes, she'd been raped, beaten and forced to torture a woman who was already near death. As a consequence of her devastation, Ortiz lost every memory she had of her life before the kidnapping, and spent years battling both real and remembered demons in a struggle to heal herself and to spread the word about U.S. complicity in Guatemala's repressive political system and in the torture and murder of thousands of innocent Guatemalans. This is an important book for two reasons: its illustration of the fallout of torture and the special needs of survivors, and

Ortiz's well-documented narrative of the U.S. government's refusal to take seriously what happened to her, particularly as she identified one of her torturers as an American. It's unfortunate that Ortiz didn't have a better editor. This is a powerful story and Ortiz (aided by Davis, communications director of the Guatemala Human Rights Commission) is a strong writer, but the avalanche of detail will confuse readers, and material such as the text of speeches and memos could have been included in an appendix. But Ortiz's determination to tell the truth in spite of ongoing threats and her own fear makes this book, despite its flaws, impossible to dismiss. Photos not seen by PW. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

In the 1980s Sister Dianna Ortiz went to Guatemala to help citizens victimized by one of the world's most oppressive regimes. As a result, she nearly became one of the *desaparecidos*, or the disappeared, called that because they literally disappeared into the night to be raped, tortured, and murdered, never to be seen alive again by their families. Sister Dianna was one of the more fortunate victims of this regime in that her ordeal was relatively brief--and she survived. Her book focuses on the long-term effects of her ordeal more than the gory details of what she suffered. But it is about more than just the torture of Sister Dianna or the other *desaparecidos*. It also puts their suffering in context by examining what allowed these things to happen. Sister Dianna's story will interest anyone wishing to understand how rape and torture break down the human spirit, and how it is possible to survive such assaults. Students of political science will also find this book intriguing. June Pulliam Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

I met Diana as this book was being written, and was already volunteering at the Guatemala Human Rights Commission/USA, where her co-author, Pat Davis, was on staff (and was my friend) as this book was being written. I developed a friendship with both of them that I will always cherish. If I'm not mistaken, one thing the book doesn't discuss was the torture of having to relive this unspeakable nightmare to produce the book. The book reveals much of Dianna's and unbelievable courage, but some aspects of her suffering were simply too painful to put down on paper. More than anything, this book reveals how sinister and cynical U.S. government employees have been in working directly with death squads and torturers in Guatemala, and also how they failed to strip Diana of her humanity (although they came close to causing her to lose her sanity by inflicting such barbarity upon her), which they tried to do even after she survived physical torture in Guatemala. As the child of a Holocaust survivor, I can tell you that what Diana went through is even more gruesome than many Holocaust death camp stories. Her story should prod us into acting, because it

was hardly an isolated incident: 200,000 innocent people have been murdered in Guatemala by U.S. government-trained and supported death squads and the U.S.-supported Guatemalan military. The United States will do anything to protect these people, because our highest level government officials over the past 50 years have assisted them, and should be held accountable for it.

This book by and about Dianna Ortiz, and her struggle for healing and justice is a mosaic of one woman's courage and resilience against a crushing backdrop of shameful torture of thousands of innocents in Guatemala. Her torture was motivated, not only by the sadistic cruelty of a few monsters, but also was part of a deliberately chosen pattern of social and political repression by the governments of Guatemala, abetted by representatives of the United States Government. The genius of the book is the way the author allows the reader into her life, and the workings of her mind as she struggles to overcome the trauma of her ordeal. She gives us privileged information about herself and the effects of her torture on her family, friends, and her religious community. The testimony of a torture survivor and the recovery of her human dignity is a story worth reading for its own sake. Dianna Ortiz's book, *The Blindfold's Eyes* offers more. Her story transcends her personal experience and serves as a window into the historical dimension of our foreign policy in Guatemala. In the light of Sister Ortiz's story, decent Americans will come to question how much human incense, (literally), are we willing to burn at the altar of National Security? This book made me angry. It made me cry. It also left me with a lot of questions. In the end this book gave me permission to hold on to a fragile hope for a world seemingly able to devise the most heinous methods to terrorize the spirit of the human person.

Dianna Ortiz has written a powerful memoir of her horrific experience of torture and her journey to try and find a sense of safety and trust again within the world. I was deeply moved by her story and think about her words often. Dianna's words are intensely personal, descriptive and her honesty is pure bravery. Not only was she brutally traumatized by the hellish torture she endured, but on her returning to home her nightmare continued. Dianna's memoir is full of undeniable understanding of the world of torture. I had heard about torture still going on in the world, but I felt distant from it, after reading *The Blindfold's Eyes*, I felt close. This memoir is an important read for anyone seeking to understand torture, any type of trauma and what trauma does to a person as a whole. Dianna is able to recount her story and suffering from a place that comes from deep inside and her vulnerability allows for a deeper understanding of the horror of torture. Thank you Dianna for your bravery and being a voice for those who have none.

I knew that this would be a horrifying story. It is a real account of one young woman's experience and the long term effects of torture and violence. There was a little too much 'politics' for me but that is a big part of the story. I appreciated her account of her real struggle with her faith and her community and family. These events should never happen to anyone and yet it continues today. As difficult as it is, we all need to know this happens and use our voices to stop it.

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