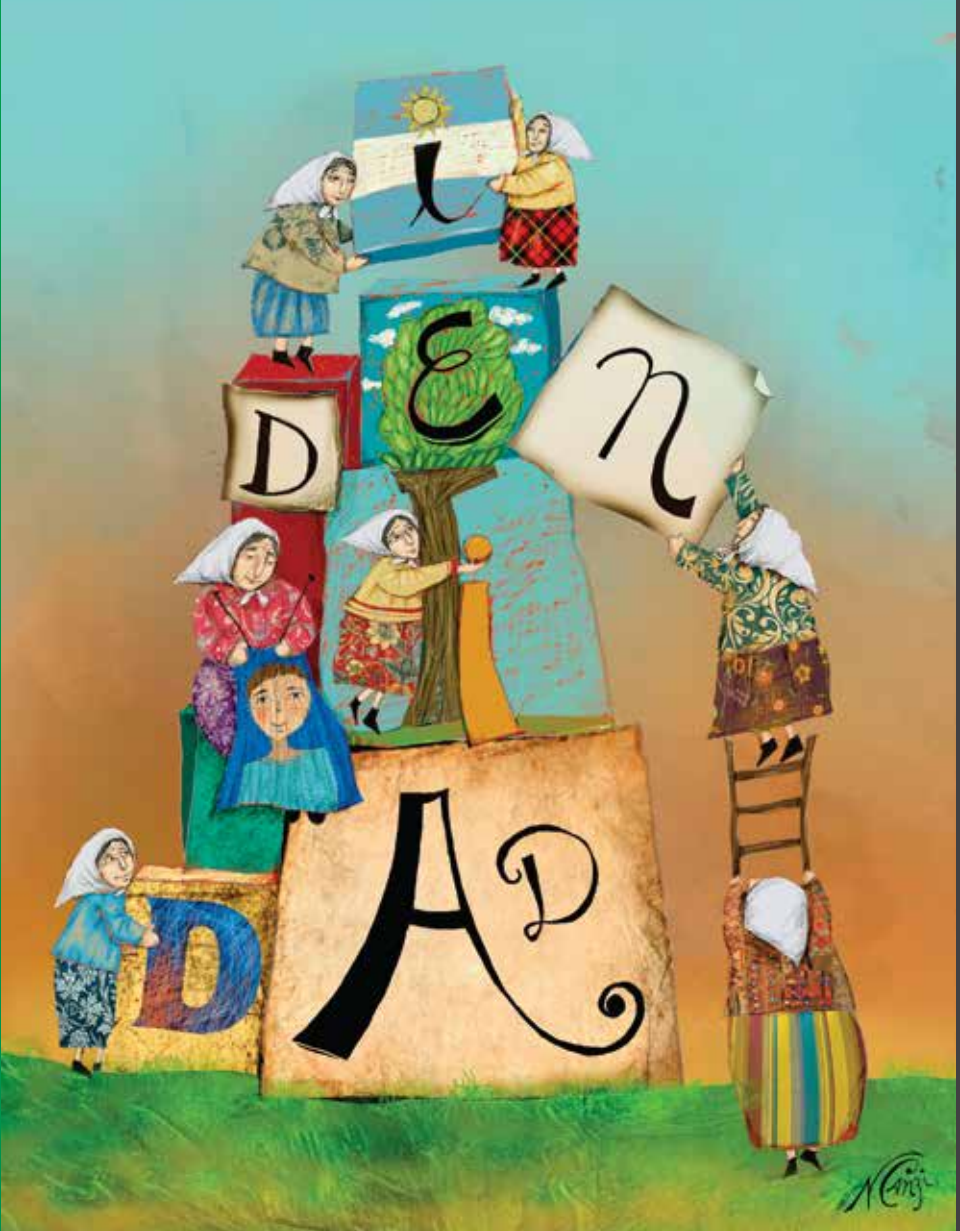


A book series that understands the reader as playing an active role in depicting the multiple meanings of a text, a series that sets off to speak about the “unspeakable” is certainly a provocative one. It seeks to build spaces for discussion that break down sociocultural constructs that drag down the invigorating processes of our XXI century societies.

Identity. A Pedagogy on Collective Memory invites us to reflect on the effect of human rights education at schools. Thanks to a courageous itinerary led by the *Programa Educación y Memoria* together with school communities, today we bring you the narratives of victims of the last civic-military dictatorship as recorded in learning activities carried out in schools of the city of Buenos Aires. Claudio Altamirano, former coordinator of the programme, expands and enriches the stories presented in *Stories. Educating on Collective Memory* (National Library of Congress, 2012). Given the restitution of new *Nietos* and *Nietas*, as well as new educational projects at learning institutions, these stories find their way to this new book. *Identity. A Pedagogy on Collective Memory* gathers the stories of the *Abuelas*, *Madres*, restored grandchildren, and leading members of human rights movements. It seeks to contribute to an education in critical citizenship that is fully committed to the application of democratic values.

IDENTITY. A PEDAGOGY ON COLLECTIVE MEMORY

Claudio Altamirano



Identity

A Pedagogy on Collective Memory

Claudio Altamirano



Claudio Altamirano is a primary school teacher, specialized in mentally challenged students and in deaf and hearing-impaired students. He taught at a school in the neighbourhood of Bajo Flores for fifteen years. There, he felt the need to give testimony of the lives of his students who were socially vulnerable. He trained at the school of Art Cinema and founded the audio-visual production group “Marina Vilte”, formed by public school teachers. He has received various prizes and awards. In 2008, he became coordinator of the *Programa Educacion y Memoria* of the Ministry of Education of the city of Buenos Aires. He has promoted, from this position, an educational policy on human rights and has championed the idea of a pedagogy on Collective Memory, Truth and Justice. In this field, he has also written *Puentes de la memoria en el campo educativo* and *Relatos, Educar en la memoria*.





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Claudio Altamirano

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editorial **FEDUN**

To my children, Violeta and Pablo

To my life companion, Silvia

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I would deeply like to thank those who made it possible for this new challenge to be solved. Those who either supported us and the project, or gave testimony in front of boys and girls in our schools.

To the *Abuelas*, to the *Madres*, to the *Nietos*, to Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, to Cecilia Vicentini, Azucena Villaflor's daughter.

To those who make it possible to build the Collective Memory of our recent past thanks to their commitment in school classrooms, thus granting the statement of *Nunca Más*.

To all young students, for their commitment and participation in each meeting, thus inviting us to keep the hope of a future based on Collective Memory, Truth and Justice alive.

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Foreword

Estela Barnes de Carlotto

***Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo* President**

I am delighted to see another book by Professor Claudio Altamirano. As a teacher, I am deeply pleased by the outstanding work he has created in his book *Identity: a pedagogy on collective memory*. His writing is the result of his educational calling and his commitment to citizenship education on Truth, Memory, and Justice for students of state and private schools.

We, *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*, have supported through the years his persistence on transmitting the importance of a history that was not mentioned in textbooks. Luckily, this is no longer so. Professor Altamirano has backed this policy by bringing schools students together with members of *Abuelas*, between these young people who are eager to learn about the darkest moments in Argentine history and our restored grandchildren. The meetings are experiences that become memorable in the hearts and minds of students so much so that they understand what we lived in our society has been the worst history and that we should never experience it again.

The present book brings you those encounters, our voices and our grandchildren's. Our stories reconstructed. You will find the happy, simple, everyday moments, and you will also find the painful, uncertain, or unfair. The most interesting and beautiful fact, though, is that all the stories told have been sifted through by a splendid school youth that embraces and enhances them with tenderness, love and care.

We wish to thank all school communities since they have shown that public education is the best place for collective memory to be exercised, become strong, and grow.

We are certain that readers will find in the coming pages the value and importance of the task carried out by this teacher and will share with us the pride we feel to be part of this project.

Publisher's note

Daniel Ricci

General Secretary FEDUN

We are deeply honored to have the opportunity to reprint this distinguished work by Claudio Altamirano, ***Identity A Pedagogy on Collective Memory***, in English language, for its distribution abroad, which bring us to the present the narratives of victims of the last civil-military dictatorship in Argentina, through Education and Memory Program with school communities, which addresses, from education about rights, in schools, that bleak period of our Nation.

This book collects the stories of Grandmothers, Mothers and restored grandchildren and notable members of human right movements. It seeks to contribute an education in a critical citizenship that is fully committed with the application of democratic values.

These tremendous collective stories take shape in this book and highlight the immense necessity of keep incorporated in the education of our society a pedagogy that makes the NEVER AGAIN a reality.

We understand as a union of university teachers that we must have a strong commitment to democracy and the development of respectful citizens of diversity, so we have to base ourselves on our story of Memory, Truth and Justice.

Every day the democracy is consolidated by training citizens and honouring our 30,000 disappeared and all those persecuted and tortured in the darkest times of our homeland.

Once again from FEDUN, we assume our unwavering commitment and our contribution to build a more just equal society and this future is based on having historical memory.

The reprinting of this present work, by Editorial FEDUN, is our humble tribute to our unwavering memory of all men and women whose lives were brutally biased by the last civil-military dictatorship.

Prologue

Carmen Nebreda

Educator, member of Unión de Educadores of the province of Córdoba, former legislator. Promotor of the publication of Stories: educating on collective memory¹

It is hard to think of something more educational for a country than knowledge of their own history. Claudio Altamirano has certainly grasped this not only in the meetings held in schools but also in the development of the present book, published by the National Congress Library in its first edition.

These materials have become a precise tool for the integral education of students and teachers in Argentine schools.

Grandmothers, mothers, and children abducted from our detained and disappeared fellows shape one common story, the narrative of a horror experience and a firm action towards the reconstruction of the social body by means of the search of justice, truth and identity. An action that, if limited to isolated hatred, would have deprived the world of one of the noblest teachings of the century: how fighting together under the light of hope can defeat the paralysis created by fear.

Let me summarise my thoughts in the words of Victoria Montenegro Torres, whose real name turned out to be prophetic:

Fear is over. Fear left with Maria Sol. I am Victoria.

¹ Stories. Educating on Collective Memory, published in 2012, is a preliminary version of Identity: A Pedagogy on Collective Memory.

**COLLECTIVE MEMORY,
TRUTH, JUSTICE**

Introduction

Identity. A Pedagogy on Collective Memory brings us the fundamental voices of the protagonists of our recent history. In the coming pages, *Madres*, *Abuelas* and *Nietos* tell us some of the key episodes that have left a mark in our country. They are with us, in their role as Human Rights representatives, when we work with students of primary and secondary schools, as well as in higher education in our role as *Programa Educación y Memoria* (Education and Collective Memory Programme). Their testimonies are seeds we sow for a future society that will understand that the *Nunca Más* is possible if we confront indifference with collective memory and if we leave selfish attitudes in favour of collective commitment.

This book brings the loving and hopeful words of the protagonists in each story of search and encounter in order to produce a material of reference for the discussion of the topic in all schools. Many of the stories are the answers to questions posed by students and portray not only solidarity in adverse circumstances, but also the courage necessary to face and overcome fear, and perseverance in the search for truth. A search led by the certainty that the claim for justice is the only proper way.

In the interviews, our speakers eloquently combine the ideals of the 70's youth, smothered by the civic-military dictatorship, with the events they lived, later understood as milestones of our times. The personal colour that each participant brings to the interviews in terms of family anecdotes and daily lives has turned these narratives into stories of collective memory that pervades and transcends a specific time and place.

Thanks to Carmen Nebreda who, as legislator, presented the initiative for the preliminary version of this book to be published to the bi-chamber administrative committee of the National Congress Library, the proposal was accepted by unanimous vote. And it was Alejandro Santa coordinating director of the Library, who decided on the printing of 5000 copies of the book. Six years later, in a visit with Estela de Carlotto to the Universidad

Nacional de Tierra del Fuego, Antártida e islas del Atlántico Sur, the university generously offered to publish a new book. In the name of the *Programa Educación y Memoria*, I wish to thank university authorities who make it possible for us to reach more state-run schools through an invaluable teaching material for present and future generations.

This book has become an instrument for a Pedagogy on Collective Memory by bringing the voices of our leading citizens to each classroom in every school because these voices will sound for those that were silenced. With these voices, we will hear the dreams and commitment of the young disappeared, and the perseverance of those who did not give up or did not stop in their search and claims in the name of Collective Memory, Truth, and Justice.

The *Abuelas* go to school

Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo

On March 24, 1976, the Armed Forces usurped the constitutional government in the Argentine Republic through a coup d'état. From that moment, the military regime, which called itself the 'National Reorganization Process', carried out a policy of terror. The 'disappearance', the predominant form through which political repression was exercised, affected 30,000 people of all ages and social conditions who were subjected to deprivation of their freedom and torture. The vast majority are still disappeared. Among these victims, there were hundreds of children who were kidnapped with their parents or born in the clandestine detention centres.

The number of kidnappings of children and young pregnant women, the operation of clandestine maternity wards (*Campo de Mayo, Escuela de Mecánica de la Armada, Pozo de Banfield*, etc.), the existence of lists of military families 'waiting' for births in those clandestine centres and the statements of the military themselves demonstrate the existence not only of a preconceived plan to kidnap adults, but also a systematic plan for the appropriation of children.

The children kidnapped as 'spoils of war' were registered as their own children by members of the repression forces, or left anywhere, sold or abandoned in institutes without any identification. In this way, they made them disappear by annulling their identity, depriving them of living with their legitimate family, of all their rights and their freedom.

The Civil Association *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo* is a non-governmental organization whose purpose is to locate and restore to their legitimate families all children who were kidnapped or disappeared under the political repression, as well as create the conditions for such a terrible violation of children's rights never to be repeated, demanding punishment for all those responsible.

Nothing and no one stopped us from looking for our children's children. Detective-like tasks alternated with daily visits to the juvenile courts,

orphanages, children's homes, while we investigated the adoptions provided at that time. We also received –and we continue to receive– the complaints that the Argentine people send us, as a way of collaborating in the task of locating our children. That is one of the results of our community awareness work.

In order to locate the disappeared children, the *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo* work on four levels: complaints and claims before government, both at national and international levels; presentations before the Justice; collaboration requests addressed to the general public and inquiries or personal investigations. In years of dramatic non-stop search, we managed to locate 128 missing children (N.E.: number of grandchildren updated as of August 30, 2018).

The Association has technical teams made up of professionals in the legal, medical, psychological and genetic aspects, necessary to fulfil its mission.

Each of the grandchildren has an open case in court, to which the complaints that are received over time are added. These make up the evidence that determines their true identity and that of those responsible for their kidnapping or illegal possession.

To ensure the validity of the blood tests in the future, we have implemented a Bank of Genetic Data, created by National Law N°. 23511, which contains the genetic maps of all the families of disappeared pregnant women or of those children at the time who were kidnapped together with their parents.

We work for our grandchildren –now men and women–, for our great-grandchildren, who also see their right to identity violated, and for all children of future generations, to preserve their roots and history, fundamental pillars of all identity.

History of *Abuelas* at www.abuelas.org.ar

Estela Barnes de Carlotto

President of the *Asociación Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*. President of the Argentine Committee for the monitoring and Implementation of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Estela was born on October 22, 1930 and married her first boyfriend, Guido Carlotto, with whom she lived until his death. Together they had four children: Laura Estela, on February 21, 1955; Claudia Susana, on June 26, 1957; Guido Miguel, on January 22, 1959, and Remo Gerardo, on December 21, 1962. At the same time, she worked for many years as a teacher, then was Head of the 'Coronel Brandsen' National School and president of the Board of Qualifications of National Schools.

She always imagined her life between her family and the development of her vocation. But all her dreams and plans were shaken after the kidnapping of her daughter Laura, a History student at the 'Universidad Nacional de La Plata'. A task force took her away on November 26, 1977, during the last civic-military dictatorship, when she was pregnant. After intense negotiations, that same year the family was able to recover her body, which showed clear signs that she had given birth.

From that moment on, Estela's life changed radically. She devoted tirelessly to the search for her grandson, born in captivity. Only on August 5, 2014, did she experience the maximum reward for all her efforts: that day, the president of *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo* learnt that her long-awaited grandson had been found. The little one was already a 36-year-old adult and his name was Ignacio Hurban. He had approached *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo* because he sensed that he was the son of disappeared people and, specifically, he dreamed of being Estela's grandson. The National Bank of Genetic Data confirmed that his parents were Laura and Walmir Oscar Montoya.

'My mother will not forget what you are doing to me and she will come after you,' I know my daughter told her captors, and since then I have pursued justice and searched for her son. I imagine her now, telling me from the sky: 'Mum, you've won'. And the prize is for everyone. I already have my 14 grandchildren with me. The empty picture frames waiting for him will have his picture.

And the implicit promise brought an extra reward, because the recovered grandson number 114 has a daughter named Lola, a great-granddaughter adored by the president of *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*.

Thanks to the work of the *Abuelas*, 128 grandchildren kidnapped by the military government have regained their identity (E.N.: number of grandchildren found as of August 30, 2018), including her own grandson; yet, Estela's search continues. And with each reunion a story resurfaces, that of a whole family, which rounds up a challenging cycle.

Collective Memory and Education are closely linked to the freedom of the people. Lack of collective memory makes us dependent, captive, subjected to slavery, with the risks that dictatorships be repeated.

ESTELA'S STORY

Estela's life was just like anyone else's life until the violence of the dictatorship hit her in one blow in a way that her teacher's smock was replaced with a white scarf as a demand for justice.

I can say that I have two lives. The first, in a home, where my siblings and I were well raised with love by very good parents. Then I got married, I had four wonderful children who I loved very much and who put up with me, because as a teacher I spent more time with my students than with them. I couldn't attend my children's school celebrations because I had to be with my other children, my students. But one day I had to change that life to become a mother-grandmother, in search of what the dictatorship had stolen from me: a 22-year-old daughter, who had had a baby in a secret place, and that child, who today is a man.

This search triggered the encounter with other women who, like her, wanted to know where their children and grandchildren were.

There is no entry for the term 'I can't' in my personal dictionary. There is 'I don't want to', but when I set my mind to something that I think is good, I don't give up. I approach it from all the aspects that I can until I achieve

my objective. When Laura disappeared, I couldn't tell my teachers or society what was happening to me because I was afraid I would receive ill-meant comments. I changed after I heard a very good piece of advice from one of my children's mother-in-law, Mrs Nelba Falcone, mother of María Claudia Falcone, one of the girls who disappeared during 'The Night of the Pencils'. She told me: 'Estela, don't stay alone, there are other ladies like you who are looking for their children and their grandchildren. Why don't you go?'. She gave me a telephone number and the name of Licha de la Cuadra. I called her and it was at her home that I met the companions that I have until today. That group that was born in La Plata and joined the groups in Buenos Aires and its surroundings came to demand answers at the door of the Government House and the Ministry of the Interior. Some others were active since 1976, but either on their own, or getting together in pairs. The group took the name of 'Abuelas' in October 1977 and became stronger. I joined in 1978, a few months after Laura's kidnapping. I was welcomed by the group because they thought that a teacher would be able to take down notes and other things. Each one of us has given and continues to give what we know, taking advantage of the fact that we are culturally, religiously and ideologically different. For me, that company and the deep integration with other ladies who were suffering the same pain and facing the same struggle was a great relief. I was strengthened by their telephone calls, our meetings both in La Plata and in Buenos Aires, our shared care and precautions to preserve ourselves, since we too could disappear.

Estela highlights the importance of all those who lent a hand to her at that difficult time. She also recalls how hard it was to foster ties of solidarity in a society that was afraid and was starting to act under the doctrine of 'not getting involved'.

I received support from my school teachers and the people around us when they found out that Laura had disappeared. The affection we had for each other made it incomprehensible to many that I could have saved that pain and that daily struggle without my colleagues knowing about it at school. People from the school parents' association, neighbours, simple people, they all wanted to lend me a hand at that moment even though there was a lot of fear and it was all clandestine. Most people didn't want to talk about it. They would say: 'Look away, or it will also happen to you'; there were slogans that blamed the parents of the young activists. That was the message to scare us. Solidarity was difficult to express and, if it was done, it was done in secret. Our families were the closest ones to those of us who had a disappeared person. On the other hand, in 1976, we, teachers, were not grouped by unions, neither the state nor the private ones. The CGT (General Confederation of Labour of the Argentine Republic) existed, which had incredible strength, but the unionists, persecuted and kidnapped, were also victims of the dictatorship. Furthermore, trade unions were outlawed. So what could they do? They could do nothing.

Fear lurked at everyone's doorstep, but it was not enough to stop the struggle of women like Estela, who advanced with the unwavering desire to find their loved ones.

Sure I was afraid. I started knocking on doors in prisons, in the regiments, in the courts, in the church and also those of politicians, trade unionists and the military, where they never gave me an answer. I didn't know how to do it and I had to learn. I told my husband and my sons, who were with us: 'Wait for me, I'll be back,' but the truth is that no one knew if I would return because the dictatorship kidnapped people who they considered to be annoying. And that's how they took my husband, who spent 25 days in a secret jail, where they tortured him and from where he came out sick. That could happen to me too, but fear wasn't going to paralyse me. I couldn't stay still at home and I came out anyway, not because I was brave or a heroine, but because I'm a mum. Any mum would do the same. Although I never believed that I would be able to give a frontal answer, challenging fear, loneliness and pain.

All her temperance and calmness were transformed into energy for this struggle, an endless battle that has always been highlighted as peaceful, just and, above all, patient.

When Laura was kidnapped, and after my other children, Claudia and Guido, were persecuted by the dictatorship, the other Estela came out. I did everything that I never thought I could ... defy fear, hide my pain so they wouldn't attack me and search without giving in. Sometimes people ask me if I ever said 'enough'. Only once, when I was already part of Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo. But my husband, my great partner, told me: 'Don't stop going because the Abuelas need you'. Afterwards, I was always ready to face everything, to continue, to help with my skills, to build, so we would strengthen and consolidate this work of so many years, which does not end with us. It will end when the 400 grandchildren that are still disappeared and the 30,000 people killed by the dictatorship are found.

ESTELA AS A TEACHER

I graduated from a national teacher training college in 1950, the year of the Liberator 'General San Martín'. I had chosen my future path with a great passion for teaching and a desire to be in contact with children.

Her dream came true when, at the age of 20, she began her teaching career.

My wish was, once graduated, to work to help at home with my salary. Dad was a mail clerk and Mum didn't work; Although we never were in need, a little more money would come in handy. I thought I would then continue studying Philosophy and Educational Sciences, later I changed my mind to Pharmacy. But I was not able to. I was appointed as an interim teacher in a Láinez little school. It was called 'Lainez' because of the Law by the same name, a law which stated that national schools could be created in unfavourable places where the provinces did not have the possibility to support them. This little national school No. 102 was in Coronel Brandsen, which was then a small town. And although it was barely 40 kilometres (nearly 25 miles) from the city of La Plata, sometimes it took us two hours to get there because we took a little train that was slow as a cart and stopped everywhere. We would prepare materials for our classes, talk with our fellow teachers, knit or do other things during the journey.

Her first task as a teacher was not an easy one. She took a teaching position where she was in charge of four different courses merged in one class.

I started working with 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th grades. It helped me a lot that there were very good syllabuses to implement throughout the country, adapted to each province, with their specificities and per level. I managed perfectly well with a small classroom of children. They were only 14 or 15, very respectful, kids from nearby ... very humble people. In those early years I was able to deliver everything I wanted to give. It was hard because of the weather, because of the distance, because of the time it took us to get there, but it was extremely rewarding.

Her experience as a teacher brought her a great deal of satisfaction, and in her profession she did not only deposit her professional knowledge but also her values, those that she wanted to encourage in all her students.

What were your days at school like?

I had dreamed of being a teacher all my life, I loved teaching. Even though I arrived at that first school without experience, the key thing is love, respect for the children, for the parents, and for the community. I've always liked to sing and dance. So, I did it with my students. I taught them our traditional folk dances, everything I had learned at school: 'Pericón', 'Zamba', 'Chacarera', 'Gato'. For school celebrations, our students dressed as 'gauchos'. It was not difficult because they already wore gaucho trousers with little slippers, so we only needed a simple cloth belt and a little shirt for them to play the role of a gaucho. Whenever possible, I would bring them the gaucho costumes that I had from my brothers. And for the role of 'paisanitas', girls would dress up with wide skirts

that their mothers could make. I also founded the Gardening Club for Kids because the school included a vegetable lot in its facilities. I taught my students to sow, grow, observe nature grow and to study it not in a notebook or a book, but live and in person. I even had contact with INTA (National Agricultural Technology Institute) to explain to mums how to preserve seasonal products. I also created the Red Cross in my school, so that students would take care of themselves in the case of accidents during school breaks. If a boy or girl fell or had an injury, those who belonged to the Red Cross Club would run to help him or her. I also created a Puppet Club, where I taught them to make puppets with paper, flour and water; to model them on small bottles and paint them with paint and create their own characters. I remember writing the scripts for those plays that they performed. Kids also learned to modulate their voice by playing bad guy, good guy, child or grown-up roles. I loved those little children's plays! Some of my students were very poor, and for Teacher's Day they would bring me a flower from their garden. Those were the most wonderful gifts for me. This is how my little girl's dreams came true. Because a teacher is a bit of all that: a mother, a friend, someone who always respects and loves children.

In 1964, after being appointed based on her credentials, Estela became School Principal and was able to continue making her dreams true for her beloved school.

What other things were you able to do as a school principal?

I made improvements to the school building, an old, very precarious, rented house. We had no ventilation, no heating, or natural lighting because it was a long and thin house, with a large living room in the front, which may have previously been a warehouse, then the rooms with brick floor, and a bathroom in the back. The patio had a dirt floor. I wanted to improve the place to make it look like the provincial schools, which were beautiful. I had new classrooms built. We also faced the situation that many of our children came to class unfed, so they would fall asleep on their desks. Provincial schools provided food to students at that time, but national schools didn't. I wondered why town kids received food, while the kids from the surroundings, who badly needed that food, did not. I wrote to the Provincial Ministry of Education and to Coronel Brandsen's School No. 1, the largest one, whose authorities agreed to send us a certain number of portions. And that's how the very poor and humble children were able to have their lunch in their school in the suburbs. But we still had to solve how to bring the food from where it was prepared, around 7 blocks away from our school. A young boy offered to bring it in his cart, with the help of a classmate. They brought the pots with food in his cart. We waited with the table ready, and we, teachers, served it to our students.

After this unforgettable experience, Estela was summoned to work at the Board of Qualifications of National Schools in the city of La Plata to be closer to her family. Later, she was summoned by the Provincial Ministry of Education and finally retired after working as a teacher at the School No. 43 in the city of La Plata.

In 1966, the Buenos Aires Board of Education summoned me to be its representative on the Board of Qualifications of National Schools before the Láinez Schools section that operated in La Plata. This consisted of a committee made up of a tenured teacher, which was me, a substitute and other teachers from the teaching union. So, I said goodbye to my students thinking I would come back the following year, but I never did. I stayed in that role, which benefited me because I was in La Plata, close to my family. I already had four children and in this way I could also focus on other important issues related to teaching. The Board of Qualifications had to interpret the Teacher's Statute in terms of promotions, transfers or claims. It was a wonderful and friendly work-group for several years until the national schools were transferred to the provinces. And the Láinez Schools disappeared. The teachers had to be transferred to the Ministry of Education of the Province and I was summoned for that job. I was there for a short time, but it was also a very important life experience. Then, I requested to be relocated to the La Plata district due to its proximity to my home. I was transferred to School N° 43. After seventeen years of working 40 kilometres (nearly 25 miles) and almost two hours of travel away from home, it now took me five minutes to get to work, since my new school was two blocks from home.

But her intention to continue with her teaching role crashed against a socio-political reality that would change her life.

When did you decide to retire from teaching?

I thought I would continue teaching as long as I felt capable, but on March 24, 1976, a dictatorship took me by surprise, kidnapping my eldest daughter, taking away a grandson who was born in captivity. I then decided to put an end to my specific and formal vocation, retire and thus have all the time to find Laura and her son. Life has its ironies: on August 25, 1978, Laura was murdered and at her wake an Estela that was unknown to her schoolmates and parents' association was revealed. I had suffered all my previous struggle in silence, without bringing my problems to work, because my vocation called for being all ready for those kids and giving them everything they needed from a Principal. Only two teachers knew of my distress. The others found out at a funeral home. They were speechless. And the most ridiculous thing that happened in that moment is that three days later I got notice of my retirement.

I said goodbye to that setting, to my colleagues, to the people, to become another kind of teacher.

The dictatorship brought dire consequences: prohibitions, censorship, persecutions that affected all areas of society and culture. Among them, education was one of the hardest hit areas, since there was little room for developing a true pedagogy for liberation, as had been promoted in the 1970s.

*I retired two years after the dictatorship began and during those two years I was always afraid of being reported, the challenge to not see an enemy in the other because that was what the dictatorship instilled: 'Watch your neighbour, see what they do; If they do something wrong, report them'. That was the slogan, but they didn't succeed, many people protected our children, they preserved them when they were persecuted. In other words, the Argentine society was not so contaminated. I remember when the dictatorship banned certain books, to name one, *The Little Prince*, also those on modern mathematics and structural grammar. For them, everything was subversive. They transformed the school into an absurdity because the educational standards were disappearing and we were instrumental to it.*

THE REUNION WITH HER GRANDSON

Since her daughter's pregnancy was so recent, Estela was able to confirm the birth of her grandson thanks to a witness who had been abducted with Laura.

In 1980 Pope John Paul II came to Latin America and two of us, members of Abuelas travelled to Brazil to see him, thanks to the help of Archbishop Monsignor Arns. It was there that I learned that Laura had been in a clandestine detention centre known as La Cacha, which today is a Site of Collective Memory. A couple of people in exile with whom we talked about where they had been and what they remembered told us that a girl named Rita had given birth to a boy, and this baby boy had been taken away to be given to her mother. In their memories, Rita had been freed two months later, on August 25, 1978 ... I realized that they were talking about Laura, because of the details and because I knew they called her Rita. When I told them that she had not been freed, that they had actually murdered her, they couldn't believe me because they recalled the captors had made her change her clothes to meet her family. But this was not what happened. Despite the pain, I returned with the certainty that I had a male grandson and since then I focused on looking for him. Plaza de Mayo is already the world, because what we are looking for, our grandchildren, are scattered all over the world.

Years went by and Estela's desire became a collective search that made her stand out as a world role model in the fight for Human Rights. But fate wanted her grandson to find her. In June 2014, Ignacio sent an email to *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo* saying that he had just found out that those who he had always considered his biological parents were not so, and in mid-July he went to the organisation's headquarters because he suspected that he could be the son of disappeared people. After the initial interviewing, he was received by the National Committee for the Right to Identity (CONADI), directed by Claudia Carlotto, and commissioned to carry out blood tests to cross them with samples from the National Bank of Genetic Data. Thus, on August 5 of that same year, the results confirmed that he was the son of Laura Carlotto and Walmir Oscar Montoya, becoming grandson No. 114.

Ignacio Montoya Carlotto had been raised in the rural area of Colonia San Miguel de Olavarría and when he turned 12 his foster parents decided to move to the city so that he could study music. Since then, he developed his artistic career and came to play in *Música por la Identidad* before knowing his origin.

Estela, how did you meet him?

On August 5, 2014, I was working together with Raúl Porchetto, organizing an activity for Arte por la Identidad, when I received the call from Judge María Romilda Servini de Cubría to give me a piece of news. I went to see her and she told me that a young man had tested positive with my family, so he was the grandson that I had been looking for so much. And I, though I am usually calm and speak slowly, started screaming with joy. I jumped up and hugged her. It was an unforgettable moment, like a lining of that miracle that was finally happening. Reuniting with my grandson has given me a huge share of happiness, still incomplete because Laura is missing, but I know that from some little star she is shedding light on us.

In the press conference organized to introduce him, Ignacio expressed the deep emotion he had felt when he found out about his new identity: 'I find all this that is happening wonderful and magical and I would like this situation that I live today to serve as a reminder of the search for other grandchildren and that we all understand the importance of closing the wounds that have been opened so long ago. I am lucky to be a part of this particular healing process. I have great admiration for all those who work to restore the identity of so many people. Beyond the fact that I have never been connected with *Abuelas*, my artistic, teaching and daily life have always been close to the claims of *Abuelas*. I share their idea of community and of building a better world with the elements that one has at hand.'

THE MEMORY OF LAURA

I had four children: Laura and Claudia, the two older girls; then Guido and Remo, the two boys who followed them. A fairly large family. And I took the time to look after them together with my husband, who was a small chemical businessman. I had a very good relationship with all of them. I always say that we educated them with great freedom. We listened to them, we were not one of those strict or narrow-minded parents who say: 'No, we don't talk about that; we don't do that'. We would tell them: 'Let's see, tell me'. In the 70s my daughters were teenagers during a rough historical moment in which the youth began to publicly say what they thought. Laura was already at university, where she began her political activism. She was part of a group of university students who criticised both the constitutional government that was killing and kidnapping people, and later the dictatorship. We talked a lot, we gave her advice, we were afraid that something would happen to her, sometimes we told her not to participate and she explained to us why they were going to continue pursuing a university policy against that 'de facto' government.

What is your best memory of her?

When my husband and I were dating, we dreamed of a daughter who would be named Laura. It was a romantic dream based on the title of a very beautiful film that we had seen, with a melody that still accompanies me. For this reason, my best memory of her was when she was born, on February 21, 1955. The first thing I looked at was if she was healthy, as any mother would do. She was beautiful! I always say that Laura was a young woman who lived in a hurry, faster than ordinary people. When she was thirteen, she started going out with a boy of 18. We told her he was old for her, but she answered me: 'Look, mum, we have two options: either I lie to you and see him the same, or you accept that I'm in love with him'. And I replied: 'I accept it and I will be by your side, I see your point'. Then, she married very young, at the age of 18, she got pregnant twice but neither of them reached term and, unfortunately, she lost the babies in those motherhood attempts. Later, she came actively involved in a political group, also in a hurry. She wanted to do everything quickly, it seemed that she knew that she was going to live for a short time and had to leave a lot behind. And those were very good moments that I lived with her, accompanying her in her dreams, in her hopes and also in the construction of a political activism that she embraced with great commitment, even knowing that she could die for it. I think her 23 years of life were all very good for me.

What was she like as a child?

She was a good student. She was responsible and she was very, very mature. With a strong personality, when she wanted something and believed that it was fair, she defended it at all costs. In addition, she was extremely smart, she liked to groom herself and look good. She was a loving daughter, an excellent daughter who only gave me satisfaction.

Laura was studying to become a History teacher when she was kidnapped.

She graduated from secondary school and began studying History at the Universidad Nacional de La Plata. I mean, she wanted to be a History teacher, but couldn't finish because she was kidnapped and murdered.

ABUELAS' STRUGGLE

When the military coup started, we did not know what would happen. We thought it was just another dictatorship. In our country, since 1930, precisely the year I was born, there have been continuous civic-military dictatorships. We call them so because the military were accompanied by civilians who interrupted the democratic process of the constitutionally elected president. And this is how, in 1976, this dictatorship disembarked with a sinister project. We soon realized that things were very different and we were scared. They kidnapped 30,000 people of all ages. Kids and young people, like those from the so-called 'Night of the pencils' in the city of La Plata, where 13 or 14-year-old children who were asking for a free school ticket fare were kidnapped and disappeared. They abducted anyone, adults, kids, old women who were visiting a house, it didn't matter. And they kidnapped children. That was the most sinister thing that this dictatorship did. But a mother gives her life for her child. It is the most sacred thing we have. And with that strength, we were able to overcome fear, uncertainty, anguish and transform tears into struggle. We went out to do what we had to: look for our children and let society know what was happening. We ran the risk of being kidnapped, but that didn't matter to us. We would leave no stone unturned in this search. No Abuela disappeared. Yet, there were Madres who were kidnapped and disappeared.

Estela joined the *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo* association in 1978. As part of the organisation, she became the voice of the *Abuelas*, waving the flags of Collective Memory, Truth and Justice and serving as the president of the organization since 1989. Because of her unyielding struggle, she obtained numerous national and international awards. Among them, the Order of the

Legion of Honor of the Government of France, the 'Defender of Democracy' award by the Parliamentarians of Global Action; the award 'Leadership in the best interests of the child,' by UNICEF; the Rank of Commander of the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic, and several honorary doctorates from national and international universities.

The search for grandchildren has been very hard, especially in the case of women who were abducted while pregnant and gave birth to their children in captivity without their families being able to meet the babies. This made it difficult to find them, since there were no photos or clues to discover the babies' true destiny.

How do you manage to find the grandchildren?

It is very difficult, they were kidnapped when they were babies, newborns, they took them from their mothers. My daughter Laura delivered her baby in a clandestine prison. That's where my grandson was born and they let her have him only for a few hours. Fortunately, there are people in society who help us in our research work. In the early days, we were the ones who investigated, in some countries they called us 'Agent 007', they said: 'You are detectives'. Now it is much more serious. In other words, if someone tells us where a grandchild may be, there we go, we find out, always with great respect and care. It is also true that since these children are grown up now, they sometimes doubt about those who claim to be their parents. So many come to the Abuelas headquarters to find out about their identity. And then there is conversation and investigation. And there is one thing that is essential: the blood test. Nobody can change the inheritance of mum and dad's blood. As they are not there, we use the blood of the grandmothers and grandfathers to identify them, and it is a safe, irrefutable test that doesn't deceive, that doesn't lie and guarantees that this young person is a found grandchild. These are the methodologies that we, Abuelas, have to recover our grandchildren.

The reunion with the first two grandchildren, Anatole Boris and Victoria Eva Julien Grisonas, happened on the other side of the mountain range and was very rewarding.

How did you react when you found the first grandchild?

It was a long time ago, in 1979. They were two siblings born from a Uruguayan couple and found in Chile, taken to and abandoned in a small square for anyone to take them home. Minority Justice found them and gave

them to a foster family without knowing that we were looking for those children. They were raised by a very nice couple, the kind who want to give love and who lawfully raise a child as their own. When their grandmother found out they were there, she flew to Chile and reunited with them again. In that case, their grandmother could identify them since they had not been born in captivity, it was an easy case. They were known to be Anatole and Victoria. We met them much later, when they were grown up. And every time there is a meeting or a celebration at the Abuelas headquarters, they travel from Chile – because they still live there– to visit us and share the party we throw at Abuelas with the other recovered grandchildren.

After the recovery of democracy, Human Rights organisations agreed that, from then on, it should be the State that would search for the *Desaparecidos* - the term had already been coined throughout Latin America. Our role would be that of collaborators in the task.

The early days of Alfonsinism (Raul Alfonsin was the first elected president after the Military government came to an end) were positive, many military officers were brought to trial and we contributed with all the elements that we could gather. It was dreadful to see them. I was a witness in those trials, like other Abuelas and Madres. They would not let us wear our headscarves in court and the press had no access. It was tough, but many officers were convicted.

At that time, the National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons (CONADEP) was created, but, contrary to our expectations, the trials of the genocide did not include all levels of command and were frozen by the passing of the so-called laws of 'Full Stop' and 'Due Obedience'.

Then we realized that such a fierce dictatorship does not end overnight.

Later, during the administration of President Carlos Menem, the organizations asked the Executive Branch for authorization to form a committee within the CONADEP, with the government as a member, so that the State could collaborate with the task of the *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*.

Amnesty International helped us a lot from the beginning and that is how the National Committee for the Right to Identity (CONADI) was born. Later, during the government of President Néstor Kirchner, we succeeded in having the so-called 'amnesty laws' –Due Obedience and Full Stop– annulled.

How do *Abuelas* feel about a new restored grandchild?

Each meeting is a joyful moment, a miracle that occurs. At the Abuelas headquarters we have board displays with photographs of our children, in some cases with a baby in their arms, which is the baby that disappeared. Suddenly one of those babies asleep in their mother's arms happens to be that man or woman now in front of us, we see it as a miracle of resurrection. They open a path of truth and for us it is a triumph over what the military wanted, stopping us from looking for our grandchildren, never to find them. It is to win a fight, to give them freedom. It is recovering their identity. They begin to know their real name; who their mother and father are; who their real grandparents, brothers, cousins are, and they find themselves with a life of their own, not the one that the dictatorship gave them.

The joy of finding a new grandchild is indescribable. Estela narrates how the *Abuelas* prepare for each reunion, putting all their joy in it and renewing their hope to continue fighting tirelessly.

Finding a grandchild is a party. We, the Abuelas, are happy people, we want to live and find more life. All the young people who work with us come to make a toast in honour of that new grandchild we have found and who is the grandchild of all of us because we are all looking for him or her. We hug each other because it is the triumph of truth over lies, of life over death. Above all, it is breaking with the sinister plan of the dictatorship that wanted our grandchildren to never meet their family again. They believed that they would be raised as they wanted but they failed. For this reason, every time a grandchild is found, a new child is born in freedom and for us it is the confirmation that we must continue. We have experienced cases in which some grandchildren did not want to meet us because they had been told that we were witches, but we receive them with love, understanding, and affection. We love them very much, that is why we look for them, to set them free, for them to regain their rights. And in this particular case, to gain the right to identity because each one of us is born from a mother and a father, and not from somewhere else. That is home, and if they cannot live there, they have grandmothers, uncles and aunts, a family and no child should ever be taken out of that place where they belong. And children must have a name. This is what Identity means.

The search continues because there are still around 400 grandchildren to be found. But as Estela retells, it is no longer just the *Abuelas* who are looking for them, but an entire committed and informed society that has adopted their legacy.

The military believed that we were going to get tired soon because we are women. But we have built a renowned institution and we have learnt to go forward during all these years, with good and bad moments, but always

creating around us. And we discovered the formula to find our grandchildren, the National Bank of Genetic Data. We are conscious that because of our age, we, the Abuelas, are not going to be there for all reunions, but we already have people to take over. Our recovered grandchildren who can do it, are with us working to find who they call 'their brothers and sisters'. This country is learning that collective memory mustn't be erased. We must remember so this won't happen again.

As mentioned before, our search remains intact despite the many difficulties that the *Abuelas* had to overcome on their way and, even today, they continue to endure.

Which are the obstacles in your task?

First of all, those who kidnapped our grandchildren know where they are, but they do not speak, they do not confess, they do not regret their actions. They are being tried for these crimes, but they do not say anything, they do not help us to find our grandchildren. The other difficulty is that there are people who know something because they witnessed, for example, that a neighbour whose husband worked in the armed or police forces showed up with a baby without giving explanations. Those neighbours are conscious of what these other people did, but they are afraid and don't speak. In those cases, working fast is necessary, since we are looking for human beings, people whose rights must be restored. But Justice sometimes works without understanding that things have to be done quickly because our lives slip by. When a constitutional government waves the flag of Human Rights, as a goal, as a necessity, it becomes easier and many more things are achieved faster.

A PEDAGOGY OF COLLECTIVE MEMORY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Estela stresses the importance of visiting educational institutions so that boys and girls can learn about what happened in our recent past from a direct source, taking advantage of the wealth that this implies.

You cannot tell them 'No, we don't talk about this'. For example, when students ask who the Abuelas are, we must answer; or when they ask what happened during the dictatorship, parents and teachers have to give an answer. Children are learning to live in democracy, therefore, they have the right to receive an answer to their doubts. That's why Abuelas frequently visit elementary schools, secondary schools and universities, to speak with those who have the

right to know. Young people need to know the truth. Now, that truth must be told with respect, without torment, without twisting their imagination. And they must always be reminded that violence is not an answer, that things must be done in peace.

Human Rights encompass multiple aspects of social life that must be safeguarded and guaranteed so that all individuals live in full freedom of action and thought. Estela has consistently defended throughout her life the full validity of these Rights both in her words and in her actions.

As from 1994, the Argentine Constitution includes a Convention on the Rights of Children and Adolescents. It compels the State —and we are all part of it— to enforce what is there expressed. This thorough law covers everything that a child needs to be happy and that it is an obligation of all adults. Children mustn't work, they must eat every day, be with Mum and Dad, go to school, live in a comfortable home and with parents who can work, play and have moments of leisure because being able to rest is part of life. When a child in this rich and vast country dies of hunger, it is the most terrible violation of the Rights of the Child. When children have to eat from rubbish bins, their right to life is being violated. Those rights must be granted and each of us has to ensure they are so. Then, for this violation not to happen anywhere, and particularly not in Argentina, each of us has to be supportive and collaborate. Why wouldn't I share what I have if my classmate is in need? Why wouldn't I help him? Focusing only on instructing knowledge on students is useless. We must include human and moral education that will teach us to share and listen to each other, that will prepare us for tolerance towards those who are different from us and to help those in need. The task of any school is to teach all this.

It is important to identify the role of schools as well as that of teachers to see how important they are in applying and guaranteeing Human Rights.

What is the role of the educational system in the defence of Human Rights?

Teachers with a passion for teaching play a very important role, which is to recover the well-being for the country through our teaching. We usually say that culture and education are what we need to correct the many evils of society, since they are the driving forces behind behaviour change. We all play our roles as citizens and say what is wrong and what is right. But teachers, the educators of these young people or children are the ones who have to share this lovingly and with the certainty that teaching will provide what each person needs, respecting individual characteristics. Children aren't equal and teachers must understand this fact and accompany them. Fortunately, history has

allowed me to witness and be part of teacher training in Human Rights, to prepare future teachers in how they have to teach them, which is not only referred to the disappeared, but it is related to being sympathetic, thinking about the others, sharing and respecting differences, the elderly, the teachers. Teaching the kids patiently their way if they have lost their track, so that they will grow to be good men or women. Teachers must leave their ideology aside to put the law into practice. Teachers must teach recent history, the consequences of the dictatorship and must try to repair those consequences so that everyone can regain their dignity. Teach students to leave consumerism aside and produce what they need. Moreover, teach students not to get depressed in the face of scarcity, but to rebel against it.

Our young democracy is key to a scenario of change. Rebuilding and strengthening our democracy should not only be a task of Human Rights organizations, but of society as a whole.

We are on a democratic path, in which a shattered country must be rebuilt. The last dictatorship, together with the previous ones, rendered a country without a democratic culture. Each coup was not questioned by the majority, except for students and workers. In addition, we were also left with a battered economy, poverty, shattered culture, poorly attended health. In other words, they left a chaos that demanded rebuilding. Let's not even talk about the Malvinas war, which left its burden of pain and death. In the first years of democracy, what had to be done was to study reality in order to shape a new structure of a dignified Argentina, an Argentina with social justice, which started to be built with some strong and weak points. But there is a long road ahead. The State has to fulfil its obligations, but civil society must also contribute.

ESTELA'S LEGACY

After so many years of search, Estela continues with the same strength as in the beginning and with the recognition gained both nationally and internationally for her outstanding and unwavering career. And it is still Laura who guides her every step of the way.

Who inspires you to keep fighting after so many years?

Mainly, my daughter Laura. Because I remember each of the words with which she convinced her father and I that what she was doing was the right thing to do and that she should do it even though she knew she risked death.

I carry the pain in my heart, but also great pride because at the age of 23 she gave everything for the others and wished for a happy country. She wanted poverty to disappear, she wanted everyone to have a beautiful childhood. I think of her, she accompanies me, she gives me strength. My other three children also inspire me. They are all fighting for the same thing, for our Collective Memory, Truth and Justice. And also my grandchildren, all together, as a family. And my partners, the Abuelas, each one with her own story. And so many people from this blessed country because each hug means love, warmth and strength. All of that inspires me.

Estela and the Abuelas have made an outstanding contribution for society to advance in the conviction of the defence of Human Rights and to face the challenge of promoting Collective Memory, Truth and Justice. Along that path, they continue to search for a better tomorrow.

But there is something that helps me even more, and for which I will continue working as long as I can, which is the desire to leave a better Argentina. Where children and young people, who are the concern of the Abuelas, grow up free, without fear of thinking, of getting involved, or of speaking. And that their parents have worked so they can eat every day. We want to leave a more dignified country for the future. All this gives me the strength to continue and, as long as I live, here is Estela.

What is your goal with the Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo?

To keep on. There are grandmothers who are no longer with us, others are already very old, but those of us who still are well, we keep organizing meetings to talk about what to do in the Board of Directors, of which I have been president since 1990, but where at the same time I am just another Abuela. I always say, a bit jokingly, that 'there are more and more walking sticks'. It is also true that each time we tend to sit a bit closer together and say to each other, 'Speak louder, I can't hear you'. We are growing old as we fight. My goal and that of the Abuelas is to continue finding Truth, Justice and Collective Memory. That is our fight.

FINAL WORDS

We, Abuelas, continue working because there is still a long way to go, many grandchildren to find, and because we still wish to leave much more from us. In this sense, it's so satisfying to go to a school and talk to the kids about everything that happened, so that it won't happen again. They know

that we are going to give our lives to this cause, but they also know they have to be active citizens. Even though they are young, they have to study because those who know are not fooled by anyone acting smart. And I assure you that the best thing is to get together: be it for a sport, an art, a study activity ... but it is always good to be united because it makes people active. It is crucial that children do not isolate themselves and participate in what they like with their companions because in that way they will surely feel very good. Always be good people. Respect your teachers, your elders, the others, those who are different. Value freedom and defend democracy together with your families.

Delia Cecilia Giovanola

Abuela de Plaza de Mayo

She was one of the 12 founders of the organisation

She was very young when she lost her husband and, since then, she raised her only son, Jorge, who would later be kidnapped and disappeared by the civic-military dictatorship along with his partner. The couple had a three-year-old girl, Virginia, who was returned to the family. But the couple was also expecting a new child, who was born in captivity. Along the way of her search, Delia became one of the twelve founders of *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*. Finally, in March 2015, she managed to find Diego, her grandson. His sister had taken her own life four years earlier.

Delia Giovanola was born in La Plata, province of Buenos Aires, on February 16, 1926. She lived a comfortable childhood and adolescence. She finished high school at the Mary O. Graham No. 1 Normal School in her city of birth, and then became a teacher at a young age in the same city.

Being a teacher is in my blood, it is my calling. I've loved teaching and have always been a teacher at home.

At the age of 37, she received a first blow: her husband, Jorge Ogando, died of lung cancer. Her son, Jorge Oscar Ogando, was a 15-year-old teenager and Delia had to go out to work. Since she was awarded a scholarship to study librarianship, she went to work during the day and studied in the evening.

I studied with great effort, but always with good humour because I had to go on and I had a child to raise.

Five years later, she remarried and moved to the town of Villa Ballester, province of Buenos Aires, home to her second husband, Pablo Califano.

However, her life would change forever on October 16, 1976, when her son and daughter-in-law, Stella Maris Montesano, who was eight months pregnant at that time, were kidnapped. They were expecting Martín, the grandson whom Delia searched tirelessly for almost four decades and who she was finally able to hug almost 40 years later.

JORGE'S STORY

He was cheerful, he was always singing, and he climbed trees. He also loved to run; he was impressively speedy! And he was on his bicycle all day long. I think he had a very happy childhood. He was fan of *Estudiantes de La Plata* football club, like everyone else in the family. When he grew older, he started studying Zoology because he was very fond of animals. I think he was a good father and a good husband; he got along with Stella very well.

The day of his son and daughter-in-law's kidnapping, another new life began for Delia. One more in her personal history. Not only because she had to search for Martín, but also because she was also left in charge of Virginia, her three-year-old granddaughter, who was returned to the family by the military.

I had to transform myself into a grandmother with the duties of a mother. And it was not easy to do it with all the pain I had for the disappearance of my kids. "Grandma, aren't you crying today?" Virginia asked me one night when I took her to sleep. I hadn't realized until then that I cried every night as I cuddled her. I would put a towel in my mouth so as not to cry out in helplessness. Jorge was my dear only child! The desired and pampered son... I don't know. He meant the world to me.

But despite so much anguish, humour is the characteristic that, according to her, kept her 'alive and strong' and never disappeared.

How do you stay strong after 39 years?

I have a funny mask that allows me to face this reality of the absence of my loved ones. It is a way of coping with the struggle and it is my support. I have no other way to survive. Fortunately, I am in good health.

Were Jorge and Stella activists?

I have never known and I still deny their activism. Jorgito did not come from a politicized home and did not understand a thing about it, as I do not understand it even after so many years because I am not a political activist. I always say that I am not a politician: I am an Abuela de Plaza de Mayo with a son disappeared and a grandson to look for (Ed. N.: When Delia gave the interview for this text, Martín had not yet appeared. He was identified in November, 2015). Jorge hosted in his home the wife of a colleague of his. This colleague was a relative on his father's side. This woman held meetings and was politically active while living in Jorge's home. At first, Jorge and Stella did not want to participate and left the house, but sometimes they stayed, I guess, and participated in these meetings. Virginia wished her parents had been political activists, I think she needed a justification for their disappearance.

TOGETHER SIDE BY SIDE

I have never hidden anything from my granddaughter. She was very easy-going when she was very little and she never asked for her parents. I remember that only once she cried asking for her mother in great grief. It was an unusual situation, and from then on, she never asked any more questions about them. We were part of Virginia's life by raising her up, and she avoided talking about her parents, until she started working at Banco Provincia, where Jorgito had worked. There, they suggested that she look for her brother.

That was an 'wake-up call' for Virginia and made her join the search for her brother for the first time.

"How do I go about it, grandma?" She asked me. That was the first time she faced her condition as the daughter of disappeared parents and confessed that she had not wanted to face reality before. But she was 'eager' to look for her brother and she joined the organization with her heart and soul. She became very close to the recovered grandchildren: she joined the HIJOS movement and the Hermanos movement.

On August 14, 2011, Virginia committed suicide in the city of Mar del Plata, at the age of 38.

She was active... I don't know what really happened to her. It may have been because of not finding Martín or because of all things she had accumulated, which she had hidden inside her for so long. The truth is that when a mate from Virginia's mother's captivity visited us, she had a tremendous fall, a depressed state, and she did not want to see or talk to anyone. She was treated

with psychologists and psychiatrists, who medicated her and gave her a leave of absence from the bank. She had not expressed any of her feelings before, everyone who met her remembers her joy.

I promised her that I would keep looking for Martín as long as I was strong, because the story of my life is the search for my grandchildren.

THE DREAM OF AN EMBRACE

Between 2006 and 2008, *Abuelas* had received allegations that warned that Martín had been registered by a couple as their own child, but the inquiries did not lead to a positive outcome. It was only on March 30, 2015, that he approached the agency's offices, where he was treated by the Spontaneous Presentation team. The investigation followed duly through the National Committee for the Right to Identity and DNA extraction was carried out through the Consulate. In March 2015, Delia found her grandson after four decades of search.

At the press conference in which the recovery of Martín's identity was announced, she summed up all her emotions.

I met my son. When they took him away, I made a promise to find his baby and when my granddaughter left this world, I promised her to find her brother. Today I feel fulfilled. I have nothing but words of gratitude and emotion. My family embraced us and it was very pleasant. I look like a overproud grandma, and I am one!

What is the feeling in *Abuelas* when a grandchild is recovered?

We feel hope and joy because each young person is a little piece of each one of us. We receive so much love from them that we feel each of them as some part of our family. I have a special weakness for Leonardo Fossati, who was born in La Plata, in a police station. He was a close friend of Virginia's from the moment he regained his identity, and he treats me with such tenderness that I feel like he was my grandson; the same happens with Victoria Montenegro, who is a sweetie and was a close friend of Virginia's as well.

How was the first telephone conversation with Diego?

He called her on the phone the day he confirmed his identity and she asked him if he was sure he wanted to talk.

Martín did not hesitate: "Why not? You are my grandmother". A big smile invaded her face after fulfilling her biggest dream in 39 years of struggle,.

VISIT TO THE MALVINAS MUSEUM WITH THE EDUCATION AND MEMORY PROGRAM

As I entered the museum, I looked up and saw myself on the wall. I froze and looked at the girl who was with me. "That's me!" I said. She looked at me and at the photo. "Yes, it's you!" She said, surprised. After a while she appeared again with a cameraman, a photographer, a journalist ... She brought a bunch of people and they asked me to tell them the story of the photo, but I had just found out that it was there.

Story tells that one day in 1982, in Plaza de Mayo, Delia showed a poster with a phrase that she had thought the night before: 'The Malvinas are Argentinian; the disappeared, too,' said the banner in her own handwriting. And one of those photographers immortalized it.

We had to be ingenious to find a way to let the world know what was going on, although I never dreamed that this photo could become a symbol.

A year after that first time, Delia visited the Museum in an educational day organized by the program *Educación y Memoria* of the City of Buenos Aires, together with 4,000 boys and girls from Buenos Aires public primary schools, to whom she addressed a few words.

I want you to be Guardians of Collective Memory. Today you are children and young people, but tomorrow you will be men and women. You will be the guardians of democracy, you will respect and care for it with love so that painful events such as the Malvinas War, which sowed so much death, and like the dictatorship, which took so many lives, never happen again.

Buscarita Imperi Navarro Roa

Abuela de Plaza de Mayo

Like many of her comrades in struggle, her life was devoted to her children, and later altered by the disappearance of her eldest son: José Poblete.

I am Buscaila Roa, I am an Abuela de Plaza de Mayo and I am José Poblete's mother, detained and disappeared on December 28, 1978. That same day, they also kidnapped his wife, Gertrudis Hlaczik, and their little daughter, Claudia Poblete Hlaczik, who was only eight months old at the time.

I am Chilean, I was born in a city called Temuco, on September 15, 1937, but I grew up in Santiago de Chile because my parents died when I was three years old, and my aunt took me to live with my grandmother. I studied little. When I was ten years old, I had to start working. At thirteen, fourteen, I met a boy, fell in love, and at sixteen I had my son, José Poblete, who later disappeared in Argentina. While José's father was doing his military service, I took care of my child on my own and when he returned, I became pregnant with Lucy, who today lives in the United States. Later, my children's father fell in love and married someone else, I stayed with my two children. I worked a lot, in hospitals, in family homes. I was strong-willed to keep fighting. Until I found the love of my life and Fernando was born. But I was abandoned again, so I raised my three children by myself. Later I met my husband, and I had my other four children. My husband and I were together for eighteen years and then we broke up. I have gone through hard times, but I must have a lot of willpower to have endured all that.

Nevertheless, the blows of life did not prevent her from finding the strength to become an *Abuela de Plaza de Mayo*.

I am one of those abuelas who went out on the street without knowing anything. I was simply a working person, a housewife. I didn't do really important things, but I've been learning. My son taught me to walk during that time he lived.

THE REMEMBRANCE OF JOSÉ

From his early years, José showed a strong commitment and concern for other young people like him, who lived in harsh conditions.

Chile was a very poor country at that time. Children of seven or eight years old had to go out to sell newspapers and sweets to bring food home. And that's what my children saw. They saw children working from a very young age. And José would say to me: 'Mom, I think we all have to help.' Well, Pepito had political convictions despite the fact that politics was not discussed in my house. And he was going around, through the slums, teaching to read, to write, to put a name.

At the age of 16, her son José suffered a train accident that prompted him to come to Argentina for rehabilitation treatment.

When Pepito was 16 years old, he had an accident. He was a student when he fell off a train that severed both of his legs. He was disabled and came to Argentina with the idea of going to a recovery institute. Here he was alone for two years. During the third year, I couldn't stand it anymore and I came to Argentina to be closer to him. I sold and gave away everything I had and traveled without blomking. With all my children and divorced from my husband. And here I had a fresh start. I liked Argentina and I stayed.

Jose's activist commitment, manifested in his first years of life in Chile, continued in Argentinian territory, when the needs of others were incarnated as his own, and he began his activism in the Unión Nacional Socioeconómica de Lisiados (National Socioeconomic Union of Crippled People) and *Cristianos para la Liberación* (Christians for Liberation).

In the institute where he was, in Barrancas de Belgrano, he met many people with disabilities. Some walked with canes, some others in wheelchairs. There he made a large group of friends. And my son began to speak with his mates and sees all the limitations they faced. At that time, there were mothers and fathers who did not have money to visit their children at the institute.

On November 28, 1978, José, his wife Gertrudis Hlaczik, and their eight-month-old baby, Claudia Victoria, were kidnapped.

When José disappeared, I started my search with José's mother-in-law, going wherever we could. Soon after, she fell into a very severe depression and committed suicide. In that moment I felt very lonely... So I joined others who were going through the same situation. I've been in Madres, in the SERPAJ, in Familiares, until I got to Abuelas. We all fought together because we were many mothers, many people, many relatives desperately looking for our children. We didn't know where to go, who to talk to until we met each other. I was one of the last to join in the marches in the square because my son disappeared in 1978 and by that time the rounds of the Madres had already begun.

The search and the reunion with Claudia

Claudia was kidnapped with her mother in a military operation. Both were held captive in *El Olimpo* for two days.

The work of the grandmothers has been very intense. The National Bank of Genetic Data is where all of us, relatives, have left samples of our blood, so that when our young people want to know the truth, they can find it.

Thanks to the search of *Abuelas*, Buscarita was able to reconnect with her granddaughter in 2000.

We found my granddaughter through a search led by Abuelas. Many say that it was because of an anonymous claim that arrived to the Abuelas Headquarters. Thus, we were able to send the case to Court and follow up with the judge who was responsible for the case. When Colonel Ceferino Landa took my granddaughter, she was eight months old.

Finding her gave me enormous joy. Her arrival was wonderful. When I found Claudia, I was thinking of going to the United States. My daughter Lucy had become a U.S. resident so that I could live there, too. So, I left with all the papers in order to stay and live, but I couldn't... Claudita was here.

The reunion with her granddaughter after 22 years was not easy. It was necessary to rebuild that bond between grandmother and granddaughter, which they would compose over time.

I had last seen her when she was eight months of age and then, the day of the reunion, we looked at each other and together with an aunt of hers on her mother's side, we handed her a bunch of photos that we carried in a small bundle. There was not much dialogue and at one point I told her: 'Well, honey, I'm your grandmother and whatever you need I want you to know that I'm here for you.' She was very angry with life, she was angry with the world, she answered me and said: 'I don't need anything.' Claudia was raised by a very

old family. The Colonel and his wife could not have children and they were already quite old. So, when she was a teenager, she would do the math and say: “Numbers don’t match because they couldn’t have had me at such old age.” But she didn’t even want to ask. She was an only child, they took her everywhere, she had a comfortable life. Only at the age of 22 did she realize that she was not the daughter of these people, that her parents had been killed, that the same man who was a Colonel could have had a role in her parents’ death. It is an unimaginable pain. And another thing is that she had obstacles in a lot of things: she had not learned to drive a car, she had not learned to ride a bicycle and she grew up in a wealthy family, who had it all. Now she says: ‘I have no more fears, my fears have vanished.’ Her uncle has taught her how to drive, she has learned to ride a bike by herself, she has learned a lot of things that, as she was afraid, she couldn’t learn before.

In her recounts, Buscarita says that it took several years for Claudia to hug her for the first time.

It took a lot of patience and a lot of love to give it to her for all the time we couldn’t. That’s how we got closer. It took us five years to bond. It was little by little until the bonds started growing and she realized that she had a grandmother, uncles, a maternal grandfather, a huge family that had been looking for her and loved her. It took five years for her to tell me ‘Abu’, for her to be able to feel protected by me (...) Claudia got married, she has a little daughter, so we are very pleased and happy.

The struggle of the *Abuelas*

Buscarita is the youngest member of the *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*. Her fight for truth and justice did not end despite being reunited with her granddaughter Claudia. The search with *Abuelas* continues without interruption, with the hope and strength that has characterized them since their beginning. When asked about the difficulties in their search, Buscarita explains:

It’s quite problematic because kids, when they have doubts about their identity, they sometimes don’t dare to go out and ask who they are because they are so afraid that the kidnappers won’t help them. Because the kidnappers have committed a crime. The kids, in general, are not with people who have adopted them, they are with people who have stolen them. There are cases in which there are people who have adopted children in good faith because they did not know that they were children of the disappeared, but in most cases the kidnappers stole them from the clandestine detention centers where they were born

or where they arrived being a few months old. So, these kids have been raised with these kidnappers thinking that they are their real parents. When they find their identity, what happens is that they say, ‘I’ve lost twice, because I found my identity, but I realize I have lost my parents.’ I mean, it’s a very difficult time for them. Now, when they look for their identity, they have doubts about their identity throughout their lives, or during their adolescence they begin to realize that they do not look like anyone else, it is different because they look for their identity and when looking for it and finding it, they find much of their history. So, it is much easier. Now, when we look for the grandchildren, and it is not a search initiated by them, it comes with great surprise, with great pain. And I believe that finding their family opens a path in life for them. Finding their identity, they feel free. That is the true word: free.

In this struggle, Buscarita has accompanied the program on numerous occasions, transmitting her testimony to the children of the schools:

Abuelas wait with open arms because we consider the kids as everyone’s grandchildren. They are the grandchildren of Argentina. We have many teachers who were disappeared. Students, workers, trade unionists. So many people who thought differently. They thought the world could be different. Teachers want students to know this truth from a young age so that they know there was a genocide, so that they know what happened to us. We will always thank teachers for this.

Rosa Tarlovsky de Roisinblit

Abuela de Plaza de Mayo

Vice-president of the organization

Rosa Tarlovsky de Roisinblit, vice president of *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*, is Patricia's mother. She was kidnapped along with her partner, José Manuel Pérez Rojo, and their daughter, Mariana Eva, 15 months old, on October 6, 1978. The young woman was about to graduate as medical doctor and to give birth to her second child, since she was eight months pregnant. The baby girl was returned to her family and raised by her grandparents. Thus, Rosa began the search for her daughter, her son-in-law and her second grandchild.

ROSA'S STORY

She was born in Moisés Ville, in the province of Santa Fe. She was the third of seven children of an immigrant couple who were part of the Jewish colonization of Argentina, group that arrived escaping the ferocity of the Tsarist pogroms.

She grew up in the countryside within a family with few economic resources. Rosa was a naughty girl, but an excellent student. As soon as her schooling was over, she went to Rosario to study obstetrics at the then *Universidad Nacional del Litoral* and after a few years she earned the position of head midwife of the Maternity School of Obstetrics.

In 1951, already settled in Buenos Aires, she married Benjamín Roisinblit and on December 8, 1952, Patricia Julia, her only daughter, was born. On Saturdays they took her to the School for Painters of the Lavardén

Vocational Institute of Art, in addition to sports practice and English. They also supported her in her studies and in entering the School of Medicine.

In 1972, Benjamín died of cancer and Rosa and Patricia's lives were altered.

ACTIVISM AND COMMITMENT

Patricia Julia Roisinblit was born on December 8, 1952, in the Buenos Aires clinic where her mother worked. From kindergarten to the end of her secondary school, she studied at the Normal No 8 in the neighbourhood of Balvanera. She was an outstanding student, loved and valued by her classmates and teachers. She continued to be an outstanding student in her university studies and after her father's death she began to work in the didactics department of a school. She also became interested in the changes that were brewing in the country and started her activism in politics. The people around her at that time remember her as someone in love with life, a person with conviction, passionate and generous.

When did you begin to worry about Patricia's fate?

One day, after coming home very late, she fell asleep. I woke her up and said, 'Patricia, what are you doing? You have to go to university.' This went on for some days. She kept sleeping and did not leave the house. Until she said, 'Mom, don't push me. I'm not going to study again because my classmates told me not to go any more, that they already went to look for me there.' She had four subjects left to graduate as Medical Doctor. She had already attended the courses, and only had to sit for final exams. She couldn't because she had to stop going to university.

She also had to quit her job at school and one day she announced to her mother that she was going underground: she went to live in a place whose address she could not give her mother.

Her activism had begun in the PRT and then she joined Montoneros, in the Health area, as doctor in operational situations. There she met José Manuel Pérez Rojo, with whom she fell in love and with whom she decided to start a family. When Patricia told Rosa she was pregnant, she asked her to get married. But that request was impossible: neither she nor her partner could put their signatures on any documentation that would allow them to

be identified because it would be the first step for them to be located and persecuted.

In June 1977, Mariana was born, and Rosa stayed with her daughter at the *Sanatorio Güemes* in the city of Buenos Aires. When Patricia was discharged, she again plunged with her partner and her baby into that life of activism that continued to be unknown to her mother. Every so often they would pick her up in their car and go for a ride, but they saw very little of each other. Rosa asked them to leave the country, but Patricia replied that 'leaving is for cowards.'

On October 6, 1978, Patricia, who was eight months pregnant of her second child, and Mariana of fifteen months of age, were kidnapped. Mariana was given to her grandparents. They were taken from their home, while José was detained in his business, in the Martínez area, province of Buenos Aires. From the testimonies of some people who were released from the clandestine detention center of the Navy Mechanics School, it was learned that on November 15, Patricia gave birth to a boy, whom she named Rodolfo Fernando. She had been transferred there from the Buenos Aires Regional Intelligence Unit in the Buenos Aires town of Morón, where she had been held together with her partner.

A DESPERATE SEARCH

Ten days after the kidnapping of her daughter, Rosa received a call from her and shortly after another, from a man, who told her that Patricia needed to check if the girl's vaccinations were in order. Knowing how methodical and orderly her daughter was, she realized that she was giving her signs of life.

