

European Online Journalism Award 2002 to holmenskanal.net for bilingual human rights website para-nunca-olvidar.org (Never To Forget)

London: July 4th, 2002: The creation of an Online Truth Commission for victims of human rights violations in Guatemala during that country's long civil war has earned Danish radio journalist Lotte Holmen the prestigious European Online Journalism Award for "Best Innovation".

The award was given July 4th, 2002, in a contest of 875 websites from 24 European countries. In her category Lotte Holmen won over co-short listed BBC Online, which took the honors in 13 other categories. Another big winner was Spanish daily El Mundo with three awards.

Para-nunca-olvidar.org is build around 16 very touching and strong in depth interviews with Maya Indians who often for the first time ever talk about their personal experiences during the 36 year long Guatemalan civil war which left 200.000 mostly Mayan dead or disappeared.

The initial purpose of Lotte Holmen's personal Truth Commission was to give the Mayans access to their own history. The civil war atrocities are not discussed in public nor among people in the villages out of fear or embarrassment. Being mostly illiterate and poor the Indigenous population has no access to the reports published by the United Nations' Truth Commission or the Catholic Church.

The journalist managed to get her interviews translated into 9 indigenous languages and broadcast on Guatemalan community radio stations. By exposing the population to their own history a psychosocial rehabilitation process has started – a process she is heralded for by Fernando Castañón, the Executive Secretary of the UN Truth Commission for Guatemala, who personally inspired her work.

Short versions of 8 testimonials are presented online in a streaming low bandwidth multimedia presentation with pictures and English subtitles. A very touching experience even if the viewer don't know Spanish. The full version of all 16 testimonials in mp3 format may be purchased at cost online.

The English-Spanish website also contains a free educational section with 200+ photographs, full transcripts and documentation of the testimonials, lesson plans and interactivity. Additionally the site has an art gallery by the painter and author Jorn Bie, who during his many years in Guatemala made sketches visiting sites of fresh massacres.

- It is important never to forget what happened in Guatemala. We produced the website to tell the world about the human rights violations in that country, but these stories could be from many countries around the world, Lotte Holmen says. Listening, reading, seeing and learning from this site will hopefully help many around the world to understand - and never to forget.

<http://www.net-media.co.uk/awards/winners.asp>

<http://www.para-nunca-olvidar.org>

<http://www.holmenskanal.net>

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