

“There’s that argument of whether torture is effective. It doesn’t matter. It is immoral, it is illegal and we have got to bring an end to it.” ~ Marcy Allman

LOUISVILLE, Ky (June 25, 2009) – “When you’re asked what you’re doing on a Thursday night, most people aren’t going to say ‘I’m watching a film on torture.’”

Those were the words from Marcy Allman, co-organizer of three events in Louisville meant to raise awareness about the affects of torture. She partnered with the Angela Merici Center to host a free screening of the film “Breaking the Silence” on Thursday, June 25. “This film has personal stories told by people from around the world who suffered torture,” Marcy said, speaking to the more than 25 people who had gathered at Brescia Hall on the Ursuline Campus to see the film. “Thank you from giving up your Thursday night to learn more about this issue.”



Co-organizer of the event, Marcy Allman, speaks to the audience about the effects of torture before the screening begins

Sister Mary William Klipsch, who is active in the Ursuline Sisters Social Concerns Committee , and Ginny Schaeffer, Director of the Angela Merici Center, worked with Marcy to organize the screening. “I was looking for somewhere to show this film, then a friend said I should try the Ursuline Sisters because they’re very active in peace and justice issues,” Marcy said.



Candles, with the names of countries where torture is still used, sat at a table at the front of the room during the screening. More than 190 countries still practice torture.

“The Angela Merici Center is a ministry of the Ursuline Sisters,” Ginny Schaeffer told the audience. “And part of that mission is to find needs in the community and meet those needs. Sadly, this is one of those needs.”

On Friday, June 26, and Saturday, June 27, vigils will be held in Louisville as part of efforts to raise awareness about the issue of torture. These local events are taking place in conjunction with events that take place yearly

in Washington , D.C. 2009 marks 20 years since Kentucky Sister Dianna Ortiz was abducted and tortured in Guatemala. In an effort to help others, Sister Dianna founded Torture Abolition and Survivors' Support Coalition (TASSC) and has worked to abolish the use of torture while helping other survivors cope. TASSC organizes and sponsors the national events.

Marcy Allman became involved in efforts after reading Sister Dianna's book about her experiences in Guatemala. "You can still see the impact it had because of how it still visibly affects me even now," she said, tears welling up in her eyes. "There's that argument of whether torture is effective. It doesn't matter. It is immoral, it is illegal and we have got to bring an end to it."



Audience members (above), including several of the Ursuline Sisters, listen as Ginny Schaeffer (below) says a brief prayer and guides a moment of reflection to prepare everyone for the emotional film.



Right now, according to speakers at the event, there are more than 190 countries where acts of torture are still used. During the Friday and Saturday vigils signs with each country on it will be held to give people an idea of just how prevalent this practice is in the world. When asked "why now," why is this the time to raise awareness about this issue after decades upon decades of abuse. Marcy said her answer is simple, "With things like Abu Ghraib still fresh in people's minds, it makes them more willing to accept that it's happening and that something needs to be done about it."

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