When the due date passed, Rosa realized that her daughter would not be released, and it was up to her to find her grandson. She undertook the search for the whole family in solitude, following every trace that she found, until she met a group of women who had her same objectives. This is how the Argentine Grandmothers with Disappeared Grandchildren was created, who later took the name of *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*.

She served as treasurer of the Board of Directors between 1981 and 1989, year in which she became vice president of the institution.

Since 1982, she attended the annual meetings of the Human Rights Committee of the United Nations General Assembly in Geneva, until the dissolution of the said committee. Since then, she has travelled the world

fulfilling her mission to search for kidnapped children and to disseminate the task of *Abuelas*, holding meetings with personalities from all social areas that could collaborate with the association's objectives.

Her image and her voice appear in a large number of publications and documentaries. She has given talks, conferences and testimonies in countless national and international events in various countries around the world. Likewise, she has presented the topic in educational establishments of all levels. Her memory, precision and the clarity of her language in explaining the contributions of *Abuelas* regarding legal and scientific issues worldwide (especially in the development of DNA research techniques and the grand-parentage index), as well as her didactic skills, peppered with warm and humorous notes, have earned her countless invitations from all corners of the planet.

She is a member of the International Society for the Prevention of Abused and Abandoned Children and of the Latin American Association against Child Abuse. She has also obtained awards and distinctions in a personal capacity, for her career and performance in favor of peace, justice and the defense of Human Rights, especially the Right to Identity.

Parallel to her activity, she devoted herself from the beginning to the relationship with her granddaughter Mariana, who had been living with her paternal grandparents since the disappearance of her parents. She shared games, music, readings and trips with her. Mariana has a degree in Political Science, is a playwright and has a doctorate in Letters in Germany.

HER DREAM COME TRUE

Rosa managed to find her grandson in 2000 thanks to allegations received at *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*. He had been raised by a civilian Air Force intelligence agent and his wife, who were prosecuted for illegitimate appropriation and identity substitution.

Where do you find the strength to continue working?

I think that my activity goes a little beyond the main objective of Abuelas, which is the Right to Identity. I feel that my commitment to life is forever, to

all those who suffer from the lack of justice and freedom throughout the world. Forever. Until the last day of my life.

What do you think about the idea that there should be reconciliation in society?

I don't have to reconcile with anyone because I am not fighting against anyone. We are asking, begging and demanding that our grandchildren be returned to us. Nothing else. Nothing more and nothing less than that. We have lost something so dear to our hearts that I believe that we are not on the wrong path if we try to get it back. But they, the ones who took them, never asked for forgiveness. So how are we going to reconcile? We demand truth and justice. Memory? We have already taken care that collective memory is preserved.

What has changed in your daily tasks since finding your grandson?

The struggle does not change at all. I come to the Abuelas Headquarters every day and although I am very happy to have found my grandson, I was not here only to look for him, but for all those who are still missing. I found mine, I felt privileged, but I also felt responsible and obliged to continue searching, without forgetting the parents of those young people for whom we are also fighting to this day. And each new grandchild whose identity is restored means great satisfaction, a conviction that what we do is the logical, normal thing to do, what we should do, and that the achievements we obtain are the greatest compensation for all the work. Every time we find a grandson, we toast with champagne. We always wonder what else we can do. And we always find a what else.

PROGRAMA EDUCACIÓN Y MEMORIA

I was a child many years ago and education has evolved enormously since then. I went to school and was a very diligent girl. I liked to comply and never went to class without preparing for a lesson. Every night, by the light of a kerosene lamp, after dinner and before going to sleep, my parents told me and my sisters the story of why they had to come from Europe to Argentina. That also marked me.

Just as she heard that family story from her parents' voice, she is glad that the same is being done today, but at an educational level in schools.

Who are the storytelling *Abuelas*?

They are the ones who attend primary schools and kindergartens to give talks. Of course, they don't give the same explanations that we would give to an adult. We do not proceed abruptly: the stories are embedded in the body, mind and heart of each one of the little ones in a way that it is not shocking or can alter them psychologically. The kids absorb what is sown during their childhood. It lasts. And that is why we always address them with all our affection. This is very important. We do not go like great professionals to feel superior to them, but rather like people who reach the level of the interlocutor and everything works out very well.

How do boys and girls react?

They bring a wonderful questionnaire. Some come prepared by their families and others by their teachers. We address them with the best intentions because Human Rights do not refer only to the disappearance of people. They also cover a good education.

The *Madres* go to school

Madres de Plaza de Mayo

Línea fundadora

We, the *Madres*, have travelled a long journey which started on April 30, 1977, in times of the military dictatorship. Such endeavour was led by Azucena Villaflor de De Vincenti, when fourteen women made public their children's 'enforced disappearances', due to the genocidal behaviour of State terrorism.

Argentina's 1976 coup d'état strengthened a policy of violence on people's lives and integrity, based on the so-called National Security doctrine. Back in 1974 and 1975, violence had kicked off with the terrorist actions of the *Triple A* (Argentine Anti-communist Alliance) under President Isabel Perón's constitutional government, and these actions were responsible for the detention and disappearance of around 2,000 people.

At first, we wondered 'Is this happening to you, too?' Neither then nor now did we ever care about the ideology, religion, or the social condition of anyone in the group. We marched united by the anguish of the absent child, desperate since the dearest part of our lives had been grabbed from us.

As time went by, our pain changed into struggle and the struggle turned into active resistance. It made us act and gave us courage.

We started building our identity by identifying ourselves with a white headscarf, which later had our children's names so as to rescue them from anonymity. For this, we occupied a public space, the *Plaza de Mayo* square. We started to walk around its Pyramid and we continued doing this every Thursday from 3:30 p.m till 4:00 p.m. This gave birth to the historical deed called *La ronda de las Madres*. This place, where white headscarves are currently painted, has been declared a "Historical Site" by the Legislature of the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires. There, the first mottos, which were yelled after each *ronda*, started to emerge: "Alive they were taken, alive we want them". "Return the disappeared alive".

The unity among the *Madres* transcended the individual and it acquired value as a collective movement, which confronted with State terrorism.

During all these years, our claim still remains for Collective Memory, Truth and Justice, values which are instilled in our society as a collective memory. This Collective Memory is the result of a joint construction whose main objective is to make us witnesses of what happened in our country. By resorting to the use of words and new narratives, Collective Memory is granted the place it deserves, that is, the passing of Truth which gives a new revaluation of history, stemming from the horror experienced by our own fellow citizens.

We, as an organization of Human Rights, say 'No violence', but also, with the same conviction, 'No resignation'. Our actions were, are and will be an active resistance based on the respect for human dignity and life. In other words, we tie our constant claim for Truth and Justice up with the current vindication of Human Rights, by defending the economic, social and cultural rights of persons and peoples. To have memory is to fight against impunity, it is to rescue from the ghostly category of *Desaparecidos* (The disappeared) those thousands of human beings who were kidnapped, tortured and murdered because they dreamt of a truly fair society and embraced political and social activism. We foster the reconstruction of Truth, by being united by our children's lives and activism, their projects and their political participation. This was what each of them had chosen. They were part of a generation committed to their historical time and to their people, who was characterised by solidarity, commitment, and dedication.

One and all of the detained-disappeared live in their fellows' and friends' memory, who share their same commitment. They are also present in the ideals of those people who, even though they did not know our children, today they keep fighting for the dignity of human beings and our country, for education, health and the fair distribution of income. Today, they keep fighting in trade unions, at schools, in health centres, and in so many more places, and, above all, our children are alive in our hearts and in our families' daily routine. And they will remain so forever while we are still alive.

Madres de Plaza de Mayo - Línea Fundadora (Founding members)
available in www.madresfundadoras.org.ar

Mirta Acuña de Baravalle

Madre de Plaza de Mayo - Línea Fundadora (Founding members)

Abuela de Plaza de Mayo

She is Ana María Baravalle's mother. Her daughter was kidnapped on August 27, 1976, together with her husband, Julio César Galizzi. At that time, Ana María, aged 28, was studying Sociology and was five months pregnant. From then on, Mirta started her tireless search for her daughter and her grandchild, who is thought to have been born in captivity.

Mirta is one of the founders of the group *Madres de Plaza de Mayo* and one of the fourteen women who for the first time gathered together in that square to claim for their children on April 30, 1977. At the same time, Mirta was one of the twelve mothers-grandmothers who founded *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo* who –under the motto 'Searching for our grandchildren without forgetting our children'– started the long-lasting path for the restitution of the identity of those children kidnapped or born in captivity.

Today, after so many years of struggle and claim, Mirta continues to be a symbol in the defence of Human Rights. She can be found in every *ronda de las Madres de Plaza de Mayo* on Thursdays.

I always say that while I still have my strength, while I'm still mentally and physically healthy, I'll keep on standing for this claim of social justice and for Human Rights at present.

With those words, Mirta summarises her commitment to Collective Memory and the Present time.

From roses sprouted new roses and from these, others will continue sprouting. It is the eternal progression, the integration in all, the absolute from the non-permanent state. Meanwhile, I live and fight for joy, and for that joy

*I will die. That is what I want. Never suffer because of me. Think that nothing or nobody will ever fall me apart. It is true, I may be a reed that men can break. But I am drinking so as to calm, at least a little, that insatiable thirst of those who are in pain.*²

MIRTA'S STORY

Mirta Baravalle is one of the founders of *Madres de Plaza de Mayo*. On August 27, 1976, a group of military officers broke into her house and kidnapped her five months pregnant daughter, Ana María. The search for that grandchild born in captivity still continues today, since he or she was never given back to his or her real family.

My name's Mirta Baravalle. We've adopted our husbands' last names so that our disappeared children can be noticed. My daughter disappeared on August 27, 1976. Pretty late at night, more than 30 people dressed in military uniforms and wearing balaclavas broke into my house. They climbed our neighbours' walls and jumped in. They were all armed with long-barrelled weapons. I heard noises coming from outside the house, so I went out into the porch because we were all in the kitchen. My daughter, my son-in-law, my brother and I were playing scrabble that night, the loser was supposed to pour the mate³. This was what we'd been doing that night. At that moment, the house was searched, but they didn't take our children. They took one of our neighbours in an attempt to terrify everyone in our neighbourhood. They took some jewellery, money, and everything they could. We thought they'd left but 10 minutes later they banged on our front door. At the entrance, they asked for our daughter, Ana. Right then, Ana felt that a critical situation was going on. They threatened me. I told them that Ana was my daughter. And it was there, when my daughter stepped up and said: 'I'm Ana'. At that precise moment, they took her. We tried to make everything we could to know more about that night, but no one wanted to talk. With the passing of time, we believed that they performed two near-simultaneous operations that night.

The National Security Doctrine was rooted in the Cold War period and it was used to account for military defence and domestic security processes against the new conditions of the advancement of socialism and the instability of capitalism. It meant a military conception of the State and it justified its occupation from the part of the Armed Forces. In Latin America,

this was built on the basis of the existence of a domestic enemy, whose intention was to subvert the traditional ways of life, by implementing military strategies not yet applied to the wars known till that moment. In this way, the idea of 'an internal war' was spread, in which the State was supposed to fight not against other states threatening its sovereignty but against 'subversion'. Apparently, this was infiltrated, in an invisible way, in the daily lives of the citizens. We were all under suspicion. The theory of the domestic war also supported the version about equality of conditions between two armies that confronted each other:

The military were shooting both from neighbouring houses and from inside my house. It looked like a game of exchange of fire. This is the reason why the neighbours thought that there was a confrontation with terrorists. My son-in-law tried to hide in the backyard, and according to what I was later told by some neighbours, one of the military officers said: 'Kill him'. When the whole situation finished, I found the bullets in my backyard.

Thus, she started her struggle, by being one of the first women who dared to make public what was going on and what was her claim.

HER DAUGHTER, ANA MARÍA

Ana María was born on March 20, 1948, in the city of Buenos Aires and since she was very young, she was "an activist for life", as her mother defined her.

Ana was twenty-eight and Julio was twenty-five years old. I knew about my daughter's social activism. She was supposed to graduate that year as a sociologist and she worked for the Ministry of Finance. Neither of them could be unaware of what was going on in the country. My daughter was an activist of life. She used to set her alarm clock at dawn so as to go to help people living in the slums. 'If we aren't able to let people know their rights, that they shouldn't be subjected, that they should be the makers of this country, nothing will remain. If this isn't changed, in 25 years' time, nothing will be left from the Argentine society', she used to say to me.

She used to wake up really early in the morning in order to give food to the homeless and she said that she didn't want people to be subjected, but integrated.

Ana María was committed to her activism and to her condition as a student. She and her husband were struggling to undo what they considered to be unfair and to promote a more egalitarian society.

² Text written by Ana María Baravalle in a letter addressed to her mother in 1972.

³ pour hot water in a traditional tea shared by many people on the same vase.

One day during her second semester at university, she went out and said: 'I'm not going to continue studying there anymore', because she didn't agree with the kind of teaching she was getting there. And I knew that her only goal in life was studying. They were aware of what they wanted and what was wrong, and for this reason they were called rebels. I believe that if you aren't a learned or educated person, you can be easily manipulated. With her thirst for knowledge and her desire to transmit it to others, she was different from the rest. Now, maybe, I understand why they were taken from us. They knew all this and that's why they never let anyone dominate them. They had ideals.

They wanted to defend their and everyone's rights and those governments knew about this. That was the danger. The danger of knowing. This is the reason why this generation is gone. They were really valuable young people. This didn't occur only in Argentina, it took place at a Latin American scale. Operation Condor was being implemented at that time, it was happening in all countries. There was an empire there which was hidden so as to move all the wealth of the countries in the world. They never had any kind of rejection towards that idea of 'taking over'.

It was their commitment towards others what led them to their inconceivable disappearance. They had considered the possibility of being judged by their actions, but it was impossible for them to notice the horror they were about to face.

I think that when they truly committed to that change they were looking for, they must have thought that if they somehow became a stone in the shoes of those holding power, at most, they were going to be imprisoned, they were going to have a trial, knowing, besides, that they were going to become parents soon.

THE SEARCH FOR ANA MARÍA

Immediately after Ana María's kidnapping, Mirta went out to search for her in every place within her reach. But this search that she started in isolation would soon acquire historical characteristics.

How did your search start?

The following day we went out into the streets. I went to the Lourdes Church in the town of Santos Lugares so as to get some information about Ana María and her husband. I think that every person whose beloved relatives were snatched from his or her side immediately went out into the streets to try to find

them. People wanted to know why they had been taken. From that moment, our search started. Where? Why? These were the questions I asked in every place I searched in.

First, I started the search alone, by myself. I went to prisons, police stations, the Armed Forces, the Ministries. But no one would say anything, no one would give me answers. Later, I realised that there were other mothers. We were all in the same situation. We walked together, we went to different places searching for the same thing, even without thinking about it or knowing one another. We went particularly to the Ministry of Home Affairs then operating at the Casa Rosada, the presidential building. At that moment, we realised that we were always given the same ironic answer. It was when the idea of petitioning as a whole group emerged. We were the relatives of the disappeared, we didn't refer to ourselves as 'mothers'. At that time, the people who were snatched from us were not only our children, but sometimes our husbands or our brothers or sisters.

At a certain time, I used to go to the Devoto jail in Villa Devoto neighbourhood every day. I saw a lot of people queueing in the same line I was. Most of them were the relatives of political prisoners, but there were others who were also looking for their kidnapped children. Like us, they also didn't know where they were. There, I started to inform myself about the steps I should follow in order to get information. I filed a Habeas Corpus petition, Case N° 616—I used to handwrite these petitions. Once, in 1978, I got one document signed for the baby and in 1981 we made the formal petition in Casa Rosada.

How did the Madres de Plaza de Mayo start to gather together?

We were all going to the same places, looking for answers in those same places. At a certain moment, there were five or six of us waiting in the square, sitting on a bench or walking around as if we were just passing by. In this way, we started to become linked.

The first thing we did was to visit the vicariato castrense⁴. One day, Azucena Villaflor said we should all go together to the Plaza de Mayo and we decided to do it on April 30, 1977. That first time we were 14 women. We hadn't realised that it was a Saturday because we had no idea of what day it was and we were saying: 'But there's nobody here'. The first mother to arrive that day was Pepa Noia. But a Saturday was not a good day to gather together

⁴ branch of the Catholic Church in Argentina created to assist the Military Forces in spiritual and religious matters)

because there were few people in the square and as soon as the military saw us, they took us out from there. So, we decided to gather together the following Friday at rush hour. It was going to be difficult for the military to recognise us in the crowd. And we did this for several Fridays and every time more women joined us. Later on, a mother called Emma Panells said that we should gather on Thursdays because Friday was the day of the witches.

And as time went by, the cluster of Madres became bigger and bigger. On the one hand, because more youngsters were disappearing and, on the other hand, because their relatives started to learn little by little what was happening. They approached us with a lot of fear. It was a really hard time for us, but we were able to continue. That was our beginning.

Mirta was also one of the twelve mothers-grandmothers who founded *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*. At first, they gathered together under the name of 'Abuelas Argentinas con Nietitos desaparecidos' (Argentine Grandmothers with Disappeared Little Grandchildren), but in 1980 they started to use their current name 'Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo'. Their motto was 'Searching for our grandchildren without forgetting our children'.

And the Abuelas, how did they start to gather together?

One day, Mary Ponce de Bianco, a grandmother who later on was going to be kidnapped by Astiz, and I went to another grandmother's house. Her son had been kidnapped together with his baby. Mary and I went to her house to help her write a Habeas Corpus for her granddaughter, Clara Soledad. I remember that we wrote it on her bed while we were all kneeling on the floor. This Habeas Corpus petition was published in the newspaper La Opinión by Timerman and it turned out to be a whole scandal because we were talking about a kidnapped baby. Soon after that, a nun said that there was a baby with Clara Soledad's characteristics at Casa Cuna Children's hospital.

And that baby was her! But the grandmother was supposed to get her custody. It was a difficult process because when the baby was kidnapped, she was eleven months old and when she was found she was more than a year old. At that time, DNA tests didn't exist, and Judge Sarmiento denied her custody unless the family bond was proved. It seemed there was no way to prove it. But then, Clara Soledad's grandmother remembered that the baby had a mole on one of her feet soles. And this was true so the Judge was able to verify this and Clara Soledad became the first baby we restored to her legal family. I remember that we organized a mass to thank for this at the Santa Cruz Church in April

1977. The church was crowded with people. But that day was a terrible day for us...

Why?

Because Astiz attended that mass. It was the first time I saw him. Then, I met him again in the first meeting for mothers and relatives that we organized at Santa Cruz. It's as if I were still looking at him! I never felt comfortable with him; I found it difficult to believe in his story; I never liked his comments. For example, he used to say that we should know more about the activities in which our children were involved. I told how I felt about him to my friend Mary Ponce de Bianco, but she didn't agree with me. I stopped attending those meetings because I had the feeling that something wrong was going to happen. On December 8, 1977, Mary invited me to go to the Santa Cruz Church to sign a press release, but I had already signed it at Bettania Church; so, instead, I went to the office of the Permanent Assembly for Human Rights to see if I could get some information. That night, Mary and the rest of the people were taken by force from the entrance door of Santa Cruz! Astiz was responsible for this, he was the one who betrayed them. On December 10, La Prensa paper published the mothers' press release. That same day, Azucena was kidnapped at the entrance door of her house. Astiz had singled her out when he kissed her at the entrance of Santa Cruz Church.

What happened then with the kidnapped Madres?

Finally, we knew what happened. At the beginnings of 1978, some corpses appeared on a beach on the Atlantic coast. At that time, it was said that they could be the kidnapped mothers. It was never mentioned again, nobody knew what happened, there was total silence, it was impossible to get any information, and in this way, time went by.

On July 15, 2005, the truth was finally revealed. Their bodies were taken to the Lavalle cemetery. It was said that the bodies of some disappeared people had been taken there. The investigation proved that those bodies found belonged to the mothers, who had been taken by force to the ESMA (Navy Mechanics School). Later on, we discovered that they had been tortured and thrown to the river.

The most significant thing that shocked us and touched our hearts deeply was that the three bodies thrown to the sea appeared together on the shore. The sea returned them together with a nun called Sister Léonie Duquet, who was also missing back then. And one wonders how in the immensity of the sea,

these bodies appeared together on the beach, while there were others who were also thrown into the sea from planes. Yet, the three mothers and the nun joined on that beach. These things are so significant because if the military and judges denied being accomplices to what was going on, these mothers returned to become themselves witnesses of the tragedy, their bodies were there to reveal this. With their appearance, all the infamy and criminality was unveiled, something that has been so difficult to recognize that happened in Argentina, our country. We've had such sinister characters in our history, that caused so much pain on our citizens, not only on one generation. The anguish and sorrow of not knowing what happened to our children, of learning about their tortures and that were victimized in such an atrocious way.

How did Abuelas look for their grandchildren?

As Abuelas, we gathered together at Café Tortoni; we used to go there to celebrate fake birthday parties. At that time, the person in charge of organizing this was Chicha Mariani, who was then the president of the movement. Vilma González, Julia Rebollo and I used to meet in different houses, in faraway places. All the claims we filed at an international level were never replied to.

From Abuelas, we carried out a lot of activities as a group. We knew about many detained-disappeared people who had not been claimed by a formal petition and we went out into the streets to search for them too. Those families didn't know about the existence of Abuelas. There were not only babies born in captivity, but also children who were kidnapped together with their parents. We did everything we could to gather as much information as possible. An example of this is what happened with María Eva Duharte. A survivor told us that María Eva had delivered a baby while she was in captivity. Her family lived in the town of Grand Bourg and so, there I went to meet them. María Eva's mother told me that it was impossible, that María Eva wasn't pregnant when she'd been kidnapped. But in that same kitchen where we were sitting, there was a little girl who said: 'Yes. My mum was pregnant. I knew that'.

And plenty of cases were like this one. We know that there are hundreds of grandchildren out there to be restored to their legitimate families.

Pregnant women who were kidnapped tried to delay being in labour because they knew that their kidnappers would illegally appropriate their babies. I cannot understand such atrocity. How the military could be so evil and unrestricted in their actions. I believe that our children's generation underestimated their enemy's criminality.

At first, we, Abuelas, gathered together for the only selfish purpose of finding our own grandchildren. But later we felt that every abducted child was

our own grandchild. We called ourselves 'Abuelas Argentinas' (Argentinean Grandmothers) and at the beginning we were thirteen: Clara Jurado, Haydeé Falino de Lemos, Señora de Caimi, Julia Rebollo de Grandi, Irma Cisariego de González, Beatriz de Neuhaus, Chicha Mariani, María Eugenia Goyena, Alicia de la Cuadra, Elia Califano, Vilma González.

As Abuela, I was able to participate in the restitution of many grandchildren. Paula Logares was the first granddaughter to be restored by the use of DNA analysis. She was twenty-two months old when she was kidnapped. Even though she was so young, she was able to point at herself and said: "Me, Paula". She defended her name at the age of twenty-two months old! We found her when she was already eight years old but she had been told that she was six.

Another initial case was Menchu Quesada's nephew. She was an actress. The boy recognised her one day when she appeared on TV and said: 'Auntie'. And also the case of the Antonale siblings, who were left in Valparaíso.

Abuela Hilda Toranzo and I went on a two-month trip around different countries: Austria, Germany, France, Switzerland and Spain. Every place we were in was crowded with people waiting to see us. From Canada, we received thousands of letters per day. This felt like recharging our batteries, because we had to return all that support back. I used to receive over a hundred letters in my house every day. I read each and every one at night when I got home after being working on our cause all day long. I keep some six or seven thousand letters.

Were you ever scared?

Once my pregnant daughter was kidnapped, the worst thing in the world had already happened to me! After that, you aren't frightened. You feel a lot of things –anguish, helplessness, annoyance. But you aren't scared.

Mirta is still looking for her grandson or granddaughter, with the double uncertainty of a Madre and Abuela who never surrendered with the passing of time.

What could you find out about what happened with your daughter and her baby?

The day Ana María was kidnapped, she had seen her doctor to check how the baby was. He had told her that her due date was by January 15, and he had congratulated her on her perfect pregnancy. So, later, I made my

conclusions based on this. I knew that since the baby was in perfect condition, he or she should be alive. At first, I was told that babies were returned to the families after 6 months, so I waited for several months.

From an acquaintance, I learned that Ana María had given birth on January 12, 1977. That day, it was around eleven p.m. when someone knocked at my door insistently. I hurried to open the door and found this person who said: 'The three of them are fine'. He was supposed to reach his house before midnight, he lived twenty blocks away, so that's why he was in a hurry. The following day, this person was kidnapped. I never knew if my grandchild is a girl or a boy. Till today, we have never found Camila or Ernesto —these were the names my daughter had chosen for the baby. Besides, I was never able to learn where they were held in captivity and what really happened to them.

MIRTA'S LEGACY

In several interviews, Mirta has recognised the importance of taking an active stance in public responsibility, the need to commit ourselves to others and oneself.

We used to think that the responsibility was only in the hands of politicians or members of government. We believed that we were just citizens who were supposed to accept or not politicians' policies, just that. That we were ordinary citizens who were just to vote. But our children taught us to see life in a different way. They taught us with their own lives.

In each of the schools she visits, this *Madre de Plaza de Mayo* puts her trust in her interlocutors: the boys and girls who listen respectfully to the story she has to tell.

We, Abuelas, have this: our expectations placed upon you. In that generation that is dormant today. You are like the substitutes for that generation that isn't here today due to their ideals. But they are present today and forever.

Mirta referred to the dismemberment of her nuclear family and how, despite her daughter's loss, they were all able to move on with enough strength so as to keep on struggling for Collective Memory, Truth and Justice.

My other children were also marked by their sister's loss. Their lives were never the same again. They lost their lives too because everything changed for the families after such events. Families fell apart or were dismembered. And the grandchildren are still suffering from this consequence. This is what we,

Abuelas, want to never happen again in our country. This is the reason why we fight for.

HER COMMITMENT

One has this commitment. It's not a formal commitment, but a truly honest commitment, a heartfelt commitment, a commitment of love. I always say that while I still have my strength and I'm still mentally and physically healthy, I'll keep on fighting for this cause claiming for justice. But my claim isn't only for the disappeared but also for social justice and current justice. It's not that we leave behind what happened to us, today we fight also for present Human Rights, what our children died for. We also fight for all those people who suffered in order to change our society, to make it fairer for all. So, I have this commitment and while I can, I'll keep on fighting with all my heart. Because our children, the youth of that time, would do the same, like so many people today are committed because they see people suffering, they feel it. Our children would be today working beside this generation of today, helping those people in need, somehow supporting and comforting them. So our struggle is an endless endeavour and I hope to live many years so that I can keep on supporting it.

FINAL WORDS

The importance of going on...

I always say that I want to be a mother worthy of my daughter's love because I know how she was since she was born. And I don't want to be ahead of my daughter but beside her. Because where I am, my daughter is there too. I know it is beside me where she wanted to be in this struggle.

Forty-one years have gone by and I am like the first day. Our families changed. Every child who was brought back is a different story. Their parents thought a whole life for them. It's necessary to restore them all. They have the right to know their story and their families have the right to know where they are.

Carmen Aguiar de Lapacó

Madre de Plaza de Mayo - Línea Fundadora (Founding members)

She was a Member of the Board of Directors of CELS and a member of the Board of Directors of Memoria Abierta

Carmen Aguiar de Lapacó was the mother of Alejandra Mónica Lapacó, her only daughter, who was detained-disappeared on March 16, 1977.

Alejandra was born in San Juan province on November 15, 1957. At the age of 19, she was a French teacher and studied Anthropology at university. On March 16, 1977, Carmen Lapacó was kidnapped along with her daughter, Marcelo Butti —Alejandra's boyfriend— and Alejandro—her nephew—. Carmen and her nephew remained in the clandestine detention centre known as *Club Atlético* until March 19, 1977, when they were released. Alejandra and Marcelo are still disappeared. Carmen was 52 years old at the time of her kidnapping, she was a secondary school teacher and had been a widow for four years.

From that moment on, Carmen began her tireless search for her only daughter, becoming a role model in the fight for Human Rights. She was a member of *Madres de Plaza de Mayo - Línea Fundadora*, the Centre for Legal and Social Studies (CELS), the Monument Committee (*Parque de la Memoria*) and the Board of Directors of *Memoria Abierta*.

Despite the painful situations she had to experience throughout all these years, she visited schools delivering her message of hope: “We must be optimistic, we persisted for so many years because we’ve always thought there’s something better in the future”.

Necesito horas, muchas horas para agradecer a mamá el cariño que tuvo conmigo y ella solo pide un beso y una flor. Esa eres tú mamá.

I need hours, many hours, to thank my mum for her love to me and all she asks for is a kiss and a flower. That is you, mum.

Tu hija querida, Alejandra (Your dearest daughter, Alejandra. Written by Alejandra Lapacó, in second grade).

Carmen died on December 13, 2017, at the age of 93. To honour her memory, we share an interview made by the *Programa Educación y Memoria* (Education and Collective Memory Programme) of Buenos Aires in 2012.

CARMEN'S STORY

Carmen Lapacó was a committed activist for Human Rights and *Madres de Plaza de Mayo - Línea Fundadora*. In 1977, the harmony of her home was interrupted by the violence of State Terrorism. At the time, she was living with her mother and her daughter Alejandra, she had been a widow for a few years and she was a teacher in a secondary school.

I'm Carmen Lapacó, Alejandra Mónica Lapacó Aguiar's mum. I use my daughter's last name because each of us has put aside her own last name to use our children's and feel closer to them. Alejandra was 19 years old when she was kidnapped and 33 years have passed since then. At our age we're still in the square, it means that we carried on despite everything.

Some days before the first anniversary of the de facto government, a military operation carried out at Carmen's house resulted in the kidnapping of her, her daughter Alejandra, her nephew Alejandro and Marcelo, Alejandra's boyfriend.

It was Wednesday, March 16, 1977. Alejandra had an exam on Friday and she was going to a friend's house to study, but since the exam was moved to Monday, she didn't do it. She told me she'd study on Saturday and Sunday. If she hadn't been home, neither would've Marcelo, her boyfriend. And it was that night. There were Alejandra, Marcelo, my mother, my nephew Alejandro—who had come from San Juan to sit for some exams and graduate as a lawyer—and I. We were three women living in the house, Alejandra, my mum, and I, so when there were young people at our table it was all about laughter, they'd make jokes to each other, and we'd follow them. Suddenly, the doorbell sounded very low, and I said 'I think someone rang the doorbell'. I got up, looked through the spyhole and said 'it's not here', and then they shouted 'Joint Forces in Action, open the door or we'll break it'. The boys immediately told me to open and some heavily armed men came in. I can't forget the image of those people coming in: my mum holding my daughter and the two boys standing

there, frozen. They came in, searched the whole house. They stole, they broke, they took all the study materials my daughter had for school and university. We had a bookshelf that reached the ceiling and they threw all the books to the floor. They took the anthropology book that Alejandra had bought. They didn't leave anything. After some hours at home, they took my mum's jewellery, a necklace and a gold bracelet, the dollars I had as savings, they took money and two suitcases filled with our belongings. And they took the most important thing in my life: my daughter. She was nineteen years old when they kidnapped her.

They took the four of us and left my mum. They brought us to the hall and put us against a wall. They covered Marcelo with an orange hood and us with headscarves, mine was made of chiffon, since the chiffon is transparent, I could see everything. They asked our names and read them in a list. When they got to me, I heard the voice and nodded, so one of them grabbed me by my hair and started to bang me against the wall. Afterwards, I recognized them as "Turco Julián" and "Colores". They left me and my mum outside in the hall and made the boys come inside. I couldn't hear their questions, but I heard Marcelo's voice as he answered, because he spoke very loudly, so that I could listen. At some point, he said 'No! The lady (referring to me) doesn't know anything and she is not even interested in politics'. Then he started to talk about Alejandra and he said 'This one is so fearful, she would never participate in politics', and about my nephew, he said 'This one is a coward from the countryside', sort of blaming himself, saying that he was the only one who knew about politics, but in spite of that they took the four of us. In my case, I think they took me because they saw an unfinished letter I was writing to one of Alejandra's classmates from university, her husband had been killed and she was now in Brazil.

Carmen experienced the horror from the inside in the clandestine detention centre known as 'El Club Atlético'. There she suffered the violence of the repressors for three days.

I was blindfolded with the see-through headscarf and was able to see, though I pretended that I couldn't. They took us out of the house and there were two cars waiting. They made me and my nephew get in one of the cars, and Alejandra and Marcelo on the other. We took 9 de Julio Avenue southwards, then turned on one street which I later found out was San Juan Avenue, and then they took us to a place which, in their jargon, they called 'El Club Atlético'. We came in and they made us stand against the wall. There were some little windows at the level of the pavement. There was a desk and a person that gave us a letter and a number. They made us take off our rings and they took a Rolex from my nephew. They filled some greenish cards, asked for our personal information and said: "The names you had up to now are not your names anymore". I was F52, Marcelo, F50, Alejandra, F51 and my nephew, F53.

After walking through a door, you had to walk down some steps. We got to some small cubicles, they chained us on our feet and made us sit. At that time, I was 1.63 m (5.3 ft) so my feet came out a lot. I threw myself to the floor, on my belly, and I looked to the sides. I heard steps and I saw Marcelo and Alejandro, but I couldn't find Alejandra.

The last time Carmen and Alejandra met was precisely there, in that hell from which only few people could get out.

At some point, I looked up and noticed that Alejandra was near me, so I reached her with my hand, she screamed so I told her who I was. We kissed and hugged and she said: "Mummy, I can't stand torture anymore, I'm dying". That was her last kiss and her last hug. They came and took her away.

After that, I was taken to testify twice. I saw Alejandro had been beaten and Marcelo was in a really bad condition, he'd probably been tortured because he was really down. When I was taken to testify they asked me what we talked about in the teacher's lounge, if we discussed politics. I said that we didn't, that we talked about cooking recipes, about the subjects, anything, but not politics. They also asked me if I discussed politics with my students and I said: "How could I discuss politics with the students? I'm an honourable teacher". I said all that nonsense because I thought it'd help me save my daughter, I don't know.

I remember they asked me why there were pictures of Evita and Perón in the house and I said: 'Because we're Peronists'. Then they said something I didn't like and I said: 'Perón didn't win only because of my vote and many of you here must've also voted for him', and the one that was in front of me—the one interrogating me—slapped me, then I saw his face and knew it was "el turco Julián". It's sad to remember all this...

At some point they came to tell me I was going to be released. They took me to release me from the chains and they asked me for the padlock number. I told them that I hadn't been given any number, I think they didn't, and they grabbed the chain and hit me in the back, as a result of that I have been very weak ever since.

Some hours later, my nephew and I were taken out of there. We were taken to a van that was used to deliver food. I didn't want to get on because I wanted my daughter to come. They told me to get on and my daughter would go in the other car. They drove us somewhere and ordered us to get off and walk backwards. Alejandro and I held hands, he said to me: 'They'll kill us now', and I said yes, they would kill us. I uncovered my eyes because I wanted to see their faces, but they were already gone.

HER DAUGHTER ALEJANDRA

Alejandra was Carmen's only daughter. She was born on November 15, 1957, in San Juan province and from an early age she began to stand out from her mates:

Alejandra was always a child that was always a bit ahead of her age. I remember one day when the preschool teacher called me and said I should put her in first grade because she was bored around children her age. So I had her take two tests to see if she could go to first grade. Indeed, she could. She was a year and eight months older than her chronological age. So my husband and I decided to enrol her in the Lenguas Vivas school. She attended primary and secondary school there, at the same time she studied French and graduated as an elementary teacher of that language. She was quite smart, in second grade she wrote poetry. When she finished secondary school she was 16 and, 15 days before the last day of school, she turned 17.

After that, she decided to study Anthropology and she wanted to study Fine Arts simultaneously. I remember a friend telling her that, unless she married a rich boy, she was going to starve with those professions. But that was what she wanted and I was not going to change her intentions.

She also liked music very much. When she was a child we enrolled her in a music school and she learnt to play the recorder and the guitar. When those monsters came to my house they smashed her guitar against an armchair. She liked music very much: The Beatles, Serrat, Les Luthiers. One day, the mother of one of her friends asked her to go to her school and sing, and she did. We went there to pick her up and then went to a bar, and she was carrying her guitar, so one lady asked her if she knew a song in Arabic and my husband said: "No, in Yiddish", he liked to joke like that. I remember my husband said: "In this house there's no money, but there's laughter", and that was important. The laughter stopped suddenly, but I think one has to keep on smiling and looking for the good things in life, without forgetting the bad times, though.

Since she was a little girl she had a sort of sensitivity that not every child has at that age. At home we always talked about politics, she was raised in an environment where politics was not a forbidden topic. I remember one time when she received some toys on January 6, the Three Kings celebration, and she said: 'Mum, the Three Kings are mean because they give presents to children with money and poor children don't get anything'.

I recall another time when Alejandra was twelve and was about to start the first year of secondary school. I got home and she was crying. I asked her: "What's wrong? Why are you crying?" and she told me that the girl who helped

us in domestic work had told her that she started primary school at twelve and other children made fun of her for being older, and Alejandra was twelve and starting secondary school. So that was the reason why she cried.

I was sensitive like that when it came to injustice and other people's problems, perhaps she heard conversations between my husband and I, or perhaps, she was that sensitive. Besides, she had a strong personality, not whimsical, but willing to make things clear.

What was Alejandra's relationship with her mum and dad like?

She had a very good relationship with me. I worked morning and afternoon and when she came home from school we would talk about various topics. So my husband would say: 'Why is it that you have so much to talk about?', then I would answer: 'It's important to listen'. I was a good listener for her; he wasn't, but he loved his daughter. I had maternity problems, I had lost two pregnancies before she was born and two after that. She was born because I spent seven months in bed. She was born early and was taken away from me early.

She was an only child and maybe we were too strict because of that. We didn't want her to be raised as an only child, to be capricious. But sometimes I regret, I think 'Why didn't I let her be capricious when she didn't like some food, or that sort of thing?'. So maybe we were too strict, but in those little details, today one says 'If we had been...'. We didn't want her to be capricious and follow her tantrums, but teach her to do the right thing.

Her relationship with her father, her father was mad about his daughter, even more so because she was smart and because of her ideas, that made him even madder... One thing is true, she could handle him more than she could handle me.

What was Alejandra's relation with politics like?

We come, from my side, from a family of politicians. My grandparents, my parents, my uncles, they were all politicians. My father was a congressman, my uncle, a senator; let's say that we always talked about politics at home. My husband was a journalist and worked in the political section of the newspaper, my daughter was raised in an environment where politics was not forbidden and where we thought that politics was the way someone thinks or expresses their wishes. We never thought the situation could go so bad...

In the School of Philosophy and Letters, where she studied Anthropology, she started her activism in the Juventud Universitaria Peronista (University Peronist Youth). She also worked at a publishing house. She worked for one year as a monitor in the school where I worked, but she didn't like to be a monitor because she said they were repressors.

By that time my husband had already died, I was not receiving a pension and had to support our home with my teacher's salary, which wasn't much, really. We lived on 900, Marcelo T. de Alvear street and Marcelo, Alejandra's boyfriend, lived in a boarding house three blocks away from home and sometimes came for dinner. He studied History in the same university and worked at a bank.

THE SEARCH: FROM DICTATORSHIP TO DEMOCRACY

When their fellow activists started to disappear, I told them: 'Guys, I can see things are getting really ugly, why don't you stop for some time and continue your activism later?', and they confidently said: "We aren't doing anything wrong, it's only politics'. But at that time politics was a bad word for the military.

Carmen was released along with her nephew three days after the fateful night when she was kidnapped. From then on, the long search for her daughter began.

I never meant to be a brave woman, it's what came naturally, like when I started to go to Plaza de Mayo. I was afraid, but it was my love for my daughter which guided me.

My brother, my nephew's father, had been told to talk to a very prestigious lawyer, but he asked for too much money... My brother told him that we weren't wealthy people, so the lawyer said he should go to the Courthouse because in that place people were taught how to write a habeas corpus petition. I didn't know that a habeas corpus petition could be filed on a Saturday or a Sunday, so I went on Monday.

In the Courthouse, the woman that recorded my testimony advised me not to mention that I had been disappeared, she said I might be more likely to receive an answer and Alejandra could be released if I didn't mention it. I think she was honestly meaning to help when she said that.

I filed many habeas corpus petitions and the answers were always negative, except for Judge Sarmiento, who proceeded just a little more and summoned the concierge of our building, the one that had opened the door that night. He was so happy, he said: 'Alejandrita will appear. I was called to testify and I told them everything'. Poor man, he didn't realise that they had only called him because I had given his name.

I later found out that it was possible to go to the Ministry of Home Affairs, which operated at the Casa Rosada, the entrance was a side door, and there I went. I had heard that there was a group of women that were looking for their children and that they met at the Cathedral. The first time I went there, it was on a Wednesday and the Cathedral was closed. On Thursday it was also closed, but while I was standing on the stairs I saw a small group of five women in the corner of Balcarce and Hipólito Yrigoyen streets, I started to approach and I noticed they were looking at me. Tita Maratea came closer and said: 'Has someone you know been disappeared?', I answered: 'Yes, how do you know it?', so she answered: 'Because of the sad look on your face'. You didn't realise that your face reflected your feelings.

Carmen stopped searching on her own, like she had done at the beginning, to become a part of a collective search by joining different Human Rights organizations.

I started with Madres, it was a small group, a bit more than twenty, I must've joined in mid-April. Before that, I went to Stella Maris church, it was there where Azucena Villaflor said: 'Let's go to the Square, we're wasting our time here!'. Since the priest was part of the Navy, the information we provided him went to officers of the Navy, the same happened in the Ministry of Home Affairs.

And that is when I joined Madres, going to the Mayo square. One day a police officer approached and said we couldn't be in a large group because we were under a state of siege and meetings of more than two people weren't allowed. So we left the place and formed groups of two, and we started to walk in circles around the monument to Belgrano, we didn't have the headscarves yet. When they noticed that we were there, they tried to make us leave, so we left through one side and entered through the other, the point is that we were there for half an hour.

In 1978, because of the football world cup, foreign journalists arrived, people abroad had more information about what was going on in our country because reporting the news was forbidden here. Sometimes, a foreign newspaper reported some news, the Buenos Aires Herald, for example, which was written in English. When the journalists came, policemen were ordered to form a line, so that we couldn't pass. It wasn't easy, they arrested us but I was always

able to flee. Meanwhile, the Padres that were not part of the Madres's marches, were nearby waiting to see what happened. There were usually lawyers and, if they arrested us, they rushed to the police station to try to get us out.

I remember that one time I was going to be part of a trip to Europe that we'd been invited to. They told me to not even think of going to the square the day before travelling. I, a true disobedient, went to the square anyway, but the police came and started to chase us. I felt a woman was grasping my arm and I said: 'Who are you? How dare you grab my arm?', and she said she was a policewoman, and I said 'You disguise as a normal person because you are embarrassed to wear your uniform!'. So one of the Madres drew me apart because otherwise, I was going to get arrested for fighting just one day before the trip. Some other times we would flee and get inside a subway station. That was what we did to survive. We've been going to the square for 33 years, and I still do it.

Around the time of that trip to Europe, I started to work at the CELS, which had been founded by Emilio Mignone, Augusto Conte, Boris Pasik and Alfredo Galleta. I joined as an assistant. We were organising a demonstration against the government, so the five of us were arrested. We were in prison for five days and I was the only woman.

Her search for Truth and Justice led Carmen to file different petitions in our country and abroad, as well as different legal actions.

I filed a lawsuit in the middle of the dictatorship. I didn't do it out of bravery, but because I had nothing to lose. Afterwards, when the Laws of Due Obedience and Full Stop were passed, the Truth Trial was requested, a trial for the military to tell the truth, without punishment. I want to know the truth about what happened with my daughter. Doctor Emilio Mignone said that it was going to be useful for us in the future, so I filed the case against the Army and the Police and he did it against the Navy. My trial followed its course, constantly rejected, even by the Supreme Court. A long time passed.

In the Truth Trials I spoke before the OAS (Organization of American States), the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. When I was speaking in the Committee, filing my claims, there was a representative defending the Argentine government position (at that time it was the Menem administration, which had granted the pardons). The Committee listened to me carefully and demanded the Argentine government that the relatives should have the right to know the truth, and urged the government to present prosecutors and judges for that purpose. I knew from before the person who represented the government in Washington, and at some point this person said to me: 'I don't want you to think that I oppose to your presentation, I represent the government and

this is the role I have to play', I answered: 'Play whatever role you are interested in, I play my role'.

In the trials that are going on now, the statements that my mother and the concierge made as witnesses are being used, even though they're gone now. I'm a witness in the oral trials as well, I testified before the TOF 5 (Oral federal court No 5). It's quite painful, you have to be around those people's attorneys, and one of them made his own defense....

How were you able to locate the Detention Centre where you were kidnapped?

As I was saying, my eyes were covered by that chiffon headscarf. I lived in Marcelo T. de Alvear street, between Suipacha and Carlos Pellegrini and I could see the whole journey. They made us get in the car and took 9 de Julio Avenue. I knew the southern part of the city, that's why I knew where this place was, but I couldn't determine the exact location. Afterwards, six survivors of this place got together, I was among them, and we walked around the neighbourhoods and said: 'I think it was here, because of the little windows'. But at that time there were many houses with little windows. So it was difficult to find it, but each one of us made a contribution. And it was in that place where they built the motorway and everything was demolished. After that, the government of that moment helped us by giving us the shovel machines to open the place. We feared that they might have covered the underground floors. But luckily, that hadn't happened. They used odd names for them, so as to conceal them. The day of the excavation we were there since 10 a.m., filled with nerves... Digging.⁵

At the beginning, when I could see the walls of the building where I had been, I'll tell you what I felt: joy and sadness. The joy of having found the place and the sadness that my daughter stayed in that place though I left it alive.

⁵ Below the motorway in Paseo Colon and Cochabamba, on April 13, 2002, excavations began attempting to find traces of *Club Atlético*, a concentration camp that operated during the military dictatorship in 1977 and where around 1,800 detained-disappeared have been. The place was designed as a torture centre and it was located in the underground floors of a police department. This exploration process, the first one of its kind in our country, was performed jointly by the City Hall, Autopistas Urbanas Sociedad Anónima (AUSA, the motorway contractor) and Human Rights organisations.

How does your task continue today?

I'm still here, fighting...Up to some time ago I was working in six organisations: Sobrevivientes del Atlético (Survivors of the Atletico), Madres de Plaza de Mayo, CELS (Centre for Legal and Social Studies), Memoria Abierta, IEM (Space for Memory Institute) and the Monument Committee, but the doctor told me: 'You see, Carmen, we need you alive'. So I quit IEM and, though I didn't quit Sobrevivientes del Atlético, I mostly follow them on the computer. I'm old to be in so many places... I know young people keep them going, so I leave the necessary spaces. And now I'm still in CELS because I know that it'll last and because they're working on the trials and the reports you can read in Página 12. I'm also still part of Madres, Memoria Abierta and in the Monument Committee. That's the hope we have, there are more than nine thousand names in there, and more will follow.

It'll remain in history, because soon the Madres will disappear and there will be HIJOS (Sons and Daughters for Identity and Justice against Oblivion and Silence), HERMANOS, but the monument stands strong, it's by the river, in the northern coast.

SCHOOLS AND COLLECTIVE MEMORY

Carmen attributes outstanding importance to the fact of telling her story to students and thus contributing to the construction of Collective Memory.

The chance of having been able to tell my story at schools with the children has an infinite value. When I was a teacher and introduced myself to the students, I'd say: 'My name's Carmen and I want to make it clear to you that my daughter is a disappeared person and I'm part of Madres de Plaza de Mayo'. I wanted them to hear it from me and not from rumours. They always respected me. One day, I ran into a former student in the street and she said: 'Have you any idea how much we respected you? It was because you confronted us and told us the truth'.

I retired while at a quite young age because I had to continue my struggle and at that time we could retire after 25 years of service no matter our age. From then on, I devoted myself completely to Human Rights.

It's important that the children and the teenagers in schools know each life story and it's important to use different languages to teach because I can speak to a university student in a more serious language than to a teenage student or to a child. Once, in a school, some eight-year-old children were so

interested that, when I was leaving, they followed me and said: 'Miss, keep on telling us', because I'd told the story as a tale. My great-nephews heard everything from their parents, from an early age, little children can understand things.

ALEJANDRA'S BOOK

In order to preserve the story of Alejandra in the Collective Memory, her family decided to put together a book to remember:

My great-nephews decided to make a small book for this reason: they knew that Alejandra was a disappeared, but they didn't know her story. Since they wanted to know more about her, I told them to take the few papers that remained from her, and to put it together. So they wrote about when I was young, about my child and my husband... There's also a text written by a man who writes poems, he wrote it as if Alejandra was alive: 'Con tu pañuelo blanco cual símbolo de plata, tenés tantas hermanas como dos gotas de agua'. "With your white headscarf as a symbol of silver, you have as many sisters as two drops of water". This is a contribution to the family memory, dedicated to my nephews that knew her and loved her, and to my great-nephews because they didn't know her and they didn't live through the dictatorship, either. I mean, this is something for the collective memory... These are very nice mementoes.

FINAL WORDS

Despite the pain for her loss, and after more than thirty years of struggle, Carmen keeps a message of hope for the future:

We must be optimistic, we persevered for so many years because we've always thought there's something better in the future. Utopias, as they say. Utopia means moving two steps forward while Utopia retreats two steps, so we continue to move forward as Utopia retreats, but in some moment both will meet.

Nair Amuedo de Maddalena

Madre de Plaza de Mayo - Línea Fundadora (Founding members)

Nair is the mother of Patricia Rossana Maddalena de Romero, kidnapped and disappeared on August 28, 1976, at nineteen years of age.

Patricia was born on April 1, 1957, and she was the second of three siblings. As a child, she already felt the need to help others, following the example of her family. Just like so many young people of her time, Patricia had a social and political commitment to search for a fairer and more egalitarian society. When she was a teenager, she devoted her free time to solidarity actions like taking care of children in foster homes or children with disabilities.

When she was fifteen, she married Juan Ramón Romero, 'Tato', and they had two children. On August 28, 1976, during an operation in the city of Villa Tesei, Patricia was kidnapped and disappeared. Her husband died in that incident and their children, who were two years old and 46 days old respectively, were left at a neighbour's house, and later taken to their grandparents.

That is when Nair's tireless search for her daughter began. Some time before, in 1975, she had suffered the disappearance of her brother Elios Amuedo, his body being found two days after the kidnapping. This is how she started her fight for Truth and Justice in the *Organización de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos por Razones Políticas* (Relatives of Detained-Disappeared for Political Reasons Organisation). Later, in 1977, she joined the *Madres de Plaza de Mayo*.

Like all the other *Madres*, she is characterised by an incredible persistence:

We, the Madres, always say that as long as we're able to walk we'll continue to be in Plaza de Mayo. And we trust the children and all of the society for

the rounds to continue. I'm not in Plaza de Mayo for myself, but for all 30,000 disappeared.

We didn't expect this openness to Human Rights, and it's something that fills us with pride. This is something universal that everybody should respect. Bringing our story to schools allows us to talk about the struggle of our children, about their most valuable ideals and about their search for a better life for everybody.

NAIR AND HER STORY

Nair Amuedo saw how her family everyday life was interrupted on August 28, 1976, when violence and barbarity of State Terrorism made their appearance:

On August 28, 1976, they took my daughter Patricia and left her husband Tato murdered in the house. Fortunately, they handed the children to the neighbours! The girl was 46 days old and the boy, two years and four months. The order of the chief of the operation was to leave them there. It was a terrible blow for us, not unexpected because we knew that these kinds of things happened to those who were social fighters.

From that moment on, Nair took over the difficult task to search for her daughter.

I went to the police station, later, to find out why the house was completely broken and my children were not there. So they told me that it had been an operation of the Joint Forces and that I had to go to the ministry of Home Affairs, where I headed the following Monday, this was a Saturday. We buried Tato on Monday and it was on Tuesday, August 31, when I became, without knowing it, this new me, which has taken my whole life. Half of our lives, or more. Because I'm about to turn 80, just think about how many years we've been fighting, how many years of anguish, of pain.

But her search and her fight had one special feature, she had to take care of Patricia and Tato's little children and be responsible for their upbringing. Terrified of suffering more losses, she had to make difficult decisions.

In my case, the pain caused by my daughter's kidnapping came with something else that was terrible as well, because I had two children. The girl was 46 days old and started to have trouble drinking milk from the bottle. We were desperate, we didn't know what to do. The boy was crying all the time, asking for his parents. We went from doctor to doctor until we found someone

who gave soy milk to the girl and we could raise her thanks to that. I continued to go to the League and it was there where a group of relatives was created and I was part of that group for a long time. It was there where we received the instructions on what to do, whom to speak, where to write. And one day I heard that the Madres were going to Plaza de Mayo. At that time, I was constantly travelling with my grandchildren, from one place to another. I went to different provinces: Jujuy, Misiones. I went to any place where I had relatives because my father had told me that the children could be taken away from me, that someone could come for them. We were in so much anguish at the time. When we were in Buenos Aires, we lived in hotels, we didn't go to our house because we were really frightened.

As it happened in all cases, the search for her daughter led Nair to navigate spaces unknown to her so far, with constantly discouraging results.

We were never given a proper answer in the Ministry of Home Affairs. So I went to the League for the Rights of Man, somewhere I knew from my father's saying to be open to people in these cases. It was there where I found out that many people had been kidnapped. In addition to the murders that were already known to us. And I was advised to file a habeas corpus and a complaint to the Asamblea Permanente por los Derechos Humanos (Permanent Assembly for Human Rights). After following those steps, my husband and I started to go to every military garrison, every police station. Any place where our children could be. Every mother went through the same thing, the answer was to keep us waiting for a long time, to make fun of us and to say that they weren't involved.

THE MEMORY OF PATRICIA

Just like every mother, Nair keeps the best memories from her daughter Patricia.

My daughter Patricia was born on April 1, 1957. She was the middle child among three children. She used to play a lot with her older sister, who was always protecting her because she was only two years older. When they were little they played with dolls and things of the sort. Later on, when they were older what they did was to put on costumes, they would dress up, that sort of games, children's, girls' games. But they were always very, very close companions.

Patricia stood out because she was sweet, she was a beautiful child. Besides, she was cheerful, she was a sweetheart. She was nice, she was helpful. I had two daughters two years apart in age. She helped me with everything: she cared for her clothes, she made her bed, she studied before I even had to tell her

to do it. Of all my children, she was the good girl, the cheerful girl, the sweet girl. My other children were good kids too, but she stood out because she was sweet and everyone loved her.

Can you tell us any story or any mischief of your daughter in her childhood?

A story I always tell about her, and which we always tell when the family is together, is about one night when we were on holiday in a house in La Lucila, a city by the beach. We had rented a small house with a big yard, so that the girls could play out in the sun. So, since they were little, we put both of their beds together, against a wall. At night, I'd move one of the beds by the side of the other to form a large bed, and they'd sleep like that, so that they didn't fall. One night, Patolita, that's how we called her, wakes up and, whining, she says 'mummy, mummy'. I asked her what's wrong and she said 'I can't sleep, I can't sleep', so I told her, 'Just close your eyes, why can't you sleep? Are you scared?'. She insists: 'No, no, no, I can't sleep, I can't sleep!'. I said 'Well, mummy's here, daddy's here to take care of you, so what's wrong?'. She says 'No, I can't sleep because I'm standing' (she laughs) Yes, the beds were close together and she had ended up standing in between both beds. That was the reason why she couldn't sleep.

They were very, very cute. Patricia was very clever. Always, since she was a little girl. When she was a little girl, even when she couldn't speak well yet, she'd wake up and the first thing she did was ask, "Is there sun?", to see if the sun had come up and she was very sleepy in the morning. So I tried to wake her up, I tried to wake her up and, well, I hardly managed to do so. I got her dressed while she was asleep, I changed her clothes while she was asleep, I took her to the living room so that she'd wake up and, what did she do? She leaned against the armchair, standing up, placed her arms, placed her head on the arms of the chair, and went back to sleep. It was difficult to wake her up. She was very nice, very helpful. We went out a lot with my husband, at the time there was a restaurant in Olivos —the city where we were living then— where you ate chicken with your hands, I mean, they served a small basket with grilled chicken and gloves, those transparent ones, and they didn't give you any cutlery. So we always took them there. The girls loved to eat in that place because it was very nice, we went out for a walk a lot, we went to the beach, to the harbour...

PATRICIA AND A STORY OF LOVE AND INVOLVEMENT

Patricia's teenage years were marked by love and social involvement. She was fifteen when she married Juan Ramón Romero:

Patricia got married very young, she had one boyfriend when she was very young. When she was in secondary school it was common for girls to go out with a schoolmate, to go to places, to gatherings. She had an older sister, who was her protector. But then, at fifteen, she met the one who would become her husband. And she was very, very much in love. I met him first because he was at my brother's house helping him to paint it. My brother had recently moved in and I'd been talking to him. Patricia was a young girl who never went out to dance, she didn't go anywhere, she read a lot. Her sister did, but her sister was 17, and she was 15. So, while I was talking to this man I was thinking 'this man would be so good for Patricia! It's a pity he's too old for her'. Because he was twelve years his senior. Those are thoughts that mums have, you see someone and think 'I like him for my daughter!'. Well, at some point, my daughter started to go to her uncle's house a lot. The truth is I don't know how they met. One day she told me she'd met a boy named Jorge —but his name wasn't Jorge, his name was Tato—, I mean, she gave me a different name. Well, but at that moment it wasn't a serious relationship. And one day I went to my brother's home for Christmas and I saw an azalea plant on the table, it had flourished, it was beautiful, beautiful. And I said 'What a lovely plant!'. My sister in law said Tato had given it to her as a present and that got me thinking. He couldn't have given it to my sister in law because she was a married woman. How could he give her a present so nice, so poetic. Then I realised that it was actually for Patricia. And it was. They met and they fell in love right away. Completely. So much so, that one day she came to me and said: 'Mum, there's something I have to ask you: to let me go out with Jorge because we want to go to see a movie'. They wanted to see a very nice movie, an Italian one. And she said she wasn't going to be able to come home by ten o'clock at night, which was the curfew we'd set, because this Jorge person had to work and they couldn't be home before 12. So I said: 'Look, I'm only allowing you to do it because I know who you're going with'. So she covered her face with her hands and said 'You knew?'. 'Yes', said I. And she said: 'Oh, mum, and you didn't say anything'. She thought we weren't going to accept that boy because he was a labourer and my husband was an industrialist, he owned a factory. We had a house, a car, we had a good living. And he was more humble. So I said 'Do you like him?'. 'Yes, mum, you have no idea how wonderful he is'. And then she started to talk about him, she spoke wonders of him. Then their relationship became official and they started to go out as boyfriend and girlfriend. She was 15 years old. But it was something

special, when you saw them, the way they looked to each other, because they communicated through their eyes. When they were married as well.

So much so that she got married at fifteen. She was in school, she was in third year and one afternoon she came to me and said: 'Mum, Tato's coming because we want to talk to you'. To me, not to her father, to me. I said 'Yes, of course'. I thought they wanted to go to someplace and they had to go out late at night. When she came from school —she went to Cardenal Copello school, a religious school in the city of San Fernando, province of Buenos Aires, — wearing her skirt, her ankle socks, her trainers, her white t-shirt, her tied hair, she was a little girl, a little girl... and Tato arrived. My husband wasn't home. Then she said to me: 'We want to get married'. I felt like I wanted to die. I asked them when, I thought, maybe next year. And she said 'No, now'. So I asked her if she was pregnant and she said: 'Mum!', feeling offended. So, he explained: 'These are difficult times, and we want to be together'. It was 1973 when they got married, those were, truly, difficult times. It was impossible to convince them to wait. So she got married in white at the church of Victoria, the area where we lived. They went on a honeymoon to the province of Córdoba because they wanted to see snow. And it was funny, when they left a place, it snowed the following day. They were running after the snow but they could never see a snowy day. So my daughter never saw the snow. It was a very, very nice wedding.

One year after their wedding, their first son was born. Two years after that, the girl. But the most distinctive feature of this couple, was the deep love that they shared, to which they added their common ideals of building a fairer and egalitarian world.

She was very young. A year after their marriage, the boy was born, on April 4. So she got pregnant right after she got married. When she told me about it she was afraid of telling me, because she didn't want to get pregnant right away. And after that, a year or so later, she got pregnant with the girl. When she was kidnapped, the girl was 46 days and the boy was two years and four months. But they were very happy. They laughed, they enjoyed themselves. Their life was very nice. They didn't go out much during their marriage, because having such a little child, they couldn't. One day I said to her: 'Don't you get bored on Saturday and Sunday?', and she said 'Mum, how could I get bored with a husband like mine, you know why? Because he makes impressions of all of you'. He mocked us. He made impressions. 'You can't imagine how much he makes me laugh'. And their son, Alejandro, the eldest, when he was a little boy, one day I saw him put a piece of cloth on his head and tie it up. He said 'tiab-ela', he was imitating his great-aunt (tia abuela). As a child, he was very funny. Patricia and Tato's children are very funny because their parents were very, very funny. In family reunions at my home, there was so much joy because we

laughed so much, we got together very often. You enjoyed being around them, visiting them, seeing their house, the way they lived.

What solidarity actions did Patricia take part in?

All kids, in all schools, were socially and politically involved because in school they formed groups to support one thing or the other. So, all the boys and girls had meetings and talked a lot about politics. But those were difficult times. Patricia and Tato got married in 1973. It's hard to understand it now because life was different then. I remember that, at the time, when president Campora said he was going to release the political prisoners, she was dating Tato, and they went to Devoto prison. I was terribly scared, but they went to Devoto because they said: 'If they don't set them free now, they'll never do it'. When they came back, I, completely scared, asked them how it went. And they told me that the police had chased them. And I asked Patricia: 'What did you do?'. 'Well, Tato grabbed me and flew me back home', she answered. I mean, I didn't worry about them because I knew Tato was very protective of her.

Their love was different because it was committed love. She was a child who, while she was in school, went to a foster home after classes, to a home where children were waiting to be adopted. She went there to take care of them twice a week, or three times a week, in the afternoon. And she had to quit because, when she left, children started crying. So she, young as she was, fifteen years old, left the place crying as well. That's how they told her no to go there anymore. So, she contacted people from the neighbourhood church to go to the Don Orione hospital to assist, talk and take care of disabled children. When she came home, she told me that there was a little boy that didn't have arms, but fins. I admired how courageous she was to take care of those little children.

Since she was a little girl she had a strong social involvement. So did my other daughter. She went to a slum to help a little girl that had suffered burnings in her arms because her mother worked all day. So, before school, she woke up at 6 in the morning and went to the slum to take the little girl to the hospital and then instead of starting school at 8 she started at 9. She had permission from the nuns. That's what my daughter did, my eldest daughter.

So everyone was socially involved in some way: collecting clothes for children when there was a flooding, or getting together in groups to help. It was a different way of life because there were many ideals toward the less fortunate. And since my girls were raised very Christian —because I have always been and I'm a true Christian— I instilled in them the basis of Christianity: the love for one's neighbour. They had that deeply, deeply engraved in them, it was very natural for them.

I used to say, thank God they're like that, but then I thought that if they hadn't been like that, she might have not lost her life. So there's the creation of a humanitarian ideal, but then there's a consequence so dreadful that in the end makes you feel bad. Many times I think that had I raised her in a different way, with less social involvement, maybe... I'd been socially involved as well, I didn't belong to any group, but at a certain moment I had supported a whole family, they had a mother but not a father, there were four children. I went to the slum, took them clothes, some I bought and some I knitted in a machine. I used my own clothes, or the girl's clothes, to make clothes for them, I bought them rubber boots, because there was a lot of mud. I got them jackets, everything. I mean, it was a different way of life, it's hard to understand nowadays.

Many people can't understand how something so atrocious can happen. What happened was so atrocious because there was a big social involvement. That's what took all that young people to embrace those ideals that brought them to death. I'm truly proud of my children, of my son in law, of my family in general. Because I have a brother too, who was killed before his son could meet him. That love for humanity, love of one's neighbour, love to another human being that is in more need than one is, that's a very strong ideal. One that at that time became the biggest danger because it was contrary to the other part of society.

NAIR AND THE MADRES

Nair did not continue her search on her own. After some time she began to be a part of *Madres de Plaza de Mayo*.

Well, after a year, when the Madres started to meet, I joined them and we started our path together. Not that we started walking as a group, only to meet. So it was later that the marching began, in groups of two, because, as we all know, there was a stage of siege and the police told us to walk in groups of two. That is how the marching around the monument in Plaza de Mayo began. Not exactly in the pyramid, where we meet now, that came later.

We were so certain that our children would return! We never thought that the Madres movement would be so important, nor that we'd be fighting for such a long time. No mother thought that her child wasn't coming back. Some did, but we weren't aware of all the things that we learnt later. This was like the nazi, when everything came out, and people started to find out, everyone was shocked. And it continues to surprise us when we listen to the politicians, the things they've done, the horror of what happened continues to surprise us as well. So, at the beginning, we didn't know what was going on: first, we didn't

understand that they were disappeared; then, we began to know that they were tortured. But we never imagined the horror they'd gone through.

Were you ever able to communicate with your daughter after she was kidnapped?

Yes, yes. That was a story that was carefully kept secret. I didn't even tell my mother at the time because it was risky and very dangerous. One day, a policeman called me, we met and he said that my daughter was among a group of 16 people that were in a basement in the city of Martinez. My daughter sent me a list of those people and her message was that I had to go there with a bishop, a foreign journalist and someone else, to see if we could rescue them. The following day he brought me that piece of paper written and signed by the girls that were there. Most of them were married couples. I remember very well everything that man told me. She was there from September to January, when he came and told me to send clothes because my daughter was in her nightgown. They had put a hood over her head and took her away in her nightgown and she was barefoot. He'd said that there was one girl there who was barefoot, but a male fellow detained had given her a pair of boots and he remained in his socks. So this man told me to give her clothes because we were in January and she was going to be taken to the city of Mercedes for recovery. At that moment, I genuinely thought that my daughter would come back. And the search continued.

How did you manage to endure your pain during those days?

It was a very, very painful time. I was near suicide. But instead of committing suicide, I went to a psychologist and asked her to please see me, because otherwise, I was going to kill myself. I couldn't stand thinking I'd never see my daughter anymore. I couldn't stand it. I wanted it to be over and, to me, the only way it'd be over was death. Once I was talking to another mother and she told me: 'Look, when I was in the subway, I stood against the wall because I feared I'd throw myself under the train'. I share this for people to realise how much damage they caused us, they caused us so much pain, so much anguish. They were so wicked that even now you can't imagine, as much as you think about it, how they were able to do something like that. They never did what we're doing now, to bring them into trial and convict them for what they've done.

To Nair, meeting at *Plaza de Mayo* was what saved her from isolation, just as it happened to other *Madres*, transforming her search and her pain into a collective process that helped her to move on.

We fought against silence every Thursday in Plaza de Mayo, the Square saved us because we had our pain in a hidden place. I always say that we fought with our bodies while we hid our hearts.

Why? Because we couldn't express that much pain. Not at home, not with your family or your friends. Why would you make other people's lives miserable? But in the Square each of us knew about the pain of the other, it was the same pain. So we could talk about our children. And tell one another about the causes they followed and where they were and how they were. What we lived in the Square has been an example for those who fight in other countries. Because we're women, because we're mothers, because we left our homes and faced conflict in a terrible time. That served us to keep on living and to keep on learning. Because today we understand a bit of politics, we know about other people's pain, we know about fights in other countries. And we're aware of many things.

About the *Madres's* fight, Nair highlights:

It's always highlighted that the Madres never performed an act of revenge in their own hands. And this is so because we'll never resemble the oppressors, I honestly say so.

EDUCATING FOR COLLECTIVE MEMORY

Nair currently travels the country sharing her story and building collective memory in the educational sphere.

You visit schools a lot, what do you think we can do from schools?

Much can be done from schools. It's important to remember our children's ideals. In schools, we usually talk about what happened to the whole people, about the consequences of the creation of the Madres movement with one single goal, which was to know why they'd taken our children and where they were. That was all we really wanted. At schools, we talk about that movement so huge, so strong, which is known around the world. The issue of the trials is important as well. Not only was this our wish, but it was also something we never thought we would get to see.

So, thanks to all the recent generational involvement, we have a peace that we didn't have before. At first, peace came on its own, little by little, when we gradually accepted that our children wouldn't return, that they were dead. The tragedy is that we'll never know the moment, the time, the place, the reason why they died. Actually, the reason is clear for us now, the reason why they took their lives away. Because later we could see what these people had done. It doesn't take much to realise what the problem for these people was: to sustain the economic situation. Everything comes from the economy because they were only interested in making people think the way they did, so they tried to impose it through violence, through fear, through terror. That is why it is called State terrorism. It means they are terrorists just like the terrorists, but it's the State who does it, because law enforcement members become terrorists. We want this to be clear so that it doesn't happen again.

FINAL WORDS

After 35 years of struggle, Nair continues to dream and to set new challenges:

I hope that every child, every human being can have, through their vote, the freedom to choose like we can choose now, the right to vote and have the ideals that he or she likes. That is what is most important to us, that children be aware of the moment we're living, the moment of freedom, of democracy, of fight. I mean there are strikes, there are claims, people can express themselves. Some people complain because some others block the streets to protest, but I'm glad to see that people can express themselves. That's something that lightens our hearts.

Aída Bogo de Sarti

Madre de Plaza de Mayo – Línea Fundadora (Founding members)

Aída Bogo was born in the city of Buenos Aires on June, 25, 1929. She married Julio Sarti and from that marriage Beatriz and Claudia, her two daughters were born. Beatriz studied in School No 43 in the city of Lanús and was a member of Club Atlético Talleres de Remedios de Escalada, a sports club where she became an activist as part of a group of young people with social concerns.

The Sartis' home was subject to three violent house searches aimed at finding Beatriz. At the age of 22, on May 17, 1977, Beatriz was kidnapped in the neighbourhood of Monte Chingolo along with her boyfriend, Ángel Arias. From that moment on, Aída started her tireless search for her daughter. She is part of the first group of women who joined Azucena Villaflor during the early times of the *Madres de Plaza de Mayo*.

She is a member of *Madres de Plaza de Mayo - Línea Fundadora* and has been in charge of organising the Archive of the institution for the past eight years. In 2008, Aída Sarti was declared Illustrious Citizen of Lanús. Today, the corner of the streets Don Orione and Timote, in the neighbourhood of Remedios de Escalada of that city, carries the name of her daughter Beatriz.

Any mother in our situation would've gone out to the streets, and the proof is that we've seen it repeat later —and I'm proud of saying it— with mothers who suffered different situations: mothers of crime victims, mothers of victims of rape; they go out to the streets and create organisations. I think we're an example of that attitude, having confronted the dictatorship thousands of times.

THE STORY OF AÍDA

Aída Bogo was a mother devoted to her family and her daughters Beatriz and Claudia, until the violence of State terrorism invaded her house a few days after the beginning of the last military and civilian dictatorship.

Beatriz didn't live with us by that time, she'd left. I guess she knew that this kind of things were happening. We suffered three house searches. But the first one was terrible, it involved a level of violence that was unknown to us.

By that time, Beatriz had developed a strong social involvement combined with committed activism, which she continued to practice, even when she knew the risks she was taking.

She'd leave me short letters under the pillow. She knew she'd die, I'm sure about that, completely sure. She'd tell me that I was her mother but there were many mothers who were suffering for their children. It all seemed like some sort of mysticism to me. Something about giving everything, giving your own life, suddenly being under such influence. Because it was such a strong influence. Both Montoneros and ERP though different, they had the same goal. I think it was such an inhuman sacrifice, so innocent in some ways, hard to believe they were not conscious of the danger in doing the things they made, that in every corner someone got killed, that they made us get off the bus to inspect us. And they knew all that. But it was like a religion. I learnt all this after working for seven years in the Madres de Plaza de Mayo archive. Every day I'd lean over hell and I can't finish reading La Voluntad (a book by Martín Caparrós and Eduardo Anguita). I make an effort, I love reading, before I go to sleep I always read all sorts of things, but I can't read that book.

Beatriz was kidnapped on May 17, 1977, along with her boyfriend, Ángel Arias, in the apartment they shared in the southern outskirts of Buenos Aires. The neighbours reported that they heard shots and that they found bloodstains in the walls of the house. They also mentioned that they heard her shout, calling her partner.

We never heard from them again. We don't know if they were taken dead or alive. We only know that they were taken away.

From that moment on, Aída began her tireless search for her daughter as part of the group of *Madres de Plaza de Mayo* from its beginning. Her commitment lasts to these days. Today, she is responsible for the archive of *Asociación de Madres de Plaza de Mayo - Línea Fundadora*.

THE MEMORY OF BEATRIZ

Beatriz was born on February 14, 1955. She was the first baby girl I had, my first daughter... I named her Beatriz because I had a dear friend who was called Beatriz, whom I met at work, and whom I never saw again, but at that moment I said to her: 'If I ever have a daughter I'm going to name her Beatriz because I like that name very much'.

As a girl, Beatriz was as restless as she was smart. Her personality stood out from her first years in kindergarten. Being only 5 years old, she started primary school in the neighbourhood of Barracas in the city of Buenos Aires, and she was a model student. They later moved to Escalada and her education continued there.

Bety was a terribly restless girl since she was very young, and she was very special. She was so restless that the paediatrician told me to enrol her in kindergarten. But in those days nobody knew anything about kindergarten, so I asked around and enrolled her in a school in Barracas where I'd been a student, School No 11, on Lafayette street. She was 3 years old, I wasn't sure if I wanted her to go. I sew her little apron, her little bag, everything. One day they called me and said: 'she's too restless'. They wanted to teach her to put clothes on a doll, it was a way to teach her how to get dressed, but she did everything the other way around, she put the underwear on the doll's head. I tell you this as a token of her personality. And that happened when she was three, when she was four and when she was five. The headmistress told us that Bety was very smart, out of the ordinary. At the age of five —because she was born in February and classes started in March— she was in first grade. I didn't make any change, nor bought a briefcase or anything, she went there with her little bag as if she was going to kinder. It was extraordinary, the teacher would tell her about the life of Sarmiento and made her go to the rest of the classrooms to explain all she'd learnt about the life of Sarmiento. Everyone in the school was amazed, even the headmistress, but to me, she was a normal girl. I knew in some ways she was different because she didn't like to play with dolls or wear dresses, like every girl does —completely different from her sister. Later, that school became an all-boys school and she went to second grade in Luzuriaga Street, near Parque Pereyra. After that, we moved to Remedios de Escalada, Lanús. She completed primary school there and also attended Talleres Club. Now there's even a plaque with her name in there. I didn't completely agree with that because the plaque was like something for a graveyard, but anyway, I agreed because her name was already in the street where we lived in Escalada.

Beatriz showed a strong personality since she was very little and unlike most girls her age, her favourite games were forming letters and shapes.

I was a dressmaker and had worked in one of the most important fashion houses in Buenos Aires, where very nice clothes were made, so Bety was always well dressed, very smart. But she didn't like dolls. One day I found one in the city, it was a rag doll, called Periquita, and I was so happy, I brought it thinking 'she's going to like this one'. She didn't. She liked to cut pieces of paper. In those days there were some wooden devices to form letters.

What was her social and family life like?

She was always in the neighbourhood, boys and girls in the neighbourhood formed a very close group of friends. They were always in the club and everything happened there: they went to dances, prepared meals for the elderly, practised swimming, they held parties. And they had their principles completely clear. My daughters were very dear to their grandparents, and that was of utmost importance. Their grandparents were highly devoted to them. At home, something that we called "the Galician community" was always present, you never knew if our Sunday puchero had to be larger or smaller because all our fellow Galician came for lunch, and they were in a way part of the family, the town, the village. None of that ever surprised me. My house was usually full of people, they were coming and going and you never knew how many they were. My mum made the typical Galician puchero and there was a feeling of community, of bonding. And the same happened with neighbours. Neighbours in that street, where my house still is, helped one another, when someone died they cared for one another in their sickness. My daughters saw all of that. That's why they were the way they were.

HER YOUTH AND ACTIVISM

Beatriz finished secondary school with very good grades. There was only one time where she failed Mathematics and had to sit for an extra exam to promote. At the same time, she was working in a print shop. She studied to be a teacher for two years, and then was accepted in the School of Medicine.

There was one time when she asked me to go to university to find out the result of an exam. I'd already started to notice something unusual in her. So, when I walked into the School of Medicine I nearly lost it because I started to see all the kiosks. I call them kiosks, I mean the spaces where groups like JP (Peronist Youth), Montoneros, ERP, and many others, stood. Each had their colour, some used black and white, some red and black, with all the kinds of paper you can imagine, images of the Che Guevara, incredible. And I saw the board with the marks and she had the best mark, but she didn't make it.

She made all that sacrifice taking those two years of teacher training while she worked at the bank, which was in the neighbourhood of Once, she went by subway and ran her way to school. She had excellent grades, but she lost interest in all that.

Was it then when her activism began?

She'd already started to change. I say this knowingly and making a mea culpa —although this sometimes causes disagreements with the Madres—. Nobody can be unaware that their children are activists, especially with an activism of this nature. And two years before being taken away she was already an activist, her change had started. At first, it was her clothing. Before that she used to wear the best clothes, she spent Saturdays waiting for the nighttime to go to dances and there was a big group of friends who went everywhere together. Afterwards, all that stopped for her. She never dressed like that anymore, only jeans and trainers. I began to ask her why she didn't come home for dinner anymore. She stopped following her daily routine, I could understand that for Saturday and Sunday, but on weekdays we used to dine together. After turning seventeen she started to change, she started to see a boy, they called him El Flaco. He'd tried to get into Medical School but didn't make it. Anyway, he was from a Galician family as well, he was a good boy, from a nice family. But, there was always a 'but'. One day they talked about the 'New man', what was the matter with that new man? I was the one who experienced that because my husband was at work. I said to her: 'Listen to me, no one can deny that you're involved in something, so let's talk about it'. She answered: 'Mum, don't worry, I'm not going to quit my job or leave school'. And they later started to bring fellow activists. This is the truth, this is what we went through. We didn't speak out for many years, and even though many mothers won't say anything, they went through the same: she'd bring packages and we'd tell her not to bring them, not to bring anything or anyone. One day I was at the butcher's and someone said to me: 'what was your daughter doing at 2 a. m. taking packages into the house?' She'd fully committed to her activism. She quit the bank and took a job at a factory, named Águila, because that seemed to be one of their rules, they had to be labourers in factories. And she brought young people home. She'd once brought a boy who'd become speechless because his girl had been killed. But we had to tell her that he couldn't be there because we were in danger, which turned out to be true later when they searched our house. My husband and I talked to her, we told her that what they planned couldn't be done in this country, that it was a country where lots of people were middle class, it wouldn't work, that it'd be a waste, that there were a lot of youngsters, and they didn't suffer hardships, they weren't poor. At some point, it was impossible to convince her, from a political point of view, as my husband tried to do.

Did she share anything about her activism with her family?

I have a letter that Bety's boyfriend wrote when they were not involved in this or at least not so involved, and it's about political discussions with my husband, full of compliments. Not long ago I found it inside an envelope, it was for my husband, Julio, 'To Don Julio' it said. Because my husband knew a lot about Marxism, there was a leftist atmosphere at home, but not activism. My husband was informed about everything, he'd read a lot, but his life had been very hard and he was never a part of that. And then, what we all know happened to my daughter. We talked a lot to her and to the other boys that came to our house, but then they also wanted to listen to my father in law, who had the same ideas. My father in law was missing one leg, but he stood outside in the street and talked to the boys in the neighbourhood and they were crazy about him. But it was impossible to convince her, it was impossible to convince any of them.

Beatriz consolidated her political involvement and her activism and, despite her parent's resistance, she left the family house.

One day, she decided that she had to leave our house. My husband had rotating shifts at work, one week he worked in the morning and the other one at night. That day, at midnight, she said: 'I'm leaving'. And I said: 'You're not leaving while daddy isn't at home. Why do you have to leave?'. It was a world that was unreal to me. So she said to me: 'I'll wait until tomorrow when he's home, but I can't do what I have to do if I'm here. Part of it is so serious that I can't even say it out loud'. So the following day her father woke up, he worked at night that day, and she said, while he was ironing a pair of trousers: 'Daddy, I'm moving out'. My husband never laid a finger on his daughters, we always talked to them, but that time he grabbed her, he sat her on the table and her trousers were torn. Furious, she told me: 'I'm sorry about you, not about him', and she left.

Some days after the military coup, on April 9, 1976, the first house search was performed in the Bogo-Sarti home. Bety was no longer there, but the family was brutally assaulted. Two more searches followed: one the following month, while the family was out of the house and twenty days later, the third one.

The first house search was the most terrible of all: at 3 a. m., they broke down the door, instead of ringing the doorbell or knocking on the door. I was the first one to wake up, immediately. Claudia, my other daughter, who was twelve, was in the other room, half asleep, wearing one of those thin baby dolls, that was like a transparent shirt. They came in bringing a boy, and said 'Aída, where is Aída'—they meant me—because he says that he knows you and that

*you're a dressmaker and that your daughter's name is Peti"—they didn't say Bety—. He'd found himself cornered and had been wandering near the house, so they tortured him until he told the truth. They went to his parents' house as well because they later brought the mother of Bety's boyfriend, and her grandson, too. I denied everything. I was terribly thirsty, they made us go into the workshop, and started their search, they stole everything. What they found was a picture of Che Guevara—it wasn't really a picture, it was a drawing made on styrofoam—. They were all in disguise, none of them was dressed in a way that you could picture they were from the military, they all had headbands and trousers like the ones they wear in the countryside. They took it on me. Then they went upstairs where the bedrooms were, they opened the wardrobes and took whatever suited them. At some point, I heard Claudia was crying. I was very thirsty, I was in the bathroom and they didn't let me drink any water. Under a piece of glass, there was an identity card that Bety had lost—I'd found it inside a book and placed it there—. Why did I say I didn't know the boy when they brought him in? I don't know. I knew him, he was Rafael. He was bleeding everywhere. He didn't open his mouth so they asked me: 'Do you know him or not?', and I said 'I don't', he didn't say anything, not a word, he was badly hurt. 'But he's saying you're a dressmaker', they said. 'Yes, I'm a dressmaker, but I don't know him', they took him out to the street, he died out in the street. Meanwhile, they brought Bety's mother in law with her grandson, and I said I knew her, it was a different situation. I didn't stop to think why I'd said I didn't know the boy, but I couldn't say I didn't know her. I heard Claudia crying again and I went where she was. They had taken off her clothes, she was in the dining room and I went crazy, they'd taken her clothes off and I covered her. One of them came, took me from behind, brought me back to where I was and told me: 'See these bullets?'—like twenty, coming out from the barrel, it was a long weapon— 'I'll put them all in your body'. I said: 'That's all right, but don't you touch my daughter'. I went back there and covered her with the first thing I found, a mantelpiece and they were laughing. Then they took me to the workshop again and in the small bookcase that was there, they found a little book called *The Red Cell*. 'Hey boss, look what they have here', and I said 'That's a medical book', and they left it. All this lasted three hours. I later knew that they went to the back of the property and when they saw my parents in law they left. They took all of the things they'd stolen. They'd gone, but they knocked at the door again. 'Bring out the girl' They said. They wanted to see Claudia again. I was in the back with my husband—they'd hurt him with the butt of a gun—, 'No, it's not her', they said from the car. This is what our neighbours told us, they saw it all from their windows.*

Contrary to what they imagined, the Sartis' neighbours 'were wonderful', bringing them food and replacing some of their stolen items. The day after the operation, at 9 a. m. Beatriz arrived at her parent's house. 'You're leaving now, the house was searched', her father told her. 'Not even that was

enough for her to see clearly what could happen to her and how exposed we were', her mother recalls.

Finally, on May 17, 1977, Beatriz was kidnapped along with her boyfriend and Aida did not have any news from her daughter's whereabouts ever again.

THE SEARCH OF BEATRIZ AND THE STRUGGLE OF THE *MADRES*

As so many other mothers, Aida began a tireless search for her daughter. She was part of the first group of women looking for their relatives and a founding member of *Madres de Plaza de Mayo*.

My daughter's disappearance was something terrible and it still is now. My life never managed to be the same after that. There are mothers with two or three children who have disappeared.

How can you live after that? It's an atrocity. I think that part of what saved us was being able to meet at Plaza de Mayo and make that catharsis. After the round of Thursdays, at night, it was like a soap opera, because one would say: 'You know, I picked up the phone and he only said two words, but it was him, it was him'. Each of us told her story. We were a diverse group of women. Some were lower class, but many others were from the upper-middle class. We heard a lot of questions about where the fathers were, but they had to work, there were other children, and then someone had to keep things going. Besides, we didn't want them to come because we thought that mothers weren't going to be kidnapped, but fathers would. We had five fathers that were our protectors: Augusto Conte, Alfredo Galetti, Emilio Mignone, Eduardo Pimentel and one more, whose name I can't remember, and they were always around the square in case we needed them".

Were you close to Azucena Villaflor until the time of her disappearance?

I was very close to Azucena Villaflor, the founder of Madres. We went from one place to the other, from one Church to another. Azucena was the only one who said 'Let's go to the square, what are we doing here?'. If she hadn't said that the group would've probably dispersed in time and everything would've ended there because we all were very frightened. And Astiz was always around, Astiz was there with us, holding our purses, because he was after Azucena, to

the extent that she once said to him: 'What are you doing here? You don't have to be here, you're young'. He was always elegant, with his shirts and his short hair, I didn't really care for him because he didn't particularly catch my attention. But I did have a small doubt: he once came to the square with a boy who, he said, was his disappeared sister's son. In June 1977, when we filed the 159 habeas corpus, he brought the boy again, but it wasn't the same boy. I thought 'the other boy had brown hair and this one has different, darker hair, and he's chubby'. But it slipped my mind because we were dealing with the issue of the habeas corpus. After that, we continued to take different actions because we wanted to do something to catch the world's attention and we published that big press release... Because we, the Madres, did all sorts of things: Azucena met with Borges, with Victoria Ocampo, prestigious writers, and I went to radio stations with another mother.

What was the impact of the kidnap of the *Madres*?

Astiz had already planned it all because he was around her all the time. She once said to him: 'But you, why are you here? Write down your name for me in the journal —because she kept a journal' He wrote Gustavo Niño. He had it all planned. In other places he used different names, but he gave that one to us. And he started to be around her, to the extent that he almost slept in her house once. This is what happened: on December 8, we went to Betania church, but Astiz was waiting for us in Santa Cruz Church, and he had a piece of paper with him, sort of rolled up and he said 'you, I'm talking to you'. That was the way to mark the one that had to be taken. 'Because I'll be right back, I'm going to get some money'. Beatriz Neuhaus, a mother with a small, doll-like face, said 'hey, what are you doing?'. 'This is a drug-related operation, madam', and pushed the three of them away. They realised what was going on. 'They're taking her away!', they shouted when they saw that the noun was being taken. 'They're taking her away, they're taking everything!'. And they saw them take Esther Careaga, María Ponce and the nun. December 9 was the day of the press release: I had to be in La Nación newspaper, on Florida Street, since 11 a.m. I didn't know what to do, I had to be there from 11 a. m. to 6 p. pm. They were all writing the letter, but it was handwritten. In the afternoon they presented it in the paper and they said: 'No, not handwritten. It has to be typewritten'. I knew that problem would come out. Since Nora Cortiñas' husband worked at the Ministry of Economy, she rushed there to write it. At that moment, the employees took all the risk to write it there, they did it in two hours, at top speed. They came back to the paper around five thirty or so, I don't remember the exact time, but I know they stopped printing at six. And then we still had to pay. We only had coins and, on top of it, in the Santa Cruz church, Astiz had taken all of our money. I wasn't even aware that something had happened, that

something could've happened to me. There were moments when I went out to the street, someone could've taken me. The newspaper employees were crazy. Mitre, the newspaper owner,—his son or grandson, I don't know—, said: 'Take everything, take it inside'. They didn't want to see us anymore. We left wondering if they would publish it or not, after so many difficulties. When we were on the street, Azucena said: 'Now I want you to go to Plaza de Mayo and tell the Careaga family that their mother was taken away'. And I said: 'How am I going to tell them that?'. 'Yes, you have to go because I've been out of my house for three days. You go there and then go to your mum's. Go take a bath and I'll be waiting for you in my house'. It was in the neighbourhood of Sarandi, I was in Barracas. I got to Plaza de Mayo and they were already crying, so there was not much I could say. I went back to my mum's house and I was at her house at eight, I didn't think of what had happened at Santa Cruz church, I went there anyway. Feeling very nervous, she gave each of us a poem from Mario Benedetti called "You are with me" or something like that. And she gave me mine at her house. She had papers all over the place. Azucena was very nervous, we were having mate and moving all over the place, looking at the window that faced the street, it was a stormy day. And I said to her: 'Why are you looking at the street so much? What's wrong?' I didn't know what to do because we hadn't seen anything like that before. She told me: 'I'll tell you something: if you ever have doubts about anyone, throw yourself to the floor and start screaming'. 'Why are you saying all this? What's wrong?' Her daughter said the same thing 'Mum, there's something wrong with you? What is it?'. She didn't say anything about the events in the Santa Cruz church. Nothing at all. I always say that she saved me because they saw it, they knew. The ones who'd been there, who went to Emilio Mignone's, said that they first saw the nun, how she was forced into a car. And I said: 'I'll come tomorrow. I'll be here at 7'. When she came with me to Mitre street, to take the bus for Barracas, I said to her: 'Why are we going to go see the nun? What happened to her? I was waiting for her'. She knew what had happened, so she said: 'You don't have to come, because Pedro's driving me', Pedro was her husband. So I got mad: 'Tomorrow at 7 I'll be here'. 'Don't come, because Pedro's driving me and he gets very nervous'. She saved my life because if she'd told me, knowing the way I am, I would've been there a bit earlier and we would've gone together to get the paper. And on December 10, this is what happened: She bought the paper, but the ink was blurry, even that happened, a part of our press release was blurry. So she went out to get another paper and it was then when they took her, in the middle of Mitre street. According to the newsagent, who saw everything, she fought hard because she was strong, but it had no use, they put her in the car and took her.

THE MADRES' ARCHIVE

Aída is responsible for the valuable archive of *Madres de Plaza de Mayo*, proving to be a true activist for Collective Memory and Justice.

The first time we met in this Madres' facility and started to organise it, I was leaving and Marta stopped me and said: 'You're going to take care of the archive'. So I answered: 'I don't have a clue about archives'. We didn't have an archive, nobody had one. Our archives were some large bags, filled with papers. For a long time we worked at SERPAJ (Service for Peace and Justice), in a small room, and then in the MEDH (Ecumenical Movement for Human Rights). When we moved in here it was wonderful! I stood there with all those little pieces of paper around me. If someone had taken a picture of me back then, it would've been a prize-winning photograph! I was at the front with four or five chairs, I sat on the floor, grabbed the bags and started to pick out all the pieces of paper, one by one, and put them in one place or another; and I suddenly realised we were organising it. Later, Memoria Abierta sent us a professional librarian, hired by them, and little by little it was completed. We had a secretary, something completely new for us. And all of that helped us. We have a beautiful library, we made some banners that had to be recovered. But I'm eighty years old now, doing all of this is enough for me.

FAREWELL WORDS

As many *Madres*, Aída visits schools carrying her testimony and her message to young people:

Once, some children from a school asked me: If you had to describe your daughter as an animal, what animal would that be? She'd definitely be a lioness because she was always one, she was very special, just like all of them at that time, because it was a very special generation. But she was a fighter. She didn't want to leave the country because, to her, she had to do everything here. And she knew what was going on, but she kept on fighting. So, after all, kids, all I can say to you is that you should fight, keep on fighting in any way you can, even if it's difficult, just as it's been difficult to us.

Elia Espen

Madre de Plaza de Mayo – Línea Fundadora (Founding members)

Elia Espen is the mother of Hugo Orlando Miedan, an Architecture student at the Universidad de Buenos Aires, he was an activist committed to his time. He was arrested on February 18, 1977, at the age of twenty years old. Elia, a mother of six, immediately started her search, setting off on a steady and inalienable road towards the defence of Human Rights.

She is a member of *Madres de Plaza de Mayo – Línea Fundadora* (Founding members), *Familiares de Detenidos y Desaparecidos por Razones Políticas* (Relatives of Detained-Disappeared for Political Reasons Organisation), and *Memoria Abierta*. On March, 24, 2010, Elia handed over her white headscarf, a symbol of the *Madres'* fight, to María Victoria Moyano, one of the grandchildren restored by *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*, as a symbol of the generational transfer in the search for Collective Memory, Truth and Justice.

Elia Espen contributes to keeping Collective Memory alive by taking her testimony to schools, to prevent these stories from repeating:

Keeping collective memory is very important. And that's what I'd like to achieve. I don't know if I'll ever see it happen, but to young people or for those to come, I say that it's important to have things clear or at least to investigate more.

Hugo's dream was to change the world, to make it a fairer world, with less poor people. He studied to help others. They had that dream of changing history.

ELIA'S STORY

Elia Espen is the mother of Hugo Orlando Miedan, detained-disappeared by the last military dictatorship.

I'm Elia Espen, my son has been disappeared since February 18, 1977. His name's Hugo Orlando. He was twenty-seven years old and was a fourth-year Architecture student.

Elia had six children and a working life devoted to providing for her family. It was solidarity and shared effort that allowed them to move on.

I wouldn't say we were a lower-class family, but I wouldn't say we were middle class either. We were a working family. I was a housewife, I studied to be a massage therapist, but rather cosmetic oriented. And apart from that, I took care of my house. Having six children, I didn't have much time for anything else. And well, with the help of Hugo, who was working, and the girls, who were grown up, we could move forward.

The violence of State terrorism was inside Elia's house. Not only was her son snatched from her, but she also had to suffer humiliation in her own home.

In my case, when the military came to my house, apart from taking everything, absolutely everything, they were violently abusive. I was terribly beaten. At the time, I had an eleven-year-old girl and she was taken out of bed with a machine gun and they left her a mark. When they came in, we were sleeping. My other daughter was twenty-two or twenty-three years old then, they lifted her nightgown and groped her.

From that moment on, Elia began her desperate search for her son and since then she keeps collective memory alive and works tirelessly for truth and justice.

This is why I think that none of what they did, my son's disappearance and all the rest, can be forgotten nor forgiven.

Like many mothers, Elia began her search in loneliness but later met other women who were searching for her children, just like she did.

We were a group of scattered women with a look of anguish in our faces, and we started to go to the same places. That's how we met, and fortunately, we had Azucena Villaflor. She was the one who organised the group.

THE MEMORY OF HUGO

She remembers her son with deep love. From an early age, he showed his interest in constructions and found his calling for architecture.

What were the games that Hugo played as a child?

I remember one time when we gave him a truck for the Three Kings Celebration. Since he was very silent and I didn't hear anything, I approached to see what he was doing. He had disassembled it, so I said 'Hugo, why are you doing that?', 'I want to see if I can build something else, mum', he answered. That was what he liked the most, assembling and disassembling. That's how he ended up studying architecture. You could see he liked that since he was a little boy.

What else did he enjoy doing?

He liked to make repairs in the house. When it came to painting, for example, he helped me, because I was the painter. He helped me repair everything, the water heater, for example, or anything that broke in the kitchen. I remember that he once told me 'mum, you have to learn to do this because someday I'm not going to be here and you're going to have to do it on your own', and it was true. Thanks to him I learnt many things.

How did you celebrate birthdays?

We were a working family, so for birthdays I'd make individual cakes, put one candle on them and that's how we celebrated birthdays. But when he was grown up I'd ask him 'What do you want for your birthday?' 'Cottage pie, mum, yours is delicious', he'd answer. All right, I'll cook cottage pie for you' I'd answer. And so, since the day he disappeared, I can't cook cottage pie anymore.

As every child does, Hugo left an indelible mark on his mother and his family. He was a great companion for Elia and his sisters.

He was very protective, he protected me a lot. And his youngest sister was eleven when he disappeared. For her, Hugo was like a father, a friend and a brother. He played with her, he checked her homework, he went for a walk with her. When he disappeared, my daughter lost her father, her brother and

her friend, all three of them. That's why she suffered so much, because he was very caring and attentive in every way.

Proud and deeply moved, Elia shares a story that illustrates her son's love for her:

And that was his fight, to manage to become an architect. One day he called me and say 'Mum, come, sit here'. And he took a large piece of paper, started drawing and said to me 'This will be your house, mum. When I graduate, this will be your house'. Well, I was moved, of course, and I feel the same right now.

Like many from his generation, Hugo wanted to change the world. He searched for a fairer and more egalitarian society.

We talked a lot. That's why what happened didn't surprise me, not at all. Because when he came home from university, he'd say to me: 'You know, mum, more guys were taken away'. Or he'd ask me: 'Mum, don't you have a spare pair of trousers? Don't you have a spare pair of shoes?', 'No, I don't wear men shoes', I'd answer. 'It's that we're collecting them for a boy who doesn't have any', he explained.

Which were Hugo's dreams?

Hugo's dream was to change the world, to live in a fairer world, a world with fewer poor people. His goal was to study so that he'd be able to help—that's what he always said—. Sometimes he went to the slums, sometimes he even helped his classmates from university. That was his only true dream. I think most young people had that dream of changing history. We always talked about that and Hugo used to say: 'It'll change one day, mum'. 'Well Hugo, I hope so', I said. 'Yes, mum, it'll cost, it'll cost a lot, but it can change. As long as we do our part to make things different', he explained.

HARD TIMES: THE DISAPPEARANCE AND THE SEARCH

Elia knew that the country's political situation worsened every day and the State terrorism that the dictatorship had imposed was having dreadful consequences in different parts of society.

So, when more and more people disappeared, I said to him one day: 'Hugo, listen to me, why don't you leave?' He gave me a terrifying look, I can

assure you that, and said: 'Never, mum. You know how many people from university have been kidnapped, because I told you, so I can't leave and forget about the ones that are kidnapped'. So, well, I didn't talk to him about leaving anymore. It'd been my maternal instinct, a need to protect him, but I guess it was his fate. And so it was.

So, despite knowing the situation, she supported her son in his decisions.

That's why when he became an activist, I was the only one to know, his dad and his sisters didn't. I said to him: 'Are you sure of what you're doing?'. 'I'm sure', he answered. And that was it. And I was by his side, as much as I could. We had long talks and they were constructive, I think, because I learnt a lot from him.

Hugo was kidnapped on February 18, 1977, and from that moment on, Elia's own fight began. She recalls how the *Madres* were united in this desperate search and the role of Azucena Villaflor within the organization:

Our first thought was to report the kidnappings to a court, to go to church and talk to the priest. Police stations and churches rejected us. That left us only with the courts. But we had, I think, very particular faces at that time. In the end, the Madres met at the courtrooms. Someone would immediately ask you 'Who are you?' and 'What are you here for?'. So the bonds among all of us started to grow, and we fortunately had Azucena Villaflor.

Azucena Villaflor played a crucial role in the fight of the *Madres* and the creation of *Madres de Plaza de Mayo*. However, she did not escape the repression of the Dictatorship and was kidnapped on December 10, 1977, outside her own home.

She was the one who organised the group but she took over every part of it. She was one of the first to join Madres de Plaza de Mayo. I met her because I was there with her. And she was so warm and loving. She'd bring little pieces of paper that she'd prepared and said: 'So, you go there and you go to some other place', mostly churches. We collected signatures to raise some money so that we could publish press releases. And on the day the Madres were disappeared at the Santa Cruz church, I was in Betania church, collecting signatures, precisely. At some point, a young man came in and said 'Leave'. I didn't want to leave, but he explained to me that they'd taken the mothers in Santa Cruz church. So, I took what I'd managed to gather, which wasn't much, and left. I think that the disappearance of those Madres brought us even closer. It helped us to keep on fighting.

Were you able to find out what happened to your son after he was kidnapped?

I learnt about my son's path, partially. My son was held in Atlético. I know that because I would go to the Plaza with a picture of him I always carry with me, and one day a young man came to me and asked 'how are you related to him?', and I said 'I'm his mother'. He answered, 'I was kept in Atlético with him' So I asked this person to tell me what had happened to him. He didn't want to, but I convinced him. Because the one thing I've always said and done my whole life is not assuming facts, because I don't want to assume that something happened, I want to know what happened. And that's what I told my children 'You have to know the truth, as harsh as it may be, but assuming is useless'. Because you might make the wrong assumptions, and that destroys you. So this young man finally told me that he'd been in the Atlético and that he was chained, he'd lost his mind as a consequence of torture, and that he sometimes heard him call 'Mum, mum'. After that, he was taken on a death flight and that was it for him.

Being aware of her son's fate made Elia redouble her strength to continue the road she had drawn up.

When I finished talking with that man he asked me 'What are you going to do now?'. 'Now I'm going to fight even harder, or do you think I'm going to sit at home doing nothing?', I answered. And that's what I did and that's what I'm doing now.

THE IMPORTANCE OF MEMORY

Elia thinks it is especially important to build collective memory and make her testimony known to others in order for history not to repeat itself.

When I visit schools and talk, I always tell kids the same: I'm going to talk to you about what I think, but you have to read and to study because you don't have to stick to what I say. You have to learn history because it's the only way you can understand the situation because I'll always tell the same story and nothing else. So, it's important to study and do research and have a collective memory because a people without a collective memory, anywhere in the world, will lose its goal.

Elia explains the emotions brought about by giving talks to children in schools and the enthusiasm and interest they show.

Giving talks in primary schools is deeply emotional. The children's little faces reflect both curiosity when they ask and surprise when we answer. It isn't hard to get to them: when I say I'm a mum who went out there to fight for the truth about her son and all the disappeared people, that opens the way for their questions. And their questions seem innocent but they're accurate. And when I look at them, I see that we have a promising future.

About the importance of building collective memory, Elia states:

Keeping collective memory is very important. And that's what I wish to be done. I don't know if I'll ever see it, but it's important for young people or for those to come, to have clear ideas or at least to make some research, to truly investigate about what happened, without any lies, without any concealment, because, I think, concealing is the worst thing possible. These are the facts and truth must be told. That's, to me, the way to make everything go forward because otherwise, you get stuck in the middle of the road.

What is your dream?

My dream is that archives are opened, because if files aren't opened, we'll never get to the truth. The military wasn't the only responsible for all that happened in our country, there was civilian involvement. There are big industrialists, there are union members involved in all this. If the files were opened, then we could learn the complete truth. I'm thankful for all that's being done in connection to the trials, but to me, it's incomplete because they take one group and take it from one place to another, but no other people come up apart from those already involved. So my dream is that, at some point, we learn the whole truth about all the disasters that they made.

FINAL WORDS

Elia considers that educational endeavour is crucial to prevent these stories from repeating.

History will have to be true to the facts and that depends on what's taught in educational spheres. Not one more person should be disappeared for having a different way of thinking. With justice, collective memory and truth we'll achieve that.

Josefina García de Noia

Madre de Plaza de Mayo - Línea Fundadora (Founding members)

Josefina García was born on July 6, 1921, in the city of Buenos Aires. In 1942, she married Juan Carlos Noia and they had four children: Alicia (1942), Daniel (1944), María Lourdes (1946) and Margarita (1953). In 1976, two of her children, Alicia and Daniel, emigrated to Australia. Despite the country's situation, María Lourdes decided to stay.

On October 13, 1967, Lourdes was kidnapped in her house along with her husband, Enrique Mezzadra, while her eighteen months old son, Pablo was left in the care of a neighbour. By that time, she had graduated as a psychologist and was a teacher at the *Universidad de Morón*.

From that moment on, Pepa Noia began a tireless journey for the search of her daughter: she visited the Ministry of Home Affairs, police stations, barracks, churches, embassies and the headquarters of the Navy, the Air Force and the Army. She was one of the fourteen women who got together for the first time on April 30, 1977, to claim for the whereabouts of their disappeared children, and she was one of the founders of the *Madres de Plaza de Mayo*.

On July 5, 2010, Pepa Noia was named Illustrious Citizen of Buenos Aires, as an acknowledgement of her tireless and inalienable struggle to defend Human Rights. She died on August 31, 2015, at 94 years of age. To remember her, we share an interview made to her by the *Programa Educación y Memoria* of the city of Buenos Aires in 2012.

The way I see it, the Plaza belongs to the Madres. And it belongs to those who disappeared. It belongs to the Madres to such an extent that Azucena's (Azucena Villaflor) remains were cremated and scattered there as it was her daughter's will.

PEPA'S STORY

Josefina García, or Pepa, was born in 1921. When she was twenty she married Juan Carlos Noia, with whom she had four children. On October 13, 1976, her daughter María Lourdes was kidnapped along with her husband. From that moment on, Pepa changed her daily routine and devoted herself exclusively to the search of her daughter.

My name's Josefina García, but everybody calls me Pepa. Noia is my husband's last name. I had four children: my eldest daughter Alicia, who's now in Australia; Daniel, who was in Australia and died six years ago; Margarita, who's the Human Rights Secretary of the CTA (Central Union of Workers of Argentina) and María Lourdes, who is disappeared. And I also have many, many grandchildren, both here and in Australia.

My son Daniel moved to Australia in 1976 because the Ford Company, where he worked, sent him. Since he did very well there, she called all his sisters and told them they should move there. My eldest daughter did. But María Lourdes said: 'If all of us leave, what will the country become?' Alicia left on October 3, 1967, and María Lourdes was kidnapped ten days later, on October 13.

In 1976, María Lourdes, Pepa and Juan Carlos's third child, was married to Enrique Mezzadra, and they had an eighteen months old son, Pablo. Pepa babysat her grandson on Tuesdays and it was precisely on a Tuesday the last time she saw her daughter.

Every Tuesday she'd come to my home and leave the baby boy, Pablo, who was eighteen months old. She'd stay for lunch and then leave for university where she was a teacher. It was customary, in those days, to have spaghetti on Thursdays and on Tuesdays I'd cook steak. One day she told me 'Don't cook steak for me anymore, change the menu'. And I answered 'You're right'. When she left, I stayed home with the boy and when she crossed the street I called her, I said 'Lourdes!'. 'Yes, mum', she answered. And I said 'Take care, please'. 'Yes, mum, don't worry', she answered. They took her away the following day. That was the last time I talked to her. We knew about what was going on because she told us about what was happening to some of her fellow activists. That was the last time I talked to her. After that, I never saw her again.

Lourdes was a young woman that was committed to her time. She worked as a psychologist and a teacher and her work as an activist showed that she searched for a fairer world, with more solidarity. These ideals were against the ones held by State Terrorism in the last military dictatorship.

She had many friends, sometimes they called her to her house. She had an alias, but I can't remember it now. They'd ask for her using that name and I'd say 'No, she's not here, wrong number', and that was it. They realised, because they knew me, that she didn't want to talk on the phone.

The Navy took Lourdes, but some time later people from the Police broke into the fifth floor, they beat the people who lived there and they searched everywhere. They said that they were looking for María Lourdes. When they could finally talk, the neighbours, those people on the fifth floor, said that the person that they were looking for lived on the fourth floor and she'd already been taken away, but the house was left destroyed. They were looking for Lourdes and they belonged to another force.

During the operation, Lourdes and her husband Quique were kidnapped. Pablo, their son, was given to a neighbour. Quique was released shortly after that, while Lourdes is still disappeared.

In Lourdes apartment, everything was left a mess. When the locksmith opened the door, he said 'What happened in here?' And he lit a cigarette. 'Don't worry, I have permission from the police station', I said. He changed the lock, but he didn't like it at all. While in there with Lourdes, they saw all the books that she had. I know of a mother who gathered all the books, put them in a box and threw them into the river. She would later tell me: 'I'm so sorry I threw those books to the river... I could've hidden them somewhere!'. The only thing they placed carefully on the table was the picture of Perón and Evita. They took Lourdes and her husband too, but not the baby boy. I think it must've been a new task force because otherwise, they would've taken him. Their order was to leave him with the neighbour. Lourdes gave him to the neighbour. They didn't even allow her to put some clothes on him, she'd just finished giving him a bath. One of them said 'Take the kid to the kitchen, get him out of here'. Something that caught their attention were some boxes with my son Daniel's belongings, he'd moved to Australia and had left boxes with dishes and cutlery. They wanted to know why that was there. That's what Quique told us some time later when he was released. She wasn't released.

Pepa started her fight and her search for Human Rights with the integrity and the courage characteristic to the Madres.

They'll never, ever say 'we saw Pepa cry'. I'd cry when I went out to the street, when I was on the bus, I sat to have a smoke and cry. But I'd never cry in front of them, ever. When I went to the Ministries I said: 'We don't have to let them see our pain'. As soon as I walked out, I cried my eyes out all the way home. People would look at me, but what did I care, I didn't think about anyone's look. But not in front of them. Never.

THE MEMORY OF MARÍA LOURDES

Pepa remembered her daughter with tenderness and emotion, just like any mother. She was born on November 21, 1946, in the city of Buenos Aires. Pepa told some stories about her daughter's childhood and adolescence.

I chose her name because around that time I used to go to the Lourdes church and I thought 'When I have a girl I'll call her Lourdes'.

What was she like as a child?

Well, to start with, she was a fan of River Plate, the football team. She liked to go out with her friends, she liked cats. When she was older she liked to go to peñas to listen to folklore music. She went to churches where small peñas were held in the evenings. My children were good kids, but María Lourdes gave me a hard time when she was in school. There was one time when they told me to take her to a psychologist, she was seven years old, and the psychologist told me: 'Congratulations, your daughter's a real intellectual'. She drove me crazy with school: she didn't do her homework, her brother did, but she passed to the next grade anyway. When she graduated from school she was everyone's best friend, the best student. To think that I had to go to that school a thousand times to talk to the teacher about her! Because Lourdes was like that, but she was very smart. None of my children gave me a hard time, but Lourdes was different. Not that she had any problem, she was like that, and she was also a very good person. Each of them was different, each had their own personality, but they weren't bad, they never fought with each other. Lourdes played with dolls, she liked that very much, she had a baby doll, she'd dress it, undress it, put it to bed. They never caused much trouble.

Where did you live?

I lived in a tenement, it had seven rooms. When the children were little, we lived on Austria Street, four blocks from Las Heras Avenue and five blocks from Santa Fe Avenue. (Admiral Isaac) Rojas lived there. I knew him, I knew his family as well. In the afternoon I sent the children off to school and left for work. My husband got angry because I didn't really need to work since he had a very good salary from the city hall. My husband had been a boxer and he quit when my daughter Alicia was born. Later, he worked as a street sweeper. That was a well-paid job, but I wanted to buy my daughter white dancing shoes and that's why I worked.

Did Lourdes like to share with her friends, at birthday parties at your home?

Everybody loved her, she had many friends. As children they didn't go anywhere and then, when the peñas started, they did. Lourdes went to the peñas in the church with Alicia. There was one time, when she was older, she went to a spring dance with some friends. They were going to choose the Spring queen and her friends took Lourdes and Alicia there. It was all fixed so that the daughter of the lady of the house would win. But Lourdes won, they chose her. That lady didn't look at her anymore! Because the prize was supposed to go to her daughter. When they arrived home in the morning I couldn't believe it. Lourdes was wearing a sash and had a 500 pesos check. And they didn't invite them ever again. Lourdes had won because she was blond and had blue eyes. She had always had very special skin since she was a baby, since she was born. I remember everybody saying 'Just look at this baby's skin!' and showing her around. When they were older, the house where we lived had a large, long patio, and they held dances there, as it was usual at the time. Boys and girls, their friends, would come and dance there, on our patio. They also raised money for poor children. They were always doing that.

What kind of music or which singer did she listen to?

She liked all kinds of music. She went to peñas a lot, I allowed that. She listened to folklore music. I remember one time we were having dinner somewhere near home and she went to another table to talk, she went from one place to another because everyone knew her and suddenly she started to sing at one table. We were so embarrassed. I remember they paid for our dinner. We got mad at her that day.

Was she in love?

She went to dances, to peñas and had boyfriends, but they didn't last long. Later, when she was older, in university, she did have a boyfriend, his name was Fernando. One day they broke up and he went to the province of Misiones. Long before she was taken away, we saw in the paper that a young man called Fernando Lopez has been wounded in Misiones. He was in critical condition and she wanted to go there and find out what had happened. Afterwards, she met another boy, Quique, whom she married. I never meddled in her affairs. They got married, what was I going to do.

Where did she attend secondary school? Did she like studying?

She went to a secondary school for girls, on Santa Fe street. One day the Headmaster was about to be fired and she organised a protest on the street. When I found out they were on the street I ran there to see what had happened. I couldn't believe it! And the Headmaster wasn't fired, the whole school went out to the street to protest. She had scarlet fever at the middle of the year and was a few days away from losing that school year because of so many absences, but in the end, since she was a good student, they allowed her to continue. During her first year, she did well, but she failed English and Zoology, which she didn't like. Then she sat for exams to skip the second year. I remember she had a teacher who always told me: 'You have no idea about how much damage you're causing to your daughter, because of her age, there's a time for everything'. She was promoted to the third year and did well. Then she sat for exams again to skip fourth year and took the fifth year the regular way. She took a course to enter university and she needed a private teacher, so I took her to the Devoto neighbourhood for private classes. That's how she started university at the age of sixteen. She liked to study. Then she also worked at a bookstore. When she got married, she finished psychology. When she was married she kept going from one place to another. She studied in the evenings.

That is how from a very early age, Lourdes proved to be a teenager that defended her ideas, with unusual intelligence and ability considering her age. She finished school in three years and, at only sixteen years old, she was a university student.

HER SEARCH AND HER STRUGGLE WITH MADRES

Early in the 1970s, Lourdes had graduated as a psychologist. She had her own practice, which she shared with two fellow activists, in 1973 she started to work at DINEA (National Directorate of Adult Education). At the same time, she was a teacher at the *Universidad de Morón*, in the Tourism area. In 1974, her son Pablo was born. María Lourdes had time for everything: her work, her family and her activism.

María Lourdes was kidnapped along with her husband on October 13, 1976. She was 30 years old and had an 18 month-old baby. The day following her disappearance, Pepa received the news and immediately began her search.

They came in the morning to tell me. My daughter Margarita's mother in law came. She stood in the kitchen and said 'Pepa, I have something to tell you'. I kept looking at her. She said: 'They took María Lourdes last night'. For a long time after that, I felt as if they'd taken María Lourdes because of that woman's words. I immediately stood up, changed clothes and never stopped after that. I went to the police station because it was a very serious matter. The policeman watching the door asked me: 'What are you looking for? What do you want?', I was furious, 'I'm looking for the officer', I said, but they wanted to know. I got a nice officer, all things considered. He told me I had to file a habeas corpus and I asked him what that was. He wrote it but he didn't put any names, he put lines where the names should go. 'You do this and write everything you know about what happened to your daughter, but please, don't tell anyone'. And so I did. After that, I had to go there once more, to ask for permission to enter the apartment.

Like all mothers, Pepa started her search on her own and, in time, she met other mothers that, just like her, were trying to find out where their children were. Pepa was one of the first fourteen mothers that walked the *Plaza de Mayo* on that April 30, 1977. But she was also the first one to arrive there: it was her and the pigeons.

At the Stella Maris church, a woman stood in the middle of a large hall and, in spite of there being guards asking people for their identifications, she said: 'Listen to me, what we have to do is go to Plaza de Mayo to claim for our children, as our ancestors did', and she went on talking but I wasn't listening anymore. A man started looking for a date and chose April 30. We didn't realise it was a Saturday, there wasn't a soul in there. No one. But that's how the date was chosen. She talked a great deal. On that day, the actor Marcos Zuker was there. Poor thing, the priest told him that his son had been killed and he left the place in tears. You have no idea how much he cried. Some time later his son called him, it'd been a lie. He decided to send him to Brazil. When the OAS people came to Argentina, his son came back, he said 'I'm going to Buenos Aires to file the complaint to the OAS'. And that's when they finally caught him.

What was that first meeting in Plaza de Mayo like?

I arrived there really early, two hours before the given time. I hadn't been able to sleep that night. I went to the square, there was not a soul in there. I was alone with the pigeons, that particular day there were many pigeons. I was waiting and smoking. Just a bit later, the rest of the mothers arrived. There was a girl that belonged to the communist party, but she wouldn't say her name, and María Adela's three sisters. After that, we said 'let's come on Friday'. A few more people came and it became something bigger. There was a mother,

her name was Nora, whose daughter had been snatched from her right before she could marry, they took all the gifts away. She said 'Why don't we come on Thursday? Friday is the day of the witches'. And we changed to Thursdays. This mother passed away. That's how it started. We began to walk in circles because we couldn't just stand, the policemen made us walk. They said 'Move, move'.

Pepa also remembers the day when Astiz introduced himself to the mothers using the fake name Gustavo Niño, claiming to have a disappeared brother. Some months later they knew about the treason of which they had been victims.

In October (Alfredo) Astiz appeared. He said he had a brother who had disappeared and that his mother was very ill, and that was the reason he came to the square. And the mothers cared for him like a son. Azucena (Villaflor) would say to him: 'Don't come, it's dangerous. You tell me where I can call you, and if there's something that you have to sign I'll let you know'. 'No, I'm not scared', he'd say. He wasn't scared, he was a traitor. I'm not good with faces, I forget things, but I don't forget the image of the girl who was there on the first day (a while ago someone told me she was killed) and Astiz. I think of it and I can see him: wearing a white polo shirt, with short sleeves, he looked like a young man playing Don Juan. He was after Azucena and he'd become friends with Remo. Remo was a boy who'd been a seminarian. They became close friends, he took him everywhere. On December 8, Astiz took the Madres from Santa Cruz church and on the 10 he went to the city of Sarandi to get Azucena. He took her as well. He took Remo from his own house. Remo invited him to barbecues, meetings with friends, everywhere, and this guy...No, no. When you think about it, you just can't understand it. After he offered his friendship the way he did, how could he sell him like that? Remo never appeared. The ones who did appear were the mothers, it was in the city of General Lavalle. It's such a strange thing, they were thrown from the plane and they appeared together, except for one of the nuns. The three mothers, four counting Azucena. All of them appeared on the beach. They were thrown to the sea, one can go this way, the other can go some other way, but they moved together. When they were found there, the anthropologists said that it was them. The mothers, Azucena, the nun and a girl who was a catechist, or something like that. They couldn't find out who the boys were, but the mothers and the nun were there. Not the other nun, I don't know where they threw her. That's how the bodies appeared.

How did you decide to wear the white headscarves?

In 1978 we were going to the city of Lujan, we'd never travelled so far and we said 'How are we going to recognise each other?', because each of us was going on her own, and one of the Madres said 'We'll cover our heads with

a nappy'. We wore a nappy so that we could find other mothers. And then we decided to keep the headscarves.

What were the marches like during the dictatorship?

During the dictatorship, we went to Plaza de Mayo. At first, we'd go there and the police would kick us out. One mother said it was the military, but soldiers never kicked us out. The police were the ones who kicked us out. They'd chase us out through one side and we'd leave and come in through the other side...Later we started to get together and we were so many that the policemen would talk with us. One day, one of them told us; 'Every Thursday when you come I get so mad because I didn't get in the police to chase women'. One day we were coming to the square when two men approached us and said 'Don't go to the square, the police are demanding your identifications'. And we went there. In time, we talked about it and we said 'remember when those two stopped us, they were wearing civilian clothes'. They had an enormous amount of IDs and there came an order from the police station, police station No 2, saying that they had to give them back. Everybody refused to take them back. That happened many times. We'd go to police stations and stay outside. Some others would come in. The policemen were furious! They gave the IDs back, wrote down the names and kicked them out. We, mothers, would laugh at the nuisance all that was for those people. The following week it started all over again. That's what it was like. It wasn't easy. The first time the Madres were arrested, I think they needed five buses to transfer them. There was another group which tried to get into the houses nearby. Fortunately, there was a parking lot, they called us from that place and there we went. That time many of us stayed. When the police left with the buses we laughed, making remarks and suddenly my husband showed up, he'd been looking for me. We went to the police station to wait for them to be released. We waited until Nora (Cortiñas) came out. She came out by midnight. Azucena was released, too, but they didn't release her son and her daughter in law and she said: 'I'm staying here until they come out'. I went with my husband and Nora to the city of Castelar, it was already midnight. You can't imagine how many times Nora has spent the night in the police station, arrested, and I, waiting for her. We've been through so many things, the Madres, fleeing, running...

Can you tell us another story about your search?

You know what Nora (Cortiñas) did once? She went to Mansión Seré (a clandestine detention centre in the city of Morón). She didn't tell anyone. She came home and said, just like that: 'You know where I've been? My answer was:

'I'll kill you. Are you crazy?'. I couldn't believe it. What she told me was this: 'I went to Mansión Seré. I began to walk around the house, looking all over. So a guy came out and said: 'What are you looking for, madam? 'My brother wants to open a retirement home and this property is on sale and he wants to buy it. I spoke loudly so that they could hear it inside. I saw someone peep through a slit. And he said 'No, madam, you're wrong'. 'No, I'm not wrong, they told me the right thing', Nora said. 'No, you know what? You should go to the city hall and ask about it. You'll see this is not for sale'. In the end, she left. Later she came to my house and told me about what had happened. I told her: 'If Carlos finds out, he's going to kill you'. She was like that, she's like that. Some other time, on a Saturday, she came from the hairdresser's and said 'Pepa, someone in the hairdresser's said there's a place where some boys were killed'. And we went to the place. We started to walk. We went into the shops and asked: 'We were told that some boys were killed here yesterday'. 'Yes, but, you know what happened?', they said. 'They had kidnapped a woman and wouldn't let her go, so the police killed them'. 'Can you believe it? That's terrible'. We kept on walking. 'We were told...', again: 'No, madam'. Everyone said the same thing. We thought 'What do we do?' And we were standing in front of the house we were talking about because we knew which house it was, and we said 'Let's go to the municipal office'. I never told Nora 'Let me do the talking'. We took a bus and went to the place.

You know where the municipal office was? You looked around and everything was deserted, it was in the middle of nowhere, that's where the office was. A police officer came to us: 'What are you looking for?' And I said: 'Look, we were told that some young people were killed here and we're looking for our children'. 'No, you don't need to worry, it was nothing like that'. And he told us the same story we'd been told before. That they had kidnapped some woman, whatever. It got dark and during our ride back home, it was raining. 'One day we'll be the ones that get killed'. And that was Nora's life, and mine... I went to lots of places with Nora, she would come for me and we'd go to the city of San Miguel. The places we've been to... It's unbelievable. The problem is I keep forgetting a lot.

What were you able to reconstruct about María Lourdes fate?

Nothing, they took her and that was it. I don't know where. I'll tell you something I haven't said: when Lourdes was taken away, the mothers weren't meeting yet, I used to go to the ESMA (Navy Mechanics School) because I knew she could be there. I'd walk that block up to the place where the soldiers were. I'd stand there and think: 'I'd like to be bewitched'. Bewitched was a TV show about witches, the protagonist moved her nose and her wish came true. I would

think 'If only I were bewitched, you'd be rolling around the road'. And the car rushed into ESMA. I went there many, many times. On my own, at that time each of us was on her own. And one day I didn't go there anymore because all I did was watch cars go by.

Was she in ESMA?

She was there, we know that from what Quique (Lourdes' husband) said. Once I was going somewhere, I don't remember where, and I took a train that ran by that place and I looked to that side, to ESMA, and you could see the garden. I remember I looked through the window and you could see the inside. You couldn't see anything, anything but the garden, the walls, and that was all. But I looked anyway...

FINAL WORDS

Pepa couldn't reconstruct much about her daughter's fate, but she always kept one last memory:

When she left I said 'Take care', and she said 'Don't worry, mum'. I'll never forget that. Who could imagine what would happen after that? I never imagined what would happen. No. It's incredible. There's something I recall, but I can never talk about it, really, because they say 'She's crazy'. I was lying on my bed and I couldn't sleep. I heard a terrible cry, like a moan. I heard it there in the room. The moan came and went. And I said to myself: 'It's Lourdes'. It was like she was dying, something happened to her, she was screaming. I never felt the same thing again. Just the one time. I think it was when she died. But I always remember those cries because I thought 'This can't be real'. It wasn't a dream, nothing like that. I never thought that something like this would happen to me, or to any of the Madres.

Haydeé Gastelú de García Buela

Madre de Plaza de Mayo - Línea Fundadora (Founding members)

Haydeé Gastelú is the mother of Horacio García Gastelú, a university student who was kidnapped in 1976, at the age of 21. Haydeé was married to Oscar García Buela, and they had three children: Alicia Ester, Horacio Oscar and Diego Fernando.

Horacio had attended *Colegio Nacional Buenos Aires*, a prominent secondary school in Buenos Aires, and after that, he started his higher education in Biological Sciences at the *Universidad de Buenos Aires*. In 1976 he was on military service in Bahía Blanca, in the province of Buenos Aires. He was on leave in the city of Buenos Aires when he was kidnapped in his girlfriend's house, along with her.

From that moment on, Haydeé began her search as one of the fourteen women that gathered for the first time in Plaza de Mayo on April 30, 1977. She is one of the founders of *Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo* and she is currently the vice president of *Madres de Plaza de Mayo - Línea Fundadora*.

Twenty-five years later, thanks to the work of forensic anthropologists, she could find her son's body, and those responsible for his death were taken to trial and imprisoned. That is how she was able to find out that Horacio had been one of the thirty victims of the massacre of Fátima, an event that took place between August 19 and 20, 1976.

Despite the years gone by, Haydeé is 'still standing and struggling'. Because even though, as she said, her search ended in Truth and Justice, there is still something left to do:

The dreams for which my son gave his life are yet to be fulfilled. And there I am, trying, at my age, to keep on fighting for that, to make it a reality.

*Este mismo sol que nos
 enumera dará de comer a
 nuestros hijos
 lo poco que sepamos
 procurarles, en su incendio
 de soledad
 camina esta distancia apenas
 olvidada como tejió la luz de
 enero juntos después de enterrar
 a los más queridos empujando
 la sangre con indiferencia.*
 Horacio Oscar García Gastelú

*This vey sun that
 enumerates us will feed
 our children
 the little we can
 provide them, in its
 lonely fire
 there walks this barely
 forgotten distance as January
 light knitted together after burying
 our dearest, pushing
 blood with indifference.*

Horacio Oscar García Gastelú

HAYDEE'S STORY

Haydeé was a mother devoted to raising and educating her children when tragedy invaded her home on August 7, 1976. On that day, her son Horacio was kidnapped at her girlfriend's house, becoming a victim of State Terrorism. At that time, Horacio was doing military service.

From the beginning, when he enrolled he was categorised as 'under observation'. As far as I know, he wasn't an activist of any organisation, but he'd graduated from Colegio Nacional Buenos Aires, which was highly political, and that seemed to be enough.

Horacio was a *Colegio Nacional de Buenos Aires* alumni and he studied Biological Sciences in the *Universidad de Buenos Aires*. Before his disappearance, he had mentioned to his parents that the treatment he received seemed suspicious to him and that he thought he was being investigated. He was on leave from July 26 to August 11 and had to be back in navy base Baterias, in Bahía Blanca.

On August 7, 1976, an armed group burst into the house of Ada, Horacio's girlfriend, in the city of Banfield.

They'd apparently jumped the wall of the Juvenile Court next to the house. They covered Horacio and his girlfriend's heads with hoods and took them to ask them some questions. That's what they were told.

From that moment on, both families filed habeas corpus but did not receive any answer. Haydeé and her husband reported the facts to the Navy Command, since their son had to appear for military service in a few days. Little by little, Haydeé came to find other mothers that searched for their children, just like she did. She was one of the fourteen women who met for the first time on April 30, 1977, in *Plaza de Mayo*

Those were difficult years, days of terrible loneliness, because nobody would listen to you. Finding one another was very important to us. And with our search, our friendship strengthened. I'm one of the fourteen women that met that day in the Plaza. Since then I've learnt that for those who are in trouble, the best option is union. And strong union, because it'll help in life. That's how we struggled to make Collective Memory prevail in our country, and to find Truth and Justice, which was our goal.

THE MEMORY OF HORACIO

Haydeé is the mother of three children. The eldest, Alicia, was born with a serious health condition which made Haydeé devote all of her attention to her. Horacio was born on April 24, 1955. Later, Diego would come.

My son Horacio came into the world after I had a very sick child, so he was destined to fill a very special place in our home. He was a very special boy, though, very sensitive. He was a good companion to us and he was very sensitive when it came to social matters. He always stood out from his classmates in school for taking care of those who were in need, maybe he was touched by his sister's story, she'd already been born with health problems.

What was Horacio like as a child?

Horacio was very responsible, since he was a child he was very studious, he was a very good son, a very good companion. He'd always been the flag-bearer in his primary school and also in Colegio Nacional Buenos Aires, where he was an excellent student. I think that he was marked, because of his family story, by an inclination to work on the problems of the world and try to fix them.

What did he like?

He liked photography, he read a lot, he spent most of the day reading. He wasn't a boy who liked football, even though he grew up in San Justo, a town where we played on the streets, which were dirt roads, and everyone played football. He was good at studying and painting, and taking pictures. He practised photography a lot, he made exhibitions in the school at the time. His favourite topics were children, elderly people and work. I have pictures that were taken by him where there are elderly people in the square, children playing on the floor, an old person crossing the street. He also read a lot. He'd already taken many subjects in the School of Biology and worked in an exporting company six hours a day. I noticed that he was keeping his salary because it was clear that he was saving to form his family when he finished military service.

As did most youngsters of his time, Horacio took part in political activities in school and had a strong sense of social commitment. However, the violence of those times made its presence among his classmates.

As a student in Colegio Nacional de Buenos Aires, he was part of the student's movements that were emerging in our country at the time. And, in 1974, he lost his best friend. His mate from all his school years in Nacional de Buenos Aires was killed and the wake was made in the school under a sign that said Montoneros. Almost everyone in the school was there in the wake, except for my son, because we were very frightened and in a lot of pain so we embraced him, and stayed with him all night in his bedroom. My husband got sick from all the suffering and Horacio was very sad.

However, young men such as Horacio continued to stand up for their ideals and attempted to, as Haydeé explains, "fix the problems of the world".

I think at the end that was what marked him and all of his classmates. I think it was that struggle in which they all took part that brought them even closer. I told him: 'You're trying to fix the problems of the world'. As a mother I think he was conditioned by the presence of his sister, he had that passion for fixing everything. So much so that, when he studied Biology, I questioned his choice because I thought it was influenced by the presence of his sister. However, many of his classmates studied Biology. Today, thanks to DNA and the advance of science, I can say that I'm one of the privileged Madres that could recover their children's remains.

Which were Horacio's dreams?

Horacio's dream was fixing the world. And all those youngsters shared the same dream. We realised that long afterwards, when Madres found each other as a consequence of our children's disappearance. We came to find out that they were like brothers and sisters. That they had the same ideals, the same dreams, that they were really like brothers and sisters of life. That was perhaps a big surprise for us, to find that these boys and girls who'd been taken away really shared the best sentiments.

THE SEARCH FOR HORACIO

Like all the Madres, Haydeé, joined by her husband Oscar, presented several claims in every possible sphere.

We all followed the same steps. We resorted to International Organisations, we filed many habeas corpus in the Province of Buenos Aires

and the city of Buenos Aires, we knocked on every door, everywhere, but we never had a concrete answer.

Haydeé was one of the founding members of *Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo* and continues to be close to *Madres - Línea Fundadora*.

In 2001, the Forensic Anthropology group clarified Horacio's fate and returned the remains of their son to his parents. It was revealed that Horacio had been one of the thirty victims of the *Masacre de Fátima* (Massacre of Fátima) which took place between August 19 and August 20, 1976. Thirty-five years after those events, Haydeé Gastelú read these words in *Plaza de Mayo*:

For more than 35 years, including the whole of the dictatorship, the Federal Coordination building was a Clandestine Centre for Detention, Torture and Extermination of citizens of this country. All of them, youngsters, adults, men and women who, even though they never met, had common dreams, and most of them had a life of committed activism for their people.

We know in particular detail about thirty of these fellow activists, because they were our relatives. After more than 20 years of constant search, demanding Truth and Justice, and thanks to the Argentine Forensic Anthropology team, we were fortunate to be able to reconstruct their story and recover their remains.

All of those who were in that clandestine centre were tortured, raped. They were held in subhuman conditions, hooded and in shackles. Thirty of them were taken out in the early morning of August 20, 1976, in a truck, dazed and drugged. They were taken to Fátima, a city in the department of Pilar, where they were all killed in a deserted dirt road...

The whole town of Fátima was horrified and scared to death. They kept this horror in silence for many years and when Truth saw the light and the bones began to speak we could start to get together and abandon silence.

That's why we're here today to tell our fellow activists that we claim their struggle for a free country with Justice and Sovereignty as our own. And together with all of you, who are joining us, we want to shout that for them, the 30,000, and for all the detained-disappeared, we don't forgive, we don't forget, we don't reconcile.

THE LEGACY OF HAYDEÉ

As years went by, Haydeé set out new challenges to continue her search:

In each stage of the search I had a different dream. First I wanted to hear from my son and I did.

After that, my dream, once I knew what had happened to him, was to recover his remains and bury him. Bringing him to San Justo, his home town, and place him with the ashes of my grandparents, my parents, where all my family is. And I was able to do it.

After that, I dreamt of justice and I achieved it, or I achieved part of it, it wasn't enough. I achieved that some people who were that night in Federal Coordination, the place where Horacio was, took responsibility and were convicted. Today they're in a normal prison for life. I went through that stage of justice, I was the complainant along with my husband, we were both complainants.

But I left Court feeling empty. Because even though I had somehow closed a period of my life, I felt that there was something missing. I wanted reality to be in fact worthy of the sacrifice of my son's life. That every child could eat, go to school, I mean, a world with less inequality, with more social integration.

Today, her challenge is making Horacio's dreams come true, and to that, she devotes her time and efforts.

That's why I'm still standing and fighting. And also for all Madres, so that they can have the luck I had, because knowing how my son's life ended, and in what manner, was good for me. In the end, life showed me that truth is liberating. Then justice, because to me, justice was an umbrella that protected us all. And I achieved justice, at least partially, at least for his case. But what's still missing for me is that the dreams for which my son gave his life come true. And here I am, struggling for that reality to be achieved.

Haydeé highlights the continued support of her family through hard times.

Horacio fulfilled his dreams, they were shattered, but they were nice dreams. In my case, I feel that the memory of Horacio, his dreams, keep me company, and so does Diego —my youngest son—, who's now, along with his wife and daughters, the joy of our home. It's what gives us the strength to keep on going. I've been married to my husband for 60 years, fortunately, he's with

me, and as I say 'the most remarkable thing in my life is my partner, who's a good companion and a good father'.

What would you say to children now?

I'd tell them to get involved, to keep their eyes open. To be aware that what happened then can happen again. I'd tell them that the world sometimes sees many events repeat and that we need to have a clear idea of where we are and where we're going. Each of us has to be aware of what they're doing and why. So, my advice to young people is that they should keep their eyes open, that they should study, work and struggle.

Which new projects do you share with the *Madres*?

As my friend Vera Jarach says, we're optimistic and we're still standing. And we're still at the ESMA (Navy Mechanics School), that place of horror will now continue to be open for projects filled with life. And the Madres have a very nice project there, it's about creating a popular and free Music School in the building that was assigned to us, for people who can't study music. In this way, we'll turn a place linked to death into something like music, which is filled with life.

FINAL WORDS

So many years after that first round of the *Madres*, Haydeé's journey continues and she has confidence in the times to come.

At this moment, I notice a great openness in young people, they've been more involved for the past years, because, for a long time, fear was imposed. It's not just young people in our country, but worldwide. And that's great, it's very promising, is what the Madres work for: for Collective Memory to live on, for Truth to be helpful and for Justice to be a reality. Those are the three things that we have and which make us stand, they keep us willing to go on struggling and also keep us healthy. I think that those of us who remain, are still healthy because we're still struggling.

Schejene María (Sara) Laskier De Rus

Madre de Plaza de Mayo - Línea Fundadora (Founding members)

Schejene María Laskier de Rus, known as Sara Rus, was born in 1927 in the city of Lodz, Poland. At the age of twelve, she suffered the violence of Nazism when she and her family were transferred to the Lodz ghetto. Later, she suffered subhuman life conditions in the concentration camp of Auschwitz and, finally, she was taken to Mauthausen, where she was released. When the war ended, Sara and her husband Bernardo, survivors of concentration camps, emigrated to Argentina with the illusion of starting a new life and forming a family.

Sara managed to have two children, overcoming biological difficulties because her body had deteriorated due to her long time in concentration camps. That is how on July 24, 1950, Daniel was born, and, five years later, Natalia.

In 1977, Sara was once again a victim of the violence of State Terrorism: on July 15, her son Daniel was kidnapped at the National Atomic Energy Commission, where he worked in scientific research. From that moment on, Sara began her search filing several claims nationally and internationally.

Today, Sara is a member of *Madres de Plaza de Mayo - Línea Fundadora* and of the Association of Survivors of Nazi Persecution, embodying her double condition as a survivor of the nazi genocide and victim of the last military dictatorship in Argentina. She is an example for her perseverance in the search for Truth and Justice and, in spite of the pain she went through, she conveys a message of hope:

In every life experience I share with young people, from my life in Poland, the terrible violence of the war, to the loss of my disappeared son in 1977, I mainly want to leave them a message of love.

I struggle against oblivion. I struggle for Collective Memory. So that the Nazi, those over there and these over here, are never as strong as they got to be in their time. Memory is what's most important. If we don't have collective memory, things happen again.

SARA'S STORY

Sara has twice been a victim and survivor of persecution and Human Rights violation. First, in her home country, she was taken to Auschwitz after being in the Lodz ghetto, where she lived in subhuman conditions. Several years later, in Argentina, she was a victim of State Terrorism, when she suffered her son's Daniel disappearance during the last civic-military dictatorship.

After surviving concentration camps and being released in Mauthausen, she decided to live in our country, searching for a better future, free from persecution.

I met my husband in the ghetto. I was a thirteen or fourteen-year-old little girl who fell in love with a man who was twenty-six. After the war we met again, we came to Argentina and we were able to start a family. That was our greatest dream. Due to starvation and the consequences of concentration camps, my body was quite damaged and my diagnosis, at first, was that I couldn't have children. But, despite everything they said, I could do it, I had a son and a daughter: Daniel and Natalia. Thank God, I later had two granddaughters.

It was not easy to get to Argentina. Sara, her mother, and Bernardo, her husband, went through a complicated journey before they were able to settle in the city.

Officially, we couldn't enter Argentina. We had to cross the river illegally in a boat, then gather some money to pay the person who helped us cross the border. We were ten. We were taken to Clorinda, Formosa. None of us spoke Spanish. And our contact left us. He left us alone, at night, in the rain. Until a policeman on horseback, carrying a rifle appeared. He made my mother sit on the horse and he gave the rifle to me. He took the ten of us to his house, with his wife and I don't know how many children. They gave us food there. But the next day they put us on buses and took us to jail in Formosa. There were more than a hundred people in that jail. Later, the group was divided, some of us went to the temple and some others to private houses. We asked what we could do to get to Buenos Aires. They told us that we'd be sent back to Paraguay. We knew of Eva Perón and all she did for people, so my husband decided to send her

a letter, written in Polish. He told her our story. Luckily she got the letter and had someone translate it for her. Afterwards, she sent us a message telling us not to be afraid and that we'd receive passes to get to Buenos Aires. Indeed, after some time all of us received the passes. And we came to Buenos Aires.

After they arrived in Buenos Aires, they had to start all over. Bernardo took a job as a tufter in a textile company. As part of this new life, they wanted to become parents, so Sara saw a doctor to know if there was any chance. And there was some hope. Her body had suffered a great deal, but it might recover. They had two children. Daniel was born on July 24, 1950, and Natalia in 1955.

Bringing Daniel into the world was difficult because my body was deteriorated. But I resisted. He was a beautiful boy and since he was a child he was excellent in school. He got the degree he wanted. He was a nuclear physicist. He was with me until 1976. He was a very desired child for me. After our experiences during the terrible Holocaust, being able to have a son and a daughter was something incredible. And my son-in-law, my daughter and my granddaughters can feel my pain, they know what happened to me in the concentration camps, I never concealed my experiences.

Daniel was kidnapped on July 15, 1977, at 2:30 p.m. He was leaving his workplace, the National Atomic Energy Commission (CNEA) when he was arrested. Up to the moment, there are no reliable testimonies accounting for Daniel's whereabouts after his kidnapping.

It was a day just like any day, it was a Friday and he had promised his father he was going to be home by noon to run some errands. But he didn't come home that day. At that point, we put on alert. I called my son-in-law and my daughter. I told them something was wrong because Daniel hadn't come home. We knew that a friend of his had disappeared the week before in the Atomic Commission as well. We asked in hospitals because we didn't know what was going on, and we started to investigate. That's how we found out that on that same day several people had been taken away from the National Atomic Energy Commission.

A total of twenty scientists from the CNEA were detained-disappeared. On that same day, his colleagues Gerardo Strejilevich and Nélica Barroca were disappeared as well.

THE MEMORY OF DANIEL

Sara remembers his son as a very cheerful and loving boy. She recalls that he was very intelligent as a child and, from an early age, showed a passion for physics and nature.

What was Daniel like?

He was a very cheerful, intelligent, loving person. He liked to be with his friends. He was always willing to help his classmates with their homework. His favourite subjects were Physics and Mathematics. At twelve years old, he made a presentation in class, in primary school, about the atom and atomic science, which is something unusual at that age. After class, the Headmaster wrote me a letter that said 'After giving a lecture to sixth and seventh-grade students he gave a lecture to teachers. The Headmaster'. I bring this up precisely because he continued his career up to the last moment with the passion of being a nuclear physicist.

What games did he like playing?

As a child my son was a good companion to his friends and he always brought them to our home to help them with homework, mostly in Mathematics. He was a cheerful boy, he was a fan of Boca Juniors football club since his childhood, and he liked to listen to matches on the radio and honour his favourite team. And from a very young age, the teachers already recognized him as the best student and best friend in primary school. He also liked playing with cars, robots, assembling games. In his free time, he played football with his friends from the neighbourhood.

What was his favourite meal?

Schnitzels with chips. Anyway, my son would eat all food, he liked being at home and being with his sister. He loved his family very much and I never had any problems with food; he liked everything, he had a very good heart and took everything with love.

What kind of music or which singer did he listen to?

The truth is that in my house we listened to classical music, and he shared that with us. He particularly liked rock music and he was a big fan of The Beatles.

Was he in love?

My son was very good looking and all the girls fell in love with him. He always said 'No, mum, I don't have time for that yet, I'm still young, I'm not interested', but shortly before his disappearance, he had met a young girl and she became his girlfriend. Unfortunately, their story couldn't develop. Her name's Estela.

What was the best moment you lived with your son? What was the best present he gave you?

The most emotional time we spent together was when he was in sixth grade, teacher Johns gave him an award for best student and best friend. While the award was introduced, Daniel didn't know he'd be the winner. The present I remember the most is a beautiful plant he gave to me and my husband on our anniversary.

SARA'S SEARCH

Daniel worked passionately in investigating the effects of atomic energy in materials. An interesting fact about Daniel's kidnapping is that three days after his disappearance, Sara received a notice informing that he had been fired from CNEA. This is proof of the involvement of the Commission's authorities, who knew beforehand what was going on.

My son was taken away when he was walking out of the National Atomic Energy Commission. After a very long time we learnt that in that moment a van appeared, it looked like one of those dry cleaner's vans, and people wearing uniforms got off that van and took him away. After having that information, we started to visit Human Rights organisations, the Ministry of Home Affairs, we started to send letters wherever we could, we even wrote to the President, I have direct responses from the President, I even sent a letter to Pope John Paul II (who was Polish as well) and he answered that he was doing all the possible efforts to find my son. All Madres received the same answers from the same

places: that they were surprised, that they couldn't find him, that they didn't know where he was. So cynical, it was unbelievable to hear that nobody knew, that nobody was responsible. The point is that, to this day, we don't have a positive response about where he was taken. We were told that the Navy took him, but that's all.

Sara also appeared in the Embassy of Israel, in her condition as an Auschwitz survivor, demanding their attention and help in her search. Finally, she joined other mothers who were searching for their children and relatives, just like her.

I believe I played an important role in Madres. I had friends who let themselves go completely. They lost interest in life. I tried to talk to them and their family and tell them my story. I would say: 'Look, if I'm still alive after the Holocaust and after having lost my son, then it's possible to keep on struggling'.

Sara is part of *Madres de Plaza de Mayo – Founding Members*, where, together with other mothers, she continues to search for her son. She recalls that theirs was a tough struggle, many years went by without any notice from their children, which affected many of them very much. Sara is an optimistic woman. Despite having suffered the Holocaust and the loss of a child, she still believes in life.

I think that this —her struggle as a part of Madres— is what Daniel would've wanted. I don't know how he was killed and tortured. At the time when my son was taken away from me, my mother, who was with me for a long time, nearly stopped talking. She lost interest in life. She died with that pain.

I struggle against oblivion. I struggle for Collective Memory. So that the Nazi, those over there and these over here, are never as strong as they got to be in their time. Memory is what's most important. If we don't have collective memory, things happen again. When we were in Germany, my mother would always say to me: 'You'll see, we'll manage to put food on our table'. And I thought 'Which table?', we didn't have a table. I say that life is nice because if after all that happened I have a table and I can have company, I can be helpful and be surrounded with love... What else could I ask for? Life is beautiful. If one doesn't want to live, dying is easy.

SARA'S LEGACY

Sara's personal goal, in order to recover from so much pain and to build Collective Memory, is to make her story public.

When someone asks me where I get my strength from, there's only one answer: children. Young people to whom I direct my experiences, my thoughts, my reflections. Their contact is what gives me the strength to move forward. I have my memories deep inside. And I can still think, I can still tell my story. And as long as I can tell my story, I'm going to do it.

I decided to talk, and I give my testimony precisely to influence youngsters so that they know a truth that many deny. When you suffered so many humiliations in your own body and managed to get over it, you must talk about it. It's the only way to give youngsters the strength they need to prevent these things from ever happening again.

Sara has very enthusiastically taken part in the activities that the *Programa Educación y Memoria* (Education and Collective Memory Programme) carried out in schools in the city of Buenos Aires. She remembers those activities as an opportunity to leave 'a message of love'.

From all the experiences that I tell young people, from my life in Poland, the terrible violence of the war, to the loss of my disappeared son in 1977, what I mostly want to leave them, on those occasions, is a message of love. I think that they see it that way, too, I can tell that by the way they look at me and the questions they make.

I see their faces as they listen to my story, so interested and so moved, it makes me regain confidence in the future. To me, it's important to be able to transmit my wish for justice and collective memory so that the horrors of both the Nazi massacre and State terrorism in Argentina can never repeat themselves.

FINAL WORDS

Sara always leaves the meetings with students with a smile on her face, highlighting the role of young people in this struggle for Collective Memory, Truth and Justice.

What we ask young people is to follow our steps in the struggle for Human Rights. The wounds remain open as long as justice isn't served. That's why my wish is that they keep struggling with commitment and the belief that a better world, of justice and solidarity, is possible.

Carmen Loréface

Madre de Plaza de Mayo - Línea Fundadora (Founding Members)

Carmen Loréface is the mother of Jorge Aggio, detained-disappeared on July 31, 1976. Jorge was born on January 15, 1947, in the city of Buenos Aires. As a child he stood out because of his learning ability. He received primary education at the school Instituto Bernasconi and after that, he attended the renowned *Colegio Nacional Buenos Aires*. Afterwards, he studied to become a Systems Analyst at the *Universidad de Buenos Aires*.

In 1976, he was married, he had two children —a boy and a girl— and held a hierarchical position in an American company. He was chosen as a union representative by his workmates. On July 31, 1976, at twenty-nine years of age, he was kidnapped and became one of the 30,000 victims of state terrorism.

From that moment on, Carmen has walked a long road searching for Truth and Justice, as a member of *Madres de Plaza de Mayo*. In 2010, the Forensic Anthropology group was able to identify Jorge's remains and reconstruct his fate. It was then when she could know for certain that he had been one of the thirty victims of the Fátima massacre (*Masacre de Fátima*), an event that took place between August 19 and August 20, 1976.

Despite having found the truth about her story, Carmen's actions as part of *Madres de Plaza de Mayo - Línea Fundadora* continue, and she recounts her son's path with motherly love and sweetness:

Talking about my son is a daily habit to me. It's a constant memory, a constant pain, it's feeling his absence. It means I'm happy to see him in a picture and then his image vanishes... he goes away. Talking about my son brings me joy. Every memory I have from my son is a good memory, from the time when he was a little boy until the moment he was taken away.

I'm a Madre de Plaza de Mayo Línea Fundadora. I'm going to explain in detail the most horrible moments I had to go through in my life, as is the terrible loss of a son. The cruelest times a mother can never endure, nor forget. The anguish and the pain when I found out that my dear son had disappeared. I didn't understand until I woke up to reality. In spite of all the time that has gone by, I'm always filled with the anguish of a mother who has lost a son. A son who was his mum's pride, who was a Methods and Systems Analyst by twenty-three. He was married, he had two children, he was all love and tenderness.

CARMEN'S STORY

Carmen Loréface is one of the *Madres de Plaza de Mayo - Línea Fundadora*, a woman who stopped being simply a housewife and mother after the disappearance of her son, Jorge Enrique Aggio, on July 31, 1976.

I was a housewife with children who studied. Ours was a regular home and I didn't know the meaning of the word 'disappeared', I didn't know that word. It wasn't something that people knew yet. They didn't talk about it in the media. Until one day, my husband came home very early, as if he had missed work. I asked him what was going on, if we had company... But he didn't know how to say it to me. He didn't dare tell me. He didn't dare because I'd had heart problems ...How do you explain to a mother that her son is gone and nobody knows where he is?

My son hadn't shown up for four or five days, not at his workplace, not at his home. He was already a father, he had two children and they knew what had happened with their dad, I was the one who didn't know anything. And they waited a bit, in case he appeared, but since he didn't, and I asked for him a lot —because every day he'd call me on the phone— they couldn't help but tell me. So I fell ill, for about a week, and one day, something happened, I don't know what, but I said to myself 'I must get up'. Because he had to be somewhere and I had to find him. It was then when they said 'No, mum, he is disappeared', 'What do you mean disappeared? Who knew that word? No one. Because the word 'disappeared' wasn't known anywhere in the world.

And that's how my struggle began. We went to the Ministry of Home Affairs and I met some other mothers there, they were desperate like I was, searching for their children. And one day we started to meet, that's how we started, with our president Azucena Villaflor, who was later kidnapped and killed. Some other day we said: 'Let's put something on our heads to identify ourselves, to show that we're someone in Plaza de Mayo, we have to do something'. Well, one used a nappy of her son, another one used a headscarf, not

these headscarves, it was just something white on our heads. We were more and more, we walked around the pyramid. And that is how our struggle began, it wasn't easy.

At 85 years old, Carmen's struggle remains intact and she continues to dream of a fairer society, where things are not forgotten.

We've been struggling for so many years. Now we're putting the criminals into trial. And some of them have been convicted, some haven't. Because we want them to be convicted for life in normal prisons. That's what we fight for. And we'll do it as long as we have strength (...) and we're going to go on fighting so that you have a better life and this never happens again.

REMEMBERING HER SON JORGE, 'PICHE'

Childhood and adolescence

We called him Piche. His father gave him that nickname as a kid. He grew up and we kept calling him Piche. But later, when he grew up, his classmates from school or university would come home and he was embarrassed by that name. So we said 'We're not going to call him Piche anymore, let's call him Jorge'. But to me, he was still Piche, my Piche.

One time we gave him a guitar for the Three Kings Celebration. From then on, he'd spend the whole day, the whole day playing, he never left that guitar. He studied guitar as a child and when he was older he learnt without any teacher. He went wherever Los Chalchaleros, a folklore group, played and then he played the songs on his guitar and he sounded just like the singer because he had an exceptional voice. And he sang at parties, everywhere. He never quit studying, though...

One day, his teacher called me because he wanted to talk to me, when he finished sixth grade, the last grade, at Bernasconi school. I asked if he'd done something wrong and he said 'No, I called you because I want to give you one piece of advice, and I do it wholeheartedly because I don't usually call my student's mothers, but this boy deserves it. You must enrol him in the best school or institution here in Buenos Aires because he has a privileged mind'. I said I didn't know any institution, I had no idea where to enrol him. 'Well you should do this, ask him if he wants to go to the Military High School or you can enrol him in Colegio Nacional Buenos Aires'. So one day I told him: 'Come, Jorge, let's talk. Your teacher called me and told me I should send you to a good school and he gave me two options, would you like to go to the Military High School?', 'No, mum, I don't want that'. 'Then it's Nacional Buenos Aires. It's the best

secondary school in our country. But, mind you, you have to study a lot in order to get in'. He said 'Well, I'm going to study, I'm going to get in that school'. So I sent him to get private classes for some subjects. He had to study Latin, and guess what? When the exam finished he was so excited. He gave me a kiss and a hug and said 'Mum, I got in'. I cried with joy, his father too was so excited. I was very happy, it was a very nice time.

HIS CAREER, COMMITMENT AND DISAPPEARANCE

After graduating from *Colegio Nacional Buenos Aires*, Jorge decided to enrol in the *Universidad de Buenos Aires* to become Systems Analyst.

He wanted to study computing, methods and systems analyst. At the time there weren't many of them, only two or three people had that degree, this was a long time ago. Well, he took that course, he finished it, he didn't work, he only studied. By the time the course was over, he was able to use the machines that came from Germany, and the following year he was a company executive. Yes, he had a privileged mind.

When he was working in an American company, his workmates chose him as a union representative, and from then on, his commitment and his beliefs made him a 'dangerous' voice. A voice that, as many others, had to be silenced, because it did not coincide with the interests of those who had taken power by force.

But what happened? There was a problem there. One day a girl came to him: 'Sir, could you do us a favour? Since you are the boss here, we need a union representative because the girls here have very low salaries'. So, he became a union representative of the company. He started to work, but in his free time, he represented the girls. He went to the CGT (General Confederation of Labour). He argued with Otero (the Minister of Labour at that time), he argued with CGT, because he was a very good speaker. But he was very kind, he cared for everybody. If he hadn't cared so much, none of this would've happened, they took him away because he was a representative. After some time, all the union representatives were gone.

Jorge Enrique Aggio, a father of two, was disappeared at the age of twenty-nine when he was intercepted on his way to work.

He was twenty-nine years old. He worked in an American company, but one day he didn't come back. I didn't know people disappeared, I didn't know that they were tortured! I was happy with my husband and my children. We

had a nice family. I think that there wasn't a dictatorship as brutal and barbaric as this one. The young people they took were people who thought. Thinking was forbidden. That's why they took them. I don't know if my son was an activist, he never mentioned it to me. He had a family, he was married and had two kids. What they wanted was a fairer society, fewer people suffering. I know that. But it seems that it cost them dearly. So dearly. I don't want this to ever happen again.

HER SON'S REMAINS

On Thursday, April 15, 2010, there was a conference in *Madres de Plaza de Mayo - Línea fundadora* (Founding members) to announce that the forensic Anthropology team had located the remains of Jorge Enrique Aggio.

I was lucky, God blessed me, because in April 2010 the anthropologists found my son's remains. It took a long time, after many procedures, trials, after going to different Courthouses, for us to receive his remains. Now I'm lucky to have an urn in my house, a small altar I made, where I talk to him, but it's not the same. I'm lucky to know what happened to him, where he was, everything. But it isn't the same to have an urn as to have one's son, because my son was full of ideals, full of life, he wanted a better world with less poor people and less rich people, and he thought he was a thinker. That was forbidden, completely forbidden, you couldn't think, and they didn't want a scenario where people thought, that was inconvenient for them. But our children are gone, they aren't in this world now. But they're here, somehow, they're among you, and my son's looking at me from heaven, not from my house, where he is.

Her pain remains the same, but now she has something material that gives her strength as she continues searching for other children.

Now, the first thing I do when I wake up in the morning is opening a little door. I kiss it and I say 'Good morning, son'. And I do the same at night. And that brings big anguish because I'd like to have him with me. That's why I say that I see my son's reflection in children. So we wake up in the morning, strong, struggling and thinking that mothers have other children that have to be recovered.

So, to Carmen, talking about her son is like talking to herself, because above all she is a Mother, in every sense of the word.

Talking about my son is a daily habit to me. It's a constant memory, a constant pain, it's a feeling he's missing. It's getting happy to see him in a picture and then seeing him dissolve... he goes away. Talking about my son brings me

joy. Every memory I have from my son is a good memory, from the time when he was a little boy until the moment he was taken away.

CARMEN'S LEGACY

As a part of her unceasing commitment, Carmen visits schools giving her testimony so that children can analyse the recent past and build a point of view that is critical and, more importantly, their own.

When I look at each of you I have the feeling that I'm looking at my son. I was always very proud of my son because he was a good student and I think that your mothers must be proud of you. You have to study a lot. And it's important that those of you who are older listen carefully when your teachers tell you this serious story that we suffered. There are special days to explain what happened with our children, you have to listen and then analyse it. You have to analyse what happened in our country so that it never happens again.

With her characteristic sensitivity and kindness, Carmen answered each of the questions that she was made about her past and present. As a mother and a grandmother, she did not keep any advice or reflection untold, in order to leave the children, the parents and the teachers a message of love, struggle and justice.

What do you feel when you visit a school?

Whenever I visit a school, the first thing I see is my son, sitting on the floor. The day I went to a school in Soldati (Author's Note: an activity proposed by the Programa Educación y Memoria as part of the National Collective Memory Day for Truth and Justice on March 23, 2009, in School No 20 D.E. 19, Carlos Alberto Carranza), when the flag-bearers appeared and I saw everybody I thought 'There's my son'. That's what I can't get over, but I go, I go to every school, every prison facility, even though I feel moved and that's bad for me. When I talk about my son, I feel proud of what he was and what he still is for me because history will someday tell me that he fought for something. So, I feel admiration, and I feel great pain for having such admiration, for being able to remember him all the time and not having him with me.

What is the meaning of the white headscarf?

The white headscarf is a universal symbol because this headscarf is recognised worldwide. That's why it belongs only to Madres and Abuelas. There was one time when we went on a pilgrimage to Luján, which would be very, very crowded and we said 'Well, how will we identify ourselves? Let's put a headscarf on our heads'. So we used the headscarves, which at the time were made of cloth, not like they are now, with drawings and all. Madres de Plaza de Mayo is an organisation known all over the world and widely recognised as an example of perseverance, of great struggle and, despite having suffered so much pain first hand, it's an organisation recognised for never having taken revenge in their own hands.

What advice would you give to mothers today?

To your mothers, to the mothers of today, I'd give my advice, which is: educate your children properly, take them through the right path, give them a lot of love (which is what they need). Teach them to be honest, to be kind, to be good friends, to love their parents very much and to love people very much. That would be my advice to the mothers of today.

FAREWELL WORDS

Campanas de fin de año, dedicado a mi hijo Jorge

Y se escucharon campanas

Anunciando el fin de año

Diferente a otros

Este fue sin llantos

Con una madre erguida

Endurecida ante el engaño

Con soberbia y el orgullo

De haberte yo engendrado

Amparada en la juventud

Como la tuya cuando
 Te arrancaron de mi lado
 Esa noche del pasado.
 Quiero contarte hijo mío
 Cómo te sentí a mi lado
 Esas veinticuatro horas
 Que las madres velamos
 Estabas a mi lado me pareció
 Que habíamos caminado juntos
 Por eso mis gritos de justicia
 Que se sumaban al llanto
 En este diciembre tan caluroso
 A un paso de fin de año
 En cada muchacho te veía reflejado
 Y al abrazarme junto a ellos
 Te estaba abrazando.
 No me acobarda el cansancio casi ni cuenta me di
 Que todo había pasado
 Pero me sentí viva de gritar
 Hasta el cansancio, acompañada por las madres
 Y los muchachos
 Quizás sea ese el motivo que al recordarte
 No hubo llanto estás siempre a mi lado
 Caeré mil veces y otras tantas me levantaré
 Pero venceremos, nuestro será el triunfo final
 Y llenaremos la Plaza de Mayo de Madres con

Nuestros hijos.

Aparición con vida hijo, mamá no olvida.

Carmen Loréfice, 2 de enero de 1983.

New Year Bells, to my son Jorge

And bells were heard
 Announcing the end of the year
 Different from others
 One without tears
 With a mother standing up
 Hardened by deceit
 With arrogance and pride
 Of having conceived you
 Protected by youth
 Like yours when
 You were snatched from my side
 That night from the past.
 I want to tell you my son
 How I felt next to you
 For those twenty-four hours
 Of the mother's vigil
 You were next to me I thought
 That we had walked together
 That is why I cry for justice

Along with my tears
 In this warm December
 Just a step away from New Year
 I saw you reflected in every young man
 And by embracing them
 I was embracing you.
 I didn't remember tiredness I almost didn't notice
 That everything was over
 But I felt alive shouting
 Till I was tired, together with the mothers
 And the boys
 Perhaps that is why when I remembered you
 I didn't cry you were by my side
 I'll fall a thousand times and a thousand times I'll wake up
 But we will be victorious, ours will be the final victory
 And we'll fill *Plaza de Mayo* with *Madres* and
 Our children.
 Return alive my son, mum does not forget.

Carmen Loréfica, January 2, 1983.

Lidia Estela Mercedes -Taty- Miy Uranga de Almeida

Madre de Plaza de Mayo - Línea Fundadora (Founding members)

Lidia Estela Mercedes Miy Uranga, "Taty" is Alejandro Almeida's mother, who was detained-disappeared on June 17, 1975, during Isabel Peron's government. Alejandro was one of the victims of the *Triple A*. Taty was born on June 28, 1930, in the Capital City of Buenos Aires. She married Jorge Almeida to whom she had three children: Jorge, Alejandro and María Fabiana.

Alejandro was born on February 17, 1955. At the time of his kidnapping, he was twenty and worked in Télam (a national news agency) and in the Military Geographical Institute, and he was a junior student of Medicine at the National University of Buenos Aires. On June 17, 1975, Alejandro left home at dusk and he never returned. Taty belonged to a military family. This is the reason why her search started among her contacts and her military acquaintances. But, little by little, she started to realise that there was a different reality of the one she knew and she started to search somewhere else.

In 1979, Taty joined the group of women who called themselves *Madres de Plaza de Mayo* and from that moment her search has been connected to the struggle for Collective Memory, Truth and Justice and Human Rights Advocacy.

A mother is capable of anything for her son, but not because we were heroines, we were and still are mothers with gut instinct, of great tenacity that allowed us to achieve many things. For example, we were able to get some genocides, not all of them, who took our children in jail.

On April 25, 2011, she was distinguished as Human Rights Outstanding Person by the Legislature of the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires. Currently, she is a member of the *Madres de Plaza de Mayo - Línea Fundadora* Association.

*Si la muerte me sorprende
de esta forma tan amarga, pero honesta,
si no me da tiempo a un último grito desesperado y sincero
dejaré el aliento, el último aliento,
para decir te quiero.*

Alejandro Almeida

*If death takes me by surprise
so bitter but honestly.
If I have no time for my last desperate, sincere scream
I will leave my breath, my last breath,
to say I love you.*

Alejandro Almeida

TATY'S STORY

Taty is Lidia Estela Mercedes Miy Uranga. She has big brown eyes and a white headscarf around her head, which she has worn for more than thirty years. Taty is one of the *Madres de Plaza de Mayo - Línea Fundadora*, who looks for her son that disappeared in times of a constitutional government, on June 17, 1975.

I was born on June 28, 1930, in Belgrano, city of Buenos Aires. My father, Carlos Vidal Miy, was a military officer born in Salta, and my mother,

Alicia Uranga, was part of a very traditional family from Paraná, Entre Ríos province. In fact, my uncle, Raúl Uranga, was governor in times of Arturo Frondizi's presidency and was the one responsible for the construction of the famous Subfluvial Tunnel.

I have three sisters and one brother. My brother was a colonel and my sisters married to Aviation officers. I married Jorge Almeida, the only civilian of the family who had also two brothers in the force. All in all, a whole military family.

Taty has been all her life surrounded by the military, either because they were part of her own family or her in-laws. Since her childhood, she has very good memories from the time she spent in the provinces of Mendoza and Buenos Aires.

My father was always transferred to Mendoza, Buenos Aires, and Mendoza again. My first trip to Mendoza was when my father was sent as a form of a punishment to Campo de los Andes, a small town in the Andes mountain range, because he told a corrupted officer off. There, I spent an extraordinary childhood, full of snow and horses which I used to ride bareback.

My adolescence was also great in both Buenos Aires and San Rafael. Later, we definitely settled in Federico Lacroze and Cabildo. When my father bought the house, he said to us: 'Look, I bought it because I was told that the underground will pass through this area'. When the Olleros station was finally inaugurated, we celebrated with my sister in honour to my dad.

Taty's family belonged to a high social class. But she highlights as a main characteristic the tender love she received from her parents during her childhood and youth.

I am aware that my family had a privileged social position, but we were not crazy about it. We had a nanny and a maid, but we were always simple people. My parents always gave me all their love... They always used to say that they were advanced people in the sense that there was a lot of respect and love in my family and not fear. I think that my childhood, adolescence and youth were the seeds of what I later became, I had a very united family, we still are.

After she finished her secondary school, Taty graduated as a teacher. She performed this profession for a couple of years and then she became a mother.

My sister and I attended Normal N° 1 school. At that time, we were supposed to sit for an exam in third year of secondary school in order to graduate as a teacher. I didn't get the score for that so I finished my studies in Normal N° 7 school, in Corrientes and Yatay. My 1950 class, the year of the liberator

'General San Martín' was the only one that instead of finishing in 5 years, we had to attend six years to become teachers. It was precisely in 6th year when I met Jorge, who I married in 1953. I was able to work as a teacher for a few years but later I didn't continue studying... I wanted to go to university to study Medicine.

Taty and Jorge Almeida had three children: Jorge, Alejandro and María Fabiana. On June 17, 1975, an awful tragedy struck her family.

Alejandro was 20 years old when he was detained and taken away on the night of June 17, 1975.

He was in his first year of Medicine at university and he worked in Télam (a national news agency). The following day he was going to sit for a mid-term test so he told me that he was not going to go to work. He left home, he said he would be right back and I never saw him again. 'Wait for me, I'll be back'. Those were the last words Alejandro said to me. That was the last time I saw him. The following day, I asked doormen, neighbours about him and I found out that there had been a huge police raid in a bar located in Santa Fe and Scalabrini Ortiz. After many, many years, I discovered that he was an activist of ERP (People's Revolutionary Army).

From then on, Taty starts her long search in which, among other things, she starts understanding her own son and, in that revelation, she starts finding herself.

ALEJANDRO'S MEMORY

Alejandro was born on June 17, 1955, a very hot morning in Buenos Aires. His friends called him 'the little prince'.

I have three children: Jorge, Alejandro and Fabiana. Alejandro Martín Almeida is a detained-disappeared person. He was just twenty years old and he was taken. Many people used to say and still say: 'If this happened, it is because he did something'. We proudly reply to them: yes, it was for something. It was because they embraced a political and social commitment, they fought for a better world.

Alejandro Martín Almeida had worked as an intern in the national news agency 'Télam' in the advertising department, he was twenty years old. He also worked in the Military Geographical Institute and he was attending his first year at the School of Medicine when he was arrested and disappeared by the Triple A (Argentine Anticommunist Alliance).

A few days after his kidnapping, Taty found, in his son's belongings, a notebook with poems that reflect his ideals, his committed activism, the love he felt for his mother and among other things. The following poem was written by Alejandro on January 13, 1975, six months before his kidnapping.

*Si la muerte me sorprende lejos de tu vientre,
porque para vos los tres seguimos en él,
si me sorprende lejos de tus caricias
que tanto me hacen falta,
si la muerte me abrazara fuerte como recompensa
por haber querido la libertad,
y tus abrazos
entonces solo envuelven recuerdos, llantos y consejos
que no quise seguir,
quisiera decirte mamá que parte de lo que fui
lo vas a encontrar en mis compañeros.
La cita de control, la última, se la llevaron ellos,
los caídos,
nuestros caídos,
mi control, nuestro control
está en el cielo,
y nos está esperando.
Si la muerte me sorprende
de esta forma tan amarga, pero honesta,
si no me da tiempo a un último grito desesperado y sincero,
dejaré el aliento, el último aliento,
para decir te quiero.*

*If death surprises me away from your womb,
 because for you , three of us are still there,
 if it surprises me away from your affection
 which I need a lot,
 If death embraces me tight as a reward
 for having wanted freedom,
 and your arms only carry memories,
 tears and pieces of advice I did not want to listen to,
 I want to tell you mum that part of what I was,
 you are going to find it among my fellows.
 The appointment, the last appointment was taken by them,
 the fallen, our fallen ones,
 my control, our control is in heaven,
 and it is waiting for us.
 If death surprises me bitterly but honestly,
 if I have no time for a last desperate and sincere cry,
 I will leave my breath, my last breath,
 to tell you I love you.*

After ten years of the kidnapping of her son, Taty participated together with a group of *Madres* in an activity at the university campus of the University of Buenos Aires to pay homage to the detained-disappeared students. There, for the first time, she met some of Alejandro's fellow activists, who gave her information about his political activism and told her that it was thanks to Alejandro that most of them had been able to go into exile, because he knew their names but he never said anything.

In the year 2008, Taty published the book *Alejandro, forever...love*, which collects memories, family and friends' words, readers' comments,

apart from the 24 poems found in Alejandro's notebook. Taty explains in this way her decision to make them public:

Since a long time ago, I understood that our children are part of our history. It is important that people know these texts that my son left as a testimony of the sensitivity of his generation.

HER SEARCH

Alejandro is part of the 2,000 detained-disappeared before the beginning of the military government, victims of the Triple A (Argentine Anticommunist Alliance).

We have to remember that this kind of state terrorismo did not start in 1976, but in the constitutional government, although I say 'non-democratic', since in 1974 and 1975 there were two thousand detained-disappeared who were murdered. From the six hundred detention centres that existed in times of the dictatorship, three of them were already active in 1975. Obviously, after the 1976 coup d'état, all this became a perfectly organised plan.

How was it to face your son's kidnapping and then the period of the dictatorship in the context of a military family?

In my family they were all military, anti-peronist and 'gorilas' (a derogatory term used to refer to anti-peronist people) and all the ideas that you can imagine. And I was one of them. I had 'fur' coming out from my whole body! I was so much like this that Alejandro used to hug me and tell me: 'My bloody little gorila, I love you so much'...

My uncle Raúl was persecuted and imprisoned for supporting a political party called 'Radicales' (the opposing political party to the Peronist party)... My dad was not promoted to a colonel rank by Perón because he was not a peronist... My son, Alejandro, was detained-disappeared in 1975 during Isabel Perón's government... For me, the ones to blame for all this were the peronist.

I had always lived surrounded by these people... When Alejandro was kidnapped, I went to see Harguindeguy, who had been my father's officer and the chief of one of my brothers in-law. Agosti had been the partner of one of my sisters' husbands and Galtieri had been my brother's chief... Harguindeguy told me: 'Madam, the peronists are the ones to blame' and I said: 'Yes, of course'.

Little by little, Taty started to see her reality with a different lense, guided by the struggle of her son, Alejandro. 'I was born out of Alejandro!'. Taty expressed this as a way of showing how much she was transformed by all this.

I started to open my eyes and be more down-to-earth. This is the reason why I always say that I gave life to three children, but Alejandro gave life to me, to this 'Taty' that opened her eyes and could see everything in a different way, not being a 'gorila' anymore, although I'm not a peronist. I don't adhere to any political party, like the Madres. Although what we do is political, but not in the sense of a political parties. Alejandro gave life to this Taty that will continue her struggle till her last day. I will go on...

How was this transformation, this idea of seeing things with new eyes?

It is terrible. The price I paid was very high, but fortunately I was able to react. I started to close some doors and windows in my life, and because of my ignorance at that time, I tried to become aware of many things. I found Alejandro's notebook and in its last pages I found his poems. I didn't know that he wrote poetry. One of his poems was like a farewell, in case something happened to him.

As time went by, Taty was able to understand that her search was not an individual one, but a collective one and this is how she joined the *Madres de Plaza de Mayo*.

After a while, already in 1979, I heard about the Madres and I started to find out about them. Till one afternoon I went to Plaza de Mayo. The police were there to harass them and the Madres said: 'Just walk, walk'. Later we went with my daughter to the headquarters of Madres, in Uruguay street. Once there I was approached by María Adela Antokoletz and she just asked me: 'Who is missing from you?'. So this is how the three mothers who had their children disappeared in 1975 gathered together: Esther Sánchez, Nelly Stagnaro and me. I realised that I wasn't the only one. Nothing else mattered, religion, occupation, class, nothing, we were united by the disappearance of our children. This is how I abruptly opened my eyes to reality. I finally understood that I wasn't the only one. Here we are all united because of our children.

And what happened to your relatives?

When I joined the Madres, I left all my friends and acquaintances behind. I left them behind, no one left me. And I committed to it. I'm sure that wherever Alejandro is now, he is proud of this 'bloody little gorila', like he tenderly used to call me.

At the beginning, all the *Madres* thought that their children were detained or in *incommunicado* detention. But as time went by, they understood what had happened.

I think that we, Madres, became fully aware that our children were neither detained nor in incommunicado detention in the year 1982. This is why we shouted 'Alive they were taken, alive we want them back' because we believed that they were alive. We never imagined the atrocities that were taking place at that time. It was something that we couldn't accept.

Nora Morales de Cortiñas

Madre de Plaza de Mayo - Línea Fundadora (Founding Members)

Nora Morales de Cortiñas is Carlos Gustavo Cortiñas' mother, who was detained and disappeared on April 15, 1977, in the Castelar train station, province of Buenos Aires. At the moment of his kidnapping, Gustavo was a university student, he was 24 years old, he was married and had a very young son.

Since his son's disappearance, Nora started her unflagging search, knowing from the very beginning the importance of a collective quest. She is the co-founder of *Madres de Plaza de Mayo* and of *Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo - Línea Fundadora*.

Currently, Nora is a Social Psychologist. She is the head professor of the Public Lecture of 'Economic Power and Human Rights' at the School of Economics of the *Universidad Nacional de Buenos Aires* and she is also the head professor in the chair of a curricular and elective subject called 'Economic Power and Human Rights' in the course of studies of Accounting at the School of Economics. Besides, she has delivered courses in universities, secondary schools, study centres and professional associations, civil organisations, workers' unions and communities of neighbours. The search for Truth and Justice made her participate in numerous conferences, seminars, and debates on the topic of human rights, women held at the Human Rights Commission of the American States Organisation (OAS) and the UN. The Free University of Brussels granted her the degree of Doctor Honoris Causa in 2000, the same as the *Universidad Nacional de Salta* in the year 2003. She is a member of the Latin American Federation of the Relatives of the Detained-disappeared Association (FEDEFAM).

After all these years, her struggle continues:

The thirty thousand disappeared will rest in peace if the struggle continues, if we know all the truth about what happened, if there's justice with actual life imprisonment for the genocides in ordinary jails, if we don't forget. They couldn't cut all the flowers, the truth starts to emerge from the ground.

Her son, Carlos Gustavo Cortiñas, still remains disappeared.

Collective Memory is what grants the basis of our struggle, it's what pushes us to continue. The search for truth and justice has to be performed every single day till we know about the victims and what really happened to them so as to go before court.

NORA'S STORY

Nora Cortiñas is Carlos Gustavo Cortiñas' mother, who was detained on April 15, 1977. Gustavo was a student of Economics at the *Universidad de Morón* and he worked in the INDEC (National Institute of Statistics and Census). He was kidnapped at the age of 24 in the Castelar train station, province of Buenos Aires.

I was a typical traditional woman, a typical housewife. I married when I was very young to Carlos Cortiñas and we had two children: Carlos Gustavo and Marcelo Horacio. My husband was a patriarchal man. He wanted me to stay at home. At that time, I used to teach sewing and worked in my house with a lot of female students teaching them how to sew. I took it naturally, as my parents had taught me to.

Like many *Madres*, Nora changed her family routine dramatically after her son's kidnapping.

Gustavo left home like any other regular day and he never came back. It was April 15, 1977. He was kidnapped in the train station on his way to work. That night, a military and police raid searched my house where my daughter-in-law was. Fortunately, they didn't do anything to her. It was a miracle taking into account that, in most of the cases, if they didn't find the person they were looking for, they would kidnap any other member of the family.

Losing a son is always a tragedy. But you have to move on and get out of that labyrinth and be able to help those who are in your same situation. Loneliness is never a good choice if you want to know the truth.

And this is how Nora went out to look for her son, Gustavo. But immediately, she realised that her search was not an individual one, but

a collective one. In this change of perspective, Nora highlights the role of Azucena Villaflor.

Azucena Villaflor was who launched our initial claim: 'All for all and all for our children'. What do we mean by this? It's an implicit promise of the Madres: our struggle is not an individual but a collective one. All along these years, thanks to this philosophy, we've been able to face many adversities: some mothers died, others had to raise their grandchildren due to their parents' disappearance. Some fellow Madres had to face the disappearance of all their children, others were snatched the possibility of raising their grandchildren because those babies or kids were also kidnapped and kept in captivity with their parents until those who murdered their families appropriated them and later registered them under a fake identity. Only the strength granted by the collective allows you to continue with the search.

It was in that collective search that Nora found a new sense for her own life. From that housewife devoted to her family, she turned into a *Madre de Plaza de Mayo*.

We're no longer our children's mothers, but the mothers of all the disappeared. Our biological child turned into 30,000 children. And for them, we gave birth to a completely political public life in the streets. We're still with our children, but not in the same way when they were with us. We revalue motherhood from a public space. We're mothers who acquired a new role, and, in most of the cases, we weren't prepared for it. We transmit something else apart from what we used to share with our children: the spirit of struggle and support for other causes. All in all, we learnt to give and take. That need to understand our children's stories was what made us stay strong, what made us occupy other places that, till that moment, were completely unknown to us.

CARLOS GUSTAVO'S MEMORY

At the time of his kidnapping, Gustavo was 24 years old, he was married and had a very young son. He had worked in the National Securities Commission between October 6, 1970, till July 25, 1974, and then he worked in the INDEC (National Institute of Statistics and Censuses).

Like many other youngsters, Gustavo had a strong social commitment that made him develop social activism in the shantytown called 'Villa 31', in the Saldías neighbourhood. There he met Father Mujica (a Catholic priest) and he started to participate in his charity organisation.

I knew about Gustavo's political activism and his philanthropic work in very poor neighbourhoods. He never hid anything from us. He married very young at the age of 21 when he was a student of Economics at the Universidad Nacional de Buenos Aires.

Times were difficult and violent in the 1970s in Argentina. Before the coup d'état of March 24, 1976, tragedy had already shaken the Cortiñas family.

My husband had told Gustavo that he should leave with his family. They didn't want to because they said: 'We aren't doing anything wrong'. They considered their activism as something natural. They helped people in the poorest neighbourhoods in the West area. He had started helping with Father Mujica in the shanty towns of Retiro and Saldías. In 1974, when Father Mujica was murdered, Gustavo started his committed activism in the area of Morón. In 1975, Gustavo's brother-in-law was kidnapped and then, he decided to go underground for a while, but not for long. He, his wife and son, came to live with us. We thought that things were improving. We never imagined that kind of cruelty and criminality that happened after March 24, 1976. We never thought of the idea of disappearances. We thought that they could be arrested and we were going to be told where they were. When Gustavo was taken, in April 1977, we also believed that he was going to be returned. We couldn't even imagine that one day we would not be able to say goodbye to our children and that we would never see them again. It was impossible to understand. My daughter-in-law was left alone with her son and she stayed living with us. And we never heard anything about Gustavo.

Gustavo was a student of Business Administration, Economics, at the University of Morón, after having studied at the School of economics at UBA (National University of Buenos Aires). Gustavo is remembered by his fellow workers and activists as "a very happy, hard-working and restless person. He used to question every topic till he had his own opinion about it. Once he had clarified all his doubts about a topic and took a decision, nothing would make him change his position, that is, he wasn't an improvised person and he had his strong convictions on issues of his interest".

Nora has always defended the collective struggle for the victims of State terrorism. During many years, she preferred not to make reference to individual claims.

I've always been cautious about making any public commemoration for my son. I thought about the children who didn't have a mother or father. I've always been there for the 30,000 disappeared, never just for him. I never looked for any piece of paper that belonged to him. Now I've found his vocational test, his grades from 'Inmaculada' School, in Castelar, where he graduated in the

Humanities orientation from secondary school. There, a tile with his name on it was placed in order to remember the disappeared who studied in this school, but for now, this is the only thing I have.

Since April 15, 1977, at 8.45 a.m, the time when Gustavo was kidnapped, till today, neither his body has been found nor any information was obtained about his captivity in a detention centre.

THE SEARCH AND STRUGGLE WITH THE MADRES

It was very difficult for us to cope with the anguish that implies the enforced disappearance of our children, not knowing why or where. I had a very young grandson and we couldn't find the words to explain to him what had happened to his father. It was terrible. Little by little, we helped each other among Madres, and in this way, our group grew, through pain.

Since the beginnings of the organisation, Nora participated in the meetings of the first group of Madres.

On April 30, 1977, it was our first day. We were just a few mothers and we were all scared and with an anguished expression on our faces. While we were trying to gather information about where our children were, we were finding more women and men in our same situation. So, we decided to gather together to discover the causes, to comfort one another. We weren't joined by political or religious opinions, but by tragedy, the tireless search. From the very beginning we didn't stay still, we decided to march. However, during the first four months of meetings, what we did was to stand in one place. Walking around in circles started practically as a request from the police who didn't want us to be forming a group. The reason was very simple: as the state of siege didn't allow people to gather together in the streets, we figured out the idea of walking around the square. It was Azucena Villaflor the mother that came up with this idea. There, we were able to express our anguish and sorrow, and people could see us and started to become conscious of what was going on.

Why did you choose Thursdays to perform the 'Ronda de las Madres'?

Since the beginning, we were all women. Maybe it was the time we chose that didn't allow men to attend our meetings because they took place during working hours. Why did we choose Thursdays? It was a random decision.

A mother said that the days that contain an 'r' in their names in Spanish bring bad luck, so we were only left with Mondays and Thursdays. Monday was going to be impossible for us since we all had to perform our household chores during the weekend and sometimes we even did them on Mondays, for example, doing the laundry. We were housewives. So, we chose Thursday. And regarding the time, we chose the moment of highest activity and concentration of people in the city centre, just right when people leave their offices. This is how we started. We started to 'rondar' (walk around the square) at 3:30 p.m on Thursdays.

How did you organise your children's search?

At the beginning, Azucena Villaflor was very important to organise all the activities. She was a completely devoted Madre. Absolutely. She used to bring a draft copy already prepared to hand it in to the Pope, the Episcopal Conference, or the military. First, it was just that. We read that draft and we turned it into a letter, and even if it were written in parchment paper, we wouldn't have mattered, we simply signed it. We didn't change anything. And then there were the letters for the military. So, she used to bring three letters and said that we were supposed to take one for each of the forces: the Navy, the Airforce and the Army. She said: 'Let's see, three mothers should go to the Ministry of War, three mothers should go to the Navy headquarters'. At that time we were very few, so we had to choose where to go in groups of three. It was a group performance quite similar to social psychology written by Enrique Pichon Rivière. Later, I went to university to study Social Psychology because the students who attended the School of Psychology were doing their dissertations or final work with us, at the Madres' headquarters. They said to us: 'You do in practice what Pichon Riviere teaches in theory'.

In fact, this is how, in a spontaneous way, natural leaders started to emerge and they strengthened the organization of the group. Besides, what fundamentally moved this cluster of women to gather together and form such a group was the profound anguish for the loss of our children and the urgent need to find them.

But at that time we weren't aware that, in fact, what we were doing was assigning different roles to decide who were supposed to queue for the habeas corpus, who was supposed to go to each place. It was a very spontaneous organisation. We gathered to distribute our activities and then we gathered together again to see what each one could get. Each one chose what to talk about and where to go. For instance, if there was a mother looking for her pregnant daughter or daughter-in-law, she would talk about that. And so, three of us would go and do that. In fact, for many years we didn't have formal roles, we were just like that.

Nora remembers Azucena Villaflor with tenderness and admiration and she reaffirms Azucena's value in terms of her leadership linked to her personality.

Azucena was a leading mother by nature because whenever she arrived in the square, she inspired respect and power. She was a generous woman, she let other people talk, she took into account everybody's opinions. She was never authoritarian at all. She was a totally open and very spontaneous person. She always found a way to make everyone participate in the decisions and to reach consent. Besides, we were not thinking about her as our president, but just as our natural and spontaneous leading figure.

When did you start to wear a white headscarf?

By 1980, we started to wear the white headscarf around our heads with the name of our disappeared relative in it. It was for the pilgrimage to the Luján Basilica, annually summoned by the Catholic Youth. It was our chance: the basilica was crowded with people, especially youngsters. We had brochures to hand in and because of the crowd, we were supposed to identify ourselves among them. The white headscarf emerged as a way of identifying ourselves. In fact, when we started to wear it, it wasn't a headscarf, it was a baby's nappy. We all had one in our houses because of our grandchildren. So, by doing this, we unintentionally founded the Madres' symbol. The name of the disappeared embroidered in it granted us the possibility for people to approach us so as to give us information about our children.

Were the Madres alone in the 'Ronda' every Thursday or were there other people too?

At the beginning, a lot of people looked at us distrustfully. During the first years, we were alone. No one would walk around with us. We had differences with other Human Rights organisations, some of them were formed by people from political parties and they had other forms of organisation and other obligations. But little by little, people started to join us.

It was a long path for us, the everyday anguish, the idea that tomorrow he or she was going to return, that we were going to be told where they were. The gathering of the Madres was a very important landmark because we understood that our sons and daughters were the same, they had the same dreams. They were all activists. Some were religious activists, or they belonged to a students' union, some were unionists or professional people. They all shared the vision of the country they would like to inhabit. This is how we gave

support to one another and we were able to become strong, each one with her own deep anguish. It took us a long time to understand why they were taken. Then, we learnt that it was just to implement a neoliberal economic system. It was impossible for us to understand that in order to carry on an economic plan, thousands of men, women and children were supposed to be tortured and horribly murdered. Those terrible deaths that we were discovering, that they were thrown to a river or the sea.

Were you ever frightened?

At that time, our priority was the search for my son, and I entered into madness. But we would never quit, never! And we were all scared... I received threats by phone, they threatened me. They told me that I was going to be sent to prison, I was badly treated. Besides, since I'm quite an extrovert, every time I went to a police station, they treated me like a ringleader and there the threats were more serious. Later, I received threats by phone, they threatened me. They painted my full name on the walls of my entire neighbourhood with the message "terrorist mother". Against all odds, I continued.

All this process of a common search marked a turning point in the Madres' lives, since in all the cases it meant significant personal growth.

We had to get used to public life, new relationships, to losing our privacy, to travelling a lot, to expressing ourselves in a different way, to arguing with powerful people, to speaking on the media and being recognised in the streets. I would say that we turned into public women. My case is an example of that: from being an ordinary housewife, I improved myself by studying and getting my university degree in Social Psychology. Now, I'm the head professor of the Public Lecture of 'Economic Power and Human Rights' at the School of Economics of the Universidad Nacional de Buenos Aires.

NORA TODAY

After 40 years of struggle, Nora sets new goals for her Human Rights' advocacy.

Our cause is no longer just the search for our beloved ones, but also the conquest for women's liberation, the respect for the free determination of the body, and the respect for the sexual, religious and cultural minorities. It's really painful to claim that the abrupt jump from our domestic and private lives into

a public life took place because of our children's disappearance. But there's no going back.

Nora highlights the importance of constructing our Collective Memory at school and every time she can, she tells her story to the students in different schools.

I think that taking our stories of what we went through in times of state terrorism to schools is very important and meaningful. We have had a lot of progress in the sense of the making of the trials, but still there are many things to do. It is quite valuable that schools include these topics, since they shouldn't be just places to learn how to read and write. It is a place for growth where children should be informed. That's why we have to take our stories to schools, being quite cautious in the kind of words we use because of the children's age. Then they start making questions to us and through their questions we realise how much they understand. This is why I believe that if children can listen to the stories directly from us, they will better understand what happened. So, we shouldn't stop, we have to continue walking this path, by unveiling the stories to children and teenagers.

How do you assess the advances in the struggle for Collective Memory, Truth and Justice in Argentina?

Our forty years of search and struggle made us witness the trials that unveil what we have been denouncing all these years. The trials show concrete progress, although they also have flaws in terms of form. People are being convicted, some in a right way and some others not, but our feeling is that impunity is vanishing little by little.

FINAL WORDS

In every story, Nora revalues the social commitment expressed by the youth of that time, like her son, and she claims to be part of those collective dreams:

All along these years, we've been supported by the people, sometimes in a silent way and in some others with a lot of strength. We've been supported by the people, our family, grandchildren, and this has been crucial for our struggle. All the monuments, public demonstrations, statues or parks will never be enough because we will always miss our children. The disappeared cannot be replaced by anyone, but our struggle wouldn't have been possible if it weren't for

the working people. Otherwise, we couldn't have borne the great anguish that the loss of a child means, one that fought for a better world. Our great commitment is to keep on exalting the ideals by which our children fought for and many more do it every day.

Aurora Morea de Pedrini

Madre de Plaza de Mayo - Línea Fundadora (Founding Members)

Aurora is Susana Pedrini's mother, an architect and a university teacher who was detained and disappeared together with her husband, José Daniel Bronzel, and her mother-in-law, Cecilia Podolsky de Bronzel, on July 27, 1976. But this tragedy was not the only one the family suffered. In December, during the same year, Antonio Juan Lucas Mosquera, Aurora's son-in-law, her daughter Noemi's husband, was also kidnapped and disappeared.

My daughter, Susana, graduated as an architect at the age of 23. She and her husband, José Daniel Bronzel, worked together as university professors at the School of Architecture of the *Universidad de Buenos Aires*. Neither of them was an activist. She was pregnant. They were kidnapped together with her mother-in-law, Cecilia Podolsky de Bronzel. They were all taken. In the year 2000, anthropologists found my daughter and a year later, they found her husband José in what was known as the Fátima Massacre. Her brother-in-law, Juan Lucas Mosquera, Noemi's husband, is also a detained-disappeared since December 17, 1976.

Aurora started immediately the search for her beloved ones, but many years went by till she was able to find the truth. The *Equipo Argentino de Antropología Forense* (Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team) confirmed that Susana and her husband were murdered on August 20, 1976, in the Fátima Massacre, Pilar county, in the province of Buenos Aires. That day, twenty men and ten women, who had been kidnapped by military and police forces under the authority of the First Army Corps, were executed in a nearby field, close to Fátima city. For many, this was the most brutal slaughter carried out by the last military dictatorship. Susana was two-and-a-half pregnant when she was murdered.

Cecilia 'Chola' Podolsky de Bronzel was José Daniel's mother. She was kidnapped together with her son and Susana. She was 51 years old and she was a housewife.

SUSANA'S MEMORY

Susana was born on July 28, 1947. Her kidnapping took place a day before her twenty-eighth birthday. This is how her sister Noemí remembers her: "Susana was my eldest sister and my role model. She taught me to appreciate good music and she passed on to me her aesthetic sensitivity. Everything in her was harmonious, from her personality to the details in her house. She was always a very responsible person. As a teenager, she was very serious and introverted, she studied a lot, she was always on the honour roll. By the age of 23, she opened up and showed all her joy. She loved life. She shone light".

THE MADRES' STRUGGLE

In 1976, when my daughter, my son-in-law and my daughter's mother-in-law disappeared, I didn't know what was going on in the country. I was called and said that my daughter's flat had been broken in and that my daughter had been taken. I was told that there had been five or six green Ford Falcon cars parked in the street and when they were taken outside the building, they were handcuffed and placed hoods on their heads. When I went to the flat, everything was upside down and many things had been stolen. I didn't know what to say or do. I started to find out where I could go. I was completely alone. My daughter Noemí was already married and she no longer lived with me. In the end, I realised that I could go to the Buenos Aires Herald, the newspaper. They warmly received me and listened to my story. The following day, the first thing I did was to buy the paper and I saw that I was on the front page, but the paper was written in English and I didn't know a word in English. So, that same day I went desperately back to the Buenos Aires Herald to ask why it was in English. They explained to me that there was no other way for them to do it if they wanted it to be published.

So this is how my struggle, my life and my anguish continued. One day, there were 20 or 30 Madres in Plaza de Mayo and Chela Mignone said to me: 'Aurora, would you like to go to the square where the Madres gather together?'. I didn't know anything about Madres, but since it was Thursday I went to the square for the first time. They told me that I shouldn't approach anyone,

that we had to walk and pretend that we were looking at nothing in particular. So, I walked, I looked, I walked around the square, I didn't talk to anyone and there was a moment that I stood still staring at a statue. At that precise moment, two police officers approached me and they told me to sit on a bench. At that time, I wasn't as calm as I'm today, so I told them: 'No, I don't feel like sitting. I'm just walking around'. 'Well, you have to either sit down or leave the square', they replied to me. And I, with my strong personality, told them: 'If you want me to leave the square, first take all the elderly sitting on the benches away - because there were a lot of old people in the square - then I'll leave. But I'm not going to move or sit'. So, they grabbed me and took me and put me into a police car. I was happy because I thought that it could be an opportunity to see Susana. Meanwhile, a Madre, Marta Vásquez, wanted to come with me and she told me: 'Aurora, I'm going with you'. We were arrested for hours, we were fingerprinted, they didn't tell us anything. I told them that the only thing I wanted was to know why my daughter had been taken. They laughed among themselves.

And this is how Aurora's search, from being an individual quest, turned into a collective one when she found other mothers who, like her, were looking for their missing beloved ones. Twenty-three years of struggle and tireless search were supposed to go by till she could find the truth about her daughter's destiny.

When I was told by Mignone that the anthropologists had started their work, I asked him for their address because I had the feeling that my daughter wanted me to find her and I was determined to do it. So, I went to see them in 1986 or 1987, I don't really remember. I was warmly welcomed by them, they've always been like this. They were really supportive for me and my daughter. They took blood samples from us and they told us that they were going to investigate. It was the year 1999 when the anthropologists called me to inform me that they had found Susana's remains. Twenty-three years of struggle had gone by. They started their research on the Fátima Massacre and it was just by chance that the first DNA blood sample they sent to be analysed in France was my daughter's. Then, I immediately sent my son-in-law's brother to provide a blood sample, too, so as to see if we could also find José and his mum. They found José's remains but they told me there were no older people among the remains. Thus, we weren't able to find my daughter's mother-in-law. When they gave me Susana's remains, it was even more painful than when Susana had disappeared because, at that moment, I wasn't expecting to find her alive, but anyway it was a very moving and shocking moment for me.

IN MY DAUGHTER'S NAME

After thirty years of struggle, Aurora still walks her path together with the *Madres de Plaza de Mayo - Línea Fundadora* (Founding members) in their claim for Collective Memory, Truth and Justice. At present, one street in the city centre of Pilar has been named after her daughter Susana.

My daughter used to say that she wanted to leave something for the future: 'So that everyone knows who I was'. She was unable to have her baby and leave her offspring. But one day, I was called from Pilar. It was Osvaldo Pugliese who told me that they wanted to name a boulevard with my daughter's name. I was very pleased by this. I asked them to add that Susana Elena Pedrini de Bronzel was one of the victims of the Fátima Massacre, so that in the future people would remember her. There were commemorations in Fátima, too. We were invited several times during these occasions and I was extremely grateful to Osvaldo for what he did because at least my daughter's name was preserved somewhere.

THE CLAIM FOR JUSTICE

I hope that all who were responsible for all these crimes end up sentenced to life imprisonment in ordinary jails. I never wished death for them, as they did with our beloved ones, with the 30,000 detained-disappeared victims. What I want is that they face trial and be convicted one by one to spend their lives in ordinary jails, and they're looked after so that they don't die soon. I want them to rot in prison. That they'll be 100 years old in confinement. This is what I wish for them.

Marta Ocampo de Vásquez

***Madres de Plaza de Mayo - Línea Fundadora* (Founding Members).**

She was the president of *Madres de Plaza de Mayo - Línea Fundadora* (Founding Members). Member of *Memoria Abierta* (Open Collective Memory) and the Latin American Federation of the Relatives of the Detained-disappeared Associations (FEDEFAM).

Marta Vásquez was born in the city of Bahía Blanca, province of Buenos Aires. On October 3, 1946, she married José María Vásquez, who was a professional diplomat. Following her husband's steps, she formed her family in different countries around the world while she was raising her children: José María, Luis Alberto, Rafael Marcelo, María Marta, Raúl and Gustavo.

On May 14, 1976, her daughter María Marta was kidnapped together with her husband César Lugones by a task force of the ESMA (Navy Mechanics School). At that time, María Marta was 23 years old, she was pregnant, she was an educational psychologist and she worked as a volunteer in a shantytown in *Villa de Bajo Flores*.

From then on, Marta started her long-lasting search for her daughter and grandchild. In 1977, she became a founding member of *Madres de Plaza de Mayo* and little by little she was turning into an undisputed role model in the struggle for Human Rights. She attended many conferences inside and outside Argentina, disseminating *Madres'* words in their search for Truth and Justice. Between the year 1999 and 2003, she was the president of the Latin American Federation of the Relatives of the Detained-disappeared Associations (FEDEFAM).

She was also the president of *Madres de Plaza de Mayo - Línea Fundadora* (Founding Members) and from there she proudly claimed:

All along this path that we've walked, our struggle never decayed and there were even more accomplishments. The Argentinian people accompany us more and more every day. The youth listen to us and they want to know our stories. They're our hope for the future. When we're gone, there'll remain our struggle for Collective Memory, Truth and Justice in our Argentina.

Marta passed away on November 18, 2017, at the age of 90. In honour of her memory, we shared an interview that an initiative called *Programa Educación y Memoria* (Education and Collective Memory Program) made to her in the city of Buenos Aires in 2012. Her daughter María Marta, her son-in-law and her grandchild are still missing.

We, Madres, are still walking a long way. And at different times, we had different priorities. Now that we see many things that already happened and that were accomplished, our concern is the hope we've placed on those who are going to continue our work, our thoughts and our actions. All along these years, we, Madres, went into the streets without actually knowing what we were going to do, but in fact, someone illuminated us. We say that it was them, our children, who showed us the way and little by little we've reached here. Today, Collective Memory is essential for the future. It can't be lost, it's our hope in those who are going to follow us, who're going to teach children and young people. When we go to the schools, it's the future that's talking to us.

MARTA AND HER FAMILY

Marta was born in Bahía Blanca. But later at the age of three, she moved to La Plata because her father, Rafael Ocampo Giménez, who was a lawyer and attorney, was appointed judge there. She lived there up to the age of 18 when a new position was granted to his father as a comptroller of the province of La Rioja. So, they had to move again.

In La Plata, I was very happy, I had a very happy adolescence, full of good memories. At that time, things were quite different. We used to go from party to party, attending events that took place in houses and clubs. In one of those lunches, in a country house near La Plata, I met my husband, José María Vázquez. We started dating and after two years we married. We'd been married for forty-seven years by the time he died.

Your husband was a diplomat and due to his job, you had to live in different countries around the world. Did you like this kind of life?

I loved it! We had six children, María Martha was the fourth one and the only woman. First, my husband was appointed diplomat in Italy, where my first three children were born. Later in Argentina, two more children were born and the last one in Chile. We used to take everything with us every time we moved, and usually, we stayed in the same place for four years. Imagined how much I loved that kind of life that, even today, every three years I have the sensation that I have to leave, I have to change from where I am. Lately, I counted the times we moved to a different house and I realised that we've moved 17 times.

And what did you do in those places?

I devoted my time to raise my children and to support my husband. We were very close. He also helped a lot with the kids. He took them to someplace, he picked them up. Later he became one of the 'fathers' of Plaza de Mayo. He was always afraid that something bad could happen to me.

REMEMBERING MARÍA MARTA

María Marta was the only daughter of the Vázquez-Ocampo marriage. With a mother's tenderness, these words emerged from Marta's heart remembering her daughter in times of her innocent childhood and her adolescence when she had her ideals.

My daughter's name's María Marta Vázquez de Lugones. She was born on December 28, 1952. She was the only girl among five boys. María Marta was amazing. She was an educational psychologist. She studied in Peru and finished her last year in Argentina because we came back to our country.

As a child, what did she like to play?

María Marta was a very feminine girl. I used to worry because she was being raised surrounded by boys, but she always had girl friends. She played with dolls and tea sets, like any other girl of her age. She used to invite one of her friends to our house, or she visited them. She was the little princess of the

house whom all her brothers loved. And, obviously, my husband had a soft spot for her.

What was her favourite food?

María Marta never had any problems in relation to food. We eat quite similar to the Italians in our country, so on Sundays, we always had our family gathering and we ate pasta.

What kind of music or singer did she like to listen to?

When María Marta finished secondary school and started university, she used to work as an entertainer in children's parties together with her friends from college. She played the guitar. Later, she devoted some time to Argentine folklore. But, in fact, the only music that the youth liked at that time was The Beatles. I found them quite loud and noisy at the time, but now I love them.

Tell us any prank she played that you could remember.

Well, after so many years, it seems to us that our children were perfect. I remember once when María Marta was two years old, we lived in a house in the city of Vicente López. One day, I walked into the garden and I couldn't find her. So I started looking for her everywhere. Where was she? She was walking on the cornice of the terrace! I almost had a stroke! I didn't know what to do. I called my sons and one of them little by little approached her and grabbed her. From my sons, I have thousands of anecdotes, but not many from her.

How did María Marta meet her husband?

At that time, María Marta had already graduated as an educational psychologist and as soon as she met the nuns, she started to go on mission in the South, in the area of Maitén and Lago Puelo. There she met her husband, César Lugones. They married on September 15, 1973. They performed the same job, they shared the same ideas. After a while, they got disappointed with some people, some authorities and their actions. They even took mills there so as to teach the Mapuches people how to work the land. But then, they discovered that the authorities kept for them the things that they provided for the indigenous people. This made them abandon this place and start their social activism in the Juventud Peronista (Peronist Youth Movement). María Marta,

César and several girls, who were also kidnapped, worked helping children and youngsters in the shantytown called 'Bajo Flores'. They built a nursery so that mothers could go to work and have their children taken care of there. They also helped children and youngsters with their school homework. Whenever a teacher couldn't go, she called me and she desperately said to me: 'Could you come?'. I'm a teacher, but I've never worked as a teacher.

Was María Marta the only activist in your family?

No, on the day of Ezeiza, June 20, 1973, my six children were there. The youngest one was 12 years old. Don't make me start remembering... I was travelling by car with my husband and we heard about the shooting on the radio. I went crazy. We left the car and we started to walk along Ricchieri. It was 1 a.m and we didn't know anything about any of my children. We were listening to Colonia Radio to find out about them. Luckily, nothing happened to any of them. At midnight, my husband and Emilio Mignone (the founder of Centre for Legal and Social Studies, CELS) went to look for them and finally, early in the morning, we knew that they were fine.

DISAPPEARANCE AND SEARCH

The 1976 coup d'état took place while Marta Vázquez and her husband were far away from the country, in Mexican lands. María Marta had been married for three years when the violence of State Terrorism surprised her.

Afterwards, the coup d'état occurred. My daughter was kidnapped together with her husband, César Amadeo Lugones, at 3 a.m on May 14, 1976. It was one of the first kidnappings. We were in Mexico because my husband was the Minister-Counsellor of the Argentine embassy. We were called at 5 a.m to let us know. We didn't understand anything. We didn't know what was going on. One of my sons told me: 'Mum, María Marta and César were taken'. But I didn't know what the meaning of that was. So, I gave the phone to my husband and ran immediately into my youngest son's bedroom, I woke him up and I went to look for another phone so that I could listen to what they were talking about.

We never imagined what had happened. María Marta and César were taken in a huge operation that started at 11 p.m and finished at daybreak. Seven boys were kidnapped. In that group, it was also Mónica Mignone. They were classmates at school.

How did María Marta's disappearance change your life?

The first year I didn't leave my house much, it was my husband who did it. He had connections, he had military friends, from the Air force and the other forces. When we had international destinations we were always with them. So, for us, it was even more painful to see the attitude they got. For me, it was like they shut down a curtain and those 43 years of diplomacy don't exist anymore. I only came back to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a Madre de Plaza de Mayo. I didn't even want to come across the diplomats' wives who participated in the gatherings... Some of them even stopped talking to me. The same happened with some relatives. Except for my dad, who supported us, Madres, all the time. He was a grandfather of Plaza de Mayo, and since he lived quite close to the square, sometimes we gathered together in their house.

Were you aware of what was happening to the disappeared?

No, any of us never imagined that. It was very hard for us all that time. During the first eight years, I was really convinced that María Marta would return, that she was being brainwashed. In 1984, some Italian journalists came to the country and they looked astonished when I told them vehemently that I was pretty sure that my daughter was going to come back. Their reaction even bothered me. With the passing of time, I wondered to myself what they'd thought about me... It was quite harsh to know the truth, in fact, what we thought that had happened because up to now we know very little.

When María Marta was kidnapped, she was pregnant...

Yes, but I found out much later. I didn't know. Later, I discovered what some friends told me, there even was a woman doctor who had assisted my daughter and she found me quite later thanks to a radio interview. She had very few weeks of pregnancy. Already in 1966, I knew what Adolfo Scilingo said (he was a repressor from the Navy, he was the first one to speak openly and in public about the 'death flights'). He said that the baby would've been born. But I have plenty of doubts. There comes a time when you don't know what to think. The search for my grandchild is something I feel I will never see. There were some children that could be, but they refused to take a DNA test. Even I went to see one of them, I introduced myself, but he didn't want to know anything about it. I told him that I wasn't there to take his happiness away or his

family, that his parents were excellent people and I just wanted to tell the truth to them. At my age, I'd like to find him before I leave this world.

HER STRUGGLE AS A MEMBER OF MADRES DE PLAZA DE MAYO

The same as the rest of the *Madres*, the news about the disappearance of her daughter changed her family routine. At the beginning, the anguish of the search occurred in isolation, but little by little, the *Madres* were gathering together and they turned into a well-known social movement.

How did you join *Madres*?

I approached the Plaza de Mayo the month the rondas (walking around the square) started. Chela Mignone, Mónica's mother, told me about this. We were friends. She said: 'You should see that there are mothers who go to the square'. I didn't pay attention to her that time. She told me again on another occasion and I went. Since then, I've been participating in the ronda on Thursdays.

This is how Marta Vásquez described *Madres'* struggle in a statement stated by the *Madres de Plaza de Mayo - Línea Fundadora* on April 30, 2011:

It's difficult for us to understand how much time has gone by since April 30, 1977, the day in which we went out to look for our children, who were brutally taken from our families. We never again knew about their destiny. They entered a shadow cone.

For them, after 34 years, we continue walking and struggling till those responsible people and accomplices of the atrocities performed in times of the State Terrorism, those responsible for 30,000 detained-disappeared, the constant thousands of murdered, tortured and hurt people while the military dictatorship dominated Argentina since March 24, 1976.

Years went by and we continued moving around and we soon felt that we weren't just looking for our children, but 'they were all our children'. We didn't ask those who approached us in the square about their religion, race or political inclination. We were all like sisters, we console and supported one another so as to move on and raise awareness.

*We were persecuted. Three *Madres* were kidnapped, among them was our founder, Azucena Villaflor de De Vincenti, and the three French nuns.*

They paid with their lives. They were thrown into the sea from a plane. We were called 'Mothers of guerrilla fighters'. How wrong they were.

Years went by and our struggle of simple housewives was changing. We learnt that our claim should be stated outside the country, so we were listened to and understood in Europe and in international organisations which fight for Human Rights. We travelled around the world, we attended conferences, seminars, international meetings. This is how the world knew about the horror that we were living in Argentina.

The Football World Cup of 1978 took place. On the day of the inauguration we thought that we were going to be alone in the square. What a great surprise for us! There were a lot of journalists from all over the world. Those were really difficult days for us. Especially at the end. Everyone was celebrating. Other children too. We cried. We couldn't understand.

Years went by and so as to identify ourselves we started wearing the white headscarf in Luján, as a worldwide symbol and that is a reminder of our children who are always beside us. They haven't gone. They inspire us and give us strength. They guide us.

Their ideals became one with us and we worry about the children who die out of malnutrition, the jobless people, those who lack medical attention, the problems of the indigenous peoples, all those who are excluded and their rights are being denied.

We never lost our hope that Justice will prevail and our struggle will continue till we know all the Truth: why they were taken, who gave the order, who executed that order, and we want to know their final destiny so that we can bury them and keep on advocating their struggle.

With Néstor Kirchner's government, the struggle for Human Rights, Peace and Freedom started to reign. In August 2003, it was declared the annulment of the laws of impunity and our country started to change. The defence of Human Rights was considered to be a public policy. We could see what now is still present: how the struggle against impunity and oblivion advances every day.

Pasquini Durán said, 'The Madres are a force of life that opened a wound in our social conscience by which desires for Truth and Justice penetrated (...). In spite of the endless path, they still have to keep on walking for their first reason: those boys and girls created in their wombs who soon disappeared from their lives, by being devoured by a planned cruelty of a bunch of murderers. The Madres are the teachers who taught us through their actions for a better Argentina. A new Argentina, similar to the one that their heroic detained-disappeared children were dreaming of'.

It's still difficult for us to believe that during the endless path that we had to walk, our struggle never decayed and every time there were more and more accomplishments. The Argentinian people accompany us more and more every day. The youth wants to listen to us. They're our hope for the future. When we're gone, we know that this struggle for Collective Memory, Truth and Justice will prevail in our Argentina.

The Madres' claim has not been limited to the national arena, but, from the very beginning, it was intended to cross the national borders taking the protest to international spaces. This struggle, which has lasted for more than 40 years, still prevails.

You disseminated *Madres'* words overseas, which were the most outstanding events in which you participated?

I attended many conferences inside and outside Argentina on behalf of the Madres' Association, for example in the First Conference of the Latin American Federation of Relatives of the Detained-disappeared Associations that took place in Costa Rica in 1981. Also, I was present in the Paris Colloquium in 1981, images that I keep in my mind forever. What I experienced then allowed me to complete my long path as well as to acquire new experiences. I have attended on several occasions the meetings of the Commission on Human Rights of the United Nations. In 1999, I was elected president of the FEDEFAM (the Latin American Federation of the Relatives of the Detained-disappeared Associations), a position I held till November 2003.

Currently, I'm the president of Madres de Plaza de Mayo - Línea Fundadora (Founding Members). Not only I like travelling but also I like everything related to International Law, the UN principles. Apart from taking our stories and struggle to international organisations, one of the great achievements of the organisations from different countries was the International Convention for the Protection of Enforced Disappearances. It was voted by the United Nations and it states, among other things, that enforced disappearances of people are considered to be a crime against humanity. This is very important: it's not the same that your child dies because of an illness than if it does because he or she was a victim of State terrorism. Enforced disappearances is a very serious crime because it is a crime against humanity, a permanent crime, a crime that doesn't expire. I sometimes say that the crime is permanent like the anguish of the relatives, of a mother or father. It is a long-lasting anguish. And this cannot be changed. When we know all the truth, perhaps we will feel reassured to know, but for now, the anguish we feel is permanent.

How is the *Madres* situation nowadays?

Today we're lucky to say that the Madres don't walk alone. We have a lot of people around us. We have a lot of Argentinian people who endorse our struggle, and understand it and advocate for it. This is the reason why we always say that we cannot stop, we have to continue. We should never lose our hope. This is our life: the Human Rights' advocacy so that they reign in this world, and the pursuit of peace and justice. An this should be abide by all the countries in the world. This is the only way in which our peoples will live in peace.

We're all old now, but we continue till the end of our days. And we are happy because we have people to pass our legacy on. There exist the HIJOS association and the Hermanos Association. When you have this struggle deep inside you, you cannot abandon it. Maybe you can leave it temporarily, but you can't abandon it.

EDUCATION AND COLLECTIVE MEMORY

Constructing Collective Memory in the educational arena is one of the challenges that *Madres* have accepted. Marta, like most of her fellow *Madres*, went into schools transmitting her story to the new generations, giving evidence of her life and struggle.

It's always a happy moment to go to schools, we return with a strong feeling of joy in our hearts. When we go to schools, the bond we create with the kids and the teachers is amazing and it deeply moves us. We come back happy about what we saw or felt because it is a complete surprise for us to have a conversation with the children - how they listen to us attentively, how much they know about the topic, how they welcomed us, the signs of affections and respect they show us. And this not only happens with primary level students, but I remember once I was invited to a kindergarten and I was amazed by those young children.

This shows us that we're on the right track. With education, history cannot be repeated. We are much more relieved because we think that there won't be any more dictatorships, the 'Nunca más' (Never again) is possible.

Regarding schools, it's evident that there's some work on this topic from the part of teachers and head teachers. Anyway, there are some schools where there are still head teachers or teachers who do not tell the children the things we would like them to tell and they don't reflect upon these issues. There's some

resistance: it is difficult for some teachers to talk about what happened. In other words, it depends on the teachers' will.

Teachers should continue every day with this work, they don't have to change. For us, it is a great relief to think that the future is in the hands of an excellent group of youngsters. Our grandchildren, great-grandchildren and all the young people have to understand and reflect on what happened in Argentina on March 24, 1976: the anguish that we experienced, and we are still experiencing, for not knowing why our children were taken and which was their fatal end.

FINAL WORDS

María Marta's teaching

I'm proud of my daughter, but, at the same time, I'm really sad because I couldn't understand her when she was here. This is what I have in my heart, I finally understood her ideas when she was not here...

After she was kidnapped, I used to go to the big house we had in order to clean it and when I grabbed the broom I started to cry. She used to tell me: 'mum, why is it important to clean? There are other things that are important in life'. She always said that to me and she was right... Collective Memory cannot be forgotten, it has to be present for all our children who gave their lives for the people so that we can have a country full of liberty, peace and welfare for all the people. This was what our children wished for and it is what we're asking today.

Enriqueta Rodríguez de Maroni

Madre de Plaza de Mayo - Línea Fundadora (Founding Members)

Enriqueta is the mother of four children. On April 5, 1977, two of her children, Juan Patricio Maroni and María Beatriz Maroni, were kidnapped together with their partners. Juan Patricio's wife was released a few days later. Juan Patricio, Maria Beatriz and her husband, Carlos Alberto Rincón, are still missing.

Her moving story appears reflected in this letter, written in 1998:

'I'm a mother of four children, two of them are detained-disappeared. I belong to *Madres de Plaza de Mayo - Línea Fundadora* (Founding Members). Twenty two years have gone by since the 1976 coup d'etat, but the claim for Truth and Justice is still present today and it is important to vindicate 'the Detained-disappeared' since they didn't have the right of defence. What was the meaning of the kidnappings then and now? The intention was to establish a horror plan together with an economic plan of growing social marginalisation. Those who thought differently were punished and the security forces were the 'saviors' who would save the country.

Our country has experienced a sinister plan performed by people who carried out the kidnappings, detentions, tortures and then disappearances as a "way of living" during many years, the most somber years of Argentine history and a generation who was committed to the history of their time and people.'

And she continues:

'The 'Detained-disappeared' category is still valid and it acquires a different dimension when that category is personalised, it has a name and surname, it is not a John Doe and it is even more when it

is your son's name. At an official level, no one has told us what happened to them, how, why, who and when. The serious problem of the disappeared has struck the conscience of a whole community. Those who were deeply affected by this were the relatives and among them, their children. For twenty one years, children and now adolescents have suffered this. We, the *Madres*, constantly claim for Truth, Justice and punishment for all those who are guilty.

We have the lawful right to know what really happened to our beloved ones. From the world of silence they were condemned to inhabit, they knock at the door of our conscience. We tell them that we will never abandon our claim for Justice, our search for truth, our collective memory and all our love for them.

Juan Patricio, and María Beatriz and her husband, were kidnapped in their houses in the wee hours of night by security forces belonging to the First Army Corps whose general in charge was Suárez Mason.

We knew that they were detained in *Club Atlético*, one of the many clandestine detention centres'.

MARÍA BEATRIZ AND JUAN PATRICIO'S MEMORY

Enriqueta introduces her children in this way:

Maria Beatriz went to primary school at 'San Francisco de Sales', did her secondary school at 'María Auxiliadora' and she graduated as a social worker at the University of Buenos Aires. She worked in a health Centre in 'Mataderos'. She was married to Carlos Alberto Rincón (with whom she was kidnapped). She was 23 years old when she disappeared.

Juan Patricio also attended primary school at 'San Francisco de Sales', he went to secondary school at 'Colegio de los Hermanos Lasalle'. He was a student of Sociology at the University of Buenos Aires. He was working for 'Aerolineas Argentinas' (the Argentine State Airline). He was married and had one daughter, Paula. He disappeared at the age of 21.

María Beatriz and Juan Patricio were very religious young people. They wanted to put into practice the lessons they had learnt from the Bible, not just to preach the word of the Lord. They participated in Catholic youth movements

and they cared about the big social injustices in Argentina. This is why they were taken.

WITH THE MADRES

Currently, Enriqueta continues her struggle for Collective Memory, Truth and Justice from her place in *Madres de Plaza de Mayo - Línea Fundadora* association. Her story, together with the stories of other sixteen fellow *madres*, is present in the documentary called '*Madres*', created by Eduardo Félix Walger. In it, he tells the stories of these mothers and their fight for Human Rights, justice and equality. About this work, Enriqueta states that:

In this material, we want to show the real story of the State terrorism and its cruel consequences. It is a story told from the perspective of the truth, by the real people who suffered it. It isn't the official story, but we hope it survives as the true story, made by us along these 30 years.

Margarita Maroni, María Beatriz and Juan Patricio's sister, has accompanied Enriqueta in her struggle and currently she is a member of *Agrupación Herman@s de Desaparecidos por la Verdad y la Justicia* (the Siblings of the Disappeared for Truth and Justice Association).

ALWAYS TOGETHER

I'm Margarita, María Beatriz's sister, her twin sister. She was 23 when she was kidnapped, together with her husband, from their home. I'm also Juan Patricio's sister, he was kidnapped from our parents' home at the age of 21. Being a twin sister, I live all this as a form of mutilation. I shared everything with her, from the womb till the games, friends and the same classroom desks from first form till the end of high school. That sensation of mutilation and horror is one of the reasons why, for many years, I lived all this in silence, being by my mother's side, but torn into pieces because of the anguish. I devoted myself to creating life, I had four beautiful daughters, in a compulsive need to give life. I think that is what helped me to survive. I was three-months pregnant when they were kidnapped and I remember quite vividly today how hard my belly was because of so much anguish. The night before María Beatriz was kidnapped, she had been with me because she wanted to give me the nappies that later my daughter Valeria would wear when she was born. I used to wake up in the middle of the night with the

feeling of dying, too. The relationship between siblings is a symmetrical one, it is the most even relationship. I think it is the reason why we haven't been able to react, we have been paralysed by the anguish and the suffocation of pain.

Vera Vigevani de Jarach

Madre de Plaza de Mayo - Línea Fundadora (Founding Members)

Vera Vigevani was born in Italy. Up to the age of ten, she lived in a neighborhood in Milán. At the age of 11, she migrated to Argentina with her family, escaping from persecution and Mussolini's fascist laws. In Buenos Aires, she finished her secondary school in an Italian school and being quite young, she married Jorge Jarach, a Jewish-Italian engineer, who, like her, had also escaped persecution in Italy.

After working in a sweater factory, she became a journalist for the ANSA (Italian News Agency), where she stayed for more than forty years. On December 19, 1957, her daughter Franca was born. She was her only child. Vera raised her daughter and supported her for eighteen years, transmitting her the values of liberty, hope and solidarity. On June 25, 1976, Franca was kidnapped by the military government and she is still missing.

From then on, Vera started a tireless search and she became a role model in the struggle for Human Rights in the national arena as well as in the international one.

She is a member of *Madres de Plaza de Mayo - Línea Fundadora* (Founding Members) and the Argentine Historical and Social Collective Memory Foundation. She is the co-author, among others, of the books *Tantas voces una historia* (*So many voices and one history*), *Judíos italianos en la Argentina 1938-1945* (*Jewish-Italian people 1938-1945*) and the *Il silenzio infranto*, dedicated to the Italian-Argentinian citizens during the military dictatorship. Moreover, she published the book *Los chicos del exilio* (*The youth of the exile*) and she participated in several films whose plots are related to the Argentine military dictatorship.

History can be repeated, but the secret for this so as it doesn't occur again is the following: Never be indifferent to what happens around you and always be prepared to react on time.

VERA'S STORY

Vera was born in Italy and since her early childhood, she has suffered violence and fascist intolerance. Her family was forced to migrate to Argentina. Here she could grow up, study and develop personally as well as professionally.

My name is Vera Vigevani de Jarach, I'm Italian. I was born in Milan. I came to Argentina in 1939 after Mussolini's racial laws. I'm Jewish-Italian. A small number of Jewish-Italian people took refuge in Argentina.

I was very lucky in my life because I had an extraordinary partner. I married Jorge Jarach, who was also Italian, when I was very young. For many years, we didn't have children, that's why when we decided to have them, we were very excited with the idea of becoming parents. Our daughter, Franca, was born on December 19, 1957. She arrived in our family as being much awaited, after eight years of marriage. She was raised in a bourgeoisie family - a sort of intellectuals - my husband was an engineer and I was a journalist. She was adored from the very beginning and had plenty of possibilities to learn and enjoy life. I think, as parents, we were quite supportive and shared our companionship with her. She was an only child so we built a very special relationship among the three of us with quite peculiar characteristics. The three of us were nature lovers, especially the two of us, since we were born and raised in mountainous places. We used to go camping together all the time, also with Franca and her friends.

At that time, Vera's joy was shadowed by the violence of State Terrorism. On June 25, 1976, her daughter Franca was kidnapped in the streets. There are no precise facts about the place and the circumstances under which this happened.

June 25 was Friday. We had gone to Tigre to spend the weekend there, as we usually did. Franca's boyfriend called us and told us about what happened and, from then on, our search started.

Many years went by till Vera was able to reconstruct Franca's destiny.

My daughter Franca was eighteen years when she was kidnapped and disappeared. I knew about her destiny, the place she was in captivity just a few

years ago. My husband didn't know because he passed away many years ago, in 1991. Until then there were just versions of it, but finally, I knew that she was kept in the ESMA (Navy Mechanics School). A person, who knew her and worked a lot with the forensic anthropologists, decided to talk and told me that she was seen there and other things. So, just out of the blue, I had some information and it was very good to know because uncertainty is the worst thing. I knew she was in this place for less than a month. When she finished her secondary school, one of the activities that Franca performed was to attend graphic design classes in a graphic design workshop once a week. We believe that she was kidnapped in a cafe called 'Exedra', located in the corner of Córdoba and Carlos Pellegrini. She phoned her boyfriend and told him that she had lost her bag and personal documents and she was going to try to find them. This is the last piece of information we have before her kidnapping. What we found out later was that on June 25 and some days around that day, a group of five people who belonged to a graphic design union, like Franca, were kidnapped too.

At the ESMA, she wasn't forced to wear a hood to cover her face, but she was in the basement. And since the military needed a place to put the hundred of newly kidnapped people, the death fights started. There is a crossover of dates that corroborates this. Another thing I knew and it was really important for me was to know that she wasn't afraid at that time, they didn't know what could happen to them. On the contrary, the people who were kidnapped later on, actually, they did know. The person who saw her and talked to her told me that, at that time, they thought that there were two possibilities for them: either being transferred under the jurisdiction of the Executive Power or being released. No one at that time would have thought of the worst. All of them were tortured, but they weren't scared of a final destiny. And in the case of Franca, a woman, who was kept in captivity with her, told me that she was OK and even she had a sense of humor. Franca said that she was plump and that she would not have to put on diet because there they were practically given no food. She was still in the mood of making jokes. All of them, who were there, were apparently OK.

From the moment Vera and her husband knew about Franca's disappearance, their tireless search for her daughter started in the national arena as well as in the international one.

FRANCA'S MEMORY

Like all the *Madres*, Vera remembers her daughter with pride when she was a teenager with all her dreams, plans and ideals, associated with a generation that was committed to their society and historical time.

Obviously, mothers are never objective, but I don't believe that I am, if I say that my daughter was an exceptional child and a truly wonderful teenager, who would have given a lot to society, and of course to herself and her family. As a child, she showed she had very different skills, potentialities and creativity. When she finished her secondary school, she could have chosen Drama, Music (because she was a composer), Literature (because she was a writer too), but what she actually chose was Educational Sciences, at least by the last conversations that we had had. She was convinced that, and she constantly repeated it, that in order to change the world we have to start from education. She was a passionate girl, she was constantly thirsty for knowledge, she was an outstanding student. She was the standard bearer of her class at Colegio Nacional Buenos Aires. She had a grade point average of almost 10. She also participated in students assemblies, school workshops, sit-ins and she was a leading figure in the students' union, everything that meant participating and to a certain extent, a kind of rebellion. These actions were the only ones that could make her leave her books for a little while to put theory into practice.

Franca was a very happy and sensitive girl, but she could experience moments of great sadness at the same time. She was very sympathetic and she had perfectly understood that this world, which is full of injustices, was not a prison. Reality could be changed. She was waiting for that transformation and she fought for that. At least, for a short period of time because she lived a short life. Franca was convinced of this, like I am today. I understand that you cannot be optimistic all the time, but I believe that there are possibilities that can always improve things and it is worth trying to. I think she could have been a good lawyer because she loved justice. Since she was a little girl, she was able to understand the concept of justice and to notice when there wasn't any.

Which schools did Franca attend?

She attended primary school in Granadero and San Martín, near our house, the area of the racetrack. It was a very nice school. First, it belonged to the Jockey Club and then it was run by the state. There she was also the standard bearer of her class and she stood out due to her grades and participation. She attended secondary school at Colegio Nacional Buenos Aires. It is an atypical school, meant for the elites, one could say, but its students are bonded for life. Besides, there is something else for me with that school because it was the school that my parents chose for me to attend secondary school here in Argentina. But I couldn't go because it was a boys school at that time. Life made that it would be anyway part of my life because I'm constantly working there on the topic of Collective Memory.

What other things did she like doing?

She was in a drama class, she wrote and she painted. My husband was an engineer but he had a great vocation for painting. So, he taught Franca a lot about it since she was a little girl. As a child, she also started going to the Collegium Musicum, where she played the flute and also the transverse flute.

What kind of music did she like? What things did she like to read about?

She really liked Classical music, but she also liked the music available at that time. National rock, a group called Almendra. The Beatles were the best of that time. And she also read a lot. In my house, we spoke Italian with her so she had a good knowledge of the Italian culture. Her grandmother made her read the Italian classics. We never thought of sending her to an Italian school because we wanted her not to be separated from the rest of the society and also we thought that she should be an Argentinian.

What anecdotes can you tell us about your daughter?

At the age of 11 or 12, she was already used to reading the newspapers everyday. There were debates in my house and she was quite aware of the problems in the world and the possibilities to change it. She had a great critical spirit. She wasn't quite happy with how things were and this was clearly seen when she started her activism at Colegio Nacional de Buenos Aires. At first, she participated in many activities but she didn't support any political party. Then, she finally became a member of the 'Unión de Estudiantes Secundarios' (Secondary Students' Union), even though she was not a peronist because we weren't.

I tell you another anecdote that can portray her and her family. In her first year at secondary school, the Maths teacher called my husband for a meeting. Jorge wondered what it could be about. He went to the school and there the teacher told him: 'Look, I have to tell you that your daughter is an excellent student, but she makes something I cannot allow. When she finishes solving her maths problems, she tells the answer to the rest of her classmates. And this isn't allowed to do'. She did this because she had a sense of fellowship. So, my husband told the teacher this: 'Look, teacher, I'm not going to tell anything about this to my daughter because I taught her to be helpful and cooperative. I'm not going to tell you anything but here it is my suggestion: Whenever she finishes before the rest of her classmates, you could send her outside the classroom'.

Was she in love?

My daughter was really passionate. She had two boyfriends, who are still today like sons to me. One lives in Spain, he got married and we are always in contact, and the other lives in Argentina, he is also married. The one who lives in Spain is a photographer, he works for Reuters, and he has done an extraordinary thing too because when the CONADEP was created and there were inspections in the places where clandestine prisoners were kept, he offered himself as a photographer to go to those places. He was Franca's boyfriend at the moment of her kidnapping. It was very difficult and painful for him, but he did it. There is a whole collection of photographs that were granted to 'Memoria Abierta' (Open Collective Memory) and there is an exhibition that takes place from time to time which is called 'Nunca más' (Never again), in which there are photos taken by this young man together with other photographers. They are people who are part of my life now. I don't have any other children or grandchildren of course, but I have fostered grandchildren.

Had she got many friends?

Yes, she had plenty of friends who used to come with us to Tigre, to the mountains, everywhere. She was a person who 'encompassed' people, this is the word. I realise this even today with people I don't know. From time to time, I receive a call from someone who knows her and they tell me this, her teachers too. She became quite a good friend of some of her teachers who later went into exile. Many of her friends are still my friends. For example, her closest friend, her friend from the heart and a fellow activist, is Ana Gelar, a classmate she had from Colegio Nacional Buenos Aires. Ana went into exile soon after Franca was kidnapped. All her group of friends left the country when Franca was taken and in doing so they were able to save their lives. Ana lived in Spain for many years and later returned to Argentina. In a way, everything was commemorated at their school. In 1996, there was an important event because there was a reunion of students and some teachers. Since Ana is back, she currently lives a few blocks away from my house. Betty Ruiz (who was from Carlos Pellegrini school) and I wrote a book about the youngsters of the exile. It was something difficult because these teenagers had never talked before, it was difficult for them to break with silence. There was catharsis and tears in many interviews. So, she is like a daughter to me. I often see them, we are always together and the same happens with other Franca's friends.

FRANCA'S IDEALS

Lugar

*A la mañana paso
cerca de un sitio rodeado de muros
altos grises tristes sucios
de carteles, de vote lista azul
un día miro adentro
es una villa miseria.*

Gente

*más gente.
Vestida de tela barata
desnuda de felicidad
Una chica me ofrece limones
"cien la docena, cómpreme".
Tiene trece años, más o menos
mi edad.
Un almacén ruinoso,
con ratas, con suciedad
con microbios funestos.
Es un sitio rodeado de muros
sucios de crímenes humanos
que son solo los nuestros.*

Franca Jarach

Place

*In the morning, I pass by
a place surrounded by walls
sad, filthy, high and grey walls,
with signposts, 'vote blue party',
one day I looked into it
it is a shanty town.
People
and more people
dressed in cheap clothes
naked of happiness.
One girl offers me lemons
'A hundred each dozen, buy them please.'
She is thirteen, almost
my age.
A noisy warehouse
full of rats and filth
with fatal germs.
In a place surrounded by walls
dirty with human crimes
which are just ours.*

Franca Jarach

Since she was a little girl, Franca already showed her tendency towards social awareness and developed her ideals for a much fairer and more egalitarian society.

Franca was an activist inside a very politicised school, in which there were periods of greater restrictions and others of freedom and democracy. It was there where Franca and her friends had the opportunity to participate in transformational projects from the inside of the school. Their dream or utopia was that everyone should have the same opportunities they had thanks to their social origin or type of education they had received.

For instance, one day students took control of the school in defense of the Chancellor. Franca participated in this. For the students, this was an incredible achievement. And it was interesting the kind of reaction we had at home. Her father told her: 'You shouldn't participate, it is dangerous'. When he was younger, he had been an activist against Peron because of the control over the universities and he was imprisoned for five or six days at Villa Devoto jail. So, she replied to him: 'Dad, you also participated in these things and you always tell us about it. Now I'm doing it'. It was the perfect argument. No one could oppose that. Finally, her dad accepted it and it was logical her participation in these events in spite of the possible dangers. It wasn't serious at that time, but then it was. Franca defended her ideas firmly: one day, it was in her last year of secondary school, she and some classmates participated in a prohibited assembly so they were all suspended, almost expelled from school. Later, they were all included again but she said: 'I will never return to that school'. She has felt offended. So, she sat as an external student for ten final exams at Liceo N° 9 and she performed really well. She also appears as a disappeared student in the records of this school too. This was her personality and she was really convinced, like the rest of the activists of her time, that changes could be made. It was a project from all the youth, it was more than just hope. Her subsequent activism was very brief, just for a few months. She disappeared on June 25, 1976.

Which were her ideals?

She believed that the world could be changed for a fairer one. This is the same I believe today, but through different ways. Maybe democracy isn't perfect, but it gives you the possibility to participate, to act, you can achieve things through peaceful methods.

HER SEARCH

Franca disappeared on June 25, 1976, and immediately she is looked for by her parents, who started first in the graphic design workshop where Franca worked and continued to different areas, even to the international sphere.

One of the first places where my husband went was that graphic design workshop where she used to work, but they knew nothing. The search has a similar story to the rest of the Madres, but in our case it was like this. First, we went to the police station to search her whereabouts. We also went to hospitals, even to the morgue and then we followed all the steps at a national official level. Then, we went to the Ministry of Home Office, to the First Army Corps, to the Navy, Amnesty International, the Red Cross, the Organisation of American States (OAS). We also spoke to senators and congressmen of the United States. It was the time of Jimmy Carter's presidency. We also went to the American Embassy and, in our case, to the Italian Embassy, which at first, we weren't taken in as properly as we believed we should have been. The doors of the embassy were practically closed. In spite of this, we were able to get in and there was someone who tried to help us. Basically, they gave us letters or connected us to people from the Church, from small priests related to the military to the ecclesiastical authorities, and, of course, the apostolic nuncio. I tried to carry out my search on the Italian side. I had two meetings with the president Sandro Pertini, who has been twice with the Pope. Also, my husband went to the DAIA (Delegation of Argentine Jewish Associations) and to the Embassy of Israel. They all made promises, they used nice words, but nothing happened, like in all the cases.

The Italian nationality and her job as a journalist for an Italian agency allowed Vera to reach certain places and to take her claim to other areas. Her lonely search that took place at the beginning was turning into a collective search.

Before going to the Italian Embassy, we have attempted to go to other places; for example, a friend of mine called me from Italy, who was the director of a newspaper and he asked us if we had gone to the CELS (Centre for Legal and Social Studies). I remember I asked him what that was and from Italy he knew about it. We went to talk to Mignone at the CELS and also we went to all the organisations of Human Rights in Argentina and at an international level, we contacted them through some friends who lived abroad and were trying to help us. Since I worked for ANSA, the Italian News Agency, I attended all the foreign press conferences with letters to the military, to the religious authorities, I was begging them at that time. I travelled to Italy. There, I went to some meetings. I met Primo Levi, we were sympathetic to each other and then in our country we had something really important that was to meet people who were in our same situation. A kind of brotherhood emerged among us.

During that time, did you receive any news from her?

¡Sí! Falta lo más importante que es un llamado de Franca. Quince días después de su desaparición, estábamos en casa con mucha gente que se solidarizaba con nosotros y suena el teléfono, mi marido atiende y es ella. Franca dice: 'Papá, estoy detenida en Seguridad Federal'. No era verdad, a la luz de lo que supe después. 'Me dan comida, me dan abrigo y me dan medicinas si las necesito'. El papá le pregunta: 'Franca, decime, ¿cuándo te tengo que ir a buscar?'. Entonces ella dice: 'Papá, tengo que hablarte en castellano –porque nosotros hablábamos en italiano en casa–, te van a avisar'. Y después dice: '¿Cómo está mamá; como está mi novio? Nos vamos a ver pronto'. Y termina la comunicación. Esta es la última vez que escuchamos la voz de mi hija, lo tengo grabado, ya que en ese momento ya teníamos un equipo para grabar. Estos eran llamados para confundir a las familias y para que no siguiéramos buscando, pero eso lo entendimos mucho tiempo después, en ese momento realmente pensábamos con mi marido: 'Bueno, nos van a avisar'.

Yes! The most important thing is missing here: a phone call by Franca. Fifteen days after her kidnapping, we were at home with a lot of people who were trying to support us and lend us a hand when the phone rang. My husband picked up the phone and it was her. Franca said: 'Dad, I'm detained at Federal Security'. It wasn't true because of what I could find out later. 'I'm given food, clothes and medicines if I need them'. Her dad asked her: 'Franca, tell me, When can I pick you up?' So she replied: 'Dad, I have to speak in Spanish' - because we used to speak Italian at home- 'They are going to let you know'. And then she said: 'How is my mum? How is my boyfriend? I'll see you all soon'. That was the end of the conversation. This was the last time I listened to my daughter's voice. I have it recorded, since at that time we had the equipment to make it at home. These were phone calls to confuse the families so that we stopped looking for her. But we understood this much later in time. At that time, we really believed it, so my husband and I thought: 'well, they are going to tell us what to do'.

But that wait ended up being indefinite. Franca is still missing.

TEACHING COLLECTIVE MEMORY

For Vera, the educational work of transmitting Collective Memory is very important. This is the reason why she goes to schools to tell her story every time she is asked for.

Why and what is the purpose of transmitting Collective Memory at school?

That is a key question. If I didn't believe in it, I wouldn't do it. It is my greatest determination. I think that Collective Memory as such is one of the main historical sources, even though there are others. Our memory could be incomplete, but it adds something and we want this to be useful in the future. When we said 'Nunca Más' (Never again) is because we believed it, this may not be a guarantee, that 'Nunca Más' gives us the possibility to know what happened, to know certain symptoms or circumstances that can precede dictatorships, danger and totalitarian systems. We are trying to foster the idea of not being indifferent, to leave aside the idea of 'not participating', to be active. Since I believe in these possible methods, I ask you all to use them and avoid the repetition of stories. It is proved that stories will never be the same, but quite often they can unfortunately be repeated. My own story is a living proof of this. My grandfather, who didn't want to come and stayed in Italy, because he said that 'nothing was going to happen to him'. He was deported to Auschwitz. There's no grave, no body, nothing. And after many years, the same happened to my daughter: she was kidnapped, tortured, murdered, disappeared. There are plenty of examples in History about repetition.

Which is the role of education in relation to stories that shouldn't happen again?

Its role is a fundamental one. For instance, for some time now, it is compulsory for schools to remember certain dates: March 24 as the day of the Military Coup d'état, September 16 as the day we remember the Night of the Pencils, and some others. These are initiatives, but they are not enough because they should be complemented with workshops, special field trips, with different activities, things that some schools actually do. I understand that the work we do on Collective Memory allows the children of today to associate their own family stories with the stories of these teenagers, to know who they were and why they were fighting for. Neither subversive nor murderers, as their enemies wanted to portray them to society. They weren't also heroes. They were kids, like everybody else, they were happy, passionate, full of potentialities and with flaws too. They were people who, at a certain time, realised that they were supposed to fight for their ideas, for the possibilities to improve the world, they opened a path. There was a tragedy, a dictatorship that killed those lives, but their paths still remain. And it is crucial to recollect these life stories. From my experience, we have developed a project in which there is an exchange program between students from a secondary school which belongs to an Italian university and the Colegio Nacional Buenos Aires. Some groups came from Rome and then some

students are going to travel from Argentina to Italy. They shared the stories of their countries and about their school, but mainly they concentrate on the issues related to Human Rights. And within this topic, we concentrate mainly on the idea of migrations and exile. What we mean is not only the stories of the Italian migrations to Argentina or the Argentinians moving to Italy due to economic or political reasons, but from the point of view of what happens when these immigrants are attacked or discriminated against. All these things that happened in the past are also happening now. There in Italy, this is happening now and it is a complete mess. And here it also happens with the immigrants who come from poor countries. The world is only one and when people migrate, which isn't something easy because it changes you forever, we have to help them, not to expel them or treat them badly.

Which should be the role of teachers regarding the topic on Collective Memory?

The role is to construct our Collective Memory, on the one side, through those who can share their experiences, like in our case while we are still alive. Collective Memory is also in documents, books and movies. There's plenty of material on Collective Memory, but it isn't enough. That Collective memory has to be used so that things aren't repeated and to show that those paths with which our children dreamt of are still there. They are still pending. Each teacher should find his or her own method, he or she can invent new things from the perspective of the theatre, the Arts, etc. Teachers know this, they are resourceful. I cannot actually suggest ideas because I'm just a journalist. Coming back to the exchange program I mentioned earlier, about the group that came to visit Argentina, I took them to the ESMA museum and to the 'Parque de la Memoria' (the park of Collective Memory). They were adolescents of about sixteen or seventeen years old and they were really moved. At the ESMA museum, they were deeply affected by the sadness of understanding what happened there in the past. But in the park, they understood the importance of those names inscribed there which show what we have always said, thousands and thousands were victims and this is going to be remembered forever with the possibility to reflect, debate, talk and act.

Do you think that the State is handling the topic on Collective Memory as it should be?

I think it is doing a lot. I also say that we, the Human Rights organisations, have our share on the responsibility and we do what we can. I think plenty is done. The ESMA museum, for example, has a great potential, or the

'Parque de la Memoria', which somehow was born out of the Nacional Buenos Aires. When a sculpture plaque was placed there with the names of the disappeared, Marcelo Brodsky, a former student and photographer, phoned me and we decided to gather together in his studio with four or five more people. There, he proposed that, although there were different places, universities, schools where the names of some groups of the disappeared were written, it was necessary a place where all the country could be represented. He said that it should be associated with the arts as a form of expression. I said: 'If it is in the city, it should be by the river'.

Well, this is how this idea was born. It was handed in to the organisations in the form of a short project. It was presented the day the new Legislature of the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires was meeting. And in this way, this idea turned into a Bill which was voted and passed and this is how the park was born. Twelve years have gone by since its creation, always with great difficulties because nothing is easy.

What did you feel when you saw the commemorative plaque in the *Parque de la Memoria*?

It was shocking. For all the Madres was something really hard, but we needed it. We needed those names to be there, which are quite moving for us, but we know that it is the same feeling that many people feel when they visit the place. To see them all together, it makes you reflect. For me, that park is a vital thing. I hope that 50 or 100 years from now, it will have the profound sense that I grant it. Most of them have no graves, we weren't given the possibility to have them. The epitaph sometimes just includes the date of birth, the date of death and some words. These epitaphs are the facts that prove they are dead, it is the materialisation of death. And this is extremely necessary in the case of the disappeared, to possess that kind of reality. The inscription on the stone is like the inscription on the grave, although obviously it is not the same. It has a different force because these are thousands and thousands of them. They are the proof of a historical event, they show you what State terrorism was. Before the existence of the Park, we used to have ecumenical services and we threw flowers to the river, but today we performed them there. The importance of the proximity of the river, everything is brought together there.

FINAL WORDS

With her immense wisdom, Vera expresses this final message to the young people:

My testimony is like a message given by any granny: always keep on. Dream because it is not bad to dream. Plan because it is something good. Join others because it is nice to share. Friendship is one of the greatest gifts of our lives, another is liberty and another is solidarity. All these things can provide life with meaning.

Aurora Zucco de Bellocchio

Madre de Plaza de Mayo - Línea Fundadora (Founding Member)

Aurora Zucco was born on January 7, 1922. She is of Italian descent. In 1945, she married 'Pir' Bellocchio, a musician, and they had eight children: Luis, Julio, Marcelo, Irene, Daniel, Eduardo, Fernando and Cecilia. One of their children, Eduardo, passed away at the age of one. Another, Irene, was a victim of State terrorism imposed in Argentina between 1976 and 1983.

Aurora suffered the violence of the last military dictatorship in the heart of her family when, on August 5, 1977, her daughter was kidnapped along with her partner, Rolando Víctor Pisoni. Their son, Carlos, of thirty-seven days of age, was given to the neighbours by the kidnappers, and he was returned to Aurora. Irene was at the time an Architecture student and a union representative in a bank.

From then on, Aurora took care of the upbringing of her grandson, Carlitos, and began her tireless search both in the national and international sphere.

After thirty-five years, Aurora continues her search for Collective Memory, Truth and Justice as a member of *Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo - Línea Fundadora*.

In 2009, she published her autobiography, the book *Pelear la Vida*. At the age of eighty-seven, she had managed to describe the family picture to exemplify the tragedies of her century, where the tragic years of the civic-military dictatorship can be seen through the sharp eye of a mother who did not surrender to the loss. As she mentions in her book *Pelear la Vida*: "(...)faced with Irene's disappearance I didn't give up. And stopping the inertia of giving up allowed me to perform subsequent ruptures. From actively searching and struggling to find Irene to taking care of Carlitos, to accepting

the final and definitive decline of my relationship with Piri. From the radical change in my view of the church as an institution, without giving up my faith, to a strong reaction of confrontation towards the attitudes of my family. And especially, the end of resignation implied a transformation from a selfless mother of seven into a *Madre de Plaza de Mayo*”.

In 2011, she was recognized as Human Rights Outstanding Person by the Legislature of the City of Buenos Aires as an acknowledgement of the path she took in the issue of Human Rights. On October 15, 2015, Aurora died at 93 years of age. To honour her legacy, we share an interview made to her by the *Programa Educación y Memoria* (Education and Collective Memory Programme) of the city of Buenos Aires in 2012.

En prisión, su madre y sus lágrimas

Hoy estás sola, pero tu corazón está acá.

Yo te recuerdo, capullo rosa cuando naciste.

Flor hermosa, cuando creciste... yo le juego a tu hijo,

Y sé que lo sientes. Cuando me llama mamá, te llama...

Cuando lo acuno o le canto para calmarlo

Y se duerme...

Estás a mi lado, con él y yo te abrazo,

Y te cobijo también en mis brazos, niña mía, en tu Día.

Aurora Bellocchio

In prison, her mother and her tears

Today you are alone, but your heart is here.

I remember you, pink bud when you were born.

Beautiful flower when you grew up... I play with your son,

And I know you feel it. When he calls me mum, he calls you...

When I rock him or I sing to calm him

And he falls asleep...

You are by my side with him, and I embrace you

And I wrap you up in my arms, my girl, in your day.

Aurora Bellocchio

AURORA'S STORY

Aurora Zucco de Bellocchio dedicated her life to her family and husband. Since her youth, she had a wonderful talent for art, but her occupations drew her away from her calling.

I was born on January 7, 1922, in Buenos Aires. My father was Italian. I was always a bit of an artist, I liked drawing, writing, designing. I studied Drawing and Decorative Arts in Ruiz de los Llanos night school. In that school, I studied drawing, painting, pyrography and carving for almost three years. I know I could've been a good sketcher or painter, but in the end, I quit because of my father's pressure and my relationship with Piri, who would later become my husband. Piri was a musician. He played in a jazz orchestra and went on tours every now and then. We had eight children: Luis, Julio, Marcelo, Irene, Daniel, Eduardo, Fernando and Cecilia. Eduardo died as a baby.

Aurora married in 1945, her eight children were born between 1946 and 1958. Irene was born on May 30, 1952. When she finished secondary school, Irene wanted to study Architecture, but due to her family's economic difficulties, she could not do it at the time and started to work at a bank.

In 1976, Irene had a partner who studied Architecture. When he disappeared, Irene went underground. She lived in different places until she finally found an apartment where two students lived. I'd meet her on the street, or in a shopping mall or in a coffee shop. One day I met Irene and 'her new partner' Roly. She looked so happy! We never imagined what was about to come.

Carlitos was born on June 19, 1977, while his parents were underground.

Roly called me and told me to meet him at the Posadas Hospital. The last time I saw my daughter was on July 21, at my sister's house. She was happy with her baby. That day I thought I wouldn't see the baby for a long time. However, I did see Carlitos, but not her.

On August 5, 1977, a task force kidnapped Irene and Roly and left their son Carlitos with a neighbour.

The arrest was terrible, but we never imagined, at the time, that it would end in their disappearance. Irene disappeared along with Roly on August 5, 1977, a task group burst into their house about five in the afternoon. At the time they had their baby, Carlitos, who was left with a neighbour who was ordered to give him to his grandparents. That neighbour had the courage of giving him to me. I recall that the day when Irene was kidnapped was a grey day and I had a strange feeling of sorrow without knowing exactly why. The following was a rainy day. Suddenly a woman knocked on our door. 'Bellochio family', she asked. 'Yes, what is it?', I asked, alarmed. So I saw she was carrying something, covered in a knitted blanket. She asked me if I knew him and I obviously answered it was my grandson. She asked for my identification and when I saw the baby I thought 'something happened to Irene'. This woman had come with another woman, who started to cry. 'What is it?', I asked. 'It's that my sister (she said that woman was her sister) is asking me not to give him away, she doesn't want me to do it, the baby doesn't have any identification, but I spent the whole night talking to her because I was ordered to take him with his grandparents'. They gave me the baby 'grudgingly', they said that the baby had been crying all night and was still crying. My daughter Cecilia said 'Well, you keep him', I held him in my arms, close to my heart, can you believe this? He fell asleep and was quiet. I said, because it's true, that the baby would never separate from my heart. That's when the lady, seeing that I was crying bitterly, started to tell me that my daughter and her husband had been taken away in a procedure and she was a neighbour who had simply been given the order to return the baby.

Worried that her grandson could be taken away from her, Aurora followed all the steps required to obtain the baby's custody.

Since they had given Carlitos to me without any identification, two days later I went to the Posadas Hospital, where he'd been born, to claim for his birth certificate. A friend who worked in Minority warned me: 'If the child didn't come with any document, the same group that sent him to you can take it back'.

The blow that Aurora endured due to her daughter's disappearance implied a turning point in her daily routine. From then on, she started her tireless search for the fate of her daughter, to which she had to add the responsibility of raising her grandchild.

Even with the blow that it was to lose my daughter Irene, I had the necessary strength. The end of resignation implied turning from a selfless mother of seven into a Madre de Plaza de Mayo.

THE MEMORY OF IRENE

With the love every mother has, Aurora remembered Irene with stories from her childhood and teenage years.

My daughter Irene was born after I already had three boys. she was the fourth, the spoiled one. After that, I had three other boys and a girl. I always think she was the joy in our home. Irene was beautiful, she was playful, very clever, quite restless, she was very good to her brothers and sisters and they were good to her. She was also very funny. She was a good dancer and singer, she had a very nice voice. I gave her a lot of freedom. She had many friends, When she was a teenager, Irene liked to go out with her friends. I gave her a lot of freedom. She was always falling in love. She fell in love as quickly as she fell out of it. She fell deeply and suddenly in love.

What was Irene like as a child?

She was cheerful, very cheerful, very funny, a very good daughter, in the sense that in case of any trouble she would say: 'Mum, I'll do it', or 'I'll help'. She was also a little of a fighter because she said that her brothers had to obey her because she was older. She was very playful, she was a good singer, she was restless, she was full of friends, very pretty. She went to La Anunciata school, in the neighbourhood of Villa Urquiza, and she was a good student and a good mate.

What was her favourite meal?

I'm an old fashioned mother who cooked traditional Italian family meals: spaghetti with tomato sauce, ravioli, steak, meatloaf, she was a good eater. Irene had lots of trouble with her ears when she was a little girl.

What kind of music or which singer did she like?

At home, we listened to jazz because my husband, Irene's father, was a jazz musician. But people from my generation only listened to what was played on the radio, no one had a TV. Some people had records, but it was mostly the radio. In my times there was tango, but I modernized when my sons started to

listen to beautiful lyrics such as 'La Balsa', or the one about that writer who died in the sea, Alfonsina. My daughter played the guitar and sang and all of my children sang. So in terms of memories, that's a very touching and beautiful memory.

What mischief from your daughter do you remember?

I remember that in those days I had very dear friends with ten children or eight children, so as our kids grew up, we gave one another the girl's or boy's clothes. One day, one of my friend's daughters brought one of her dresses, it was white, made of very nice organdy. The following day was terribly cold and I went to church early, like a saint. We lived in the neighbourhood of Villa Urquiza and when I turned round the corner I saw a little girl that ran out of an apartment, it was freezing cold, and she was dressed in a white organdy dress. I thought 'Oh, that mother must've not seen the girl go out dressed like that'. When I arrived home I asked where Irene was and they said: 'She went to church', so I got a coat and ran out looking for her. She was in the church and everybody was looking at her because it was even comical and ridiculous. Another mischief of my daughter, a bit more scandalous: since we lived on the second floor, in the afternoon, after all the things children have to do during vacation —taking a nap, some chore, drinking a cold beverage—they'd go down to the sidewalk to play. So, the concierge came to me and said 'Madam, please come and see how your daughter is out on the street'. I saw her brothers and then I saw a girl running naked, she'd taken her clothes off! She was three years old, she'd taken off her clothes and she was running all over the sidewalk, so I had a cheerful daughter, luckily.

Aurora remembers her daughter's childhood with joy and she understands her commitment and the ideals she stood up for.

That's why I don't think that we, mothers, idealise our children, our children were valuable in every meaning of the word, they loved their family, they had the will to help. She had finished secondary school and studied at UADE university, where she had a scholarship, until she met a boy and he became her boyfriend. She had always wanted to study Architecture and so this boy, who was about to graduate, convinced her to do it, so when she disappeared she was a second-year student of Architecture and her partner at that time was a fourth-year student of Engineering.

THE SEARCH

Irene was twenty-five years old when she was kidnapped. Her little baby could only share thirty-six days with her. From that moment on, the endless search began, without any answer.

After the kidnapping, did you have any news from Irene and Roly?

Yes, a week after the kidnapping, my husband answered the phone and, very moved, informed me that it was Roly. When I started talking, I recognized his voice clearly. He asked me to take Carlitos to the hospital, urgently, because there was a study that had to be performed on him because of a condition that he had when he was born. I asked him for Irene and he said that she was fine. He couldn't tell me anything else. That was the only contact I had with them. I always thought that Roly exaggerated about Carlitos health to check if his son was with us.

After that only call from Roly, Aurora contacted a lawyer, who helped her write a habeas corpus and a document to present in police station No 10.

The same day when we presented the habeas corpus, our lawyer said that only my husband and Roly's mother should go to police station No 10 to report the facts. That I shouldn't go because I was in charge of Carlitos and if the police decided to arrest us, the custody of my grandson was at risk. After that, I suggested to Irene's mother-in-law that we went to our children's apartment.

With the police permission, I was able to take the baby's things, but I was not allowed to touch anything else.

I quickly began to understand that what I was going through wasn't the expression of an isolated case. It was part of a reality that the dictatorship had installed, in spite of the silence of the media, that reality was visible through the talks and the information heard everywhere.

Aurora knocked on every door along with her companions from the rounds.

I went to the Permanent Assembly for Human Rights, to the Centre for Legal and Social Studies, the League for the Rights of Man, the Ecumenic Movement for Human rights, Relatives of detained-disappeared... To each of these organisations I took a copy of everything that had happened and they put me in a list, in all of them. At the time we were very ingenious and we thought that our children were in prison somewhere.

What were you able to reconstruct about your daughter's fate?

In the 1980s, a survivor searched for me and told me that he had met my daughter in the Clandestine Detention Centre known as 'Club Atlético' and he recalled a conversation he had with her. According to him, she said 'I'm calmed because we know my mum has the baby'. Apparently, they were there until September 20 and that is the date when they were 'transferred'.

Between 1981 and 1984, Aurora lived in Barcelona, Spain, with her grandchild Carlitos. She was there with her son Fernando, who had gone into exile some time before. Aurora continued her struggle carrying her testimony in defense of Human Rights. When she returned to Argentina, her demand for Collective Memory, Truth and Justice continued in *Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo - Línea Fundadora*.

AURORA'S LEGACY

Despite all the years gone by and the difficult times she had to go through, Aurora's memories are intact. With the clarity of a woman, mother and grandmother who had an intense life, she shared her lessons with youngsters.

During all of this long life I had, I've seen everything. I've seen administrations fall, I've seen people being killed. I've been alive since the time when Yrigoyen was overthrown (the first president to suffer a military coup d'état, in 1928). I saw all the coups d'état, there were some joyous or important moments, but this country is marked by death and hate. What we had before, in the old times, were the words friendship and honesty. People were really honourable and neighbours cared for each other. At school, children would help their classmates when they didn't understand or didn't know something. And teachers were wise, really wise. Since the world changed, teaching changed as well. We've seen this since the times of our children's generation, the time in which they were studying, in public schools, in religious schools. I think that everyone is eager to learn, to know, but mainly to understand. We don't have to teach anybody anything, but we do have to explain that none of this would have happened if we had had a really honourable people, a people that really cared for their neighbour or their family, a people that helped the one in need.

In this way, Aurora highlights the importance of the educational endeavour in building a more supportive and thoughtful society.

That's why I remark how important public education was. It was aimed at educating in a more human way, and teachers taught everything they had learnt during their training years. They taught us to sing, to laugh and to be truly the best to our classmates. It's not that I long for that, what I wish is that little by little you learn to love and listen to your teachers. Because the teacher's intention is above all, to teach in a way that allows you to learn not only about a lot of subjects, but to love life and to stand up for life, to stand up for mankind, and not to yield into the temptation of hate, of labelling people in one side or the other. That would be the real value of life and happiness, which is knowledge, friendship, duty, and love.

As a synthesis of her life, in the last chapter of her autobiographical book, *Pelear la Vida*, Aurora states:

"I've already said that, to me, falls, the many falls I had in my life, were like the physical expression of moments when I fell apart, moments when I couldn't take the weight of situations that overwhelmed me. (...) I had individual falls and consecutive falls. From all of them, I managed to get up. I didn't fall with Irene's disappearance either. As I've said before, just like the other Madres, I was able to turn pain into a will to fight (...) But as I look back at my road, I think that my ability not to fall came from other conditions as well, less precise, related to my personality, some of which were already part of my personality and some of which I had to build in it.

I spent most of my life obeying. In my teenage years and in my youth, I had to obey family traditions, coming especially from my mother.(...) During that stage, my religious education consolidated (...) All my impulses to leave that schema were reduced to my most internal world: my readings, my inclinations towards everything that is beautiful, my interest—in an unfavourable medium with few tools—to learn and to connect to other cultures through that learning, my social concerns, which clashed with my family's visions. But, to the outside, despite some unsuccessful attempts to change situations, it was all about obedience: to my family, to my husband, the priests. (...)

But when I was faced with Irene's disappearance, I didn't give up (...). the end of resignation implied a transformation from a selfless mother into a Madre de Plaza de Mayo: to realise that what had happened to me was part of a reality shared by many, a social, political, economical reality, and that my answer to that individual reality could not come from my capacity as mother, but as a Madre de Plaza de Mayo.

All that process was liberating in a way, but also very painful. Because of the pain for Irene's disappearance, because of the pain of the ruptures. But it also allowed me to stand, personally, in another place. And socially, it allowed me to play a small part in a larger struggle for truth and justice."

FINAL WORDS

Aurora wrote many poems for her daughter. She wrote "When the day is sunny and the sky is blue" on the beach, during the first summer after her daughter Irene's disappearance.

*Cuando hay sol y cielo azul se acongoja mi corazón
porque pienso que estás encerrada y gris de tristeza.
Cuando veo a una pareja con su hijo los miro con respeto y con dolor.
Pienso que te sentirás como vacía, y llena de agonía
Cuando llevo a tu hijo
por la calle, y lo miran todos, tan azules los ojos,
tan vivo y saludable, yo gritaría:
¡A él le faltan sus padres! Y él va creciendo,
lleno de gracias,
y vos y Roly no lo ven cuando da besitos, y pega grititos, y a mí me
llama mamá...*

Aurora Bellocchio

*When the day is sunny and the sky is blue, my heart grieves
because I think you are locked out and grey with sadness.
When I see a couple and their son, I look at them with respect and pain.
I think you must feel empty, and in agony,*

*When I walk with your son
on the street, and everybody looks at him, and his blue eyes,
so alive and so healthy, I would scream:
His parents are missing! And he grows up
full of grace,
and you and Roly can't see him when he kisses and gives cries and calls
me mum...*

Aurora Bellocchio

The *Nietos* go to School

Restored grandchildren

Every restored grandchild is a sibling that uncovers the Truth about his or her own story and in this way recovers his or her Identity. Since the first grandchildren were restored in 1979 to the present day, over 100 cases have been solved due to the unique persistence and consistency of *Abuelas*. Yet, the identity of about 400 young people is still to be recovered; their search continues.

Every day that goes by is another day with lies kept alive, taking over the truth in the lives of over 400 young people and their children's, the new generations of Argentineans.

Those youngsters are our brothers and sisters, and we can certainly tell them that recovering our true identity has allowed us to be true to ourselves, instead of what others wanted us to be by, first, murdering our parents and, second, by changing our identity.

We, who today are able to know who we are and who our parents were, also know that they gave us life and that under no circumstances we were abandoned.

Only by knowing the truth about the situations our parents underwent, we shall get to know and be able to build a stronger society, without lies and with the truth brought to light.

We are free today because we can choose what to do with this story, as recovering our identity has not turned us once again in somebody's captive, but quite the opposite: our families respect our rights and each of us is free to choose what relationship to build with them.

We are free because we recovered what was stolen from us, because we have sorted this matter out, and therefore are able to understand our DNA, a DNA that nobody could change... If at any point in our lives our origin was

hidden from us, today we do know it and can speak directly about it; we are able to build a future based on that story.

The right to one's identity is a Human Right and, as such, it is inalienable. It is as important as the right to life, to freedom and physical integrity. Nobody shall decide whether to exercise that right or not since it is for the State to warrant and safeguard it.

Open letter from recovered grandchildren and brothers and sisters who are looking for their siblings born in captivity – November, 1, 2009.

NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE RIGHT TO IDENTITY

The work carried out by the National Committee for the Right to Identity (CONADI) was central to solving several of the searches led by *Abuelas* in recent years. Its Coordinator, Claudia Carlotto, thus explains its origin and functioning:

The CONADI is a government agency, created in 1992 by a national law in compliance with articles 7th, 8th and 11th of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. These are the so-called "Argentine articles" that defend the right to Identity of a person, especially minors. This agency was created upon request of Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, aiming at having the State help in locating and restoring the identity of the children of people disappeared for political reasons. Notwithstanding, it can also deal with any other case involving a minor with violated identity. So there are around 200 cases of adults that have received our advice and help in their search.

In order to achieve its goal, the CONADI can use a variety of procedures.

The essential tool available to us is the capacity to order DNA testing at the National Bank of Genetic Data without a court order, that is to say, without having to bring a case before Court. After assessing the specific case, we can order the DNA test just with the consent of the presenting party and a justification of the request. In this way, we preserve each of these young people who think they might be a disappeared person's child from having to bring a case on such a sensitive issue, so personal and private, before the Court.

The CONADI's identity search service is confidential and free of charge.

This is a public, open and free service. In addition, we handle each case confidentially, keeping the interested person's identity absolutely confidential; likewise, there is a previous documentary research that might or not result in a DNA test, also absolutely confidential.

Knowing one's own Identity is a person's basic right, in addition, the lack of clarity about one's origin can bring about aftereffects that are

hard to recover from.

In our experience, we've seen different consequences arising from the lack of clarity about one's identity: for example, not being able to graduate, being unable to settle down and get married, going through severe crises when becoming a parent. Endless issues reveal that the right to one's identity is a basic, fundamental right, as important as the right to life and the right to freedom. Because a person is not free nor enjoys a real life if he or she doesn't know about their origin. This is seen in people in their sixties or seventies, who can't achieve closure unless they find out about their origin. And then they come to us —sometimes in a desperate condition— after thirty or forty years of knowing their identity was not real, claiming that before moving on or reaching the end of their lives, they need to solve such an existential issue.

Such a painful experience has helped us, in addition, to contribute mechanisms to society so as to avoid its repetition. Because from the disappearance of children due to political reasons, and seeing them suffer as they're raised as part of a lie and then, maybe when they're nine or ten, twenty and now thirty years old, they learn that their biological origin is different; and on seeing their suffering and how hard it is to process that wealth of information, we also try to provide new tools for the State, in its role as State, to safeguard the identity of people, such as the act for the identification of newborns, control of amnesties and all kinds of extrajudicial registrations, including adoptions by direct assignment or surrenders. Lots of issues allowing that in Argentina, to date, the right to identity is still being infringed in percentages far higher than acceptable.

The search by *Abuelas* and their relentless claim facilitated progress in several aspects, including scientific, legal and ethical.

Abuelas well exemplify that it is possible to rebuild oneself out of pain and horror, while leaving a legacy to society: the grandparentage index, the creation of the National Bank of Genetic Data, changes in jurisprudence regarding adoption and child abduction, as well as changes to the Criminal and

Civil Codes, are tools left for our society to be better protected against this kind of abuses in the future.

Finally, the role of education and educators in this area is significantly important .

Schools are paramount to create a better society and draw a lesson from this horror so as to improve both as a country and a society. Our message, today, is that we should act with the truth. Sometimes the truth isn't an easy truth to reveal. Sometimes it isn't nice to tell a child about certain aspects of their life: why they aren't living with their mother, or why they aren't living with their dad, or why they aren't able to see their grandparents or that in fact they're being raised by a family different from their family of birth. It isn't easy, but hiding their identity is much worse, and then twenty years later we see these young people in crisis, serious crises. Besides, we are noticing a new phenomenon: it is their children who are starting to show up, to enforce their parents' right to their identity. Thus, the best is to face up to the truth.

Claudia Carlotto

José Sabino Abdala Falabella

Grandchild restored by *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*

José Sabino Abdala was born on July 27, 1974. He is the son of Susana Falabella and José Abdala. On March 16, 1977, when he was only two years and eight months old, he and his parents were kidnapped from their home in the city of La Plata. A thirteen-month-old girl called María Eugenia Gatica Caracoche, who happened to be temporarily under their care, was also kidnapped.

Both children were taken to the Fifth Police Station of La Plata and then to the Women Police Brigade, where they were delivered to different families. María Eugenia was appropriated by a police chief and she recovered her identity in 1984. Sabino was appropriated by a married couple of San Justo (a town in Greater Buenos Aires), who registered him as his own son, born on August 7 1976, under the name of Federico.

Sabino started to doubt when he was around eight or ten years old. At that time, he found out he was not the biological child of those who had claimed to be his parents.

In 1992, Sabino was found by the *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*. His filiation was confirmed in 1993 after immunogenetics testing at the National Bank of Genetic Data. In 1998, a court ruling restored his true identity to him.

Sabino cooperates with *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo* to help find the four hundred grandchildren that are yet still to be recovered:

I cooperate with Abuelas. We, grandchildren, have to lend a hand to Abuelas, they get happy with us around and feel our support.

Susana and José, his parents, are still disappeared.

The truth is always the best path, though painful, it sets you free.

SABINO'S STORY

José Sabino Abdala is the son of Susana Falabella and José Abdala. He lost his identity on March 16, 1977, when he was kidnapped together with his parents. He tells us his story as follows:

My name's Sabino Abdala and I was born on July 27, 1974. My parents were politically active in La Plata. In March 1977 a police gang suddenly appeared and kidnapped my parents, myself, and María Eugenia Gatica, a little girl who just that day was under my parents' care at home. I was then two and a half years old and María Eugenia was a year and one month. We were taken to a women police brigade and later split up. María Eugenia was taken to the house of a police chief and was able to recover her identity in 1984. I was handed over to a family in San Justo who was connected to the Brigade there. My alleged 'dad' was a doctor and my 'mum' was the head of a clinic. They registered me as their own child.

Sabino was appropriated by a married couple who used a false birth certificate stating August 3, 1976, as his date of birth and Federico Gabriel as his name.

I had a happy childhood. I started to question my identity because I didn't look like my brothers. They are blond, but I'm not. So I started to make questions, and they told me I'd been adopted, but they'd registered me as their child so that I could enjoy the same rights as my brothers. At that time, although I was shocked, I found this explanation reasonable, and that was the end of it. However, there was a big lie behind all this...

Thanks to a professor's observation and commitment, Sabino started the long journey to recover his identity.

In 1992, in my last year of secondary school, I had a substitute professor of Civics. He was connected with Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo. When he saw me in class, he immediately thought I looked very much like a photo of my dad at the Abuelas' headquarters. So, he presented my case and they started to do some research. Once I ran into my cousin —I didn't know then he was my cousin— and he asked me something. My aunt was further away. They immediately found I looked identical to my dad, but said nothing because they were afraid I might leave the country or something like that.

The case investigating the illegal holding and hiding of José Sabino began with charges filed by the *Asociación Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*, maintaining that Federico could in fact be José Sabino Abdala. A bit later, this suspicion was confirmed.

In 1993, when I was back from holidays, my adoptive mother showed me a piece of paper stating that there was a fair chance I was the son of a disappeared couple and I was being summoned for a blood test. I agreed to do it, but didn't understand the situation. Later that year, it was confirmed that I was Sabino Abdala and was the person they were looking for. By the end of 1993, I met my family: three grandparents, cousins, uncles and aunts.

From then onwards, a hard time started for Sabino: on the one hand, he had to understand and accept his new situation; and on the other hand, a heated dispute began between both families.

It was the beginning of a fight against myself over my identity. It took me two years to want to recover my name. Besides, I was suddenly two years older. The hardest thing was that I got in the middle of both families: my biological family and my appropriating family. When I recovered my identity, a trial for my illegal appropriation automatically started.

Little by little, Sabino begins to unfold his own story with his blood relatives' support.

In 1999 I got closer to Abuelas and started to listen to other stories. Talking about this was cathartic and allowed me to understand what was happening to me. Now I'm assisting Abuelas to recover the four hundred grandchildren still missing.

THE REUNION WITH HIS STORY

The first thing that Sabino recovers is his story: Susana, his mother, was born on August 10, 1949, in Mercedes, Buenos Aires province, and was 27 years old at the time of the kidnapping. José, his father, was born in the same town on October 2, 1951, and was 24 years old when he disappeared. They were married and had a two-and-a-half-year-old son, José Sabino. José studied sociology and worked at a petrol station. Susana was a scrub nurse.

The family was kidnapped on March 16, 1977, at 12:30 p.m. while having lunch at their home at streets 6 and 167 of Los Hornos neighbourhood. People wearing plain and military clothes surrounded the block. They hit José, covered him with a hood and put him in the boot of a car. They

took Susana in the back seat of another car, together with Sabino and María Eugenia, the thirteen-month-old little girl by chance under the family's care. After the kidnapping, the house was looted and all their belongings were taken away.

They were all taken to the Fifth Police Station. The children were crying and in despair. At around six in the afternoon, a police officer grabbed both children by their arms and drove them away. They were taken to the Women Police Brigade, used as a transit place for children. The Police Chief, Mr Silva, finally took María Eugenia —whom he called Marcelita— and appropriated her.

How did you feel when you discovered that you were the son of disappeared people?

First, denial. I didn't want to recover my identity right away. I was highly confused. The worst was when attorneys appeared. I didn't have the slightest idea of what was going on.

The first time I met my grandmother, I felt as part of a film, as if it was happening to somebody else. This was at the beginning, like I was wearing a different mask depending on who I was acting for. The problem is I couldn't take responsibility for what I was undergoing because it was very painful.

What was your adoptive parents and siblings' reaction at the news?

When I recovered my identity, the trial to my adoptive mother started, as my adoptive father had already passed away. My brothers told me to do what I had to do. I tried to speak with her several times, but she kept on hiding the truth. So I let justice prevail. It was a hard trial that lasted seven years. She was charged with forging my birth certificate and hiding me. At that time, I felt just in between both families: my biological family and my adoptive one. In the end, she was sentenced to three years not punishable with imprisonment.

Why when they are notified there is no resistance by your adoptive family?

When the summons for DNA testing arrived, it came together with a note including photos showing me as a blond-haired little boy, so my mother thought I couldn't be Sabino Abdala; but that was made on purpose by Abuelas

for me to show up. I had meant to take it anyway, because I totally knew that I had to. I was young, nineteen years old, but I was aware of what had happened in Argentina. Later, when my DNA tested positive my adoptive mother changed her attitude, putting me in between both families. So I started to be attacked by both sides. If my adoptive mother had seen a photo of my biological father, I guess she'd have been reluctant...

Did anybody realize that you were two years older than what they were saying?

There was a kind of civil complicity. When I started primary school, my mother asked the director not to raise too many questions. The same happened at secondary school. They sent me to a school different from the one I had chosen, where they made sure not to face questions. You have to understand that in this country it took quite a long time to be able to talk about the Dictatorship due to great fear. And when there's fear, there's silence.

How did you feel about not growing up with your real family?

Family support is a very complicated issue. Being kidnapped was a great shock to me. My elder siblings tell me that when I arrived I barely spoke and was afraid of the dark. And my bond now is with my grandparents or uncles and aunts, but it's complicated because when you haven't lived something it isn't the same.

Before discovering that you were adopted, did you feel that something was missing?

Yes, I did, I felt I was missing something. That's why they couldn't hide everything for a long time.

SABINO TODAY

At present, Sabino cooperates with *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo* to find the four hundred grandchildren who have not recovered their identity yet.

I cooperate with Abuelas. Their latest spot was my work. I studied film-making and know a little bit. It was my idea that grandchildren appear on TV saying who they are. In this way, the grandchildren are addressing those who aren't sure of their identity, encouraging them to start their own search. We, grandchildren, have to give a hand to Abuelas, they get happy with us around and feel our support.

Have you currently got a relationship with your adoptive mother?

With my mother, yes, sometimes. But as she hid the truth from me so many times, something got broken. I hold no grudge against her, I still love her. She was sentenced for this issue, so it is over.

What is your present opinion of the military forces?

I look to the future. I think it's great that they're being prosecuted. I'd also like to know the location of my parents' bodies. We need to be given information to find the grandchildren and the bodies of the disappeared people. Without their bodies, there is no chance for grief, no closure to one's story.

What inspires you to go to schools?

Being with you all, to get questions. Besides, sharing my story is good because it might help someone to raise a doubt or make progress in their own process of inquiring.

Have you seen your school professor again?

Yes, at first I was angry at him because he said nothing. But I've been told that very often, when the appropriating family is suspicious, they take the person out of the country or hide them. So, later I thanked him because he was the driving force behind the reunion; without him it'd have been much more difficult.

FINAL WORDS

Recently, my life has changed dramatically. First, because I was able to take responsibility for my story and who I am. If you don't take responsibility for your past, you can't build anything in your life. That's why I struggled with almost everything throughout all those years. You learn as the years go by...

Martín Amarilla Molfino

Grandchild restored by *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*

Martín was born on June 17, 1980, at the Campo de Mayo Clandestine Detention Center. His mother, Marcela Molfino, and his father, Guillermo Amarilla, —both from the province of Chaco— had been kidnapped eight months earlier, on October 17, 1979. It was then that Martín was appropriated and registered as the biological son of an army intelligence officer.

As a child, Martín started to question his identity. At the beginning he had doubts about being the biological son of his so-called parents and later, when a teenager, he started to consider that he could be the son of disappeared people.

In 2007, he went to *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*, but the first search proved unfruitful. His mother gave birth eight months after being kidnapped, her body disappeared and her family never found out that she had been pregnant. A repentant person's testimony allowed *Abuelas* to continue searching and link Martín's story with his parents, Marcela Molfino and Guillermo Amarilla, still disappeared.

Two years later, on November 2, 2009, Martín recovered his identity, becoming the restored grandchild No. 98.

From then onwards, Martín met his three brothers, who had been kidnapped together with his mother and were returned to their grandparents in the province of Chaco a few days later, and a large family, who celebrated the new member from the very beginning.

When I hugged my brothers, I felt for the first time that I had something for the rest of my life.

I discovered several similarities with my parents, such as playing the accordion and the guitar, the way I sit and walk. And all of these things fill me with joy and happiness, because they also have to do with your identity building: looking at yourself in the mirror, in your own blood, and seeing a root for your feet.

MARTÍN'S STORY

My name is Martín Amarilla. I'm the son of Marcela Molfino and Guillermo Amarilla. I recovered my identity on November 2, 2009 after a long process of doubts and questions...

As a little boy I already questioned my identity. At the beginning, I thought I could be adopted, but over the years I started to ask myself whether I was the son of disappeared people.

What is unusual about my story is that in 2007 I had my DNA tested at the National Bank of Genetic Data and it didn't match any genetic profile. It took two years until it matched with my biological family.

I was appropriated on the day I was born, on June 17, 1980. I was born at the Campo de Mayo Detention Center. My parents were kidnapped on October 17, 1979, from the west sector of the Greater Buenos Aires area: my mother was kidnapped in San Antonio de Padua together with my paternal uncle, three brothers of mine and two cousins; and my father was kidnapped on the same day in Ramos Mejía, which is, actually, the city where I was raised...

In addition, in 1980, my grandmother was kidnapped in Perú, brought to Argentina, and found dead in Spain. This was thanks to Operation Condor, a plan of extermination and collaboration for the entire Latin America, that included different countries under dictatorships. Under this agreement, the Military Forces could cross borders to stop the so-called 'subversive criminals'.

In 2009, when I finally met my family, I met my brothers, my cousins, my uncles and aunts... They're all from the province of Chaco, we're a big family from Chaco. On my maternal side, we're 60 people, on my paternal side, 200 people, not long ago my relative No. 201 was born.

What was recovering your identity like? What made you question your identity?

First, personal issues, something pretty basic, instinctive: I didn't feel at home, no sense of belonging to my pack. Besides, other complex issues arose. For instance, whether my appropriating mother was young enough to have children. And the answer is no, she was not, because she was then fifty years old and that was impossible at the time, science was not into assisted fertilisation yet! Besides, I couldn't find any photo of her being pregnant, I kept looking for her pregnancy photos everywhere with no luck. A further element was my appropriating father's job, an army intelligence officer during the dictatorship. They never told me anything, not even that I was adopted. Nevertheless, later, as I was growing up and realized that I had no similarities with their ways of walking, laughing..., nothing in common with any of them both, I started to wonder. Because there was nothing, not even physically, nor in the way of addressing and seeing several things of our daily life that linked us together. I looked at the world in a very different way from any of them.

Luckily, thanks to the Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo's effort and of all the people who work with them, I was able to recover my identity.

When you started to investigate and have your doubts, did you keep it secret? Did anyone help you?

Yes, I kept it secret, I never asked my appropriators about anything. I never dared. Maybe at that time I was pretty scared. Every step I took, I struggled hard, but every achievement meant a world to me. So, everything I did was behind their back. My appropriating father died when I was fourteen years old, so I went through most of the process alone with her—in reference to his appropriating mother. She just found out when the press conference with Abuelas was over and I had already met my family. Anyway, she heard it from me. It was me who approached her and talked about it. But I went through the entire process without her noticing it.

Before 2007, had you thought of having your DNA tested? Had you questioned your identity?

I had doubts since quite some years before. The first time I thought of the possibility of being the son of disappeared people was thanks to a literature professor from my secondary school, a Catholic school, where it was strictly forbidden for professors to address that kind of topics. This professor would sneak us into the library to watch films such as 'The Night of the Pencils' and other films

about the dictatorship. And it was kind of a secret between us and our professor. This took place in 96 and 97 because he was our professor in the last years of secondary school. It was then that I started to have doubts, not whether I was their biological son because I had always questioned it, but whether I was the son of disappeared people. My first questions started with this professor, this was the kick-start.

REUNION AND HIS FAMILY'S SURPRISE

Martín's story is atypical because at the moment of testing his DNA with the entire Bank of Genetic Data there was no positive family group match. Yet, two years later his story was to change.

When my mother was kidnapped nobody knew she was pregnant, so nobody in the family left their blood sample at the genetic bank because they weren't thinking of searching for someone else alive. After many cases were treated, it was established that that young man who appeared in 2007 to file a complaint matched with statements saying that a woman, Marcela Molfino, had given birth in 1980 at Campo de Mayo Detention Center. So they asked the Amarilla and Molfino families for a blood sample to be checked against mine. Obviously, it tested positive. And one day I got a phone call from the CONADI asking me to go and 'get more information', as I was told. At that time, I met Estela Carlotto's daughter, Claudia Carlotto, and she started to tell me the story of a certain family. She was speaking of my grandmother, my mother, my father and ended up saying that that family was my own family and that they were all together at the Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo Headquarters. She asked me whether I wanted to meet them and of course I said yes. I remember the ten-minute taxi ride as ten minutes of emptiness, of not knowing what to do. Claudia went on and on while I was trying to picture my brothers' faces. When I arrived at the Abuelas' Headquarters, it was Estela who first welcomed me and invited me to go in. Then, she opened a door and I thought that some three people there were my family. Yet she corrected me and, when I opened the right door, I found a lot of people in that room. They looked like a gang of football fans! Some sixty relatives of mine had come from Chaco. And when I came face to face with them, no introduction was needed, nor DNA testing since we all look very much alike.

What was your appropriating mother's reaction?

At first, it was a very strong breakup. After a while, I took it as something of the past. I didn't know the truth, but she did. We could wonder how much she knew of the whole story. But my position first was to keep calling her mom.

Later I stopped doing so and started to see her less and less often. And now I barely see her, but I want to know how she's doing. I don't fight this, it's just that I am more into recovering or building my bond with my brothers and my family. I won't bring myself to break off my relationship with her nor to continue it. Whatever happens, let it be gradual and evolve in the direction it should.

What kind of relationship did you have with your appropriating father?

My relationship with him was rather peculiar; let's say he was a peculiar person because he was a violent person. He was never violent towards me, well, actually his violence to me was shown in the fact that he lied to me and abducted me. That is violence because a person who kidnaps a baby is terribly violent. However, in our daily life he wasn't violent, but his problem was his alcohol addiction. So, living together was hard, the greater violence was against my appropriating mother. Let's say that when he was sober it was a normal relationship, and when he wasn't, it wasn't. He died when I was fourteen years old, but my reaction to his death also caught my attention since it didn't hurt really as the death of a parent should do. That raised even more doubts. I thought: 'you're supposed to suffer the loss of a father, to feel sad', but it wasn't my case. Maybe I suffered the first days, but less than for other issues, like a failed relationship, but not like the death of a father.

MARTÍN AND HIS LONG JOURNEY TO REBUILD HIS STORY

After recovering his identity, Martín devoted all of his energy to rebuild his family ties and build accounts in order to get closer to his parents. Guillermo Amarilla and Marcela Molfino met in 1972 as part of the *Juventud Peronista* (Peronist Youth movement). In 1975, in Resistencia, province of Chaco, their first son Mauricio was born; in 1977 Joaquín was born in the city of Buenos Aires, and in 1978, while exiled in France, Ignacio was born. In May 1979, they came back to the country and settled down in the province of Buenos Aires, where they were detained and since then are disappeared.

What were you able to rebuild from your parents' story?

I'm lucky to be part of a large family, so there are a lot of people who are able and willing to tell and help me build an image of my parents. My eldest brother, who was four years old at the time of the abduction, was also able to tell me a little bit. My uncles and aunts and their fellow activists helped me to build their story. Besides, I got photos, even a recorded video of my dad, and tape recordings with my mum and dad's voices. I mean, quite a lot of material within reach to get to know them. Their story is being told day by day. Maybe at the beginning I was very interested in their activist story. Then, little by little, this started to change and I looked for subtler or more important things, like what it was like waking up in the morning and having my father or my mother by my side. Those small details, something I was already looking for and didn't know where; luckily, now there is a place to find it and that's very important to me.

Have you found out anything about their activism?

My dad was an active member of the Peronist Youth movement of Chaco, in the north-east part of Argentina. From an early age, he joined this movement and when he was twenty-two he was already one of the leaders of the Peronist Youth in the region. He was one of the founders of the Montoneros group. I'm proud that he was one of the people who came back together with Perón in his plane. As for my mum, she used to belong to a grassroots Peronist branch, and soon moved to the Peronist Youth movement. Both were active members in Chaco, at different neighbourhoods. And when the problem with the Triple A began, in 1975, they came to Buenos Aires to lead an easier life in anonymity, as in Chaco everybody knows each other. Then, beyond their activism, I was able to discover several points in common. He loved guitars, used to play the guitar, and so do I. She played the accordion, and so do I. He liked lemon ice cream, and I love it...

Which similarity struck you the most?

Learning about the accordion was quite powerful because I bought my accordion before meeting my family. Two or three months earlier. And on the day I met them, we were gathered around this big table and a maternal aunt asked me what I did. And I replied: 'I play music, I just bought an accordion'. And they all went blank, astonished, because my mother used to play the accordion. So, they started to ask a lot of questions and then I would answer and we

found a lot of tiny things in common. Such as the accordion, my way of sitting and walking, which are identical. That fills me with joy and happiness because that also has to do with building one's identity: looking at yourself into the mirror, in your own family, and being able to trace your roots.

Did you get to know what happened to your brothers when they were kidnapped?

My brothers were taken to a sort of childcare place. My eldest brother recalls there were lots of little children and seeing several policewomen out of the window. My three brothers and my two cousins were restored to my paternal grandmother's home on November 2, 1979, and, by chance, Abuelas restored me on November 2, 2009, exactly thirty years later.

How is your present relationship with your brothers?

We have a really great relationship with my brothers. For sure our bond isn't fully developed; I'd never been a brother before, I was an only child my entire life. So, the nearest thing to a brother to me was a friend. But the first thing that happened to me when I first met my brothers was that I felt there was something forever. And that creates a very strong bond, we could call it superior, I don't know. But, luckily, we have a very good relationship, we're building our bond. We won't be able to play marbles, but we can play football, we're still young!

What losses did your family suffer under the Dictatorship?

My father's family was a large family, they were eleven brothers and sisters, my father being second to last. A cousin of mine, Rubén Amarilla, was the first to be punished in the family, the first disappeared member of the family. He was an active member of the Juventud Universitaria Peronista; when he was eighteen years old he was kidnapped in the city of Rosario while painting a political graffiti at a corner and nothing else was heard of him. He was detained in Buenos Aires and illegally imprisoned, another disappeared person in 1979. He wasn't a member of any political group at the time since his group had been totally disintegrated; most members had been killed or else escaped to different places. So, in 1979, my uncle was kidnapped in Buenos Aires, then taken to the province of Chaco, and there to the current building of the Casa de la Memoria de Chaco (Chaco's Centre for the Collective Memory). Previously,

he'd been taken to a police station in Chaco. An uncle of mine went there to take clothes and cigarettes to him once, showing to the military and police officers that he was aware of my cousin's whereabouts; he asks nothing and just shows up, with certainty. So the military had to make him 'appear'. On the other hand, my grandmother, after what happened to my mother and my father, went to Geneva to report before the United Nations what was taking place here and in the rest of Latin America. And then letters were found from the Batallón 601 (Battalion) asking the CIA what to do with Noemí Esther Gianetti, with that woman who was my grandmother, because she was already a public person who had been filing complaints worldwide. The CIA replied that she had to appear dead in a neutral state. That's how she was kidnapped in Peru, brought to Argentina and murdered in Spain.

What was her role within the organization?

Let's say that my grandmother's home was a big house that would welcome people from all sorts of groups, from revolutionary Peronists to leftists, as in our family there were members of those two branches. So, she would cook homemade pasta for them all. I value what they did and am proud of the political activism of my parents and my entire family. On the other hand, my dad starts to work with the Ligas Agrarias (Agrarian Movement). He stayed in the province of Tucumán, where he became closely involved with the Ligas Agrarias. Then he returned to Chaco hiding and crossing open fields to make it. When he arrived, he had lost fifteen or twenty kilograms. An uncle of mine welcomed him, the one who told me this story. And there he reunited with my mother; with whom they already had a child, my eldest brother. After some time in Buenos Aires, where my second brother was born, they went into exile in France. My youngest brother was born there, and then they returned to Buenos Aires with my six-month-old brother. I also have a cousin, called Alejandra, who was detained under the dictatorship. She went into exile in Paris for a long time, came back and is now living in Córdoba, together with her partner. That's my family, scattered everywhere.

In 2007, when you tested negative, did you give up and think you could be the biological son of your appropriating mother or did you keep investigating?

I was at a friend's house in Córdoba when I got the news. At first, I felt relief and thought 'maybe this was just me being crazy, just something in my mind'. I mean, I was blaming myself. Those two years were kind of void, no more questions, no purpose. I'd got stuck with that answer, dissatisfied. Because

deep down I knew that I wasn't where I belonged, that feeling wasn't gone. Those two years I felt a deep emptiness, it was a hard time for me. I accepted the news and stopped searching. It was really a terrible piece of news, but luckily now it's over.

MARTÍN TODAY

Martín is truly happy to have confirmed his suspicions. Far from being trapped in the story of his appropriation or what could not be, he looks at the present and the future with renewed challenges and optimism.

The truth is that at the moment of the reunion I felt extremely happy, joyful. And today I'm going through this process of discovering the little things in my parents' relationship and in their own lives. And this is thanks to the fact that I was able to recover my identity, the truth sets you free. Lies trap you in something that you are not even to blame for. Becoming free is painful because the truth isn't always nice, but it's the healthiest thing.

When you think of the life you had, do you harbour bitter feelings or have you overcome this stage?

I see it as something healed, not forgotten, because it was part of my personal process of building myself. Later there was a rupture in that process. I see it today as something real, as something that actually happened, but without bitter feelings. At the beginning, I felt that way, it hurt, it didn't help me. There aren't too many options when facing this situation: you either keep regretting what those thirty years with your biological family could've been or else you devote yourself to building a relationship with that biological family, with that new life, which is my new life. The other part is still present, we don't forget it, and that's why we keep looking for grandchildren, because of what we endured. I see now that those years were kind of a zebra, neither white nor black...

Did you set yourself in a future-oriented project when you recovered your identity?

Several projects. The first ones were related to my family. Meeting them face to face, enjoying them, making questions, talking, learning about my family. Making questions to those who are here, and to those who are no longer here, so as to build an image of them as well. That was my first goal.

Have you seen that professor who aroused your curiosity again? What would you tell him if you come across him?

I never met him again but I'm looking for him... what would I say? Mainly, I'd thank him because he had a lot to do with this story. I'd love to hear that he's still teaching and doing the same with his students because those teenagers could be asking themselves the same identity questions I had.

Today, Martín is looking for that professor who opened his way to his family, to his truth. That professor who, challenging institutional rules, followed his conscience and taught about the recent past from a teaching practice committed to his time. And by doing this he raised doubt. And that doubt led Martín to recover his story and identity.

FINAL WORDS

Just like his 'brothers and sisters', the other restored grandchildren, Martín feels a deep affection for the *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*.

The Abuelas' Headquarters is a place where we, the grandchildren, feel well respected, at ease. Each of us is a grandchild to them, and they are our grandmothers to us. Likewise, every grandchild is our brother or sister. The Abuelas give a lot of love every day, they are an example to us. They have a very clear goal, always rooted on their great love. In this way they've found 105⁶ grandchildren, paving the way for us, grandchildren, who are the ones to keep searching together with many other people. Every time they look at us they show us their love and understanding. There are no words to describe what the Abuelas are.

⁶ Translator's note: quantity by 2018, when the interview took place.

Juan Cabandié Alfonsín

Grandchild restored by *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*

Juan was born on March 16, 1978, at the *ESMA* (Navy Mechanics School). His mother, Alicia Alfonsín, who was only seventeen years old, and his father, Damián Cabandié, nineteen years old, had been kidnapped on November 23, 1977 in the neighbourhood of Congreso in the city of Buenos Aires. Juan was able to be with his mother for only twenty days. Then, he was appropriated and registered as the biological son of Luis Falco, an intelligence officer for the Federal Police, and his wife.

As he grew up, he questioned his identity and, in 2003, went to the *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo* Headquarters looking for an answer.

At last, on January 26, 2004 he received the confirmation that he was the son of Alicia Alfonsín and Damián Cabandié, becoming the grandchild number 77 to be restored by *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*. From then onwards, he was able to reunite with his grandmothers, aunts and uncles and cousins, and began a long journey to rebuild his identity.

Already as a teenager, Juan had felt a political commitment to help socially vulnerable groups. After recovering his identity, his activism grew stronger.

This is another coincidence with my parents. One of my goals is to work for a country with social inclusion for everyone. And keep asking for Justice, Truth and Collective Memory, because Collective Memory is essential for a people to grow.

In 2007, he took office as Legislator of the City of Buenos Aires for the *Frente para la Victoria* (a Peronist electoral alliance).

His story became well-known thanks to the song 'Yo soy Juan' (I'm Juan), by León Gieco, and to a television programme called 'Televisión por la Identidad' (Television for Identity), which devoted its second episode (out of three) to Juan's story. Alicia and Damián, his parents, are still disappeared.

If I could talk with my dad and mum, I'd tell them to be at ease, I am what they wanted me to be: a person who keeps their fight alive.

JUAN'S STORY

Juan is the son of Damián Cabandié and Alicia Alfonsín. He was born on March 16, 1978, at the Clandestine Detention Centre operating at the Navy Mechanics School while her mother was held in captivity. Juan was only able to share twenty days with her. From then onwards, his identity was stolen, he was registered as the biological son of Luis Falco and his wife. In 2004, Juan recovered his identity. He is the grandchild 77 to be restored by *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*. Two months later, on March 24 that same year, on the National Day for the Collective Memory, Truth and Justice, Juan participated in an official ceremony in which the Navy Mechanics School building became a Site of Collective Memory, and read a heartfelt speech that circulated widely at national and international levels. He introduced his story as follows:

En este lugar le robaron la vida a mi mamá. Ella está desaparecida.

En este lugar idearon un plan macabro de robo de bebés.

Acá hubo personas que se creyeron impunes, jugando conmigo y sacándome la identidad.

Tuve mucho tiempo de búsqueda, y hace dos años, sin tener elementos fuertes, le puse nombre a lo que buscaba. 'Soy hijo de desaparecidos', dije.

Encontré la verdad dos meses atrás, cuando el análisis de ADN confirmó que soy hijo de Alicia y Damián.

Ahora soy Juan Cabandié Alfonsín.

Soy mis padres, Damián y Alicia.

Mi madre estuvo en este lugar detenida, y yo nací aquí dentro, pero el plan siniestro de la dictadura no pudo borrar el registro de la memoria que transitaba por mis venas y me fue acercando a la verdad.

Bastaron los quince días que mi Mamá me amamantó y nombró para que yo le diga a mis amigos, antes de saber quién era mi familia, que me quería llamar Juan, como me llamó mi Mamá durante el cautiverio en la ESMA. En algún lugar estaba guardado.

Mi madre aquí dentro me abrazaba y nombraba, así dicen los relatos de las compañeras que hoy pueden contarlos.

Fui su primer y único hijo, y tanto a ella como a mí nos hubiese gustado estar juntos. Pero lamentablemente unas manos impunes me agarraron y me sacaron de sus brazos.

Hoy estoy acá, 26 años después, para preguntarles a los responsables de esa barbarie si se animan a mirarme cara a cara y a los ojos y decirme donde están mis padres. Estamos esperando la respuesta que el punto final quiso tapar.

Este es el principio de la verdad, gracias a una acertada decisión política, pero no basta si no se llega hasta lo más profundo. La verdad es libertad, y como queremos ser íntegramente libres, necesitamos saber la verdad total.

Gracias a mi familia que me buscó incansablemente.

Gracias a las Abuelas y la lucha por la verdad.

Gracias a los que fueron sensibles por esta lucha, y me ayudaron a recuperar mi identidad.

Gracias a los que apostaron a la vida en un contexto de tanta muerte. Y por sus relatos y ayuda estoy acá parado.

Gracias a los que piensan y luchan por una sociedad más justa.

Gracias a los que apuestan por la verdad y la justicia.

Por los cuatrocientos chicos que aún faltan recuperar.

Por los casi diez chicos que nacieron en la ESMA, y aún no lo saben.

Por los que están dudando y sufren.

Que nunca más suceda lo que hicieron en este lugar.

No le podemos poner palabra al dolor que sentimos por los que no están.

Que Nunca más suceda esto. Nunca Más. Gracias.

In this place they took my mother's life. She is disappeared.

In this place they devised a sinister plan for the abduction of children.

Here there were people who thought they'd go unpunished, playing with me and taking my identity away.

My search lasted a long time, and two years ago, without much evidence, I was able to name what I was searching for. 'I'm the son of disappeared people', I said.

I found out the truth two months ago, when my DNA test confirmed that I'm the son of Alicia and Damián.

Now I'm Juan Cabandié Alfonsín.

I'm my parents, Damián and Alicia.

My mother was detained in this place, and I was born here, but the sinister plan of the dictatorship couldn't delete the imprint on my memory, running through my veins, the one that pushed me closer to the truth.

Those fifteen days that my Mum breastfed me and named me were enough for me to tell my friends —before knowing who my family was— that I wanted to be called Juan, just as my Mum had called me during my captivity at the Navy Mechanics School. My name lingered in me, somewhere.

In this place my mother hugged me and named me, this is what her surviving detained fellows tell me today.

I was her first and only child, and both she and I would have loved to be together. Unfortunately, unpunished hands snatched me from her arms.

Here I am today, 26 years later, asking those who were responsible for this cruelty if they dare to look to my face and eyes and tell me where my parents are. We're waiting for the answer that the full stop law tried to cover.

This is the beginning of the truth, due to a wise political decision, but not enough if you don't get to the bottom of it. Truth is freedom, and since we wish to be entirely free, we need to know the whole truth.

Thanks to my family for their tireless search.

Thanks to Abuelas and their fight for the truth.

Thanks to the people who were sensitive to this fight, and helped me to recover my identity.

Thanks to the people who bet for life in a context of so much death. It is because of their accounts and help that I'm standing here today.

Thanks to the people who think and fight for a fairer society.

Thanks to the people who are committed to the cause of truth and justice.

To the four hundred grandchildren yet to be recovered.

To the almost ten children born in the Navy Mechanics School, who are still unaware of this fact.

To those who are in doubt and suffer.

For the things that were done here to never happen again.

We can't put into words our suffering for those who are gone.

For this to never happen again. Never Again. Thank you.

HIS SEARCH FOR HIS IDENTITY: 'I'M JUAN'

January 26, 2004, was a key date for Juan. From then on, 'Mariano Andrés Falco', the name given by his appropriators, was left behind and he went back to being 'JUAN', just as his mother had called him those few days they shared together.

'I want to be called like that, Juan', he told his grandmothers and biological aunts at their first encounter. However, that was not his first time using this name. During his childhood and adolescence, he chose the name of Juan and used to dream of his mother in semi-darkness, rocking and breastfeeding him while calling him Juan. Yet, his journey to find his truth had started a few years earlier, when Juan's doubts about his origin started to grow stronger.

I felt I didn't belong there; I was always interested in social issues, in the most vulnerable groups; my style didn't match that family's. Besides, at their house there were no photos of my alleged mother being pregnant, or of my early years, which upset me and raised many questions. 'She' hid the truth from me

when I asked about it. I grew up under the pressure of my desire to solve that enigma: my true identity.

During the Argentine 2001 crisis, Juan's doubts deepened: the cruelty he lived during his childhood, differences in personal traits with his alleged 'parents', the lack of family memories and records in that family about his birth were key issues for Juan to suppose that he was not the son of the couple who claimed to be his parents. Back then and under those circumstances, Juan was well aware of the close relation between being adopted and being the son of disappeared people.

To be an adopted child didn't just mean to be adopted. It meant being the son of disappeared people.

On top of all this, there were other important facts: the Reggiardo Tolosa twins were among his childhood friends. Their appropriator, Samuel Miara, was acquainted with his alleged 'father'.

Along this search for truth, Juan had the unwavering support of his foster sister Vanina, his appropriators' biological daughter.

Everything was gradual. At twenty-three, my doubts were growing stronger about me being the son of disappeared people. First, it was a lonely search, lots of hours of inner search; then I started to revisit the history of our country, departing from 'their' influence and education. Finally, when I was internally ready, I spoke with my sister Vanina, proposed my hypothesis to her, and she joined me in my search. At a certain point, she was also questioning whether she was the daughter of disappeared people, but later due to her age and physical resemblance, we confirmed she wasn't. I got in contact with the Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo to be tested and finally learned the truth.

What was your life like before confirming your true identity?

It was a life that tried to be normal, even though deep down I always had a feeling that there was an enigma in my life, kind of a philosophical stance. I walked through life trying to find an answer to something without really knowing what it was.

His appropriator, Luis Antonio Falco, was an Intelligence officer for the Federal Police. Falco's father was a police chief and his brother is still a police member. Falco worked as a pharmaceutical sales representative to conceal his most sinister activities. His violence spread within his immediate family, but in particular against Juan.

How was your relationship with your non-biological parents?

We call appropriators to the people who raised us because they aren't parents, neither biological nor adoptive. They are people who unlawfully performed a role that wasn't theirs. It was a difficult relationship because this man was an intelligence officer for the Federal Police. He treated me badly. So, it wasn't good. But it was different with Teresa, my alleged mother. I stopped seeing him when I was nineteen, when they got divorced. I never saw him again. He was very violent, very authoritarian; violent against his family, or his supposed immediate family; though he was particularly violent against me after typical childish pranks, which he used to justify his violence against me.

What was it like to stop being Mariano to start to be Juan?

It was a great relief since my suspicions were confirmed. I recovered my identity, what I'd been so eagerly searching for. Because the truth sets you free. So, I felt it was the beginning of a new stage of my life.

What was your reaction when you learned that you were the son of disappeared people?

It was hard because I went to Abuelas driven by my own interest or doubts. I got in contact with them because I thought that the people I had lived with so far weren't my family. My family didn't mention whether I was adopted or anything like that. Although this wasn't an adoption, since adoptions are registered before a judge. So, I wanted to know who I was. My first reaction was ambiguous: happiness to discover I wasn't that family's son, as well as sadness because on the very same day I learned that I was the son of a disappeared couple I learned that I would never be able to see my parents.

REBUILDING HIS STORY

A few days after the beginning of 2004, Juan confirmed his identity. He then returned to the Abuelas' headquarters to meet, for the first time, with his family. His grandparents, cousins, uncles and aunts, and some restored grandchildren were waiting for him there.

I remember Horacio (Pietragalla Corti) being there, which brought such a relief to me because he was a guy who had lived what I was living.

He was greeted with applause and endless hugs, welcoming Juan to the new story lying ahead.

I wanted to hear about everything right away, about those places to which my parents had been, the club where they met, the neighbourhood of their political activism; I visited their neighbourhood, I met my father's friends. Later I could relax a little bit and there are lots of my parents' friends that I haven't met yet; every now and then one of them shows up and says: "You know, I was with Damián or with Alicia"; so, I'm still missing a lot.

That day he learnt that on November 23, 1977, his father Damián, aged nineteen, had been kidnapped first. Using Damian's keys, a group known as 'Fuerzas conjuntas' (Joint Forces) got later into his home and took Alicia, then five months pregnant.

My parents disappeared on November 23, 1977. Their political organization had then decided to go underground. I mean, not visiting usual places; my parents were very young, sixteen and nineteen years old, they'd got married a year earlier.

Juan learned that his parents had met at Colegiales Sports Club. Alicia, with wavy blond hair, a bit shy, played basketball. Damián had joined a theatre group, he was a fan of River Plate football team and motor racing. They started dating and worked together at slums in the Colegiales neighbourhood in the city of Buenos Aires. When they were kidnapped, they were living in another neighbourhood, Congreso. She was taking evening classes to finish secondary school and he worked at ENTEL, the telecommunications company.

What were you able to discover as you started to rebuild your own story?

I find a lot of coincidences with my parents; I share their ideals, their liking for certain food, their love of nature...

Regarding his parents' death, Juan was able to learn that they were both taken to the Clandestine Detention Centre known as 'El Banco' first, and then to the 'Club Atlético'. In December, his mother was taken to the Navy Mechanics School, where she was kept in the so-called 'room of the pregnant women'. In March his baby was born, whom she called Juan.

Damián and Alicia are still disappeared. Juan continues with the hard task of building an inner image of his parents and recovering their story of love and struggle based on relatives' and friends' accounts.

JUAN TODAY

Another similarity between Juan and his parents is his social awareness and commitment to the most vulnerable groups of society. Since his adolescent years, well before knowing that he was the son of Alicia and Damián, Juan started to take part in actions of solidarity and political activism.

What made you engage in politics?

I've always been interested in social issues and politics; I believe it's the tool to transform people's lives. This is another similarity with my parents. One of my goals is to work for a country with social inclusion for everyone. And keep asking for Justice, Truth and Collective Memory, because Collective Memory is essential for a people to grow.

In addition, Juan brings his testimony to young students in schools and shares his story, thus contributing to the construction of Collective Memory. He explains our recent history as follows:

Early in that morning of March 24, 1976, the democratic process was interrupted through the use of weapons, with a final toll of 30,000 disappeared people and 500 abducted grandchildren. Of those 500 grandchildren, Abuelas've been able to recover the identity of 105 youngsters. Another toll is that this dictatorship —the bloodiest in our history— implemented an economic plan... because sometimes we all keep talking about the 30,000 disappeared people (a terrible fact, it's a shame it happened in Argentina), but forget to talk about the consequences of those economic measures, consequences that we're still suffering, an economic model that favoured importing foreign products instead of promoting domestic production. These economic measures left thousands of Argentineans jobless, deprived of their dignity and of the chance to be breadwinners, which caused distress and depression, as a consequence of the economy prevailing in that dark period.

In this way, Juan connects the past and the present. He takes his tragic story and keeps it within the socio-political context of that terrible period in the country's history. Although he knows he is a victim of State Terrorism, he understands that he is not alone in his suffering, that his story is part of

our collective history, and that the best way to remedy it is by betting on the future. To Juan, his present struggle takes the form of active involvement and commitment to pursue those ideals that were unaccomplished with the disappearance of his parents and 30,000 detained-disappeared people.

In 2007, Juan took office as Legislator of the City of Buenos Aires for the *Frente para la Victoria* political alliance, and, in 2013, he was elected representative of the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires in the National Parliament. In this way, he follows his parents' path, working for a better future.

Today, our fight must help to transform reality, so that society grows in reflection and education. And I believe we're succeeding.

FINAL WORDS

Juan vindicates the *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*'s fight and thinks it would be really fair and worthy that they be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Among Human Rights organizations, Abuelas are the one that keeps searching for so many youngsters and adults alive. There are over four hundred grandchildren that Abuelas are searching for and I think that deserves to be highlighted. They've been honoured throughout the world, they've been awarded keys to several cities, they're regarded as social activists, both the UN and the OAS praise and vindicate their fight. They're an example to many. Their fight has transcended boundaries. Their nomination and actual award would be an act of justice; a prize that is such an important acknowledgement of accomplishments and achievements for the entire humanity.

Jorge Castro Rubel

Grandchild restored by *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*

Jorge is the son of Hugo Castro and Ana Rubel, and was born between June and July 1977, in the Navy Mechanics School (ESMA). He found out his true identity in late 2014 and unintentionally continued his parents' story through his engagement in social research on trade unions.

The Castro family knew that the couple was expecting a baby, though they had not met Ana yet; whereas Ana's parents began to search for her unaware of her relationship with Hugo and her pregnancy. Their relationship was confirmed three decades later, due to statements by ESMA survivors and the CONADI's investigation.

We always fight to be happy. Personally, I had a nice childhood and average teenage years, I don't keep bad memories. Yet, I have to adapt to something new, but my whole life is real, only that I didn't know my origins. Now I know who I am.

JORGE'S STORY

In August 2014, Jorge found out that he was not the son of the people he had thought so far to be his parents. Reaching the truth was difficult because of a lack of support in the so-called family, just as in other cases of appropriated children. But then, his alleged father confessed to Jorge how they had obtained him. One night, covering his duty as an on-call doctor at the 'Pedro de Elizalde' Children's hospital, he treated a premature baby brought by two men. He and his wife decided to keep that baby boy and register him as their own.

On October 16 of that same year, Jorge went to the *Abuelas* Headquarters to start his search for his origins and had a DNA test. When the results he had eagerly waited for finally arrived, he found the answer to the most important question of his life. On December 4, the National Bank of Genetic Data informed him that he was the son of Ana and Hugo. He was 37 years old and thus became grandchild No. 116. Jorge learned that his grandparents weren't alive, but he had uncles, aunts and cousins. Jorge already had two little boys, and immediately changed their last name.

What was your childhood like?

I had an average childhood and teenage years, with no bad memories, just happy memories.

Why did you decide to find out whether you were the son of disappeared people?

As I was born in 1977, when I learned that I wasn't the biological son of my alleged parents, I went to Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo with lots of questions, and it was confirmed that I'm the son of Hugo Castro and Ana Rubel, two active members of the FAL (Argentine Front of Liberation) who disappeared under the dictatorship.

How did you feel at that time?

I was really anxious to get my DNA test results, and when the confirmation arrived, I felt kind of weird. On the one hand, there was satisfaction after finding the answer to the big question of 'Where do I come from?'. Besides, I was glad that finding my true origin, brought such a collective joy: to my family and all the people who were truly concerned about this issue.

REMARKABLE COINCIDENCES

Jorge Castro Rubel introduces himself as son, father, friend, sociologist and researcher for CONICET (Argentina's National Scientific and Technical Research Council), displaying the various characteristics that make up his identity. Since 2012, he works as a research assistant at the Gino Germani Research Centre of the National University of Buenos Aires, focused on the

relation between trade union disputes and culture. He started in this field two years before learning that he was the son of trade union activists who disappeared under the civic-military dictatorship. His sociology PhD thesis focused on the experience of trade union organization and development of the workers of the Buenos Aires underground between 1994 and 2007.

From a young age, he took an interest in politics, as it was a recurring topic at home. He always felt the need to stay informed and read newspapers. However, it was not until being a grown-up that he questioned his identity. Then it all happened extremely fast: on December 4 2014, he received a phone call from Claudia Carlotto, head of the CONADI, confirming that he was the son of Ana and Hugo, a trade union activist of the political-military organization called FAL.

I never imagined that I'd be so directly connected with my subject of study.

Ana Rubel was born on July 27, 1949, in Resistencia, province of Chaco, and Hugo Alberto Castro on September 1, 1951, in San Isidro, province of Buenos Aires. They met working for the FAL. Hugo —or '*Cabezón*' (big-headed) as his friends nicknamed him— was kidnapped on January 15, 1977, after visiting his family. Whereas Ana was abducted from her flat in the city of Buenos Aires one or two days later; she was two months pregnant. The Army was involved in both operations, and held them in captivity at one of the Army's clandestine detention centres and later moved them to the Navy Mechanics School. There are witnesses who reported that Jorge's birth was earlier than expected, in June.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF COLLECTIVE MEMORY

As part of the educational activities organized by the *Programa Educación y Memoria* from the Ministry of Education of the city of Buenos Aires, Jorge accompanied 7th-grade students of the 'Francisco de Vitoria' School No. 17, in Villa Crespo neighbourhood, to visit the *Parque de la Memoria* (Memorial Park). The park was built to pay tribute to the victims of State Terrorism in Argentina and is located on the riverside of the Río de la Plata. They stopped in front of a commemorative plaque for his mother, and he told them about his life.

What do you feel when you walk along this space?

I'm deeply moved to see my parents' names on those plaques in tribute to the victims of State terrorism in Argentina at the Parque de la Memoria, and it hurts even more to read the word 'pregnant'. We're still suffering the aftermath of the dictatorship and repression, wounds are still open, babies are still being searched for.

During his talk with these children, Jorge acknowledged that everything related to recovering his identity came as a surprise to him, and that —at first— nobody could fully explain anything to him.

That's why it's so hard to understand the impact of this issue. It's difficult to process such a change, but I feel joy whenever I realize that my adaptation to my new reality is itself an act of repairing the damage inflicted by State terrorism.

At the end of this activity, touched by Jorge's testimony and the school children's warmth and thrill, Claudio Altamirano (the Programme coordinator) stated: 'This is a day to thank you all: to the workshop facilitators, who bring their love and knowledge to each encounter; to Jorge, who gave his testimony, voiced his pain and carefully shared his story with us; to the teachers, who've done such a wonderful job with their students, proving once again that valuable experiences, knowledge, conceptualisations, and critical thinking are being built within schools; and to the boys and girls, who with their enthusiasm and commitment once again prove that memory is a collective construction and that these actions strengthen policies of collective memory at school.'

FINAL WORDS

Jorge thinks that the relationship with his appropriators became complicated once he found out about his true identity, yet he does not believe that his life before learning the truth was a lie:

Nobody told me about it. I lived all that I lived. I had and have to adapt to something new, which isn't easy, but my life's real; it's just that I didn't know about my origin. Now I know who I am. I'm this, and much more.

Horacio César Pietragalla Corti

Grandchild restored by *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*

Horacio is the son of Liliana Corti and Horacio Pietragalla, and was born on March 11, 1976, some months after his father was murdered in Córdoba. He lived with his mother until August 1976, when she was murdered during an operation in the neighbourhood of Villa Adelina, province of Buenos Aires. Horacio was immediately taken to the Mayo Hospital and the Women Police Brigade of San Martín, where kidnapped children were in transit before 'placing' them with unknown families. He was appropriated by the brother-in-law of lieutenant colonel Herman Tefzlaff, who had already appropriated a baby girl born in 1976. A bit later, the family did not want to keep Horacio, and it was their housekeeper who offered to raise him.

Meanwhile, *Abuelas* had already included his story in a case brought before the Federal Court for Criminal and Correctional Matters No. 1. During twenty-seven years his identity was stolen, and he was awarded an illegal birth certificate with false information. Registered as César Sebastián Castillo, born on May 22, 1977, he was raised in the neighbourhood of Lugano by a family unrelated to him.

At fourteen, he started to harbour serious doubts:

It's really amazing to see yourself in someone else, so I kept wondering: who do I look like?

In 2002, he went to the CONADI to dispel his doubts. After a DNA test on March 11, 2002, it was confirmed that Horacio was the son of Horacio Pietragalla and Liliana Corti. March 11 was also the day of his real birth.

Horacio is the grandchild number 75 to have been restored; and from the day he recovered his identity, he has joined *Abuelas* in their fight so that other youngsters like him are able to recover their true identity.

Horacio was able to recover the remains of both of his murdered parents.

I wanted to discover who my parents were because by knowing them I'd get to know myself. However, I realized later that the best way to fully know them was by looking at myself in the mirror and discovering myself.

HORACIO'S STORY

Horacio is the grandchild number 75 to be restored by *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*. He tells us his story as follows.

My name's Horacio Pietragalla Corti. I'm the son of Horacio Pietragalla and Liliana Corti. It's been only a few years since I can introduce myself in this way, my name used to be César Sebastián Castillo, the name given by the couple who appropriated me. My real name's the one given by my mum at birth, and it's Horacio as it was my dad's name. My dad was murdered when my mum was pregnant. At that moment, my mum went underground; I mean, she moved and changed her name because she was aware that they could chase and kidnap her. When I was five months old, in an operation by military officers of the joint forces, they broke into my house and ended her life. My mum saved me as she left me inside a bathtub. So, they took me to Casa Cuna Children's hospital, and I stayed there until I was appropriated, given another name and registered as the own son of a married couple. When my mum was murdered, my biological family lost track of my location; they started their search.

When he was a teenager, he started to have doubts, raised by growing differences with his family.

I'm almost 2 metres (6.5ft) tall and very different from my parents, who are short. Besides, I had a different outlook on life; I was very outgoing, whereas they were very reserved. And there was a birth story for my foster sister that was told at every birthday: my mum's water broke in a taxi and she was born there. Quite a story. But on my birthday... total silence... as I hadn't been born from her, so there was no story to tell.

As part of this inner search, his desire to learn more about his own story, Horacio took his doubts to *Abuelas*.

I was very different from my family; they were from the north of Argentina, extremely shy, nothing to do with myself; things that cast doubt. When you're a teenager, you want to distinguish yourself from your parents. And in that process, you start to think that you might be adopted, but then you

*look at yourself in the mirror and find your mum's or dad's features, and you realize that you aren't adopted. Well, I looked at myself and found no similarities. I lived with my doubts for quite a long time. After almost ten years, I plucked up the courage to go to *Abuelas*. I always tried to gather information from our neighbours, in my neighbourhood.*

Those doubts grew stronger and were the driving force for a new journey: the reunion with his true identity.

*I used to get back home, turn my TV on and see the *Abuelas* in different programmes. I felt they were chasing me. At that moment, I had a girlfriend, and my alleged mother told her that when she died, I'd get shocking news. When my girlfriend told me this, I decided to go to the CONADI. CONADI has the power to ask a hospital to provide someone's birth certificate. So, I asked them about my identity and a week and a half later I was summoned. I shared all my doubts with them. It's worth mentioning that my godfather was a lieutenant who had appropriated a little girl, Victoria. She recovered her identity way earlier than myself. Her court case started in 1995, but she didn't want to learn anything about her story. Victoria had been told a story that wasn't true. Later, she had to understand that the military had murdered her parents. In my case, I wasn't raised by a military officer who instilled in me a certain ideology. For many of my fellow activists, it's really hard to break away from all those years of lies.*

The year 2001 was a turning point for the Argentineans. Hit by one of the deepest socio-economic crises in history, our society took to the streets driven by different circumstances. Beyond each personal case, this was a life-changing year for everyone, including Horacio.

*The 2001 crisis had a profound effect on each of us. Personally, my doubts were on edge. Tired of the national situation, my partner and I were thinking of moving to Brazil. We did everything to go abroad, but first I had to give closure to my story. When I went to the hospital to have the DNA test, my girlfriend at the time visited *Abuelas*' website, and looking case by case she found a photo of a woman. It was me with a wig and breasts! There was a baby and he looked very much alike. When I looked at the photo, it was amazing as I looked like someone for the first time.*

He was not alone in his doubts. Neighbours, friends, relatives were struggling to find the truth from different places.

*Well, when I go to *Abuelas*, they tell me that they were also trying to get in contact with me. Even a professor of mine was also suspecting that I could be the son of disappeared people. And there were a lot of people and neighbours who were also in the same situation.*

Thanks to Horacio's personal drive and search, the DNA test and discovering his truth were faster than expected.

When I took the genetic test, I showed the photo to the geneticist and said: 'Look, it's me with a wig, so check my sample against this family group'. And fifteen days later, in only fifteen days, I got the result and was told that I was the son of Liliana Corti and Horacio Pietragalla.

THE MEMORY OF HIS PARENTS

I wanted to discover who my parents were because I thought that by getting to know them I'd get to know myself. Every night I had dinner at the house of different people who'd been my parents' fellow activists because each of them would tell me different stories. That was an important contribution. Anyway, I felt a certain emptiness, and no matter how much their friends told me, I felt I was never going to fully know my parents. I was in distress; such a feeling's pretty awful.

In his account, Horacio talks about his parents' activism, and how important it is to share this part of our history so that people value our current possibility to engage in political activism with absolute freedom.

My parents were political activists. They were members of the Montoneros group, which was a political-military organization. If the young people who now fight for decent schools and housing had been active in the 1970s, they surely would have been disappeared.

The political commitment of the seventies represents a landmark in our country. They felt they could really change things, fight for a fairer society.

There were people who were politically active. My mum and dad were really engaged: my mum studied Psychology and my dad Political Science.

In Horacio's own words, it is paramount to be able to convey the message to youngsters and he shows an endless desire for justice, which is among the main guarantees for the development of any democratic society.

We don't want this to happen again. If my parents were wrong about something, the military should've put them in jail and then send them to trial. Just as we're doing today with the military. This is a democratic State, so we try the military to make them pay for their crimes. We should never forget this because it really matters. You're going to hear that terrorists were planting bombs everywhere and that the military were good, that activists were bad and vice

versa. We want justice forever. There are 400 youngsters who went through what I did.

It was through their activism that Liliana Corti and Horacio Pietragalla were able to channel their pain after the loss of two children and devoted themselves to help those in need.

My parents had a son who died shortly after birth. Then, they also had a daughter called María Eva, who died at birth. That pain, arising from the loss of two children, was healed through their political activism. It was the genocidal government that caused my parents' death. Who doesn't like the idea of feeding a person who doesn't have food on his or her plate? They thought that people deserved to live better. So, in their activism, they eased the pain of the experiences endured.

Horacio was able to find the remains of his parents.

My dad was found in Córdoba; he was kidnapped, executed and set fire on the roadside. Then he was buried as 'no name'. I was fortunate to find my mum as well, who was buried in the town of Boulogne. I'm the only child of disappeared people to have found the remains of both parents. I'm tired of hearing that they're all in Europe. After thirty years, there are still lots of relatives who are unable to bury their loved ones. In this context, I consider myself privileged.

RECOVERING HIS IDENTITY

Horacio Pietragalla spent twenty-seven years of his life unaware of his true story. Full of doubts and questions, destiny took him to Abuelas.

Since I recovered my identity, I've chosen to tell my story over and over again. By such a simple action, telling my story, I found —on the one hand— the way to process my new experiences, and, on the other hand, the possibility to tell society that this really happened, that we're here. For sure, one of the things I like the most is telling my experience at primary and secondary schools, so that the educational system keeps in mind the live accounts of the protagonists of social issues and, in this specific case, of the last and terrible dictatorship suffered by us, all Argentinians. This is crucial for today's youngsters, as it ensures that these atrocities aren't committed again. And it's also an opportunity for a part of our society, that used to go around defending the military, to be formally questioned by a young person who reminds them that there was a genocide here. Besides, the child of one of the grandchildren that Abuelas are searching for might be among the audience, and later arouse their parents' doubts.

Recovering his name, the one chosen by his mother, and which was his father's name, was an important landmark in the rebuilding of his own story. An initial symbol that paved the way for countless accounts about his own life.

On the same day I learned about my identity, I started to know my grandmother. Estela asked me whether I wanted to meet my family, and I said yes. The first person to enter was my aunt, and she didn't even ask where I was, just came straight to me. I couldn't believe it. She hugged me. My aunt Marta looked at me, turned around, and started to cry on a wall. She couldn't believe her eyes, my resemblance with my mum. We went to have pizza at an aunt's home. I right away felt part of this family, which was my family. To feel a member of a family was amazing. When you find your own blood... it's beyond one's understanding. It was one of the best moments of my life.

New questions arose along this journey to find out who he really was, and they meant a greater knowledge of his parents and himself.

I understood that in order to get to know them, I had to know myself. All those doubts helped me to move on. When I looked at myself in the mirror, I got to know my parents more. Obviously, we, grandchildren, need a lot of therapy. When I recovered my identity, I was told that I was a year older. My hair immediately turned grey! Later I had to change everything, even my personal identification.

While going back and forth between his past and present, Horacio recalls memories and anecdotes shared with school friends.

Recently I got together with my school friends and they told me: 'I remember you once brought a copy of the Nunca Más to show your godfather to us. You said: 'This is him.' I always tried to make him accountable for something. And I found it: he was a genocidal, a rapist, a torturer. How was I to blame for the fact that my parents were murdered and I was thus separated from my biological family? They should've returned me to my family, instead of giving myself away as an object.

How old were you when you tested positive?

My case is quite special. I thought I was twenty-five, but when I recovered my identity I was in fact twenty-seven years old. All of a sudden, I was older! I was born on March 11, 1976, but was registered with a false birth certificate with the date May 22, 1977. So, I was never twenty-six, which was actually my mum's age at death.

How did you confront the Castro family at first?

When I got the blood test request, it was the first time I told them about it. I remember that this was an intense day, they weren't expecting it. They got nervous. I told them: 'Remember what happened, think about it', and I went to my girlfriend's home. I gave them one day to tell the truth. They were afraid of what might happen to me. It was really hard. After twenty-six years of lies, it's really hard to believe. I took what they told me, but I drew my own conclusions. They were brought to court. They had abducted a baby! They were held in detention for almost a year. In a way, I felt they blamed me for what had happened to them. It was all a heavy burden for me, and I wanted a bit of relief. I had to do something positive, to get rid of what was hurting me. So, I grew apart from them a little bit. How come someone brings you a baby and you don't ask about it? It's not right. It's unethical. I think they weren't humble enough to apologize to me for not telling the truth.

Have you spoken with any member of the Castillo family again?

Yes, I have a foster sister, she's two years older. They fooled us both. She has a daughter, and I'm her girl's godfather. We have a great relationship. Sometimes, she doesn't understand my decision of not talking with the people who raised me. From the very beginning, I stopped calling them mum and dad. My parents are Liliana and Horacio. I think they made a mistake. If they'd told me the truth, I would've gone to Abuelas earlier, and I could've hugged my grandparents. One of my grandmothers killed herself, and the other died of a disease. Families were tortured as well, just in a different way. My grandfather used to get anonymous phone calls, saying that his son was detained in a police station. Families were also subject to great havoc.

What happened to your godfather?

He was already detained when I recovered my identity. His case had come to light first. But he was sick while in jail; he had a really bad time; he was hospitalised constantly. He was released in custody. As soon as I recovered my identity, he was already in hospital, and soon after he died.

On the Castillo family's side, did you have cousins or other relatives?

Yes, I did; but they weren't a close-knit family. They didn't get together often. I believe that my incorporation into that family drifted them up. I think that my alleged parents' family knew that I was the son of disappeared people. I remember hearing many arguments among them from an early age. It kept them apart from their own family.

HORACIO TODAY

Who do you think you are helping more, yourself or others when you revisit your past and talk about your story?

Both ways. It's not correct if I say that I'm only helping myself. I've learned a lot from every talk because I learn from myself as well as from other people's questions. I learn to share, which is something that I really like. I really like being present, there's a calling in this, getting together with people and telling my story. And when I began telling my story, it helped me a lot. At present, it might not help me as much as it did when I was taking it in, at the beginning. I think it contributes because they are testimonies —which are really needed—, live testimonies to show that what we tell are stories that really happened.

I was willing to go through the process; I found out certain things about my parents that my family didn't know, and it was me who had to tell them. In that process, we were able to recover many accounts of my parents' lives. Luckily, I got to know many fellow activists who survived, as well as other relatives. Their testimonies were very useful.

What do you think of the present situation?

There are lots of people who are interested. There's no turning back. We've made significant progress. The fact that a teenager can make questions brings great joy to me. At present, if someone out there says that we were better off with the military, this person can be challenged by a 13-year-old teenager who knows what happened under the dictatorship. So, the only chance from now on is to mature. We can make mistakes, but they'll never be as serious as the mistakes made before the year 2000. At present, there's a certain reparation... the trials... I think that in revisiting this dictatorship we're also revisiting their economic model. I take the risk to say that we won't return to those sinister

years, either... The fact that on March 24 we commemorate the National Day for Reflection; on October 22, the National Day of the Right to Identity; and on December 10, the Human Rights Day; well, school curricula are forced to address these topics, no matter the ideology of civil servants in office at the time. When I take part in a school activity, I tell my story, then wait for the students' questions, enjoying the possibility to be in front of them and listen to them. To be able to answer them is, for sure, one of the most enriching experiences. Many of those youngsters, although born in democracy, don't detach themselves from the 70s and Argentine history; they provide insight that reveals not only individual but also social growth. Recovering my identity is truth. It's always positive to find out the truth. Today, I have a six-month-old daughter and her last name is Pietragalla. Otherwise, her identity would've been wiped off as well. This account is part of that identity. It helps to our rebuilding. There are also those cases of young people who were too afraid to get close. And then many others say we should leave them alone. The State is giving you the tool of truth. With this tool, you can act. You're this person, and you have to continue with your new life. You, yourselves, are constantly taking decisions. It's been demonstrated, after the number of grandchildren who rejected to take a DNA test, that then Justice intervened, and in time they were able to have some kind of contact with their biological family. At present, there are policies coming from the State. In the beginnings, the Abuelas were insulted in Plaza de Mayo and were told that they were crazy, that their children were in Europe.

As grandchildren, do you get any support in connection to your cases?

Well, we, grandchildren, are all linked to Abuelas. Then there is HIJOS (Sons and Daughters for Identity and Justice against Silence and Oblivion) as well. They're children who always knew that they were the children of disappeared people. We're committed to the cause of Abuelas because, unfortunately, at present there are fewer and fewer grandmothers, and there are many siblings who are still searching. Many of us are politically active. And among us, grandchildren, there are people from different political parties. For specific cases, Abuelas has the Centre for Psychological Therapy for the Right to Identity. Before getting the DNA test result, they offer that help. So, if we need treatment, we go to this centre.

FINAL WORDS

I always say that in order to understand that period, you need to switch your mind to images in black and white. You can't think of history without putting yourself in context. From a current viewpoint, you won't understand it. What was happening in those years? It was very different from our present time. Our parents weren't used to living in democracy since they'd lived under dictatorships for so long. There was a commitment to change the reality that drove them to do many things. We're still paying for what the military did. There weren't only physical disappearances. A lot of people lost the opportunity to enjoy a decent life.

Leonardo Fossati

Grandchild restored by *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*

On March 12, 1977, Inés Beatriz Ortega, aged seventeen, gave birth to Leonardo Fossati. She went into labour at the kitchen of the Fifth Police Station of La Plata, one of the largest clandestine detention centres of that city, that held over 200 people. Among them, there were ten pregnant women and even some children who had been abducted together with their parents. Thanks to Adriana Calvo's testimony, who was also pregnant and had been kidnapped together with Inés, it was known that Inés gave birth, bound hand and foot, with the assistance of a police doctor called Jorge Antonio Bergés.

Leonardo lived his entire life in La Plata, with a family of civilians after 'an illegal adoption, though bona fide'. He was bought from a midwife who told them a story of abandonment and then registered as their biological son. He grew up with a sister five years older.

My foster parents were quite old in comparison with the average age of other kids' parents, and somehow I was kind of raised by my grandparents; they spoiled me. I had a happy childhood. From an early age, I had different groups of friends at school and my neighbourhood; we used to play in the street or at Saavedra Park. Every summer, we used to go on a family holiday to the city of Mar del Plata. All my memories from that period are full of enjoyment.

Were you aware of not being the biological son of the couple who raised you?

I have an adoptive sister, five years older, and we'd both been told that we were their biological children. She found out first that we weren't, but she

didn't tell me so as to keep that family secret. In my teenage years, a phase full of changes and questioning, my doubts started to arise. I found it odd that my parents were so old; I couldn't find any family resemblance with them or my sister; besides, there were lots of photos of our childhood, even as newborns, but none of our mother's pregnancies.

How did you undergo that time of doubts and enquiries?

I felt disturbed by all of these issues; and as my doubts grew, an answer became clear: I wasn't the biological son of my family, which meant that I'd been abandoned, but, luckily, had been adopted by a loving home, where all needs were met. I used to think: 'While a family abandoned me, another one chose me and took care of me, so I'm very grateful'. And that was enough for me; I was satisfied with it. I never talked about it with other people. I was OK with that answer.

Which were the first clues that you might be the son of disappeared people?

I became a father at twenty, and things started to change. With my new experiences, I kept wondering what can lead a person to abandon a child. In this period, I began to wish to know what happened to my mum to abandon me. And I felt like meeting her, not to reproach her, but to try to understand her and even help her; so that she learned that I was fine and that she had a grandchild. Something else was affecting me: I was transferring this huge doubt to my son. So, I talked about this with my foster family. First with an aunt—who confirmed how things had happened—and later with my parents. My foster father was especially afraid of losing our affection and of possible changes if we found out about our adoptions.

How did you live this period?

It was an intense time in my life, not just because of the discovery about my origin, but also because of my parenthood. Besides, I separated, and since my foster family's business had gone bankrupt during the Argentine 2001 crisis, I became the sole breadwinner. In the midst of it all, I didn't have time to think about myself. But in three or four years I was able to stay afloat and then my personal quest grew stronger.

At that point, Leonardo went to the midwife's house looking for more information, but she had died, which killed any chance of getting new clues. Until Leonardo did improv in his theatre workshop that called the attention of another member of the group. After hearing that he was adopted, this woman suggested that Leonardo should go to the *Abuelas'* headquarters and find out whether he was the son of disappeared people.

I'd only heard about the most salient cases of children of disappeared people in mass media, children who'd been appropriated by police or military officers. I'd never pictured myself in that situation because my foster family had no connection with the Armed Forces, and they didn't share their ideology; what's more, they belonged to the UCR (Radical Civic Union) party and had celebrated the return to democracy.

HIS SEARCH FOR HIS IDENTITY

Nonetheless, he decided to follow her advice.

As I had nowhere else to go for help, I went to the Abuelas' branch in La Plata and told my entire story. I was filled with a rather common fear: getting my foster family into trouble.

As part of the investigation, he was offered to take a blood test to compare his genetic data against the families who were looking for a disappeared grandson. It was 2004 and it took some time to get the results.

In my case, it took nine months, just like expecting a baby! But on August 11, 2005, I learnt who my parents were. Getting the news was shocking. Great and difficult at the same time, since I came across a family that had split up after my parents' disappearance. My grandfather on my father's side had died; he developed leukaemia when my dad went underground and died a few months later; whereas my grandmother had a stroke shortly after the disappearance, got bedridden and then died. That's why from my dad's side I only met an aunt, who'd also suffered a lot under the dictatorship. I loved meeting her... For the first time, I looked like somebody. We built a very good relationship; luckily, she still lives quite close, in the town of Villa Elisa. On my mum's side, I met my grandparents, who were very young; an aunt, my mum's twin sister, and another aunt from my grandmother's second marriage. My relationship with this grandmother isn't very good, because her relationship with my mum wasn't good either... My mum and her twin sister left home at fifteen. My

best relationship is with my cousins who live in Venezuela and their father, who was very close to my dad.

What was recovering your identity like? Could you adapt to the name change?

When I recovered my identity, the first thing that came to my mind was that Leonardo was the name I'd chosen for my first son, who was finally called Tomás. In this kind of cases, Justice is involved and, at a certain point, you're required to include the new last name from your biological family in your personal papers. But I also chose to change my first name, because I felt that it represented me, and it came with a family story: it was my dad's second name, as well as my grandfather's. At the beginning it was weird, changing isn't easy, but I started to reject being called by my previous name and, after a while, I even saw why some people found it difficult to adapt to it, and so I clearly pointed it out.

Inés Ortega was born on February 15, 1959, in La Plata, and together with her twin sister, joined the *Unión de Estudiantes Secundarios* (Union of Secondary Students), while her partner, Rubén Leonardo Fossati, was born on September 12, 1955, in the same city, and was an active member of the *Juventud Universitaria Peronista* (University Peronist Youth). They were kidnapped in an operation in the town of Quilmes, on January 21, 1977, when Inés was seven-month pregnant. They were seen in the Fifth Police Station of La Plata, where Leonardo was born, and at the clandestine detention centre known as *Pozo de Arana*. According to witnesses, Inés was transferred to the Investigation Police Brigade of La Plata. Both are still disappeared.

How did you get to know more about your parents' story? What were you able to find out about their political activism?

From my relatives, I learned about their childhood and teenage years. Thanks to Abuelas and their research team, I received my biological family file, which included interviews to members of my family, my parents' friends, and survivors; accounts that reveal what they were thinking at the time of the interview and their experience with the search; as well as an opportunity to get to know those who are gone. Later, I met my parents' fellow activists, such a wonderful group from La Plata, and they've been great company.

Which details do you find more remarkable?

When I started to learn about my parents' lives, I found an explanation for certain personal things that were now making sense, things that had nothing to do with my foster family. I studied at a private school, and on the second school day I joined the Student Council, to fight against some unfair situations. I liked that place. I also took part in marches for the Night of the Pencils. From an early age, I understood that you need to get involved and support worthy causes. So, when I learned about my origins, it all made sense.

The Fifth Police Station, where Leonardo and other children of disappeared people were born, is about to become a Space for Collective Memory. This is the result of a favourable ruling at the so-called *Circuito Camps* trial, under which Leonardo, together with *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*, had been complainant. In 2013, the building was partially released—order that came into effect in 2014—; and then conservators and other specialists started to shore it up, as the building was operational but its cells were closed down. In March 2018, it was fully released so the police station was moved. The new *Espacio de Memoria* (Space for Collective Memory) shall open as soon as works are over.

What do you think about the *Madres'* and *Abuelas'* determination to find their abducted relatives during the dictatorship?

They showed outstanding courage; they risked their lives and fought with limited tools. Although they were going through great pain, they didn't curl up in an armchair to cry. Many a day when they must've felt like doing it, yet, they overcame it and went out to fight. They're among the greatest examples in my life to keep on going despite the worst pain. And I understand that these families continue their own story the way they managed to. I also learned to see the strength of women, their different nature. I know many men who had a hard time trying to turn that pain into action. Men get depressed more easily, whereas women are capable of wrapping those feelings and be on their feet again. I try to learn from this.

Leonardo joined the association *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo* as a natural development in recovering his identity.

I worked at a travel agency round the corner from the La Plata branch, and I used to stop by, visit them and share some mates. It was the only place where I felt total empathy.

Thus, Leonardo started to look for ways to collaborate, and helped in mass dissemination. Later he joined the association with duties at the Buenos Aires' headquarters, and represented the association in different areas until he became a member of the Board of Directors. In addition, he is carrying out the project for the Space for Collective Memory at the Fifth Police Station, and is a representative of Human Rights organizations at the former ESMA (Navy Mechanics School).

LEONARDO TODAY

How have you shared this with your children?

I've always been very careful. My oldest son restored his identity as well because he was eight years old when I recovered mine. I explained everything little by little, in the best way I could. My greatest fear was his reaction, but, luckily, he just felt our family was getting larger. Afterwards, whenever an opportunity arose, I tried to explain to him the context for what happened to his grandparents, while introducing him to recent Argentine history. Back then, there wasn't much talking about it at schools. I have two younger children: Ciro, aged five, and Inés, aged two. Ciro already knows my story, and as this was at an early age, for him it's very natural. Besides, there are now other tools to talk with kids, such as PakaPaka, a children's television channel that produces shows on Argentine History.

What's your opinion on discussing subjects related with Human Rights in schools through educational programmes such as *Educación y Memoria* (Education and Collective Memory programme)?

It's fundamental. To me, the basis for a good education is knowing the recent history of our country, particularly this tragic part. We need to understand from an early age that it was a civic-military coup d'état and that many of the parties involved are still unpunished. It's very important to make it public because these civilians keep their great power due to their economic capital; if we fail to convey this truth and keep our collective memory alive, oblivion and disinformation would be very easily spread through the media. It's constant work, with a starting point but no ending point, so that our children and grandchildren don't have to undergo the same.

FINAL WORDS

I feel admiration for my mum and dad because they were firmly committed to their ideals despite their young age. Although they knew they were in danger, they decided to carry on. At an encounter with my dad's fellow activists, I learned that he endured severe abuses in the clandestine detention centre, and yet he clearly revealed nothing because nobody was abducted out of that. The more I learned about my parents, the prouder I felt. Although I couldn't meet them, they've taught me valuable lessons.

Adriana Garnier Ortolani

Grandchild restored by *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*

Adriana does not know her date or place of birth, but already knows the most important information: who her parents were. She was raised as an only child, unaware of the fact that she was not the biological daughter of her alleged parents. She knows that she was born in late January 1977, and she always celebrated her birthday on January 27, the day she was registered under false information. She is thought to have been born at the clandestine detention centre known as ‘*Pozo de Quilmes*’. She is the restored grandchild No. 126, and her parents were Violeta Graciela Ortolani and Edgardo Roberto Garnier.

Until I was 37, I thought I had a normal life. I always —and until very recently— lived in a flat in Monserrat neighbourhood, where I had a good, happy childhood. Yet, I felt an existential emptiness, of which I couldn’t make sense. I always felt a sort of loneliness, thinking it might be related to the fact that I was an only child or that my parents were old and quite severe. I still refer to the couple who raised me as my parents, I still acknowledge them in that role. I feel I had four parents. (Note: This interview was conducted seven months after Adriana’s identity was restored)

“Our responsibility —of all of us— is to know that as long as we are here, *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo* will be as well. And Edgardo and Violeta. They are behind these tears of happiness”, Silvia Garnier, Adriana’s aunt.

ADRIANA'S STORY

Which were the first clues that you might not be the daughter of the people who raised you?

When I was ten or twelve, I started to ask about my place of birth, and my mother told me it was in the town of Wilde, which I found quite strange since we always got around the city of Buenos Aires. My mum, Alicia, was a poor liar and hesitated when answering me, which made me disbelieve everything. I could see in her eyes that she was lying to me; what's more, I felt she was begging me not to keep asking. Later, as a teenager, it called my attention that whenever they didn't like my behaviour, they would say with reproach: 'After all we've done for you, this is how you pay'. When I started to date a man who was 30 years older than me, they went mad and said: 'What are you looking for? You already have a father'. They finally kicked me out of their house, when I was 25. I left thinking that they didn't recognise me as their daughter. Later they were sorry and we made up.

Which were the first clues that you might be the daughter of disappeared people?

When I was 25, we had a terrible fight, and my doubts returned. I remember telling it to my boyfriend at the time. I told him: 'If I didn't look so much like my mum, I'd think I'm the daughter of disappeared people'. Some years ago, after my mother's death, I was hurt, feeling abandoned, because she hadn't taken care of herself. During a talk with a friend of hers, after an account of all of our differences, I bitterly said: 'In the end, I feel that I'm adopted', just a gut feeling. And angrily she replied: 'What if you are adopted?' Much later I learned that they'd suspected I might be the daughter of disappeared people. My aunt (my father Norberto's sister), a very nice and wise person, told me that when I was around twenty, while driving his taxi, my dad saw a poster with photos of the disappeared, and he noticed a girl who was my spitting image. I heard that he got very upset, showed it to my mother, and then they told my aunt, who suggested that they should reveal everything to me. However, from the very beginning, they'd taken the decision to tell me that I was their own daughter, so they kept the secret, even though they were suspecting I was the daughter of disappeared people. They belonged to a different generation, one that didn't value identity. But from that moment on, they started to be constantly ill: renal insufficiency, cancer, thyroid disorders, heart failure.

After talking with her foster mother's friend, Adriana got a piece of advice from her best friend. She suggested to Adriana that her physical

resemblance with that family could be just by coincidence, and that she should be open to the idea of not being biologically related to them. She also offered to go with her to the *Abuelas'* headquarters. Adriana accepted but decided to first discuss it with her paternal aunt. And, for the first time, she was sure of something: she was not the biological daughter of the couple who had raised her. Her aunt confessed that the couple had brought her from a clinic in Wilde. She also told her about the poster with photos and how they had all harboured a suspicion afterwards. 'What if there is a family waiting for you?', asked her aunt, and joined her in a visit to *Abuelas* for blood testing.

When I was 38 until 40, I lived in the dark, since I got an initial negative test result. I moved on with my life, just thinking I'd been abandoned, with hard feelings against my biological mother. Until one day I got a phone call from Manuel Gonçalves Granada, from the CONADI, asking me to go to pick up some papers. I said I couldn't as I was busy at work, but then he explained it was really important and I should go as soon as possible. I remember that my blood pressure went down as my first thought was: 'What if I found my family?'.

And she sure did. At last, after so much questioning and searching, Adriana found her origin. Her first test result was not positive because the genetic map was incomplete, but later, with new technology, they were able to get more genetic markers and thus different probabilities. They were able to obtain genetic data from relatives other than grandparents, and her map was thus complete.

When they explained everything, I asked my friend (who was there with me) to pinch me, as I couldn't believe it. First, they showed me a photo of my parents coming out of church at their wedding. My dad's long face... my mum's smile, and her big, black eyes... Yes, I saw myself in them. 'You're privileged, one of your grandmothers is alive', said Manuel. I couldn't believe that aged forty I had a grandmother alive.

REUNION WITH HER STORY

What was the first contact with your biological family like?

At Abuelas, I was told that it was up to me to decide when to meet them, no rush. And I replied right away! No time to lose. For forty years they'd been looking for me, and I'd done the same for two. What else were we going to wait for? I felt welcomed and I let myself go. I feel part of the family because there's an emotional bond. They're euphoric. However, we still have to bridge

the blanks in our memories, since we've lived separate lives. So far, I'm living in this 'time lag'. I have a very good relationship with my cousins on my mum's side. They gave me forty gifts, one for each year we hadn't shared together. And my aunt, my dad's sister, is a loving person. She suffered a lot with his disappearance and had to take care of his father, who got ill and died shortly after.

After recovering her identity, Adriana celebrated Father's Day for the first time in her life with her paternal family, in the town of Concepción del Uruguay.

How did it feel to recover your identity and find yourself?

I'm still going through a process. My grandmother wants me to use the name chosen by my parents, Vanesa, but I just can't do it for now. I'm quite old. I get its meaning since it'd be my name as a free person. But I consider that a person's identity is made up of both your origin and your personal construction along the years. In these cases, it's a complex identity, based on an initial lie, but fed with real facts on top, the ones I lived throughout all these years. The person who studied, fell in love, made friends, that's Adriana. In my case, something else is added: those two years I spent full of doubts, I didn't know when I was born, who my parents were, where I was born, which was my last name... and in that sea of doubts, I hung onto my name as a life jacket. 'I'm Adriana', I replied, to feel I was sure about something.

Edgardo was born on August 7, 1955, in Concepción del Uruguay, province of Entre Ríos, and moved to La Plata to study electromechanical engineering. Violeta was born on October 11, 1953, and also studied in La Plata (chemical engineering) thanks to a scholarship. They met while being politically active at university, then moved to the *Federación Agrupaciones Eva Perón* (Federation of Peronist Political Groups); Edgardo was also a member of the *Juventud Peronista* (Peronist Youth Movement), and Violeta of the *Juventud Universitaria Peronista* (University Peronist Youth). Finally, they both joined the *Montoneros* group. They got married on August 7, 1976, in the city of Bolívar, when Violeta was three-month pregnant. She was kidnapped on December 14, 1976, at the La Granja neighbourhood in La Plata, already in her eighth month of pregnancy. Her partner got to learn that her daughter had been born, and decided to look for them, despite the great risks. On February 8, 1977, he was kidnapped in La Plata. They are both still disappeared. Adriana feels emotional when talking about her father:

He's my hero. I don't know if he expected to find us, my mum and myself, but he needed to have the same destiny. To me, it's him, San Martín, Che

Guevara, and then the rest of our national heroes. I looked at them in photos and I think that they would've been great parents, young, full of life. I believe that I would've been able to unlock my potential to engage in collective causes.

How did you get to know your parents' story?

I talked at length with my paternal aunt, who told me stories about my dad as a boy, what he liked doing. I know he was a dog lover, and I'm the same... I also know that he really cared about others, that he did voluntary work at slums, and that he absolutely hated the United States and its culture. According to what I've heard about my mum's personality, I take after her: strong-willed, outgoing, chatterbox. And I identify with her in something else: she was quite a tomboy. Just like me, I didn't like dolls or the typical 'little house', but balls, toy cars and toy guns. I know she was a very passionate activist, and I see myself in that trait, but for things other than political activism. I used to be indifferent to politics; sometimes a talk with my dad Norberto, but I got bored. Now I reject it. I understand that politics is behind far-reaching changes, but it turns my stomach to think that my parents died because of political issues. I know this is a simplistic view, but I feel it from my heart.

What were you able to find out about their political activism?

I made lots of questions, and I was told that, since they were engineering students, they made home-made smoke bombs to place in banks. One of their fellow activists told me this. I also wanted to know if they were armed, but no, just these small tasks. Unlike them, when I went to university, I didn't get involved because there was an unwritten family rule of studying without political activism. 'Do not lose your time', they used to tell me, and I bought it and assimilated it.

ADRIANA TODAY

How have you lived your first Day of Collective Memory as a restored grandchild?

I'd taken part several times in the march held on March 24 before learning that I was the daughter of disappeared people, but this time my role was that of a protagonist, of someone who was deeply affected by history. I went

filled with joy at the people's growing awareness, at their gathering to celebrate democracy and demand that a dictatorship comes back never again. I marched holding a photo of my parents on my chest, with joy despite my pain. I felt them there, with me, and I felt really good to take part. I was accompanied by a cousin of mine, as well as relatives from the town of Moreno (an aunt and uncle together with their children), all together as a family.

Recovering her identity paved the way for a new present to Adriana, where she thinks of herself as a protagonist of a collective history that she can and must help disseminate, contributing her voice in the construction of a collective memory with truth and justice. She feels that her collaboration goes along the *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*. *I found my place there*, she says. Together with her grandmother Blanca, they shot a spot for the association with the aim of calling more grandchildren to learn their true identity.

What do you think about the *Abuelas*' determination to find their abducted grandchildren during the dictatorship?

I admire them so much that I can't thank them enough. The mould was broken after them. They turned their despair and pain into fight, and in the best way. It's brilliant. I see Estela de Carlotto and can't stop hugging her and I'm crazy about Delia Giovanola's sense of humour. Whatever they engage in, I'll be ready to collaborate since I feel eternally grateful to them.

What's your opinion on discussing subjects related with Human Rights in schools through educational programmes such as Educación y Memoria (Education and Collective Memory programme)?

I think it's very important because it's part of our history; maybe the most painful, cruel and infamous. How come people who are supposed to protect you are hunting you and kill you just because you think differently? I can't help trying to imagine what Argentina would be like if the 30,000 people hadn't been disappeared. I'm sure that this country would've been different, with less mediocrity. My dad gave his life for his family, and that's something not everybody does.

FINAL WORDS

When I'm with my family I feel the warmth of home. It also happens with my adoptive family, with my aunt and cousins, but in a different way,

since with them it's about our story together, all I don't have with the other side. With my biological family, our shared roots are present. It's very deep... I come from there, I belong to that tree.

Manuel Gonçalves Granada

Grandchild restored by *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*

Manuel was born on June 27, 1976. He lived with his mother until he was five months old. From then on, his identity was stolen, and he was given up for adoption to the Novoa family, in a very irregular procedure.

He lived as Claudio Novoa until aged nineteen when he was visited by the *Equipo Argentino de Antropología Forense* (Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team). He received the news that he was the son of Gastón Gonçalves and Ana María del Carmen Granada, both persecuted and murdered under the dictatorship. Manuel—who until then thought he had been abandoned—discovered that his family, including his grandparents, had always been searching for him. He met his maternal grandmother, Matilde, a member of *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*, and recovered a brother called Gastón, a musician in the popular band *Los Pericos* (of which Manuel was a fan).

He started his long journey to rebuild his identity. His parents were political activists devoted to adult literacy. His father was detained on March 24, 1976, and later murdered. His mother, five-month pregnant, managed to escape and remained underground with another family in the town of San Nicolás. Manuel was five months old on November 19, 1976, when a military operation destroyed the house. He was the only survivor, thanks to his mum's protection by hiding him. He was in hospital under police custody for four months, until a Court gave him up for adoption, ignoring applicable legal procedures.

Although Manuel found it difficult to face his story—it still is—he is certain that this has been the best option. Now he knows that he is the son of Gastón Gonçalves and Ana María del Carmen Granada.

“(…) We’ve forgotten what we really liked doing: enjoying a glass of wine, talking, maybe crying alone, and once in a while feeling the wind. Just that, so simple and beyond our reach. So, let’s make a stop, brother, and let’s return to the old path, Man’s path, and let’s not stray off ever again”, Gastón Gonçalves, Manuel’s father.

MANUEL’S STORY

I lost my identity five months after my birth. My dad was kidnapped on March 24, 1976, the very first day of the coup d’état and my mum was five-month pregnant. They both lived in the city of Buenos Aires but were politically active in the areas of Escobar and Garín. Since my mum was being persecuted, she left their flat in the city, and we ended up in San Nicolás, a town in the north of the province of Buenos Aires. We were there, hiding in a house, my mum being persecuted, when I was born in June 1976. I don’t know my place of birth, but surely it wasn’t in the best conditions as my mum couldn’t lead the normal life of any pregnant girl who’s expecting a baby and gets medical care. Somehow, aged twenty-three, she succeeded in seeing her pregnancy go to full term. I was born in June 1976, and, by November, we were sharing a house with a family made up of a couple and their two children, aged three and five. They were from the province of Entre Ríos, also persecuted by the dictatorship who’d managed to arrive at this house in San Nicolás. So, we were six people living in the same house.

Manuel was able to share a few months with his mother until horror stormed into their house in late 1976, and he became the only survivor.

On November 19, 1976, officers of the Army joint forces, the Federal Police, and the Police of the province of Buenos Aires, surrounded the house. There were forty men who attacked and destroyed it. They even threw hand grenades to blow doors and fired machine guns. As a consequence of that operation, they killed everyone in the house but me. They took me out with breathing problems as we’d been teargassed. I was taken to the local hospital. Doctors saved my life. Within a normal context, I would’ve been hospitalised briefly and then returned to my biological family. This never happened, for four months I was alone in a hospital room; four months in police custody. Imagine that I was a five-month baby in police custody!, which reveals how insane were their interpretations of the so-called National Reorganization Process.

Manuel was another victim of a sinister plan that included a plan for the systematic robbery of children. Through a very irregular adoption, he

lost his identity, was deprived of his own story, and taken away from his biological family.

For the Army, I wasn’t supposed to go back with my biological family, just as in other babies’ cases, and they didn’t want me to stay in San Nicolás either, since —obviously— a few years later I would’ve found out who I was, since the whole town knew that in that operation they’d killed five people, among them two children, with only one survivor, that baby who was in hospital. I mean, it would’ve been quite difficult to hide that story from me. That’s why they gave me for adoption with a different identity to a family of a distant town, Lomas de Zamora, through a local Juvenile Court. So, in February 1977, I went to live with them. My adoption wasn’t carried out properly by the Court, thus, I grew up with this family knowing that I was adopted, but without any clue about my real origin.

How did you learn the truth about your identity?

When I was nineteen, a man rang our doorbell and told me that my biological family was looking for me. During those nineteen years, I’d thought I was an unwanted, abandoned child, and therefore hadn’t searched for my family either. I used to say: ‘If my parents died—as I imagined—, how come nobody told me anything about it? How come no grandparent or uncle is looking for me?’. In that case, I thought nobody wanted me; I felt abandoned and didn’t feel like learning anything about my origin. Yet, this man started to tell me that he was part of the Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team; that his search began due to an investigation by Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo; that not only I hadn’t been abandoned but was alive thanks to my mum, who, during an operation, just before being murdered, had put me among pillows inside a wardrobe, which partially protected me from teargas. It was teargas that caused the death of Fernando and María Eugenia —the other kids in that house— as, in order to protect them, their parents had hidden them in the bathroom (the only inner room where they wouldn’t be reached by gunshots); unfortunately, they were reached by teargas and both died of asphyxiation. So, my life changed forever: I realized that, although so far I’d thought quite bitterly ‘I don’t care if I was abandoned, I now have my own life; I’m done with it; I’m Claudio, I’ve built something’, in fact, I did care, and a lot. From that very moment, I felt deeply loved by my family and started to have this weird feeling of having a mum and a dad, that I hadn’t met, but who were my mum and dad. In time, you understand the importance of that direct, blood bond, that maybe as a way of protecting oneself we rather skip, as has been the case of other grandchildren.

How did knowing your true identity change you?

In my case, the fact of knowing my identity enabled me to start to build something on a real basis. Everything I'd done before was related to a lie: from something basic such as an incorrect name, until the fact that everything you do is backed by a lie, such an unstable situation for any person. Only when you recover your identity, when you get to know your true origin, you're able to build something on solid ground. And that takes a long time. At first, you think that it's just a name change: 'I'm no longer called Claudio, now my name will be Manuel'. Actually, it took me many years to complete all the paperwork to recover my identity, as we had to void my irregular adoption. When the judge was about to issue his ruling and register me with my true identity, he asked me whether I wanted to keep Claudio as my name —the one I had used so far, the one by which people knew me— or change it for Manuel, the one my parents had chosen for me. Along those years, I'd used my biological last name (Gonçalves) but kept my adoptive name (Claudio). It was all I could do until then. I thought: 'In the end, I'm acknowledging I'm Gonçalves, but in everyday life, people still know me as Claudio'. It was hard to think that people would call me Manuel. But then, on that day, when the judge asked me that, I went out, sat for a while on the pavement, then came back and said: 'No, please just register me as Manuel.' Luckily, it'd been a while and I realized that, in doing so, for the first time it was me who could do something with my own story, a story that had taken a certain path without me asking anything. Manuel was the name chosen by my mum and dad and I had the opportunity to recover it, to make it legal. Besides, Manuel was the name that I should've never lost. The name Claudio was part of a lie, a consequence of a decision by others. To recover my true identity with the name that I should've always had was an act of justice. And that's how, for some years now, my full name is Manuel Gonçalves Granada, as I was able to take my mum's last name as well. And from then on, I started to understand the importance of this in other people's lives, those almost 400 grandchildren that are still missing, that aren't aware of their true identity; many of them can be close to you. We're struggling to find them because they're among us; that's why it's very important that you embrace these stories as your own, not just as the Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo's fight, or as the grandchildren's as well, who are older now and can help them in this search. Instead, this is everyone's fight, these 400 identities are missing from all of us. As a society, we've made a lot of progress in recent years and have grown up a lot; we're full of hope; we know we can count on you.

Do you keep any memory or image of your name, from being in your mother's womb, or your first months of life?

No, I don't; yet, when my identity was changed, initially they called me Manuel Valdes to give me up for adoption. So, Manuel was a totally familiar name, which I associated with my childhood, with those first times when I hadn't turned into Claudio yet. What did happen to me was that I had some weird images when I was between seven and nine years old. Back then I used to have frequent tonsillitis with high fever, and they'd give me penicillin, the only way to bring it down; and twice or three times, I saw a situation in the room, with some people wrecking everything. Later I understood: that's what had happened in that house (in San Nicolás); it was a memory deep in my subconscious that came flooding back. Of course, being seven or eight years old, I couldn't make sense of it, but on recovering my identity and finding out about the operation at that house, I realized that my perception was related to what had actually happened.

Did you ever suspect that you could be the son of disappeared people?

I understood that I wasn't the biological son of my alleged parents. What I didn't know was where I came from. Anyway, I'd never thought of the possibility of being the son of disappeared people. I believe it's because back then people didn't talk about this just as we do now in schools or on television. Abuelas found me in late 1995; and nobody had talked about this to me before, not even in school. So, imagine how complex it was for me to say: 'I might be the son of disappeared people'. Whereas with the changes at present, with the opportunity to talk about this freely, to tell the truth, to lay it on the table, with the fact that you're even able to study this at school, even at kindergarten, it all has allowed for many of the recently found grandchildren to have come directly to find about their origin. In these cases, they did go through that exercise of questioning their identity, of thinking they might be the children of disappeared people, and thus they went to Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo. Dissemination is paramount, but it wasn't so in my time. In fact, Abuelas had a TV spot quite a while ago, but they weren't able to spread this message because nobody talked about it, and nobody wanted to broadcast it. That's why it'd never crossed my mind that I could be the son of disappeared people.

Did the people who adopt you know that you were the son of disappeared people? Had they ever suspected anything?

My adoptive father died when I was three, so my adoptive mother raised me, and she recently died. The only time I asked, she replied that she didn't know, that she'd just been told that my mother and father were dead. I understand that my parents didn't know much more. Anyway, I think that somebody in my adoptive family must've known. I was aware that when I filed my case, all of them would be tried, even my adoptive mother, who would have to testify and be investigated. The prosecutor had explained it to me, and even though it was painful and very difficult, I decided to do it: let each of them be accountable before a court, explain and pay accordingly.

On your adoptive parents' side, did you have uncles, aunts or grandparents?

Yes, of course. It was a full family: grandparents, uncles and aunts. As it's usually the case with restored grandchildren, we were all raised in so-called 'normal' families. Indeed, 'abnormal' is the fact that those families included us within them, and held a lie. This is extremely confusing as people end up saying: 'Well, if they raised you, if they sent you to school...'. And, honestly, if a person wants to become a father or mother or aunt or grandparent, the least he or she can do is take care of and raise the child. It's time to change this common belief; if you look at every particular case, you realize that this so-called love they're giving you rests on a lie. No love is true if it comes from a lie.

CIVIL COMPLICITY

Manuel's story is one of the many examples of civil complicity in actions of State Terrorism. In this case, it is the irregularities of the Judiciary that separated Manuel from his own story.

Who took you to hospital: the same people who wrecked the house or a neighbour?

Those who took me out of the house are the same ones who caused the death of the other five people in that house, including my mum. They entered and took me to hospital because I was a baby. Clearly, the military had

a systematic plan for the appropriation of children, that included stealing our identity, keeping us, and if that wasn't possible, making sure that we didn't come back with our biological families so we weren't raised as our parents. In my case, there wasn't much choice: they either took me to the hospital or else I died. So, they did take me, and later this had implications because their operation had taken place in the centre of the city, with lots of witnesses. In fact, today those neighbours are witnesses in the case I filed on the operation and subsequent carnage. It was such a notable episode, because of the slaughter and with only one survivor, that the entire city knew about it, including hospital workers. That's why they thought I couldn't stay with any of the people who were at the operation. Many of them even visited me with their families, developing a bond, yet the Army's order was that I had to be sent somewhere else. Then, they changed my identity and gave me up for adoption.

How did your adoptive parents keep a lie for so long? Were other people involved?

There was collusion from the juvenile court judge, the secretary, the deputy secretary, and the entire juvenile court that covered for what the Army had done, and used institutions—in this case, the Judiciary—to disguise this situation and give me up in a highly irregular legal adoption. It was legal because it was within this institution, but when you read the adoption file, it's clear everything was wrong: they didn't look for the biological family, they gave me up under a false name—in full knowledge that it was false—and during the following five years that I was with this adoptive family, they never sent a social worker, a basic procedure when a child is given in custody or adoption. This was on purpose so that nobody knew my location. In fact, some time ago I filed a case against that juvenile court judge, and when his Court was searched, my adoption file was gone, even the page of the court book that stated its location had been torn off. Therefore, there are several accomplices and many others on whom silence was imposed. Maybe the most terrible thing is that these people were civil servants, I mean, people holding office, which they should've honoured. I understood that, back then, under the dictatorship, this judge, his secretaries, had all been afraid; I wasn't going to pass judgement on them because they didn't risk their lives for me. I totally understood their silence, their lack of reaction. Nonetheless, from 1983 until 1995, they had plenty of years to tell Abuelas: 'I handed over this boy you're searching', but said nothing. And in this case I've now filed, none of them show any regret.

REUNION

Manuel's encounter with his family was the beginning of a long process to recover his Identity. Little by little, from the accounts of his family and parents' old friends, he was able to construct his own story.

I have a very nice relationship with my biological family. It wasn't right away, it was a process. You need to create that type of bond, because at the beginning, at the time of introductions, you're told: 'This is your uncle, that's your grandmother'. I only met one of my four grandparents, my maternal grandmother called Matilde, which was a weird situation. Nobody's prepared to meet their grandmother when you're twenty. Or, as in my case... raised as an only child, to suddenly find out that you have a brother, who had three children as well —so I was an uncle—, it was all very intense. I didn't know what to do, how to react to that situation, but, in time, bonds are created. Besides, there is an immediate situation given by the blood bond, and a common past. We might be two strangers, but in my brother's case, we come from the same place; my grandmother's the person who raised my father... so there's a past that is shared by all of us, common to the entire family. And the truth is that today, after so many years, there's still part of my family that I haven't met yet, some live far away, but whenever I have the chance, I expand my bonds with the family, and it's really nice. Only when you go through this, you value the importance of a close family bond. I know that in your case, probably you have a brother or sister at home, who's constantly bothering you, fighting with you, but in our case, it's totally different, when we met we talked for eight hours, we had to make questions about everything. All those things that you already know from your siblings, and you don't even care about, that's what we wanted to know from each other. We needed to recover what had been stolen from us. Yet, we have a positive outlook on this. Instead of regretting those stolen nineteen years, we're happy to be able to be together and build something good from now on. We feel quite lucky, since all of us, the grandchildren who recover our identity, can do something with this story, with our life, owning it. Nevertheless, as I said earlier, there are still many other youngsters —almost four hundred— who don't have this opportunity and spend every day living with people who aren't their real family.

What was it like to return to your biological family, to undergo such an emotional process and learn about your parents?

It's a very special process. Nobody's prepared to recover his or her identity, to face such a reconstruction, to build that framework that had been broken, from which you were separated. So, to include yourself in this story takes some time. It took me a long time, in fact, I haven't finished —and never will— enquiring, learning and knowing. What I do feel now —and I feel much more comfortable like this— is that this story that looked extraordinary to me... of my mum, and my dad, and their fellow activists, and of all that they had done, today I feel it like my own. At first, I felt uncomfortable to be part of it; I idolized them so much that I felt I hadn't earned a place as their son. So, when I first heard my grandmother talking about my mum and dad as two wonderful, beautiful beings, I thought: 'I have to meet my parents' friends to hear other voices. And then I met their fellow activists, even came back to those neighbourhoods where people had learned to read and write with them, and I got similar comments: 'They were wonderful beings'. And I, who didn't want to idealize them, couldn't help it. Thus I feel I have a great bond that links us. I mean, what I know about them is through other people's accounts. My dad was murdered before I was born, and I only shared five months with my mum. So, through those accounts, I'm building a story, and the most important thing in these cases is to embrace it as your own. It's complex, even the few photos we have of them. We all keep just a few things from our parents because the military destroyed everything: from my grandmother's house they even took the stove, they left nothing. I have three or four photos of them, and they're younger than myself, it's so weird. This whole situation is weird, since you are older than your parents, and you always see them young. I can't imagine having a dad and a mum who are old, because they're gone. This is another special characteristic in our story: our mothers and fathers will always be young. And yet another thing is that it goes beyond direct bonds: I feel the mum and dad of other grandchildren's as if they were my own. Each of their stories is also my family story. It's hard to understand for someone who hasn't gone through this. The same happens with Abuelas. To me, every Abuela de Plaza de Mayo is my grandmother, and I love them all as such. And they also feel that way with all of us. And they say: 'How skinny you are; how fat you are; wrap up warm; how come you don't have a girlfriend?'. They all behave like that when we visit them at the Abuelas' headquarters, and, luckily, they're so many. It's something that helps us both: to those who couldn't find their grandchildren, as they can feel us as their own, and to us, because it's to counteract what was taken from us. It's being able to say: 'Now we have lots of grandmothers'. It feels so good, to beat what was imposed on us, in the best way.

MANUEL TODAY

Manuel has been able to face life and everyday matters in a different way thanks to the recovery of his identity and his story. It also enabled him to conceive new projects and build his own family on the basis of truth.

You have children: how does the appropriation of identity affect new generations?

I have a ten-year-old daughter called Martina. She had to learn this story as well, since Martina was born in 2000, and was registered as Martina Novoa (the adoptive family's last name). When she was five, we changed her identity card, and then her name became Martina Gonçalves. It was a nice moment, we went together to change our ID cards, and she took it so well, so naturally, so joyfully, that she helped me a lot. She said: 'Well, dad, we have our new names... anyway I'll always be called Martina, right?'. The thing was that I was changing from Claudio to Manuel, and she accepted it, but that was her limit, only her last name. The truth is that being a dad or a mum has been of great help to understand the importance of identity, and it also reveals the extent of the damage: it goes up to my daughter's generation. Our children had a false identity too, even though they were born in the years 2000, so twenty-something years later. They make it all much easier. One day I took my daughter to Plaza de Mayo square, when she was very little, only five. I told her: 'We're going to the most important square of the country', together with a certain story about it. She went there, had a look at everything, and when she was back in our car she said: 'Dad, how come that's the most important square in the country? There are no swings!'. So, with them, everything's easier.

What is your new life like? How do you approach it?

My new life, honestly, is very nice. It's very strange as well since it's totally different from my previous one. When a story like this happens to you — with all that is involved in recovering your identity—, it changes the meaning of things, even of the value you place on things. I have childhood friends who, as they haven't undergone a story like this, have more 'normal' problems. To me, those problems that are normal for most people aren't problems. Inevitably, your system of values changes and you start to see things with a different outlook. There's no way to avoid this process. When a story like this happens to you, and you feel this kind of absences... well, what used to be a problem is no longer one. So, there'll be other problems in your life, other situations to deal

with, but I believe the most important and healthiest thing for us is to embark on the practice of feeling fulfilled as a person; and from then on, you can do something good with this harsh, heavy story, that is unavoidably present every day. Hardly a day goes by when I don't think of myself as the son of disappeared people, of my mum and dad, of what they went through, what the military did to them... That's something that never goes away from your mind. And with that imprinted on your mind every day, you also react differently. All said, if I were to choose between keeping the life I had, continuing being that Claudio who knew nothing, or else face what happened later, having to overcome much more difficult situations... well, I'd rather choose to know the truth. Always.

FINAL WORDS

To Manuel, sharing his story at schools is an act of reparation, that gives him hope of a wanted future.

It really gives me hope to see how this kind of activities are taking place at schools, how these topics are being discussed here; I didn't have the chance to be told the true history of our country at school. It's so important that schools are playing a role in helping you to think about what happened. Keep in mind that your parents' generation didn't get much information either; it was the generation that suffered the dictatorship and had to remain silent. So, it's great that you take this topic home and help that generation —so beaten under the dictatorship— to dare to talk, and we thus break that silence that was imposed on us; it's the healthiest way for a society to deal with such a hard topic. We believe that we have matured a lot and that this is the best time to reinforce what we have and to build a future for a better country.

Hilda Victoria Montenegro Torres

Grandchild restored by *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*

Victoria was born on January 31 1976, in the City of Buenos Aires. She is daughter to Hilda Torres, born October 1 1957, and to Roque Montenegro, born August 16 1955, both from the city of Metán, in the province of Salta. She was less than fifteen days old when she was kidnapped together with her parents by national security forces, during an operation commanded by colonel Herman Antonio Tetzlaff, in Lanús, province of Buenos Aires.

As from that moment, she lost her identity. She was registered as the biological daughter of Herman Tetzlaff and María Eduartes under the name María Sol Tetzlaff, born May 28 1976. Thanks to the insatiable search led by *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*, she was found in August 2000 and rejoined her biological family one year later. To stop being María Sol and to get back to being Victoria was a long process full of contradictions and ideological break-ups from an upbringing indoctrinated against what her appropriators used to call '*subversion*'.

Her biological family has kept her company throughout this long process of accepting her true identity. Today, they have been able to build a strong, solid bond, based on love and truth. She is grandchild number 95.

Despite having to overcome a really harsh and challenging story, I think that, if I had to choose, I'd choose to know the truth. I can't imagine life today as María Sol. It was worth having to undergo a whole lot of ugly things so that I could be Victoria today.

Victoria is married and has three children. Her parents are still disappeared.

Fear is over. Fear left with María Sol. I am Victoria.

VICTORIA'S STORY

I used to be called María Sol Tetzlaff and was the daughter of an army colonel –Herman Tetzlaff- and of María del Carmen Eduarte, his wife. Back then, I used to think, for real, that what Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, Madres said, was a lie. When I was a child, I used to be told that they were a bunch of crazy old ladies who hadn't taken care of their children properly and now that they were missing, these women realised how much they wanted their kids back and sought to harm the values of the Argentine family – just like the one I had when I was María Sol-, by lying. Thank God, the Abuelas weren't some crazy old ladies, they were nothing but struggling women whose children hadn't only been kidnapped, but their grandchildren both born and to be born also had. I was thirteen days old when I was abducted. Abuelas started legal actions against my appropriator and I didn't 'appear' as María Sol Tetzlaff until I was twenty-five, 2,000 kilometres (1,242 miles) away from my family. Truth to be told, this was pretty hard. Only now, ten years after that moment, can I say my name's Victoria Montenegro, I'm a grandchild restored and proud of my parents, my grandparents and my siblings. But that takes long because there really was a terrorist state that did a lot of harm, that hurt us badly, that robbed us of our childhoods, of our families, of our parents' dreams about us; and that isn't something you can adjust that easily. Imagine, one day they give you a paper saying you aren't that person any longer and that the people you loved, those you used to call mum and dad, are not your real parents. In my case, what made it harder, is the fact that the person I loved the most in all the world, confirmed that he himself, certainly, had killed my parents, the 'enemy', and that he'd done so to 'save my life'. And I, back then, thanked him because I felt he'd actually saved my life. Of course, I'd grown up in barracks and therefore had received a very strong military-ideology education. I was terribly scared to admit the truth so as to call things by their names. It took me many years, but luckily, I could come to understand that that man I used to love wasn't my dad, he was my appropriator, and that what I thought was an act of heroism was a crime against humanity. Because I believed him when he said he was 'saving the country' and told me he entered places and killed the enemy. They said that every time they killed a subversive they were doing it to save the nation, and I truly believed that that was true. As time went by, I was able to understand that that hadn't been an act of heroism, that he hadn't saved my life. On the contrary, he'd driven me away from my true life. I was able to distance myself from him and stop calling him 'dad', an amazing achievement for me. I can call 'dad' my real dad, whose name's Roque and his friends called him 'Toti'. I now call him dad. And I could call Hilda, my mother, 'mum'. I could join my biological family. We've been together for ten years. We have a beautiful relationship that grows daily, and it's all thanks to Abuelas, who never gave up looking for me.

Nowadays, we, the grandchildren work with Abuelas so we can hug our missing brothers and sisters and because many of us have kids of our own and are well aware that our generation isn't the only one without an identity, that our children are growing up with an identity that isn't theirs. When mine was changed, I had to change my three children's names as well. Their names are their history. There was resistance at first, of course, because my kids were already grown-ups. But today, they're very proud of their surname and their grandparents.

What position does that leave your former parents in? How do you feel about them now? Because, although it was all a lie, you spent a long time with them.

I always say that what I was given when I was twenty-five was my DNA. I got my identity back many years later. It was only two years ago that I finished the process. After all those years, since the DNA test, since I found out that the family who had raised me were not my real parents, I've resettled in many aspects. Sometimes, it's hard. When the adopting family is nice and loves you as their own, it's one thing. In some grandchildren's cases, like mine, who were raised by someone in the force that took us, they really brought us up in indoctrination. They were convinced we were 'the children of the subversive' and so they raised us, with that idea. In my case, my appropriators paid attention to everything. Things that are commonplace for you, such as picking up a flyer with political propaganda, weren't so for me. He'd sit down and talk for hours about how dangerous that was. I mean, he was 'educating' me all the time. So, with a discovery like mine in terms of identity, it takes a while to step aside from an ideology, from everything you thought was right. At first, I had the problem that he was my dad and everything he said was right and it was the others who were guilty: the Abuelas, the judge... everybody but him. Until years went by. I was already a mother and I had to tell my children what was going on. I remember I was talking to them and saying to myself: 'No, this is what I was told, but I know it's not like this.' So, I had to tell my boy: 'You love grandpa –because my eldest grew up with him- but what he did isn't right.' So, you begin to put things in its right place, to say: 'This knocking-down-doors business has nothing to do with saving the country, it's tearing families apart.' Moments like this help you step aside little by little. I definitely set myself apart only two years ago, because, until then, to me, mum and dad were Herman and Mari. In fact, when I was called to court, I introduced myself as María Sol Tetzlaff and said I was colonel Tetzlaff and María del Carmen Eduarte's daughter and that that wasn't going to change, ever. Those were the words I used to introduce myself to my biological family, who had been looking for me for twenty-five years. I went there with the idea that I wasn't going to love my biological family because, to me, there wasn't such a thing. My mum and my

dad were only Mari and Herman; the rest was a mere accident. I didn't want to hear that truth they wanted to tell me. But then you realise that family exists and is yours. Besides, it turns out that I look like all my family. That helps call things by their names: 'Well, all right, I love him –my appropriator had already passed away- but he isn't my dad.' As he was out of the picture, I was able to start loving my real parents, because my father was Herman; the other guy was Toti, he felt like a friend to me. On the other hand, my real father's pictures are from when he was seventeen or eighteen, and it's really hard, because you're twenty-five, twenty-six, and he looks younger than you. Nowadays, my eldest son is the same age as my dad was when he disappeared, so it all turned out to be really complex, at least to me. But the truth is, I celebrate having been able to move the people who raised me aside, I could take them out of the place of mum and dad. I don't hate them, I don't, but I love my true parents. I want to know every single thing about them, I want to be with my family, I want to get that back. I don't hate, because if you really think about what happened to us, if we start hating, we get sick; plus, we wouldn't be changing anything. We can't change what happened and if we hate, we'll ruin things, we'll be doing the same thing they did to us; and we don't want to be like that, because our parents loved us, they brought us into this world and we are the fruit of love. So, we have to be like they were: nice people. I don't hate my appropriators. I just know they're not mum and dad. Mum and dad are missing and they are who I truly love. I still see my female appropriator every now and then. But standing in this position: I visit my sister –I have nieces and nephews, too- and that's it. I see her, but I know she's not my mum. Mum is missing.

Did you hold any suspicion that you could have been the daughter of disappeared people?

No, I didn't think so nor was any suspicious about it. I say it's funny because my appropriator was the son of Germans, Tetzlaff. He was blond and had green eyes and María was blond, too. And my parents were from the province of Salta. I always remember that whenever I had to do any paperwork, clerks would ask me about the origins of my surname. I loved that surname because it was strange. María Sol's was T-E-T-Z-L-A-F-F. So, when asked about its origins, I'd go: 'It's German.' And people would stare at me, of course... And I'd say: 'Northern German,' and they'd keep staring at me... I used to say that because my female appropriator had told me that her father-in-law, Herman's father, was from northern Germany, and had been 'dark.' And, of course, I had seen his picture in black and white and he looked very German. To me, it was like that, I had no doubts, although it was strange for everybody else. I never doubted I was the biological child of the Tetzlaff-Eduarte's. I found that out at court. To me, what Herman – my appropriator- had said back then was true,

undoubtedly. When the judge told me 'It has been proved that you are not the Tetzlaff-Eduarte's biological daughter,' I stood up to him and said no, that it was a lie, that the genetic bank was run by those 'montonero' Abuelas and he, a 'montonero' judge. I don't know if you've ever seen that character from Capusotto's TV show, 'Bombita Rodríguez,' who says everyone is a Montonero. Well... I was just like him! Just like that character. And then, the judge told me: 'There's a 99.99% saying you're not the Tetzlaff-Eduarte couple's child.' I threw the files back at him and said: 'I'm keeping that 0.01% because this is a lie, because I'm my father's child.' After that, I came back home and there was my appropriator. He was going to be taken to Caseros (prison). I told him: 'We're going to order a counterevidence test' because I was convinced that I was his daughter. And that's when he said: 'No, Negra, we're not.' And then I told him: 'We'll order a release on parole.' And that's how I found out that I wasn't their biological daughter. Before that, I'd never doubted it.

How did your adoptive parents keep up with the lie for so long? Did they have any accomplices?

Yes, they did! That's why now all the members of the Force and their civilian accomplices are being prosecuted. I lived in the neighbourhood of Lugano I & II, which is a housing complex in the South of the City of Buenos Aires. And there, two of us were children of disappeared people: me and Horacio Pietragalla, another grandchild taken by my appropriator, Herman. He gave the child to the cleaning lady who worked at home and, therefore, we grew up together. When Horacito –who is actually two metres (6.56 ft.) tall, but I call him like that as a show of affection- appeared, I was a year older than him, apparently; I think I'm actually only a month older. Lina, the woman who raised him, used to claim he was a newborn though he could walk, already. It was a 56-flat building, absolutely everybody was aware of that. And it was the same with me. My appropriator would show me photos of my baptism and say: 'Look! Only five months old and you weighed fourteen kilos (30 lb).' They said I was a newborn and was actually five months old, and all there knew it. When we came by later, all the neighbours admitted it: 'Yes, we were all aware of that. It's so good to hear you've been found!' But nobody ever said anything. They all knew and would say: 'Why are you making so much fuss about it? You're well-fed, you go to school.' To them, we had to leave things as they were and change nothing. What my female appropriator used to say –and continues to maintain- is: 'What could we do, send you back to that subversive family?' The idea behind it was: you got a second chance; if your parents are gone, that's it, you get another life, another name, another surname. Then, since it wasn't their issue, they didn't care. There, in Lugano I&II, which is huge, everybody knew that Horacito and I were children of disappeared people, or were suspicious

about it. In his case, opposite to mine, his adoptive mother was from the province of Tucumán and he was blond, white and two metres tall; they didn't look alike at all... And nobody ever did anything, nobody ever reported anything.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF HER OWN STORY

To Victoria, rebuilding her own story was not easy at all. First, she had to get rid of both the prejudice and ideological arguments she had been brought up to by her own appropriators. However, her family's unconditional love provided her with the support she needed in order to recover her identity.

What was your relationship with your biological family like since then? And now?

Since that terrible introduction the first time I saw them in court, the relationship's changed. I was determined not to love them because, to me, that meant betraying those who were my parents back then. That's what I felt. And although that was my position during that encounter, something else happened inside me. All my aunts and uncles and two of my cousins were there –they had to draw names because they're a really big bunch, and two of them came-, Leandro and María Julia. My father was the youngest of eight, he was everybody's baby. They're that kind of family that tends to stick together and if there's a birthday party, all of them attend and are always together, always looking after one another. I remember that when I finished introducing myself I saw tears rolling down my aunt Irma's cheeks; and one of my cousins, Leandro, the more talkative of them, started to tell me, very respectfully, that they'd always looked for me, ever since day one, under the name Hilda Victoria. He told me my parents' story, my father's name... My family on my mother's side, instead, first mentioned my parents' political activism and that made me reject them, automatically. But not them, my father's family, they were very respectful. They told me about my father's childhood and asked if they could meet my children. Well, that year, we travelled to Salta for the first time. It was my cousin's wedding –his wife's expecting their fourth child now. And from that moment, a beautiful relationship started. I remember the first time I visited Salta; I was walking down the streets and my nieces –some of my nieces are my children's age- came running up to us shouting 'Auntie! Auntie!' I looked at them and thought they were headed towards somebody else because I have children like them and I know that they don't lie when they are that age: first, they say hi, they study you and then, they hug you. A child wouldn't, by any means, pretend they love

you. However, they hugged me as they kept shouting out 'Auntie, auntie!' They took me into my aunt's house and started to bring a whole lot of pictures. Then, they showed me pictures of my birthday parties, because every single January 31 they would celebrate it, even though, for obvious reasons, I wasn't there. They'd go: 'Aunt, this is your five-year-old birthday party. You weren't here, but this was your party. Here, you received your First Communion.' See how big a part of their lives I was! What I felt that day was that it'd been a long time since I'd last seen my family, it just happened, I never got the impression I was new. I felt as if it'd been too long, nothing more. My aunts and uncles, my cousins, my nieces and nephews, their fondness was of great help in understanding this story. And, of course, all together with my husband and children; they're closest to me, they're those who support me the most. But my family's love also helped me a lot to rebuild, to recover my identity, my story and my parents'. That's where I was standing, because I'd never felt a hug like that before, not in the way my aunts and uncles hugged me. I'd been given many other things, material things, other hugs, but not like that, not from the bottom of their hearts, not from people with the same blood. Truth is, my family and I today share a beautiful bond and that makes me really happy. It feels as if, even though they're 2,000 km (1242 mi) away, they were just around the corner. I feel they're so close to me, despite the distance. Having my family makes me very happy.

What did it feel like to undergo all that emotional process and to start learning about your parents when you met your biological family?

I married very young, I was only fifteen, and was a mother at a young age. I've children aged nineteen, sixteen and twelve. So, when I recovered my identity, I was already married and had three children. Besides, I kept a defensive attitude towards my real family because of those ideological contradictions that wouldn't let me open up and listen to them. At first, what I asked, what I wanted them to tell me, was only what my parents did when they were kids or young. But everyday stuff, nothing related to their political activism, because I'd automatically place them as 'subversives' and couldn't accept them as parents. That took a long time, it took years to understand that they were my parents, that they were people, that it was possible to separate them from the 'subversives'. It was only eight years later that I could understand they were my parents. So, I started to connect with them from this position, asking about simple things such as what they ate, what they did when they were in school, what games they played, and so I could start to love them. I didn't get in touch with their political activity fellows, they were members of the ERP (People's Revolutionary Army) and, unfortunately, most of them are disappeared. Apart from mum and dad, an aunt and an uncle on my mother's side are also disappeared people: aunt

Juana, aged nineteen, and uncle Pedro, aged sixteen. My grandmother and my other aunt on her side were expelled from the country before the coup. My family on my mother's side was destroyed. So, it took me longer to reconstruct the story. It wasn't long ago when I could get in touch with the few survivors from those days who were politically active with my parents. And this year, the first time I've ever spent a March 24 in Salta, I visited my father's school. I'd visited the city of Metán –the city my parents came from– many times before; I'd walk by the school door but could never enter the place where my father had completed his primary schooling. This year was the first time I could and it was very shocking for me because I'm still putting things in their place. I did find their fellow classmates, not their fellow activists, because almost all of them in Metán have disappeared. Everything you're told, much or little, is treasured so you can keep putting their picture together. Because there were no video or tape recorders either, there was nothing but black and white photos, and that's all you have to try and put the pieces together. It's not been long since I started to open myself up to learning about my parents' political activity and be proud of them without putting them in the place I used to do, not for one second. Now I feel I can do it without fear.

VICTORIA TODAY

Nowadays, Victoria feels complete and full of joy. She was able to overcome her fears and now faces her personal and family life posing renewed challenges. To Victoria, getting to know the truth was an absolutely positive process.

What is your new life like? How do you face it? How do you see yourself with all the new things you have?

As far as I'm concerned, my life's changed radically. María Sol used to think that the best thing a woman could do for her country was to stay home and raise her children properly so as to build a home with values, safe and united. In debates, I used to say that women, precisely, were to blame for everything, because they left their houses to go to work and neglected their homes. Because that's how I'd been brought up, hadn't I? (She laughs.) And, as for today, my thoughts are completely different. As Victoria, I consider myself to be complete, happy. Of course, my house doesn't look as spotless as it used to; it looks more like most of the houses, but I work, I'm politically active, I help and stand by Abuelas' side; I feel like I want to change the world, or so to speak. I'm also aware that we're young, but somewhere around our forties, so we have our

limitations; but I'm full of hopes and dreams. And even though we had to go through a long, harsh story, under a lot of strain, I think that, if I had to choose, I'd choose to know the truth. It's like when someone asks you if you'd have your child again: when you give birth to one of your children, you can't imagine life without them; you can't just come up with that idea, despite having gone through a thousand things, having them is worth everything. Getting my identity back is the same, I can't imagine life today as María Sol. I had to undergo a whole lot of ugly things, but it was worth it so that I could be Victoria today.

How do you feel when you go to schools and tell your story? How did you feel here today?

It makes me very happy and I'm leaving happily. Children are the future; I have no doubt that each and every one of you will help spread this message which is sheer justice, dreams and truth. I'm leaving full of questions you asked that make us rethink history and feel a little bit more of company. We speak on behalf of the grandchildren found by Abuelas, of those 400 grandsons and granddaughters we're still looking for; but I also feel, I'm not sure this won't sound kind of selfish, that whenever I'm talking with you, mum and dad are here beside me. And the fact that you're here and give us this chance to tell you our stories and that you respect our questions and silence, makes me really happy. Besides, I see you and I see this beautiful future we're all building together and I thank all the teachers and their commitment so that you can learn these stories today. When I was a schoolgirl, this didn't happen. For instance, everybody at school knew I was the daughter of disappeared people; I remember going to the headmistress's office, all bruised from head to toes, and she would say 'she fell down the stairs,' she wouldn't report anything. So, this thing you have, these teachers are the ones who'll help this country succeed, who'll build that country our parents once dreamt of, that's exactly what we want for you and we have no doubt that each and every one of you will help us build it.

FINAL WORDS

When I appeared, I hated Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo. My condition for meeting my family was that Estela de Carlotto had to stay away, that she wouldn't be near the courthouse. I said: 'If I happen to see la Carlotto, I swear I'll leave.' And Estela's always had that dignity, like all of the Abuelas; after 25 years looking for me, when the moment to meet me came, she stepped aside to avoid any situation that would upset me. But that doesn't matter now, what matters is that I could understand it, digest it. And today I'm absolutely proud

of having recovered my identity, of being able to help Abuelas find the 400 brothers and sisters still missing. Because what one of us feels is what the rest of us feel. The thing is that when we get the chance to hug our families, to go to Abuelas's and share a cup of tea with them and spend time together, we feel the urge to find those 400 grandchildren missing so that they can also have the possibility to be hugged by their families and know that they weren't abandoned, that they weren't given up for adoption, that instead, their parents dreamt of them and loved and cherished them to the last minute and that their families have always looked for them.

Juan Pablo Moyano Altamirano

Grandchild restored by *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*

Juan Pablo was born on August 26, 1976. He is the son of Elba Altamirano and Edgardo Moyano. Juan Pablo and his parents were only able to share a very short time together. His father was kidnapped in August 1977. His mother was kidnapped on January 14, 1978 from the city of Carapachay, province of Buenos Aires.

Juan Pablo, who was a little over a year old at that time, was literally pulled out of his mother's arms. The security forces that kidnapped her handed Juan Pablo to a nearby neighbour. The family handed him over to Juvenile Court No. 2 in the city of San Isidro, Buenos Aires Province. This court, after an absolutely irregular procedure, awarded his custody to a family without taking any precautions, therefore exposing Juan Pablo to a terribly inadequate environment.

In 1983, he was found by *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*, and was restored to his true family on November 27, 1984.

His true parents are still disappeared. His father, Eduardo, is known to have been kept alive in the clandestine detention centre working in the Navy Mechanics School (ESMA) until January 1978.

Today, I'm able to truly say who I am and who I want to be. I'm aware of what I want for my life, for my daughter and for my country.

JUAN PABLO'S STORY

He is the son of Edgardo Moyano and Elba Altamirano and was born on August 26, 1976. Before turning a year old, his father was kidnapped and a few months later, his mother was kidnapped while walking down the street. He was nearly a year and a half old when he was snatched off his mother's arms and handed over to an unknown family.

My father disappeared in 1977. In my mother's case, she was kidnapped one day in the city of Munro while I was in her arms. The Armed Forces snatched me from her and took her away. I was left to an unknown family. They called on a neighbour's door and told her: 'We're leaving this boy here; we'll be right back.' But they never returned. Later, the woman said she couldn't take care of me because I wasn't hers. She took me to Juvenile Court No 2 in San Isidro and left me in charge of Dr Fugaretta and that's where I stayed. Then, one day, a woman who had trouble with her daughter because, according to her, she was a really difficult teenager, came by. She saw me there, crawling down the corridors and asked: 'And that baby boy, whose is he?' They told her he was nobody's and she requested permission to take me. Just like that, no paperwork or follow-up. She took me into her home and I lived with her until 1983, under an alternative identity, with a fake surname, living quite a precarious life, mistreated, abused.

His grandmother, Natividad, in 1981, reached *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo* in order to report his case and start the search. This is how, with information from various findings, they found the house where Juan Pablo lived. And so, one day in 1983, a man knocked on their door and six-year-old Juan Pablo opened it without the faintest idea that that moment would change his life.

One day, someone knocks on my door. It was some guy selling ties and we started talking. I was six, what kind of tie could I possibly be interested in buying? Well, that man turned out to be my uncle. That was the first day I got in touch with a relative after the disaster. My grandmother was standing some 20 metres (65 ft) away to see whether it was actually me. They came up to my house after they received data indicating that there lived a boy who might be her grandchild. With that information, Abuelas started to move. They started legal action and a few months later, they knocked on our door once again. I open the door and they were all there, Abuelas and the media, Manuel, my uncle and many other relatives.

And this is how, Juan Pablo, just six years old, had to start to work on his new identity and his true story.

I think that it was a great moment because I was having an emotionally rough time... sometimes, I was hungry, too. Those times were pretty hard. And receiving so much love all of a sudden was wonderful. Everybody would ask me 'What can I bring you?' and I'd say: 'Crayons, sweets.' And they did! Anyway, nice as it felt, it was weird, I couldn't quite understand. Not long before, my appropriator had told me to be careful, that I mustn't open the door to anyone because they were after a child called Juan Pablo, but that kid wasn't me. I never do as I'm told. On July 21, 1983 I moved back in with my grandmother. I was back home! And since then, I've become Juan Pablo Moyano. But the story doesn't end here, because to my family on my father's side, the fact that he'd been politically active in the Montoneros group meant that he was 'deranged and liked to set bombs around.' For them, what my father used to do was really wrong... it all was a very heavy, difficult story to accept. It was really hard for them to say what had happened to my parents. It was easier for them, for my aunt on my father's side in particular, to take me as their own. Now that I'm older I see this as a second appropriation: I was given a new mum.

Living with his true story was not easy since it also implied new information silenced and concealed.

It was all about deleting my story. Even though I recovered my name, that was it. My family always tried not to look back on that, not to stir the pot. Back then, Abuelas used to invite all of us to play games. Their intention has always been to stand by us and support us throughout the process of rebuilding one's identity. I remember that once, Chicha Mariani, who was their President then, called home to invite me to join them and my grandmother and my aunt replied: 'Look, we're really thankful for what you've done for us and Juan Pablo, but he needs to start over and turn the page.' And so, I started to live my life. In spite of being with my family, it had nothing to do with my origins.

After so many years with a family that's not your own, what did it feel like to find your biological family?

I didn't find them, they found me. Back then, I first felt relief. I changed from living in a horrible house with a horrible family, to a beautiful place, with lots of love and care. It was beautiful, then. Later, it was quite traumatic. It takes many years to digest, to chew, to process. It's a rather challenging job. It's something a seven-year-old isn't up to. That's why I lied to myself about who I was and found my identity at the age of twenty-seven, not when I was seven. This work takes long. Even longer in my case, because I was with my mother and was snatched from her. I was breastfed. I don't remember that, but I experienced it. All those experiences are in your head and take a lot of work and therapy. Meeting again with Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo in 1996 was of great

help. They still help me and I still learn about politics and social issues from them, from their lawyers, from their research team. It's a long process. You find your family, you change your name, but that's only the beginning. There's a long way to go ahead of you. It isn't easy. It's challenging. But the good thing about it is that it's the truth. You change from living in a lie to living your own reality. And that's essential because knowing where you come from feels really good.

Was your relationship with your aunt always the same?

Sometimes, I received love, sometimes, demands. I was loved by someone who was emotionally very sick, who suffered a lot. She'd lost two siblings and wasn't quite psychologically balanced after that. I was loved by someone sick, someone who acted according to her needs. I don't judge her at all, but she's made a lot of mistakes, just like I do today as a parent. Being a parent is a huge responsibility and you learn as you go. There's no instructions manual. I don't want to say she didn't love me, living with her was just quite hard.

JUAN PABLO'S PARENTS AND HIS SEARCH FOR HIS IDENTITY

Elba, Juan Pablo's mother, was born on June 13, 1947, in the province of Córdoba. Edgardo, his father, was born on January 25, 1951, in the province of Buenos Aires. His fellow activists used to call her 'La Negrita,' and him 'Ricardo,' 'El Negro Ricardo' or 'Capricardo.'

Mum and dad met in Ezeiza Airport when Perón came back. I found that out as an adult. I was a rather difficult teenager... I was in a lot of trouble because I could never find my place. I don't know how many schools I was expelled from. I needed answers. I needed an identity, that's beyond knowing whose child you are. After so many behaviour issues, someone once asked me: 'Why don't you reach Abuelas?' I remember thinking: 'What am I going to do there? I already have my identity back.' Twelve years later, I showed up there and said: 'I'm Juan Pablo.' They all welcomed me very warmly and that's when I reconnected with them and started to join their activities. Since then, I can say I've started to recognise myself as Juan Pablo, son to Edgardo and son to Elba. I'd spent all the time, since I was eight till my early twenties, calling mum someone who was not my mum. Hard to believe, right? I became aware of that and, one day, I sat down to talk with my aunt and explained to her that I loved her very much, but she was my aunt and Elba was my mother. It was very difficult for me to explain who I was. For instance, if I happened to be detained for

a record check and I had to give my mother's name, I'd use my aunt's because it was true in legal terms of adoption. But when I had to give my father's name, I'd say I had no father because he was actually the brother of the person I called my mother. Can you imagine?

What could you find out about your parents' experience?

My father was held at ESMA detention centre but we have no information as to my mother's location. There isn't much data. My father was studying engineering, he wanted to be an engineer. Then, he became politically active and quit. As from my findings, he was a person with judgement and criteria. As I was told, he had the charisma of a leader. The thing is when someone isn't here, we tend to idealise them and therefore, whenever someone tells me something about my father, nobody tells me his flaws. Someone said he was really stubborn. Quite so. I know he was murdered at ESMA. Many have told me: 'You've no idea how many people are alive thanks to your old man. All the information the military could get out of him was his name.'

What was the objective of robbing babies?

I think they meant to possess anything that belonged to the enemy. The enemy was us. Then, they figured: 'I rob you of your child, I keep him or her, I educate him/her my way so they don't turn subversive.' I think there's something like that. It didn't turn out very well, did it? Thanks to Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, grandchildren keep appearing and will keep appearing. Their idea was to appropriate everything. Just like they'd take things from houses, they'd take children. I think it was one more path to humiliation.

FINAL WORDS

Finding his identity, his name, proved not to be enough of a reason to be able to process and understand his own story. Time was necessary so he could own his search and start his own journey. This is Juan Pablo's message to young people today:

It's only today that I can say who I am for true and who I really want to be. Anyway, I'm still far, very far, from that. Yet, I'm aware of something: I know what I want for my life, for my twelve-year-old daughter, for my country.

That's good, isn't it? It's important to know about our parents, our dictatorship, Latin American history. We're but a tiny part of this history, a grim one full of social exclusion, of having to respond to interests that aren't our own. The subject of identity is much deeper than we can actually express. My message for all is that we should be aware that we'll always have enemies. There'll always be people who want us to think differently, to be someone we're not. Think of who you want to be yourself and fight for it. Be informed, take a stand.

María Victoria Moyano Artigas

Grandchild restored by *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*

María Victoria was just like any other girl. She loved sports, reading, drawing and handicrafts. She had always known she was not her parents' biological daughter; but, still, even as a little girl, she could sense she was not being told all the truth about her origins. She remembers that, at first, she was told that her parents had died in a car crash; but later, the explanation changed and, instead, her mother had died giving birth to her and her father had then abandoned her.

Those two versions caused deep uncertainty and pain in me. When I started primary school, I felt bad, I used to cry and demand to know what had happened to my dad and my mum.

Her first-grade teacher knew her from before because her son was Victoria's foster brother's classmate. This teacher's paper was fundamental in getting her identity back. According to her statement, she started paying attention when her son's friend said he had a sister when she knew that his mother had not been pregnant. Besides, she also knew that there was a member in that family who was a chief of police for the Police of Buenos Aires Province. Even during the dictatorship, her teacher suspected she could be an appropriated child. By 1982 she was convinced that Victoria could be the daughter of disappeared people and reported the case to *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*. Later, she asked to be the girl's class teacher in order to maintain the link with her. Thus, she was able to access documents that *Abuelas* needed to support her story and the association could get the investigation going.

Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo had received reports about a chief of police whose last name was Penna whose brother had registered a girl as her own using a fake birth certificate signed by police MD Jorge Héctor Vidal. With this start point, corresponding legal actions were taken and, in January 1988,

the results of the tests run by the National Bank of Genetic Data confirmed her bond with two of the families looking for their grandchild.

Thus, María Victoria became one of the first grandchildren to recover her identity. She found out she had been born in the clandestine detention centre known as 'Pozo de Banfield' on August 25, 1978 and that her parents had been María Asunción Artigas and Alfredo Moyano.

Whenever I talk with my teacher, I thank her for having had the courage to report my case during the dictatorship. And to every teacher, I beg you, beyond this story, don't miss out on the opportunity to help your students.

MARÍA VICTORIA'S STORY

What was the first piece of news you heard about your origins?

I knew I was adopted, but I had no idea about who my parents were. On December 27, 1987, a group of authorities, among whom there were police officers, a prosecutor, a judge, among others, a big bunch of people, came to my ex-family's house. I remember the door being forced open, certain violence in the air, while I was in my bedroom because it was very early. They came for me and I didn't understand anything. Then, the judge explained that he thought I wasn't my foster mother's child and that my true family had been looking for me. I told him I knew I'd been adopted and that there's always someone in the family, an uncle or a cousin, looking for you. Back then, I knew I'd never come back there, that I was leaving for good.

She was taken to the Courthouse where she spent the first 12 hours before she was taken to a substitute family's house, where the minor's location is kept secret but for the judge.

How did you feel back then?

I was surprised and confused. It was kind of contradictory because I somehow felt calm, yet strange. They didn't let me take anything, any of my things.

Compatibility tests were run and on December 30, she was taken back to the Courthouse where she was informed that it had been confirmed that she belonged to one of the families who had been looking for grandchildren abducted during the dictatorship.

At that moment I did feel despair because I didn't want to meet people whom I had no idea about. Anyway, it was weird that I wanted to make lemon cookies to take for my grandparents on my visit. I had mixed emotions about it. I was taken to the Courthouse once again, where lunch had been set so I could meet my grandmothers for the first time. My grandmother from Uruguay had travelled all the way to Argentina. A great-aunt was also there and I remember Estela de Carlotto and Chicha Mariani.

After that meeting, María Victoria moved with one of her grandmothers immediately by an order of the judge. She remembers those first minutes, on receiving the news, as a hard moment. She felt reluctant, but had to obey. On the following day, she met her aunt and cousins on her father's side; they had travelled from São Paulo, Brazil, where they lived.

As months went by, I adapted to it and wanted to stay. I still had mixed emotions, but I felt like staying with my grandmothers. It was sad because it was a terrible story, but that first period of adaptation went by fast.

How did it feel to recover your identity being only nine years old?

Although I was still a child, I somehow felt older than the other kids. I'd had to grow up. In my free time, I used to listen to music and read. I kept the name I'd been given before because nobody was certain about the name my mother had given me. I was lucky, I didn't want a new name. It may seem unimportant, but it isn't.

It was decided that her grandmother from Uruguay would come and stay with María Victoria in Buenos Aires because they had bonded from the very beginning.

My grandmother Bianca and I got along immediately, from the very moment I saw her. During that first meeting at the courthouse, I asked her to hold me up in her arms.

Both her grandparents moved to Argentina and lived here for two years. After that, the three of them returned to Uruguay, which was a long-expected fresh start. Plus, she felt safe, at peace, after a really frightening experience: her female appropriator went to see her at a concert by surprise.

RECOVERING HER IDENTITY

How did you get to know your parents' story?

Being in Montevideo, Uruguay, made things easier because I lived in the same house my mother had grown up in, her things were all over the place. I even wore some of her dresses and sandals. And my grandparents kept talking about her daily. There were some fellow activists who had survived, and many of our neighbours who told me many things about her. I'm still investigating my parents' final destination and, apart from seeking a trial and a sentence, I look for the truth; I'm using much of the information my grandmother passed on to me. She truly understood the importance of this legacy.

When did you start to understand what being politically active meant and why your parents had chosen to be so?

All my family was politically active. My grandfather had been a mason union delegate and my grandmothers had been active members of Human Rights organisations, they took part in Madres and Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo. All my aunts and uncles on my mother's side were politically active. Activism was my family motto and nobody here could ever imagine building their lives away from their ideas. Even today, any arguments that may arise revolve around political issues, never family. I never felt angry at my parents, all the contrary, I understand them, I stand up for them and feel absolutely proud of them.

María Asunción was born on March 26, 1951, in the neighbourhood of La Teja, Montevideo, Uruguay; and Alfredo was born in Buenos Aires on March 1, 1956. Both were active members of the *Movimiento de Liberación Nacional-Tupamaros*. On December 30, 1977, they were abducted from their house in Berazategui, a city in the south of the Greater Buenos Aires area. According to testimonies from survivors, they are known to have been held in the clandestine detention centres known as “*Pozo de Quilmes*” and “*Pozo de Banfield*.” María Asunción was two and a half months pregnant and her baby was born on August 25, 1978. Both of them remain disappeared.

What highlights from their lives most called your attention?

I'm struck by how young my father was when he became politically active. He was only twelve, the equivalent of a seventh-grader here in Argentina. I know that the context made everyone be more mature back then, but he was particularly young. My grandparents had taken him on a trip to Europe so he'd get distracted and wouldn't get so involved in politics, but he, instead, seized the opportunity to buy political literature. He was five years younger than mum and married her when he was 17. Both were Anarchists and ended up taking part in the Resistencia Obrera Estudiantil (Student Worker Resistance.) My mother's social condition was a bit more complicated, she lived with her family in a working-class neighbourhood. My relatives tell me she wore mini-skirts and polished her nails even if it wasn't fashionable. She was rebellious, in all aspects. She studied medicine, but then moved to Argentina with my dad; they were running away from the Uruguayan dictatorship. Her fellow survivors from the clandestine centre she was in highlighted her moral strength. I can imagine how hard it must've been for her, especially given her pregnancy. She was a rebel even in the worst of conditions. I like that.

What have you done to raise their flags again?

Since I was one of the first restored grandchildren, my political activity began side by side with my grandmothers. Some of us had been found but only a few were willing to speak at interviews. However, I had to fight that battle because society didn't understand what restitution of identity was. Since I was a kid, I've been trying to raise awareness of the issue by testifying. Later, as I grew older, I came to understand that I had to become more involved and deepen my convictions. I became a politically active member of the PTS Frente de Izquierda (Workers' Left Front). My ideas are different from my family's, but we agree on the need for social change even though I don't share my parents' political point of view. I raise their flags again as a statement of revolution.

What do you think about Abuelas's determination to find their grandchildren abducted during the dictatorship?

I think their role goes beyond what we imagine. I think that, with time, we'll come to totally grasp the importance of all they've done. They went out in the streets so they could find both their children and grandchildren, which took a lot of courage given the context. They're an example for women, a milestone:

women's role will never be the same in our country. They transformed everything. My grandmother, all the other grandmothers and the mothers, even in their differences, are much more revolutionary than they ever thought. I deeply love Abuela Mirta Baravalle, whenever I need to talk about harsh matters, I share them with her and restore my balance.

What's your opinion on discussing subjects related with Human Rights in schools through educational programmes such as *Educación y Memoria* (Education and Collective Memory programme)?

I think it's super important. Those against discussing these issues affirm that they belong in the past, because it's been a long time since the dictatorship finished, but, to them, I say that this is the future. We have to build that future on justice and truth. Therefore, it's our obligation to pass this knowledge on to younger generations and thus, allow them to choose their destiny.

FINAL WORDS

For the children of the disappeared, family history and Argentine history are intertwined. Our children must learn why their grandparents, aunts or uncles are not here, and in order to explain that to them, they are taught History in parts. That's how these children are educated as they grow up. Even after many years, we need to repeat some information and explain things over. But we always tell them the truth, to the extent they can handle it. I'm absolutely aware of what a child can understand because I experienced it in my own flesh when I was nine.

Martín Ogando Montesano

Grandchild restored by *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*

Martín was born on December 5, 1976, in the clandestine detention centre called 'Pozo de Banfield,' in the province of Buenos Aires. His mother was Stella Maris Montesano, a young woman from the city of La Plata, in the Province of Buenos Aires, and was eight months pregnant when she was abducted. His father was Jorge Oscar Ogando, 29, from Tornquist, in the province of Buenos Aires. They had a three-year-old daughter called Virginia, who was taken care of by her family on her father's side.

Martín's grandmother, Delia Giovanola de Califano, one of the twelve founding members of *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*, looked for him from the very beginning. Meanwhile, between 2006 and 2008, *Abuelas* received three anonymous reports about a young man who had been written down as a legitimate child in spite of the rumours about his birth having taken place in a clandestine detention centre. That boy happened to be Martín.

Although he had been registered as a child of their own by the couple who raised him, he had doubts about his origins and, when his foster parents died, he reached *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo* with 'strong suspicions of being a son of disappeared people.'

It was March 2015 when that happened. After telling his story, personnel from the National Committee for the Right to Identity (CONADI) contacted him and his blood sample was taken on May 15 that year. The test was run via the Argentine Consulate in the US because Martín had lived there for over a decade then. On November 5 he was given the news that would change his life: he was the son of disappeared people and would thus become grandchild restored number 118.

"A few months after the abduction, we figured the baby must have been born and started to search for his/her possible location. We asked the authorities to keep us informed, but there was no answer. So, eleven other ladies whose daughters or daughters-in-law were pregnant when kidnapped, and I joined forces to organise a search. That's how *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo* was born," Delia Giovanola, Martín's grandmother.

MARTÍN'S STORY

My childhood and my adolescence were beautiful. My foster parents gave me everything, they were really good with me and had always told me I was adopted. In fact, they didn't adopt me legally, instead, they paid to have me when I was only a few days old. They couldn't have kids and found out that there was a clinic in Wilde, in the province of Buenos Aires, where they could get a baby in exchange for money.

When did you start to feel curious about your origins?

Since I'd been adopted, I'd always needed to know where I came from. It's the same doubts about one's own roots anyone may have.

What were the first signs you noticed that you may have been the son of disappeared people?

My date of birth, for instance. My foster father, Armando, and I used to discuss I may have been the son of disappeared people. He wasn't completely sure about it, but he had some suspicions. I didn't want to be tested while they were alive because they were always good with me and I didn't want them to experience that.

Armando passed away in March 2015 and, then, Martín decided to come to *Abuelas* and did what is known as a "spontaneous presentation." He told them his story and showed them his birth certificate. After some time into the case, he was asked to go to the Argentine Consulate to be taken a blood sample for the test.

Some six months later, when I already started to suspect that the results would be negative, I received a call telling me I was positive.

What was that moment like?

*They started to tell me about my family, about my father Jorge and my mother Estela. They also told me I had a grandmother, Delia, who's one of the founding grandmothers of *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*. So, little by little, I started to learn all my story and that was really strong.*

That's how you recovered your identity

Yes. In fact, this happened by the end of 2015, I'm still in the process of change it all means. It takes time and it's not easy. Still, I'm really glad to know who my true parents were and I keep receiving information about them and all they went through. Having met someone as good and special as my grandmother Dalia is beautiful.

THE FAMILY REUNION

The first contact we established was on the phone given the distance: I received Claudia Carlotto's, president of the CONADI, phone call. She told me all my story and I asked her if I could speak with my grandmother, who happened to be there with her.

What was that long-awaited encounter like?

My grandmother was crazy with joy, she shouted excitedly. Since then, we've been talking on the phone almost daily. We have a beautiful and very close relationship. The first communications we had were via Skype; we even saw each other's faces for the first time on the computer. That's how she met my daughters and how I met aunt Lili, my mother's twin sister. Meeting her was so important to me because she's the closest to my mother I'd ever get. She was a wonderful person. Lili's son, my cousin Juanjo, lives in Spain and is a lovely person. I've been really lucky with my new family.

Stella Maris Montesano was born in La Plata, in the province of Buenos Aires, on September 3, 1949, and since she had a twin sister, her nickname was "La Melli" (short for 'twin' in Spanish). Jorge was born on November 28, 1947, in Tornquist, in the province of Buenos Aires and people used to call him "Cogo." They were abducted from home during the same operation on October 16, 1976. According to witnesses, Jorge was held at the 'Pozo de Banfield' clandestine detention centre just like Stella Maris, who, after giving

birth, was transferred to the 'Pozo de Quilmes' clandestine detention centre. Both of them are still disappeared.

What process did you have to go through in order to learn your parents' history?

I'm still trying to find out what they were like. I'm not certain whether they were politically active because my grandmother Delia and my aunt Lili said they weren't, but my sister Vicky said they were members of the PRT (Workers' Revolutionary Party). Another version says that the military had gone for them because of a cousin of my father's who'd been caught a few days before; others believe that it may have been because my parents used to rent a room in La Plata from a boy who apparently was strongly politically active.

Four years before Martín had been found, his sister Virginia took her own life at the age of 38. It was on August 16, 2011, in the city of Mar del Plata, in the province of Buenos Aires. Currently, Delia is struggling to get her children to meet their uncle.

When did you find out about the end of your sister's life? Do you usually talk about her with your grandmother?

It's hard for me to talk about Vicky. I would've loved to know her and share our lives. Family, friends, everyone speaks highly of her. They say she was amazing, full of light, beautiful. I know she'd done a lot to find me. She was a member of the HIJOS (Sons and Daughters for Identity and Justice against Silence and Oblivion) organisation and was also fighting alongside grandma. But, unfortunately, the incident happened... And that's a really harsh part to accept because, to be honest, I would've really liked to have known her. It's a very sad chapter and speaking about it makes me very sad.

In April 2016, Martín was a special guest to activities in the *Programa Educación y Memoria* (Education and Collective Memory Programme) in the City of Buenos Aires so as to commemorate Civil Courage Day. It was the first time grandmother and grandchild participated in a public activity together. They appeared in a ceremony organised by *Comuna 15* (Commune No 15) of the city of Buenos Aires; teachers, neighbourhood, cultural and social organisations from the neighbourhoods of Paternal, Almagro, Caballito and Villa Crespo participated to pay tribute to those brave women who founded *Madres de Plaza de Mayo* and walked around the *Pirámide de Mayo* on April 30, 1977, for the first time (*La ronda de las Madres*). "Grandmother

Delia is absolutely adorable," confessed Martín. Since he lives abroad, he has participated in the programme educational activities on several occasions through recorded messages which, because of their warmth, have touched everyone's heart.

What do you think about *Abuelas*'s determination to find their grandchildren abducted during the dictatorship?

I deeply admire Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo. The strength and courage they've shown are unheard of; they came out and claimed for their missing children and grandchildren when the dictatorship was at its height. To walk around the pyramid surrounded by the military holding those weapons just beside them... To make things worse, one of them, Azucena Villaflor, had disappeared. But they've gone on and on, they still do.

How do you feel about the fact that Delia has been one of the twelve founding grandmothers?

I think it speaks highly of her and that fills me up with pride. She took action as soon as my father and my mother were abducted. First, she sought for them as she could and then filed a Habeas Corpus. Later, she started to go to Plaza de Mayo and that's where another woman asked if there were any women whose daughters or daughters-in-law were pregnant and had been abducted. Then, other women and she stood aside of the queue and that's how what would later become Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo came to life. And it's already been working for 41 years.

MARTÍN TODAY

He lives in Miami, in the United States, where he is raising his two daughters aged thirteen and nine.

How do you pass this on to your daughters?

I always tell them about grandma, about my parents' history, about my new identity, or so to speak. Of course, I do it very carefully because this story isn't pretty at all, lots of dark, ugly things happen in it... disappearances,

torture, death. Then, I try to choose every single word very carefully. And, although they've been to Argentina, they were born in the States and have lived here ever since, that's why they aren't as familiar with the subject as other children in Argentina. Still, I always tell them about it and show them photos of my grandmother, my parents and my sister, and they keep them in mind.

What's your opinion on boarding subjects related to Human Rights in schools through educational programmes such as *Educación y Memoria* (Education and Collective Memory programme)?

I think that the fact that this should be taught at school is super important because, if a country lacks memory, if its people don't learn from their mistakes from the past, this country shall be doomed to failure. That's why I think this work is all right, so the kids are aware of all the bad things that happened in history so they won't happen again.

FINAL WORDS

A few days ago, I had a talk with my grandmother about her participation in a protest held at the National Congress where, once again, I saw a massive crowd cheering them. And she said: 'Mind you, it was only five or six grandmothers when we started showing up at Plaza de Mayo. Then, the following week, ten more joined, and then, 30 more... until there were a lot of us. But it was only a few of us at the beginning.' What they've done is unique worldwide.

Guillermo Rodolfo Pérez Roisinblit

Grandchild restored by *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*

The grandson of *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*'s vice president, Rosa Roisinblit, had never imagined he might not be the child of whom he used to call his parents. He did not know most of what had happened during the dictatorship. Thanks to his sister's and Rosa's insatiable search, he found out his true identity in 2000 and was able to start his own family after that.

"A man called *Abuelas* saying he'd met a boy whose description resembled my grandson's; coincidentally, my granddaughter Mariana happened to answer that. That man contacted Guillermo and they came to *Abuelas* together. Mariana welcomed him in and said: 'I think we're siblings.' Sometime later, his blood was tested and our DNAs matched," described Rosa Tarlovsky de Roisinblit.

GUILLERMO'S STORY

Like many other babies who have grown into men, Guillermo Rodolfo Fernando Pérez Roisinblit was born at former *ESMA* (Navy Mechanics School). His mother, Patricia Roisinblit, and his father, José Pérez, had chosen the names Rodolfo Fernando for him, and those are the names he should have been called all along; but, because of his appropriators, he was Guillermo Gómez for over two decades and lived a life with a heritage that, in spite of being his own, did not belong to him. Since that day, November 15, 1978, and for a long time, his origins were hidden; however, they did not faint, as it had been planned. As from the year 2000, with three names and two surnames, he and his children have lived a life based upon his restored identity as a key element.

What was your childhood like?

I was raised as a child of divorced parents and was a witness to domestic violence. Plus, I suffered unmet needs and the absence of a father figure. That marked my childhood. In this world, where anything is possible, I can take that my parents have disappeared, but not that I was set apart from my family. I was robbed of the possibility to have a great relationship with my sister, maybe. I was denied having any memories with her. I couldn't go and play in the park with grandma. She couldn't buy any candy for me. I couldn't meet my grandfather. I was robbed of all that. Not just the military. My appropriators, too. Every day of my life, they chose to keep me in a lie.

How did it feel to find out, at age 21, you weren't who you'd always thought you'd been?

I felt it couldn't be me, they had to be wrong. I knew there had been a dictatorship, but not that babies had been robbed. How could I ever imagine I was one of them, lacking that information? To make things worse, I felt I was my appropriator's son. It's really hard to admit that that's happening to you. But I'd been raised as an only child and had always wanted a brother or a sister. That's why I reached Abuelas the very day I found out: there was a possibility that I had a sister and wouldn't miss the opportunity. The problem was that, even though the girl who'd found me was my sister, I didn't consider myself the child of those who she called our parents.

What was your everyday life like during those first couple of days?

I'd wake up crying and I needed to take a look at a ring with my initials in it because I had no idea who I was. Still, those letters were no longer my name's. It's as if the ground below you disappeared and you started to fall without anything to hang on to because everything around you is just fake. However, the experiences you've lived and felt are real. I feel I've been able to live my life, but surrounded by a big lie. Perhaps, the lie, compared with all the things I've been through, isn't that big, but it's so deeply rooted... it's so primeval that it makes the rest look terrible.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF COLLECTIVE MEMORY

Guillermo has joined the *Educación y Memoria* programme in various activities in order to tell his story to a big crowd of little boys and girls.

It's easy for me to tell them about my life. It's the same when I'm home, when I have to explain this to my kids. Ignacio, the eldest, started asking questions when he was four and he could understand the meaning of 'disappeared' shortly afterwards. I was worried it felt so natural to him and that many aspects of it were clearer to him than they were to me. Freedoms had been violated, some people had been abducted and their children robbed. Today, we count with tons of teaching materials that deal with the subject carefully, in a specific way. Besides, teachers are prepared to teach that information; there's been a highly positive structural change in education. That's why kids today can ask really sharp questions and dare to talk about some issues some journalists don't. They're very curious and don't have certain inhibitions.

RECOVERING HIS STORY

I'd get upset whenever those people who'd raised me were called 'appropriators,' but I crossed that line a long time ago. They took a kid, kept him, registered him as their own, forged documents, suppressed his identity, robbed him of his family... they are appropriators. I no longer call them mum and dad, or parents of the heart, or foster parents, or anything of the kind: they're my appropriators.

Were you and your true family able to create a bond quickly?

Actually, I felt the urge to have my own family because the one who'd raised me wasn't and I was a total stranger to my true family. In spite of their long, extensive search, it's hard to open up at first, you're missing the basics. That's why I asked the judge to accelerate the restoration, I couldn't think of becoming a father without the basics: a surname. Once I recovered my identity, I could finally think about having children.

Guillermo is Rosa Roisinblit's, vice president of *Abuela de Plaza de Mayo*, grandson and is not afraid of saying that he had no idea he was a son of disappeared people and that he was not aware of *Abuelas*.

When we met, she introduced herself saying: 'I'm your grandmother.' And I replied: 'I know, baba,' like my sister's called her ever since she was a kid. And we hugged. I deeply admire my grandmothers. All of them. I admire my grandmothers Rosa and Argentina in particular. Rosa's intelligence, point of view, conception of reality and wordiness are so special that make her stand out from everyone else. They should've been able to enjoy her grandchildren's childhoods, to spoil them; instead, they had to reinvent themselves and go out and search for us in spite of having everything against them.

What do you want for your children?

I want them to grow in an environment where politics are discussed. Not in terms of parties, I want them to be aware that politics is a means to modify people's realities. I want them to feel it won't be necessary to look for other grandchildren when they grow up. I want them to see we've finished our quest and everyone's been found. I want them to be good men, to be proud of their history, of me, of my parents. Basically, I want them to be happy and live in freedom, so no one can tell them lies about history, so they can be politically aware. Because all those things were denied to me.

Are you happy?

*I'm truly happy with the person I've become and that's why I'm convinced that knowing the truth about my origins is one of the best things that's ever happened to me. I suffer my parents' absence because of the impunity the military had when my parents disappeared, because nobody has been held responsible and because there's no grave I can visit. I don't have a single memory with them. That's terrible. However, I'm a happy guy. I'm married, I have two beautiful kids who I feel so proud of, I help *Abuelas* do their search because I believe that there shouldn't be anyone around whose identity doesn't belong to them.*

FINAL WORDS

I accepted myself as Rodolfo in 2005 for the first time, at ex-ESMA's basement. I was told: 'Look, Rodolfo, this is the place where you were born.'

And I turned around. I'd never responded to that name before, and it was happening there, where I'd been called Rodolfo for the first time. I think this was a beautiful way to close the circle.

Tatiana Ruarte Britos Sfiligoy

Grandchild restored by *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*

Tatiana was born on July 11, 1973. She is Mirta Graciela Britos and Oscar Ruarte's daughter. In August 1977, her father was detained-disappeared in the city of Córdoba. Two months later, in October 1977, her mother was abducted. Tatiana and her sister, only two months old, were left alone in a park in Villa Ballester, in the province of Buenos Aires.

They were taken into an orphanage, where they were separated. Thanks to a woman who worked there and knew the girls were sisters, they could be adopted by the same family, the Sfiligoys.

In 1980, the girls were found by *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo* and became the first granddaughters ever restored. The Sfiligoys have always collaborated with the girls' family and *Abuelas* from the very beginning in order to bring their suppressed identity into light. After that, Tatiana and her sister decided to stay with their foster parents and remained in contact with their biological families. After coming of age, Tatiana chose to continue using her foster surname. Currently, she is a psychologist and is a collaborator at *Abuelas*. In 2007, the television show *Televisión por la Identidad* dedicated the first of three chapters to telling her story.

Mirta Britos and Oscar Ruarte, her parents, continue disappeared.

Whenever I fall, I stand up again. That's how I am. Luckily, I always think that there must be a reason why something bad happened to me, that life's given me a chance to learn something and so, I can make something positive out of it.

TATIANA'S STORY

Her birth name is Tatiana Ruarte Britos. She is the daughter of Mirta Graciela Britos and Oscar Ruarte. She was born on July 11, 1973. As a consequence of the tragic military dictatorship that started in Argentina in 1976, Tatiana first lost her father. Later, her mother was kidnapped in October 1977. Tatiana and her baby sister were left alone in a park in Villa Ballester, in the province of Buenos Aires, at the moment of their mother's abduction. Today, Tatiana is Tatiana Sfiligoy, she chose her foster last name. She and her sister are the first granddaughters restored by *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*, in 1980. This is her story:

When mum was abducted I didn't really understand what was going on. I knew the situation was unusual because we were on our way home, walking –I get flashbacks, as in a movie- and, on arriving, mum realised an operation was taking place, that they'd broken into our house. So, we kept walking and went straight down to the park. When we got there, mum noticed we were being followed and she started to hug us and said goodbye. She told me: 'Take care of your sister. I'll never forget that phrase.

That is how Tatiana, who was only four, witnessed her mother's abduction and she and her two-month-old baby sister were left all alone in a park.

Then, mum walked away, almost running, running away so we wouldn't see how they got her. I didn't understand anything then, not then. With time I came to realise that I'd witnessed my mother's abduction. And later, when I turned twelve, I began to understand the political issues behind it... What 'disappeared' meant, who they'd been. Because I was a kid growing in the midst of the dictatorship and those topics weren't even mentioned at school. There were no talks and you couldn't say you were a child of disappeared people. People used to think 'Well, your parents must've done something wrong, to be seized like that.' Luckily, that situation's changed and we can say it here, proud and loud.

Following their mother's abduction, the girls were taken into a Courthouse where they were placed up for adoption and adopted by the Sfiligoys. Tatiana retells that a woman who worked at the Juvenile Court helped her and her sister remain together.

I haven't met her in person, I'd love to. I know she worked in the Courthouse, as a social worker, perhaps. Apparently she, slipped out the information that the baby girl my mother was about to adopt had an elder sister, who happened to be me. That's when this family decided to adopt both of us. Otherwise, each one of our destinies would've diverted, we would've been given

to different families and we would've probably never seen each other again. That was a part of the systematic plan, too. If there had been an abduction, the remaining children were separated and sent to different families. It's not an isolated case.

This unknown woman's intervention was decisive in these girls' destiny and granted Tatiana the opportunity to fulfil her mother's request to take care of her sister.

I think this woman had no intentions whatsoever to hide our origins or our future location. Thanks to her, my foster parents were able to adopt both of us. This fact somehow allowed much of the information that was usually deleted from the files to remain documented. She was like a tiny ant that infiltrated the system. Luckily, that information ended up in my foster parents' hands so that both of us could be together.

Tatiana decided to keep the name given to her by her parents at birth and kept her foster parents' surname as a show of appreciation for all the care and for never having hidden the truth from them. Today, Tatiana chooses the name Tatiana Sfiligoy.

Tatiana's the name my disappeared parents gave me and it's the name I've kept. I wasn't changed because I could speak when I was adopted and I would protest. That's always been my name. What was different was the fact that I'd be able to change my last name to my biological family's surname at eighteen. I considered it for a while and I decided to keep my foster surname because the adoption was legal, there were no lies, no hiding. There was no appropriation. My name's everything because I keep the name my biological parents gave me and the surname given to me by the people who raised me.

Tatiana's story differs from other children's stories in terms that her identity was never denied.

All cases are somewhat different, like Juan's case, or Horacito's, where there were lies, document forgery and tension between their biological family and their foster family. It wasn't my case. That's why I keep in touch with both families. It sounds a bit strange, sometimes, because I have four parents: two mothers and two fathers. And, this is hard to explain, sometimes.

RECOVERING HER IDENTITY

Tatiana was always aware of what had happened to her, that her parents would not return, although, at first, she could not understand the reason

for their abductions. She says she never doubted her identity because she was old enough when it happened. Her grandmothers found her in 1980 after a long and difficult search.

Abuelas found me when I was very little, when I was six. I didn't look for them, they found me. Those days, the Abuelas would search everywhere, hospitals, schools, in all public areas. Until they found a file in the Courthouse in San Martín, in the province of Buenos Aires. They had a picture of us, so finding us was easy.

What was the reunion with your biological family like?

The encounter was very strong. The first one took place in the Courthouse. My foster parents and my grandmothers were there. The judge asked me if I knew those people, pointing at my grandmothers. I looked down, which seemed like a no; to be honest, I was really scared, the same thing happened to many other grandchildren. The first time's a shock. Then, the first reaction's denial. But, in our second encounter, fifteen days later, I found myself in my grandmother's arms. It was like going back in time. So, somehow, my grandmothers saved me a lot of time. They appeared in my life while I was still a child and was able to meet my lost family. I was unlike other grandchildren who experienced that 'time lost,' that wasn't my case. But our encounter was extremely touching and I was afraid I might lose something, too.

Fortunately, Tatiana was able to be reunited with both her biological grandmothers and recover that time they spent apart. One of them used to live in the province of Córdoba and visited her often.

How did your biological and your foster family get along?

Very well. They got used to each other quite quickly. My reunion with my grandmothers didn't happen on one day only, it took many days. But that started it and I always wanted to see them. Then, they'd come and visit me or we'd travel to Córdoba, where they lived. They were my grandmothers, and, like you, we loved to eat their food, tasty grandma food, and to get presents from them. Though, you always have a favourite grandmother. I can say it, now that they're gone, now that they've passed. My grandmother on my father's side would always visit me and stay home for about a month. During her late years, she really enjoyed spending time with her great-granddaughters. She was so proud I'd become a mother; she'd come home and stay...

To be honest, I really enjoyed both their company, especially Amalia's, my grandmother on my father's side. She was always an active member of family organisations back in Córdoba.

Tatiana respects her sister's decision to keep her story private.

My sister doesn't appear much because that's her choice, she doesn't want her story to go public. I respect that. That's why you know nothing about her. She grew up with me, we're in touch. She also has two boys. She lives abroad, I'm trying to convince her to come back to our country. So well, we're trying to get her back here.

What helped you move on?

I guess it was the possibility to have other parents, foster parents who raised me and played their part. There were no lies, there wasn't any tension, all the contrary. They were able to do their job as parents and I think that's why I can move on and sit here to tell you this. That was the biggest help I could ever have so as to face that tragic story where I was left all alone in the streets the day my parents were abducted. It was a milestone. I guess my personality also helps, if I fall, I stand back on my feet. That's me, come what may. If I fall, I stand back up. I've always been like that, ever since I was a kid. That's me. Luckily, I always think that there must be a reason why something bad happened to me, that life's given me a chance to learn something and so, I can make something positive out of it. I think that's good.

RECONSTRUCTING HER STORY

With time, Tatiana was able to reconstruct part by part what happened to her parents after the abduction. This is how she remembers them:

They met when they were eighteen, acting in Villa Libertador, a working-class neighbourhood in the outskirts of the city Córdoba. Both were from middle-class families but had decided to become politically active and started to work in shantytowns. Besides, both of them were interested in drama and arts. Mum also liked puppets.

Then, they started to do it together and wanted to build a couple, a family. They were very active, they had such a busy lifestyle that it's hard for me to understand how 24 hours a day were enough to do everything they did.

What could you find out about your mum and dad?

I've learned most of what I know from my parents' friends, they told me a lot of things, things connected with their activism, perhaps. My grandmothers, instead, had memories of them as kids. My dad was charming, cool, a funny guy from Córdoba. That's how I picture him and what I've been told. My mum was a bit shy, kind of serious. Some strange turn of fate hooked them up and they decided to start a family. Some time later, they split up.

I found out as a grown-up that my parents had had another daughter between my sister and me. She died of meningitis when she was very young. My grandmothers never knew about it. My parents' fellow activists told me about it. This early passing resulted in their separation, the couple couldn't take the blow. They were very young, too... Later, my mother started dating Alberto Jotar, my sister's father, who disappeared the same day my mother did.

Tatiana rescues the happy moments in her story and moves forward and takes on challenges for the future.

There are really beautiful moments in this story because it's full of life, and there are really tough points in it too. I was shocked to find out about my other sister because I thought I only had one, when I actually had two. I never met one of them. I still owe her a flower, because I'm sure she actually is buried somewhere.

Tatiana's father was abducted on August 17, 1977, in Córdoba, together with his partner. According to research, Oscar Rearte was taken to the clandestine detention centre known as 'La Perla.'

I was told about my father's kidnapping, testimonies prove that. It happened on his return from a trip to Buenos Aires. The operation took place when he arrived home, in Córdoba, where he lived with his girlfriend. Both of them were taken. My dad's girlfriend wasn't involved in politics and was released ten days later. First, they may have been taken to a centre called 'La Riviera.' Later, apparently, he was transferred to another clandestine centre, 'La Perla,' perhaps. That's as much as we have, but the data is enough to say he was killed soon afterwards.

I met Mariana, my father's girlfriend, as a grown-up. I had to meet her many times because my family suspected she'd turned him in, they had that fantasy. But we could sit to talk and I realised that she had no idea back then. When she met my father and they started dating, my father kept everything a secret. Later, he said he may be interested in becoming politically active, but she had no information about that. That's why she was released, because letting some people go was a part of their sinister plan, too, so that they'd tell what

they'd gone through. The few things she told me about being in a clandestine centre, to be honest, were so terrible.

TATIANA TODAY

Tatiana is a psychologist and works for Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo in the Spontaneous Presentation Department.

I'm interested in knowing what happens inside other people's heads. One of the things that interested me the most when I started studying was to know 'What does a murderer think? How do you become a murderer? What events lead a person into becoming a murderer?' I've never been able to find it out because that's way too complex... but those questions have marked me.

Have you kept any memento from your parents?

Grandma moved houses many times and, as a symptom, she wouldn't stay long anywhere. It was as if she would always come and go. I think that maybe it was for fear. The puppets and other stuff got lost after moving so many times, other stuff survived. I have letters, decorations, an ashtray my father made with a brick. I have some things that belonged to them when they were kids or youngsters.

How does it feel to be the first granddaughter restored by Abuelas?

A whole lot of responsibility! I'm kind of everybody's mum because I'm the eldest grandchild. But I like it, it fills me up with pride. On the one hand, I know it's a huge responsibility, but it's my choice and I'm proud of it.

Tatiana has told her story in schools many times and she is aware of the value of spreading these testimonies in order to keep the Memory of what happened alive.

Today, I believe that I must feel proud of being here. Being able to tell you my story and giving you a picture, a word, a memory to take home with you means a lot to me.

FINAL WORDS

Tatiana gives a message of hope to young people today by telling her story. She doesn't give up on the possibility of a better world.

Although I witnessed my mother's kidnapping, that somehow helped me reflect on how sinister State terrorism was. It was a systematic plan and, in effect, some knew that they tortured people, that they kidnapped pregnant women, that they'd keep them alive as hostages and get money from the grandmothers. It was all so sinister, especially the murder of such young people. We tend to dehumanise the military or the people who participated in that, but, tough as it may seem, the perpetrators of these horrible incidents were people, flesh and blood creatures. I think that the most important detail we must bear in mind is that this actually happened, it wasn't a work of fiction. And all of us, not just me, took part in it. All of us have been a part in a society affected by fear, because fear and horror haven't left. Still, there's a little seed of hope coming from activism and the possibility of a better world.

Alejandro Pedro Sandoval Fontana

Grandchild restored by *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*

Alejandro had never had any doubts about his identity until 2004, when he was faced with the possibility of being the son of disappeared people. Finally, on July 14, 2006, he recovered his identity thanks to *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo's* tireless work. He is grandchild restored No. 84. He is Pedro Sandoval and Liliana Fontana's son and is known to have been born on December 28, 1977 in the *Campo de Mayo* Clandestine Detention Centre. He could only spend three months of his life with his mother before he was appropriated by Chief of Gendarmerie, Víctor Rei, who registered him as his own son, born on April 14, 1978.

Alejandro's mother, Liliana, was twenty years old when she was kidnapped. She was born in Viale, in the province of Entre Ríos, studied to become a hairdresser and was two and a half months' pregnant. Pedro, his father, came from Nogoyá, in the province of Corrientes, was thirty-three and worked as a mason. Both of them were very politically active.

Liliana Fontana and Pedro Sandoval were abducted on July 1, 1977, while they were in Liliana's parents' house in Caseros, in the province of Buenos Aires. According to testimonies from survivors, they were seen in the "*Club Atlético*" clandestine detention centre and that Liliana was transferred when she was about to give birth. Liliana and Pedro are still disappeared.

Alejandro expresses his opinion about the importance and the value of having recovered his identity:

We have an identity as a community. Little by little, we are recovering that identity... We are recovering our right to walk freely and to know who we are.

Truth shall set you free... but we must take responsibility to set ourselves free. As you learn, you can see all different realities. We build our own identity on a daily basis, that's a fact. But when you have all the information that you need, all the truth about you, that's where you get the choice what to keep, how to act, which side you're on.

ALEJANDRO'S STORY

Alejandro is Pedro Sandoval and Liliana Fontana's son. He was kidnapped when he was in his mother's womb, on July 1, 1977. He could only spend three months with her. Then, he was robbed of his identity and handed over to a military officer's family. This man was Víctor Enrique Rei, Chief of Gendarmerie, and registered him as his own son.

My uncle was kidnapped on July 1, in the morning. Later, in the afternoon, it was my father's turn and they took my mother because she said she wanted to kiss him goodbye. Mum was two months' pregnant. She was transferred to Campo de Mayo. That's where I was born. I was left with my mother for three months because my appropriators wanted an older baby. They liked older babies. My appropriators' son's fourteenth birthday was on April 5, and I was his 'birthday present.' That marked me forever.

Even though it was hard for Alejandro to recognise himself as the son of disappeared people, eventually, he found his way around and he realised that what his appropriators had done to him was a crime. Currently, his appropriator is under arrest on those charges.

My appropriator's role in the dictatorship wasn't unimportant at all. This person attended the School of the Americas and was decorated with high honours. Currently, he is under arrest and is still considered an American soldier.

Alejandro recovered his identity in 2006 after refusing to undergo DNA testing and tampering evidence. That's when his life changed, completely.

Then, in 2004, I felt as if I'd hit a wall. They told me: 'You're not who you think you are.' I had no doubts. My family and I looked quite alike, it was like looking at myself in the mirror. And then, Justice came and blew me on the face.

He then found out that Abuelas had been looking for him since he was a baby, but were unable to find him.

The issue of my identity came to light in 2004. Abuelas had been looking for me since 1985. I remember I was eight or nine when a woman came

up to me while I was playing ball in front of my house. She reached me and said: 'Come with me, I'm your grandmother.' I grabbed her, looked at her and told her: 'I have no grandma.' I entered home and told my parents what had just happened and they started fussing about not talking to and staying away from strangers. To scare me more, they also implied the idea that kids were being kidnapped to sell their organs and that ambulances were being distributed around schools with the same purpose. Later I realised it was all a lie to prevent Abuelas from finding us. Then, in 2004, I was contacted by the justice to tell me the truth. It took them two years to get my blood for the test. On July 14, 2006, I was told by the justice who my true family was. That's when I started bonding with my true family.

Justice intervention was required to deal with Alejandro's case. With their help, he was able to stand against his appropriator and start to live his life as Pedro Sandoval and Liliana Fontana's son.

In 2009, there was a trial and that was the turning point. I was 100 per cent sure of who I was. The trial finished on April 27. The following week, I visited my appropriator in the prison of Marcos Paz, in the province of Buenos Aires, in order to face him and hear the truth from him. When you visit someone in prison, they make you wait in a special area... a waiting room. As he entered the room, he started shouting that it was my fault that he was there. So, I stood in front of him and replied: 'Excuse me, how's that that you're here because of me? As far as I know, being born isn't a crime. What you did is.' He froze in perplexity, accepting my words. So, when I realised he wouldn't say anything, I turned around and left. I realised he would never ever tell me the truth.

In Alejandro's words, the trial was a turning point in accepting his truth. After that, he was able to distance himself from his past and start the journey towards the reconstruction of his identity.

I like to make a comparison that may sound a little morbid. When you purchase a pet dog, you love that dog. You buy food for it, you walk it. And then, what happens when it bites you? The poor thing is now the worst. You begin to hate your pet. And you have two choices: you leave it in the wild or you put it to sleep. That's what happened to me. I bit my appropriator on my visit. Because I had supported him at first. I supported him during the trial. And then, I bit him. And that made him furious and started saying he was in prison because of me.

I always say that it's easy to hear people. You may hear a lot of stories. But you must have qualities to listen to others. If you don't want to listen, you just don't. That happened to me. Abuelas, my relatives told me stories and I wouldn't listen: I was there, not paying attention. That's why, when the trial

started in 2009, I wasn't sure I was ready, but I knew that my appropriator couldn't lie. If you lie or give false information in court, you may be arrested. So, there, I started to talk about the things that happened, I began to understand Abuelas' struggle. And that's when I realised: 'Well, I must close this door so other doors will open in the future.' And that's how I started to reconstruct my identity.

THE ENCOUNTER WITH HIS FAMILY

At first, Alejandro supported his appropriators' actions. As he discovered his and his parents' history, he decided to reencounter his family.

Little by little, you put the pieces together. When you experience something like what happened to us, you can't forget it. Because it's a part of your identity. Knowing the truth makes you stronger, enables you to make choices. I, for instance, decided to keep my biological family. It's a natural thing, I want to be with them. Yet, there was a time when I wanted to keep in touch with my appropriators. I wondered what I'd get by fighting them: nothing. I didn't want to quarrel because I didn't want to hit rock bottom. I somehow wanted to know why. If you like, you can search for the trial and see that the first thing my appropriator did was to compare me with a kid in Vietnam. There, I realised he was admitting I wasn't his son.

After so many years living with a family that is not your own, how did it feel to find your biological family?

It felt like being hit with a bucket of cold water during winter. Just think about it, you believe your old man is your old man and someone shows up and says he's not. You need to adapt to it. There is a grandchild who spent ten years trying to figure it out, to accept his true family. If you had a good life, that life all kids wish for, you had a mother, a father, an education... that makes things worse. I grew up with silver spoons in my mouth and, suddenly, I was told: 'That's not you...' And, on the other side, I found a family who lost everything, torn apart, emotionally defeated. And when I realised that, I needed to reconstruct, first, my person, my true story; I had to and besides that, back my family up and be backed up by them. The trials helped me open my eyes and see what I wanted to see. That's why I was filled with mixed emotions. One day you are happy, next day, you're sad. One day you love everybody, next day, you hate everybody. Reality is like a bucket of cold water: sometimes for good, sometimes, not so.

Alejandro highlights the importance of knowing the truth. It allows choice. In his particular case, it helped him choose the kind of life he wants to live.

Truth shall set you free... but we must take responsibility to set ourselves free. As you learn, you can see all different realities. We build our own identity on a daily basis, that's a fact. I can't deny 24 years of existence. I can't deny I lived where I lived. When I turned 26, 27, 28, I already had all the information, all the truth I needed to choose what to allow, when to act, which side you're on.

Alejandro has a high opinion of how valuable the fight *Madres y Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo* has been. He truly admires the fact that they never tried to take justice in their own hands.

I like to explain that Abuelas have been searching for the truth for over 30 years. And they've always found it by means of justice and for justice. They've never taken justice in their own hands. In spite of what happened to them, you'll never hear any of them saying: 'We must take justice in our own hands!' In fact, I bet you've seen them walk past a repressor without doing anything at all. They've always fought to obtain justice using justice as a tool per se. Of course, it's difficult, but they find the truth.

Like all the other restored grandchildren, Alejandro highlights Abuelas' effort and courage.

The grandmothers in Abuelas are very different from one another. They're different women from different social classes, with different points of view, united for a cause. They have been fighting together for over thirty years. They've been slandered, threatened. But the strength of their unity has protected them. That's what we need, unity. People have different beliefs, different points of view. But when there is a cause in common, we must forget our differences and remain united.

What was the apparent reason for appropriating babies?

Currently, a trial is in process in order to find that out. I can tell you my experience: on one side, they thought that 'a guerrilla member's child was bound to be a guerrilla member.' Which was ridiculous, of course, because we're not necessarily going to do the same thing our parents did. Another reason was to hide a need: some women couldn't bear their own children so they appropriated us. In my case, when I was taken, my appropriators' son was fourteen years old. Since my appropriator's wife suffered from a thyroid problem, she

couldn't have any more babies. They thought that taking me was the easiest way to have another son.

ALEJANDRO TODAY

Alejandro insists on the importance of collective memory, because it brings society closer and closer together in search of Truth and Justice.

The march held every March 24 is highly important, not only to commemorate Collective Memory, but also because all the people join it. I remember being told it was a day to grieve, but to me, it's a day of joy, because we must celebrate that it's different than that March 24 in 1976. Therefore, every single March 24 is a celebration to me. I think that's how people see it today. Students and families attend and people raise diverse political flags. Everybody has the same purpose: to commemorate that day so it won't happen again. That shows social maturity. We may fight thousands of battles, but it's important for society to remain united at some specific events. Union means strength. If there is strength, you won't be hit again. I don't claim for justice in our own hands. I want Justice for Truth.

As regards student claims, Alejandro considers it is important for young people to stand up for their ideas.

I'm deeply honoured to join students in their claims and protests., because, when I see them, I see my parents fighting for their rights. Union makes people invincible.

Alejandro sees schools as the ideal setting to work for Collective Memory. He emphasises the importance of further development in the approach to Argentine History in schools so that children become involved in its construction.

The school is the right place to acquire knowledge, it's the place where teachers will help children reconstruct their history using the testimonies of those who went through an experience as a tool. They will let you reconstruct your story. This is valid, too.

After my appropriators' trial I was able to understand what was going on. Because reality is, I wasn't as lucky as children today are. They can study what happened during the Dictatorship at school. I was totally illiterate when it came to Argentine History. When you attend primary school, you learn the important days in your country's history. Later, in secondary school, you learn the details about those dates and you start to understand more. It's up to you to go

deeper into the subject or to prevent it from being ignored. I remember, when I was in the second year of secondary school we were to learn Argentine History. They told us there had been a coup d'état. Then, in 1983, it finished with the arrival of democracy. And that's it. I got back home and asked: 'Mum, Dad, what happened during the dictatorship?' They told me that the Military Forces, that is, they, had seized power because the people were upset and that the people were happy when they took over the government so that the State could be re-organised. After that, in 1983, when they considered that the government had been properly organised, they returned the power to the people in democracy, through elections. That was my father's 'fairy tale.' And, since he was my dad, I believed what he said and stopped asking questions.

That's why school matters: a good teacher will guide children and help them find answers, because it's important that every single child should find their own answers. In my experience, I wasn't given the option to investigate, to solve anything. Another advantage these days is the media. Some media didn't exist before. With the Internet, now we can access information that wasn't available before. I'm positive that, if it had been possible to google 'Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo' back in 1991 or '92, nothing would have come up.

FINAL WORDS

Alejandro is proud of the commitment of young people in the search for Truth, Collective Memory and Justice.

We can do a lot with your support. Because you play a fundamental role: you listen to us, you find information, you want to find out what happened, you ask questions to learn more about the subject, that's a lot of help. We are the ones who thank you, because you invite us to talk in order to help everybody think and grow.

Marcos Suárez Vedoya

Grandchild restored by *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*

Marcos was born on December 20, 1975. He is Hugo Alberto Suárez and María Teresa Vedoya's son. Both of them were from La Plata, in the province of Buenos Aires. Marcos spent only a few months with his parents: Teresa was kidnapped on October 20, 1976, and Hugo, in the first week of December in the same year. Some days later, Marcos was taken to *Casa Cuna* (Pedro de Elizalde Hospital for Children, in the city of Buenos Aires), where he was appropriated by an employee and was raised as a legitimate child with forged documents where he appeared as Gustavo.

Right after Hugo and Marco's disappearance, their family set on a relentless search for the three of them. They found Marcos 30 years later. Hugo and Teresa are still disappeared.

On March 30, 2006, Marcos had serious doubts about his identity and presented himself spontaneously at *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*. There, he was directed to CONADI (National Committee for the Right to Identity) so he could start the search for his true identity. On June 22, 2006, his blood was extracted to be tested against the National Bank of Genetic Data at Durand Hospital, in the city of Buenos Aires. He received the confirmation of his identity on September 12, 2006: he was Marcos Suárez Vedoya and his family was looking for him.

A long, winding road lay ahead of him in order to reconstruct his identity. *First, I felt that I'd been betrayed by whom I believed to be my mother. I felt terrible. After that, I was filled with joy because I found a lot of people who'd been looking for me: relatives and friends of my parents'.*

Currently, Marcos is a collaborator at *Abuelas*. He helps them find the missing grandchildren:

I admire Abuelas. Many of them died before they could meet their grandchildren. That's why I'm here, to help them.

When I saw my grandmother and hugged her, although we hadn't met in person, I felt we'd known each other from before.

MARCOS' STORY

Marcos Suárez Vedoya is Hugo Alberto Suárez and María Teresa Vedoya's son. He is grandchild restored No. 85.

I'll tell you how I found Abuelas. I was raised by two women: América, my adoptive mother, and Norma, her sister. My father's figure remained a mystery: I kept asking questions, but their answers didn't quite make sense. They said he'd died in an accident, but there was no evidence of the fact. Something else that called my attention was that there weren't any pictures of América pregnant. When I asked her why, she'd tell me that the bag where she kept those photos had been stolen from her on a bus. When I visited family (aunts, uncles, cousins), it felt as if I were only a visit: when I did something wrong, nobody said anything, and I thought that was strange. But the taboo here was my father. My friends helped me and encouraged me into contacting Abuelas because I was born in 1976. I was very scared. I was full of ghosts. But they encouraged me, so I went there. At Abuelas, I had an interview with a psychologist and I told him everything. I remember he told me I'd first contacted them to find a father, but I had found myself a big family, instead. As from April 2006, CONADI started searching for documents proving if América had given birth, but nothing was found. So, my DNA was tested at the National Bank of Genetic Data and I was informed that I was the son of María Teresa Vedoya and Hugo Alberto Suárez.

Marcos' search is connected with an Argentine fiction television series from 2006, *Montecristo*, where there is a story about the appropriation of a daughter of disappeared people. The day CONADI received the news that another grandchild had been found, Marcos' picture appeared on the show. Actress Viviana Saccone, as Victoria, held in her hands Marcos' picture as a baby. That picture had been given to the show producers by *Abuelas*. One of Marcos' grandparents had given it to them. Marcos did not watch the episode that day, but he had found some information already.

That's when I started to reconstruct my story. I was born on December 20, 1975, and was kidnapped, alongside my father, during the first days of December 1976. My mother had been disappeared before, in October 1976. That means I spent almost a year with my parents. With this information,

I went to talk with Norma (América died when I was 14). She apologised and justified the thirty years of lies by saying it was a 'family secret.' Then, she told me América had found me in Casa Cuna, where she used to work.

América had taken him from *Casa Cuna* and had registered him as her own son under the name of Gustavo. On September 12, 2006, Marcos recovered more than a name, he recovered his identity.

I found one of my grandmothers (my three other grandparents have passed away), my aunts and uncles, my cousins, and my mother's siblings. During the four following years, I met a lot of people who helped me learn my parents' story.

THE REUNION WITH HIS STORY

On September 12, 2006, Marcos was summoned by the CONADI to be given the news on his case. Here, he was able to have access to information about his parents for the first time.

His father, Hugo Alberto Suárez, aged 23, a university student, was taken by joint forces in Buenos Aires. He was holding his little boy, Marcos, in his arms. They were inseparable after María Teresa's abduction, on October 20, 1976.

Two days later, on September 14, 2006, Marcos met her grandmother, Modesta, his aunts and uncles and his cousins at *Abuelas*'.

When you saw your family, did you find any resemblances? Did you feel comfortable in their company?

Yes, of course. When I saw my grandmother, we hugged and, although I hadn't met her in person, I felt that we'd known each other from before. Later, I found out that I'd been in her arms many times when I was a baby...

Marcos and his grandmother on her father's side's meeting was a true reunion, because he and his father had been hiding in her house in the months before their kidnapping, and therefore, she also took care of him. That is how he found out that they started looking for them as soon as they had found out about their disappearance. All the family started their search through State agencies. Then, they resorted to the Catholic Church. Then, they went to hospitals. They only got negative answers, systematically. His

grandfather on his father's side, Luis Rodolfo Vedoya, reported the case and placed the request for Marcos' search at *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo's* building. Luis Vedoya passed away in 1999 and could not meet his grandson again.

That hug told me I'd been with her before, it's hard to explain. Estela Carlotto, president of Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, says we look very much alike.

How did you feel at that moment, on learning your story?

First, I felt I'd been betrayed by whom I believed was my mother. I felt terrible. After that, I was filled with joy because I found a lot of people who had been looking for me: relatives and friends of my parents'.

How do you feel towards the family who raised you?

Norma's the only one I could forgive because she raised me and took care of me after América's death. But América... she lied to me while she was alive.

Have you tried to reconstruct your parents' story?

Yes, I was told a lot of things about them and I feel I'm a bit like them, especially my spirit. I'm not sure if I would've acted like them if I'd lived then, but I inherited their fighting spirit. I found out that my mother was disappeared in October and I was at home with my father when he was disappeared in December. We lived in a guesthouse. I haven't been able to figure out how I ended up in Casa Cuna yet. Perhaps, the military left me there. Or maybe I was there, all alone in the guesthouse and a neighbour found me and took me to Casa Cuna. It's not clear yet.

During the first talk with his grandmother, which lasted over two hours, Marcos found out that his father was a true sportsman. He had been a football player for *Estudiantes de La Plata*, a famous Argentine football team. Apart from that, he practised fencing and played paddle ball. On the other hand, his mother liked to have people around the house, a situation his grandmother quite disliked. This is what he says, with a grin:

I got my passion for playing ball from my dad; and from mum, I got her fanaticism for rock music, breaded beef and chips, and that thing for being with many people all the time.

What was your relationship with your friends from secondary school who helped you like?

We talked a lot... I told them about my doubts, about the lack of information about my father, about the dates. I was very scared. But they encouraged me, they played a fundamental role. I think it took me so long because I didn't want to hurt Norma.

What was the point of view on the dictatorship in the house you grew up in?

Nobody talked about it. They were the 'from-home-to-work and to-home-from-work' kind of people. They weren't in favour of the dictatorship, but if we talked about a crime or a minor offence they'd say things like 'This didn't use to happen before.' I guess they didn't know who I was because children are abandoned at Casa Cuna on a daily basis. Perhaps, they suspected I was the son of disappeared people, but wouldn't say it...

MARCOS TODAY

When I talk to children, I get nervous at first: I'd always been on the other side before. As we move on into the talk, I relax and enjoy talking with them. I think this is very important because talking about the dictatorship is taboo. However, thanks to the last couple of governments, we started to bring up the subject.

The search for the 'missing brothers and sisters' is his headlight.

It's always good to be heard because you never know where the children that are still missing could be, then, if a friend of a person who's looking for their identity listens to my story, then it might be useful. This person could start investigating their story. That's what I enjoy the most because I've been asked all kinds of questions, even the least expected type. You should see the looks on their faces, when I tell my stories and answer their questions, my stories are terrible. I feel my story must be of use to open up young people's minds, especially those who know nothing about the subject; and, like I said before, to help the families who are still looking for their missing children.

Recovering his identity and his story has allowed him to take on new challenges and think of the future. Marcos has a son and a daughter and they keep him company along this journey of reunions

What is your view on activism in the 70's? Are you an activist today?

I've never been really interested in the subject and I'm not politically active. I'm here to tell my story, to help someone become aware the way I did. I can die in peace because I know who I am thanks to Abuelas.

What is it like to make 'the step' into changing your life?

It's very hard. You're afraid of what may come. You start wondering things like 'What did they do?' or 'Why am I here?'

FINAL WORDS

Marcos is a collaborator at *Abuelas* and helps to search for the four hundred missing grandchildren that have not yet been recovered, so that, like him, they can have access to their truths and recover their identities.

The biggest challenge is to maintain the peace the Abuelas have had for the job they do. I may have my own internal issues, but I can't just hate those who raised me because they didn't know. But Abuelas' mission is remarkable. Many of them left this world without finding their grandchildren. That's why I'm here to help them.

Mariana Zaffaroni Islas

Grandchild restored by *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*

Mariana was born on March 22, 1975 in the city of Buenos Aires. She is María Emilia Islas and Jorge Zaffaroni's daughter. Both of them were Uruguayan. She could only enjoy being with her parents for eighteen months, until September 27, when all three of them were abducted and taken to the Clandestine Detention Centre known as '*Automotores Orletti*'.

Her parents, María Emilia and Jorge were 23 and 24 respectively at the moment of their disappearance. They arrived in Argentina in exile from the coup d'état in Uruguay in 1973. They were student teachers and students' rights activists.

Mariana was appropriated by a person an acquaintance of Police Intelligence services. Even though she was registered as a child of their own under the name Daniela Romina Furci, her grandmothers set up an insatiable search for Mariana and her parents. María Ester Gatti, her grandmother on her mother's side, started actions at an international level and was able to obtain the first data on Mariana's whereabouts in 1983. María Ester was an unstoppable fighter and advocate for Human Rights in Uruguay. In 1979, she created the *Madres y Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos* (Mothers and Relatives of Uruguayan Detained-Disappeared) association. Mariana's picture as a baby became the icon of this battle.

Finally, in 1992, Mariana recovered her identity. Yet, it took her many years to accept her reality and be able to create long-lasting bonds with her family, who had been looking for her tirelessly for so many years.

The 1997 documentary "*Por esos ojos*" showcases her grandmother's search. The book *Los padres de Marian. María Emilia Islas y Jorge Zaffaroni:*

la pasión militante, by François Graña, reconstructs her parents' story based on their friends' stories and testimonies.

Mariana is leading the search for her sibling. Her mother was pregnant when she was abducted. She has taken her grandmother's words as her own: "We must never lose our hope and our determination to fight."

Her parents, Jorge and María Emilia, are still disappeared.

"We must rejoice in those of us who are here and in our fellow companions who are not. We must fulfil our duty in the past, in the present and in the future. We must build a better country. We must never lose our hope and our determination to fight." María Ester Gatti.

MARIANA'S STORY

She is Jorge Zaffaroni and María Emilia Islas' daughter. Both of them were Uruguayan. She was born on March 22, 1975, in Argentina. She only spent eighteen months with her parents.

Her story is a very good example that helps understand the massive repressive and coercive plan implemented in Latin America. Her parents arrived in Argentina from Uruguay hoping to find a land they could exile in from the dictatorship back in their country. They never imagined that, two years later, that dictatorial zeal would take over Argentina and they would be two of the many victims of State terrorism.

My parents were Uruguayan. They exiled in Argentina in 1974 because the Uruguayan dictatorship started in 1973. I was born in Argentina in March '75. On September 27, 1976, the three of us were abducted. I was only a year and a half old. We were taken to the clandestine detention centre 'Automotores Orletti', where my mother and I remained for some four or five days. My parents were transferred to Uruguay on a clandestine flight, where they probably died, and I was taken by an intelligence services agent, who raised me as his own child. My birth certificate and my name were changed.

She lived as Daniela for many years. Meanwhile, her whole family was looking for her, in fear, but never giving up, looking forward to the moment they would meet again. With the return of democracy, Mariana's search became public and received extensive attention from mass media.

Well, I had a very happy childhood until the return of democracy. At that moment, my family, who had been looking for me for so long, could make their search public and there were photos of me on the newspapers and on the

TV. My grandmother on my mother's side, María Ester, was a fierce defender of Human Rights back in Uruguay. Our abduction's case had become widely known because my grandmother was one of the most important advocates for Human Rights. She is like Estela de Carlotto here in Argentina.

María Ester Gatti, Mariana's grandmother on her mother's side, is an example of struggle in our neighbouring country. In 1979, she created the *Madres y Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos* (Mothers and Relatives of Uruguayan Detained-Disappeared) association, where she received all of the claims from different relatives. María Ester had only spent one month with her granddaughter before her parents were kidnapped and disappeared. Mariana's picture became the icon in the advocacy of Human Rights and the search for Truth and Justice. The first clues of Mariana's whereabouts reached *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo* in 1983. Still, the long path to recovering her identity was not easy. Her appropriators, under increasing pressure given the public interest in the case, decided to move to Paraguay to prevent Mariana from hearing the news of what was happening in Buenos Aires.

My foster parents felt threatened given the circumstances and, for fear I would be taken away from them, they decided we should move to Paraguay, where we lived for a few years. After a while, we returned to Buenos Aires. My relatives and my grandmothers had kept looking for me during those years. Until, in 1992, my foster parents were arrested and I was taken to Court, where the judge told me all my story and restored my legal identity.

Until then, Mariana had been Daniela Romina Furci, the name she had been given by her appropriators. She was sixteen years old and had her own story to understand in front of her, and that was not easy. It took her a long time to accept who she was.

This doesn't mean I was unhappy about it, I just rejected that name and that story as much as I could. Of course, I was encouraged to bond with my biological family who lived in Uruguay. I avoided doing it as much as I could. Very slowly, especially after getting married and becoming a mother, it was easier for me because the conversations weren't so much about who my parents had been and what had happened to me, they were more about my daughter, more loving chitchats, instead.

Mariana travelled to Uruguay in 2001 so she could reencounter her family and reconstruct her own story herself.

I finally made up my mind to travel to Uruguay in 2001. I kept postponing the trip because I wasn't ready to face everything it implied, given the repercussion of the case.

Little by little, she started to get close to her numerous family and her parents' friends. That allowed her to reconstruct her parents' image from a new perspective, with other aspects of their activism and youth.

THE LONG WAY TO RECOVERING THE TRUTH

You don't see what you don't want to see... You keep for yourself whatever makes you happy, and what lies on the other side of doubt is so terrible that it's safer to remain where you are. That's what we tell people today, that if in doubt about their identity, crossing on to the other side is not that terrible; we encourage them to go on with it.

That is exactly what she gained, she could cross on to the other side of doubt. Thus, little by little, she was able to reconstruct her story. She learned that her father was Jorge Zaffaroni and was 24 when he was abducted; her mother, María Emilia Islas, was 23 years old. Both were student teachers and were active members of the *Asociación de Estudiantes de Magisterio en la Resistencia Obrero Estudiantil* (Student Teachers Association – Worker Students Resistance). They married in 1973 and came to Buenos Aires when the military government started in Uruguay. Apart from that, she learned about both her grandmothers', María Ester Gatti and Marta Zaffaroni, struggle. They and all her other relatives looked for her from the very first moment.

Little by little, I got to meet the rest of my family, which is quite big. And, not long ago, I decided to meet my parents' friends, too, so I could somehow be told what they were like from a different perspective. I'm lucky to have had my parents' story told in a book, along with their friends, their fellow activists, their relatives, everyone who knew them and spent time with them.

Her parents' story has been reconstructed in the book *'Los padres de Mariana'* ("Mariana's Parents") by Graña. Here, the story is told from one of her parents' fellow activist's point of view and emphasises the transcendence of the case back in Uruguay.

What did you learn about your parents?

Back in Uruguay, my parents belonged to a student association which they joined at a very young age, they were still in secondary school. When the dictatorship started, they came to Argentina and worked with other fellow activists from Uruguay who were exiled here. They were working on the creation of a political party called Partido Para la Victoria del Pueblo (People's

Victory Party), which still exists in Uruguay. They were active members of that party, but took no actions against the Argentine dictatorship. They were trying to create a party to advocate for the return of democracy in Uruguay, they posed no subversion against the Argentine dictatorship. They were abducted by Uruguayan military forces in partnership with the Argentine military forces.

Was it hard for you to accept your parents' story and finish your relationship with your foster parents?

It's a very good question. It was so hard that I couldn't finish our relationship. Although our relationship today is nothing like it used to be, I didn't stop seeing them. The moment I found out they weren't my parents, nothing changed, at all. I didn't have a confirmation of my identity, either. Four years passed between finding out I was adopted and recovering my true identity. And, to be honest, that confirmation that they weren't my biological parents didn't change much as regards our relationship. I insist, at the beginning I rejected everything and pretended that had never happened. I think it was because of what accepting that tragic story had happened to me meant.

Mariana continues her relationship with her appropriators, although she would rather not call them like that, since she still has a bond of affection with them.

What do you call the people who raised you?

Technically, they are appropriators, although, in my case, I was raised in a very loving environment. Whenever I tell this my husband, he says: 'That would have made it, if they had been bad to you, apart from all that they'd already done to you.' In some cases, the appropriators did mistreat their children. My childhood memories are nice, and that somehow weighs. And, to be honest, I can't stand calling them like that. I'm not offended when others do, but I just can't. My adoptive parents did tell me terrible things about my parents and my biological family indirectly... that's one of the things I do reproach my adoptive mother. Although I know she had no idea who I was when I was brought to her. There was no connection between her and the incident. But when my picture went public, she couldn't say she didn't realise it was me in it, because it had been taken before I was brought home. And all that story about my family not being good people, that they didn't understand what they wanted, what they were looking for, that there must have been a reason why all that happened to them... unfortunate phrases that people repeat until today. Until one day I told

her: 'As you wish. But none of their actions justifies what happened.' Well, after that, she never mentioned it again.

When did you start to realise what was going on?

I was about ten when I started to hear about this, so I guess they must have discussed the issue somehow. Which side they were on was pretty clear. They supported the idea that it was a war, that whatever they did had been necessary. I had no idea what they had been done, but it had been necessary. After a while, I started to learn what had happened, and they started being more careful about what they said. They knew that, if they spoke their minds, I would probably be offended and leave. Then, they were very respectful, they didn't actually go deeply into it.

Mariana met her biological family in 1992. At first, the meetings were cold and distant. But as time went by, she was able to find the affection in the bond that united them. During the last couple of years, the relationship has grown closer.

MARIANA TODAY

Mariana is a lawyer and teaches at university. María Ester Gatti, her grandmother who never ceased to look and wait for her in spite of the pain, passed away on December 5, 2010. María Ester died in Mariana's company, without knowing her daughter and son-in-law's fate.

A few years ago, Mariana found out that her mother might have been pregnant when she was abducted, which means she may probably have a sibling born in captivity. Thus, her struggle is now more complex, because it is not only a claim for Collective Memory, Truth and Justice, but it is also her own search for a beloved, for a sibling.

Not long ago, I found out that my mum could have been pregnant when she was kidnapped. After talking about it with other grandchildren and from other people's own experience, I've found out that if she had been pregnant, she would have probably been kept alive until giving birth. So, there's a chance I have a brother or a sister. That's why this moment finds me checking out if the possibility is real and if I will eventually meet my possible brother or sister who, I repeat, may not exist.

How do you carry on the search for your sibling?

Doing what my grandmother and my grandfather did: spreading the case and bearing in mind that if someone has doubts about their identity, if something in their story doesn't quite match their information, he or she might be my sibling. Because all of us have found something we were told that didn't quite close. Something may be explained to you and you just may choose to stick to it and say: 'OK, that's good enough,' or you might feel there's something wrong and try to figure out what's behind that story. Then, I encourage people to go for it. I had an interview with someone convicted for taking part in my parents' abduction (he denies it, of course) to confirm whether my mother was pregnant. Obviously, he denied everything and said nothing about it. I go after those things that might help me come closer to the truth and use them.

The best way to pay homage to María Ester is that her granddaughter continues her work, just like she did when she started it 35 years ago.

I'm not sure whether I stand on solid ground, but I try to do what Abuelas and my grandmothers did. I talk to the media and encourage people who doubt their identities or the people close to them to reach us and see that this is done with love, only love.

Has there been any progress in your parents' trial?

Their abduction and subsequent disappearance have been tried in Uruguay. Many militaries have been convicted. I'm not sure whether it's everybody who took part in it because, actually, the visible leaders are known, but they refuse to talk or testify. So, we can't obtain more detailed information about what happened, or who did what in particular. Here, in Argentina, the trial against the plan for the systematic robbery of children is in process. Many of us must testify in it. Simultaneously, the trial against the abductions and disappearances that took place in the clandestine centre 'Automotores Orletti' is in progress. Not long ago, the first defendants were convicted and now the second part of the trial is about to start. Here, my appropriator is the only defendant. I asked not to testify in the trial.

What do you think about the possibility to find truth and justice?

Trials are taking place, but we can't find the truth. The prosecutors reconstruct the truth based on the testimonies they get. But when asked who kidnapped them, who tortured them, we can't learn that because their answers

are that nobody did anything, they don't accept any responsibility. I'm not sure there will be Justice, at least not at its fullest. But I find it really hard we will ever find the Truth.

Mariana's commitment increases on a daily basis. Her work has brought her close to the *Abuelas* and the grandchildren, she no longer feels the rejection she used to. Now, what weighs more is her motivation to find truth and justice instead of pain, lies and death.

Well, lately I've been closer to Abuelas through their grandchildren. In them, I've found history siblings, and, in spite of our differences, there's a really deep connection that brings us together which is common to all of us and keeps us company: the fact of having gone through everything that happened to us.

Are the associations for Human Rights in Argentina and in Uruguay related?

After the return of democracy in 1985, in Uruguay, there is an association called Madres y Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos (Mothers and Relatives of Uruguayan Detained-Disappeared) that concentrates all relatives in one organisation. My grandmother was one of its founding members, she would travel to Argentina frequently and was in touch with Abuelas constantly. Estela used to tell me: 'Of course I remember your grandmother; she always came here.' They travelled together many times to press charges, they shared whatever news they had. Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo would contact her in case of news and she would travel immediately. The two organisations are 'related,' or so to speak.

FINAL WORDS

The recovery of identity is a long, winding road only known by those who have really had to go through it. In some cases, like in Mariana's, it is the little details that make her feel 'home.'

I guess the funniest thing that happened to me was on my first trip to Uruguay to meet my family. It was summer. I only knew a few of them. We were at the beach and I noticed that everybody's toes, including mine, were exactly alike. It's a minor detail, but to me, it meant: 'Well, I belong here, in this place.' Because, after all, I don't actually look like any of my relatives from here or from there. But my toes and my ears do. So, you can feel you belong there, that it is your place.

**Our Leading Citizens
go to school**

Adolfo Pérez Esquivel

Nobel Peace Prize Winner 1980

President of the *Fundación Servicio Paz y Justicia* (SERPAJ)

He was born on November 26, 1931 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. He studied Architecture at the Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes in Buenos Aires and at the Universidad Nacional de La Plata, he worked as a teacher for 25 years. In 1971, he began to get involved in movements that fought for peace and justice.

In 1973, he founded the *Paz y Justicia* newspaper, which soon became the summit of the pacifist movement and the defence of Human Rights in the Latin American area of influence, and the Paz y Justicia Ecumenical Movement with various Christian groups. Two years later, he participated in the creation of the Permanent Assembly for Human Rights.

Starting in 1976, he dedicated himself to designing aid and development programs for communities of Latin American indigenous peoples, labour movements and other social groups in vulnerable situations throughout the world. During 1977 and 1978, he was imprisoned as politically persecuted by the military dictatorship of de facto President Rafael Videla. During that period in prison, he received the Pope John XXIII Memorial Peace Prize awarded by Pax Christi International.

In 1980, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his fight for Human Rights and shortly afterwards he was appointed a member of the executive committee of the United Nations Permanent Assembly on Human Rights.

Pérez Esquivel has contributed to numerous international missions, such as 'Boat for Peace to Nicaragua', 'Boat for Solidarity to Poland' and conflict resolution campaigns in South Africa, Afghanistan, the Middle East and Tibet, among others. Among his innumerable literary works, Walking

Together with the People (1995) stands out, where he recounts his experiences in the struggle for the ideal of Non-Violence in Latin America.

Currently, Esquivel dedicates his time to the *Fundación Servicio Paz y Justicia* (SERPAJ) and the Project 'Aldea Niños para la Paz', which assists numerous minors in a state of social risk.

The past helps us understand what previous generations and each one of us have lived through. Memory is not to stay in the past, but to illuminate the present and rebuild hope.

ADOLFO, HIS ORIGINS AND HIS EDUCATION

Pérez Esquivel comes from a humble family. His father was an immigrant who came to our country in search of a better present. At the age of ten, he began working as a newspaperman. He always liked to read a lot: at that time, Gandhi's autobiography came into his hands, one of the books that "changed his life".

I was a kid who ate one day and not for the next two days. My father was an immigrant, a fisherman, who came here like so many immigrants, so I started working at the age of ten: I sold newspapers. When I was a boy, there was a bookseller in Plaza de Mayo from whom I bought used books because I couldn't buy new ones. One day he told me: 'Kid, I have two books. I'll give you one, and you pay me the other when you can.' And so it was, the book he gave me was Mahatma Gandhi's Autobiography: My experiences with the truth, a book that marked me forever. The other book was The Mountain of Seven Circles, by Thomas Merton.

He had a Christian education that led him to social work in poor neighbourhoods, villages and also in other communities in Latin America. In these years, he met his "teachers" of life.

I have a Christian background, I was educated by the Franciscans. Since I was a kid I worked in parishes and neighbourhoods. First I did it in San Telmo, where I lived, and then also in La Boca. Little by little I became aware of what poverty was, a poverty that I also lived because I was never given anything. As a teenager I began to travel to Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay, getting closer to the Latin American reality. There were many people who helped me to think, to work, to find the ways. My teachers were indigenous people, peasants, men and women in different parts of the world. To this day, I'm an apprentice of life, a person who shares with people, convinced that this is what makes us grow as people. Thus, one is learning in life, growing and assuming

commitments. Since I was a child I wanted to be an artist –I'm a painter and a sculptor–, I didn't want to be a professional, I wanted to start a family, like everyone else. But as you grow, you become aware, you move forward and you commit yourself.

His approach to the problem of the needs of the native communities led him to design an aid and development program for these peoples in 1976, when little was said about the rights and the subjugation they had suffered throughout history.

It's all related to my origin. My grandmother was a Guaraní Indian, she was a woman from the jungle, therefore, she was a savage. Being a savage means to be a people of the jungle. Since I was a child, I suffered a lot of discrimination at school because the teachers told us that the indigenous people were lazy people who didn't want to work, that they did bad things. But none of those teachers said how these people had had their lands taken away from them, how they were expelled, how they were slaughtered to this day. So, for me, it was a challenge to respect the life of native peoples, their languages, their cultures, their spirituality, their rights to the land. What does Mapuche mean? 'Mapu' is land and 'che' is a person, 'Mapuche' means 'people of the land'. We've held two congresses on languages: in the first congress on languages, 640 delegates came from all over the continent, from Mexico, from the United States - indigenous people of the United States - to Patagonia. And there we tried to share cultural diversity. We are multilingual peoples and we have to know how to respect each other, appreciate the deep richness of other peoples. We shouldn't despise it and exploit it, as we're currently doing. That's understanding the deep meaning of life. I learned that from that woman, my grandmother, who taught me to listen to silence. My grandmother never spoke Spanish well. She was illiterate, but she was a wise woman because she understood the deep meaning of life. One has to learn to listen, to get closer to people, to educate ourselves isn't simply to be/ get informed.

ADOLFO AND HIS RESISTANCE TO THE DICTATORSHIP

I'm a survivor of the death flights, of the prisons and of torture. But how many boys and girls disappeared! The struggle of the Madres is that of all of us. We fought because we wanted to build another country. The 30,000 disappeared didn't fight for the sake of it, they did it to have a better country, for children not to die of hunger and preventable diseases. The fight was for a sovereign country. The military didn't go insane and began to kill people: a model of domination was imposed on the entire Latin American continent. It was an

imposed policy, a policy of terror, which had very clear objectives. They sought to impose a political, economic and cultural project that fundamentally led to rob the new generations of life hopes and their dreams.

Adolfo was imprisoned between 1977 and 1978 at the disposal of the National Executive Power.

For me it was a very hard experience to be in jail because I went through torture, but I also lived through resistance. In prison I was a free man, they could lock up my body, but they couldn't lock up my spirit, they couldn't lock up my thinking and my ability to resist. Inside the jail, I learned to be resilient in the face of injustice. They never managed to dominate me and they never will. If we allow ourselves to be dominated by fears, we lose the most fundamental quality of the human being, which is the condition of being a person. And fears must be overcome. You have to keep working despite everything.

What do you think were the causes for depriving you of your liberty?

Well, when they put me in jail, I was at the disposal of the Executive Power. I was never tried, I was never accused of anything, they just took me out of the way like they did to so many others. Some were killed, so I am a survivor.

Did you think you were putting your life in danger?

I never wanted to put my life in danger by any means. It'd be suicidal! No, what I did was try to commit myself to the cause of my people, period. We knew the risks we had and the difficulty that the country was experiencing. But I love life. I'm not suicidal.

What changed in you after those two years in prison?

We're never the same. After living that experience, we change in thought, in attitudes, in values. We have to learn from experiences, good and bad, to be better.

ADOLFO AND THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

During his imprisonment, he received, among other distinctions, the Memory of Peace from Pope John XXIII. In 1980, he received the Nobel Peace Prize for his commitment to the defence of Human Rights in Latin America. His speech in Oslo, where he received this distinction, was not broadcast in the Argentine media at the time.

Did you ever imagine winning the Nobel Peace Prize?

Not at all. I never looked for any kind of prize. It came and I accepted it, I said it from the first moment: I didn't assume it personally, but on behalf of all the peoples of Latin America, of all those who fight and work for peace every day. Shortly after the 30th anniversary of that award, I continue to believe that it's an instrument to bring the voice to the Latin American peoples.

ADOLFO AND DEMOCRACY

What is Democracy for you?

Democracy is not just putting the vote in a ballot box. That is an exercise of democracy, but it isn't democracy. Democracy means that our children do not starve, that we apply the right to education and health for all, that there's work, freedom of the press media. Human Rights are indivisible values of democratic construction. They mean putting into practice the exercise of democracy. If they're violated, democracy weakens and ceases to be democracy, it ceases to be real and becomes only a formality. Democracy goes beyond the formal, it's a daily practice. Democracy isn't a gift, it's a daily conquest of each one. We've walked part of this road and now it's your turn to continue. You're the young people who have to keep building with hope the life of a country. In a democracy, the people rule through their representatives, but the problem is when our representatives don't rule for the people, but for their own interests. Democracy must be participatory: if we want the people to rule, the people have to participate and demand their rights.

For the Nobel Prize, democracy is "a space to be built" linked to the recovery of natural resources, social equality and economic sovereignty.

And what do you propose?

I don't belong to any political party, but I'm clear about what the alternatives are. For example, among other things, we're demanding, first of all, that the country doesn't pay an immoral and illegitimate debt. Second, we aren't a sovereign country because we don't have any control over our resources. We must recover our energy sources, nationalize oil, gas and mining again, prevent the destruction of the country's biodiversity, and stop land clearing. It has to be through political action, the unity of the people, and through social, cultural and political consciousness. Unfortunately, we don't see this in political parties. This must be changed, we need a participatory democracy. Why are they preventing the application of the 1994 National Constitution? Why aren't plebiscites, popular consultations and referendums called?

Pérez Esquivel highlights the recovery of the sovereignty of Bolivia and the vindication of the indigenous peoples carried out by that country.

Evo Morales, president of Bolivia, an Aymara indigenous, is claiming the rights of the original peoples, he's recovering the sovereignty of the Bolivian people. Bolivia, like many other countries, had a high rate of illiteracy and today UNESCO has declared Bolivia free of illiteracy and that was thanks to educational campaigns, literacy campaigns, permanent work. And let's hope that at some point in Argentina - which had previously overcome illiteracy, but which unfortunately today has many illiterates - we can say the same.

He also highlights the Bolivian government plan on natural resources.

I'm going to give you, as an example, what Evo Morales did in Bolivia. First, he recovered the basic resources of Bolivia. They were in foreign hands and he nationalized them. Thus he recovered the structure of the country. In Argentina, during the Menem era, which was a disaster like the dictatorship, everything was privatized and all resources were given to large transnational companies. If we don't have resources, what sovereignty are we talking about? To extract gold and silver, two highly polluting products are needed, such as mercury and cyanide. The destruction of the glaciers means that the country will be polluted because 60% of the water from the glaciers is what irrigates our soil. Transgenic soy produces contamination to the country and the destruction of the ecological system in such a way that within a few years it'll be scorched earth. Today, the impenetrable in the Chaco is penetrable, it was called impenetrable because of the great natural reserves that no longer exist today. How do we change this? With the participation of the people, with the capacity for social resistance - not the resistance to break things, be careful with that, destroying isn't constructive. You have to think, the great challenge is creativity. The rebellion of the students of '68 in Paris was based on 'Imagination to power' or 'Let's be realistic, demand the impossible'. This is the challenge: you have

to think about, don't stop with what I'm telling you, investigate, analyze, have a critical conscience, don't get carried by the nose even by a Nobel Prize. You have to be formed as free men and women. Don't accept the chains - which are usually the most dangerous - of single thought. Have your own thoughts, analyze things yourself.

ADOLFO AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Human Rights aren't limited only to Collective Memory and Justice for the disappeared, the tortured. Human Rights are the right that no household should lack a plate of food, that everyone has education and health, that families have a job, a decent home, that small and medium rural and industrial producers play the role that belongs to them in the country.

From that view we can understand Human Rights and from there we also have to think about what's happening in our country and in the rest of the Latin American countries. If we're only talking about the dictatorship, we're missing the point because everything that happened during the dictatorships today shows its consequences: the increase in illiteracy, hunger, poverty, the closure of sources of work. Human Rights have to be seen in their entirety, not only backwards: the consequences of the past must be seen in the present.

And, what do you feel when you see a child whose rights are violated?

I try to turn to the authorities, to the organizations that can really solve these problems. You can't do things alone, that's why we work with organizations, we try to claim the rights of children and see how to help them. Many times I disagree with rulers of countries when they want to lower the age of imputability of the boys to fourteen years to send them to jails. We visit prisons, they are human deposits. We've delivered the report in the Province of Buenos Aires on the institutes for minors and prisons and it's a very hard report. I'm the president of the Provincial Committee for Collective Memory, which has jurisdiction in the province of Buenos Aires, but the problem of prisons is tremendous at the national level. The representatives and senators who support the imputability project should be asked if any of them ever approached that boy on the street and asked him about his safety. We all want security, and this isn't solved by penalizing young people, but through social policies, guidance, education, psychological and medical assistance. We work 24 hours a day with these people, we have social programs, we have 24-hour guards. Some of the programs are carried out with the City Government and others with the Province

of Buenos Aires, and we monitor the actions of judges, police, the treatment given to children in prisons, the wrongly named 'Institute for Minors'. This, then, is a long journey, we've been working on for more than thirty years.

What advice would you give the government to be more attentive to the needs of children?

We've been working with some areas of the government. I think there are programs in the country that serve the minority, but they aren't enough. Sometimes, when I meet with the ministers, I see that there isn't enough budget, perhaps the task of orientation programs should be strengthened.

ADOLFO, EDUCATION AND COLLECTIVE MEMORY

Pérez Esquivel is an educator and finds in school and community work a vital space to "build our shared memory".

Collective Memory isn't meant to keep us in the past. Memory illuminates the present. Because it's through the present where we can generate life, thought, behaviours, values. People's lives always walk between anguish and hope. In order to build memory, we have to have a deep sense of hope because it's the only thing that gives us the strength to build a new society. There isn't a people without collective memory. The peoples without collective memory disappear. There is no person without memory. Each person has a personal memory and a shared memory. I prefer to raise discussions from a collective memory, as in the case of education. That is why it is so important to work on collective memory in schools, in universities, to begin to see our history from a collective memory standpoint. Many times, in schools - I've been a teacher for more than 40 years - history is taught as a thing of the past. Our so-called heroes are put in bronze and polished and are never seen as people with their conflicts and their experiences. This teaching was disastrous, it showed us an unreality. For this reason, collective memory is very important: opening these spaces in educational settings, in teacher training, because active participation in the teaching process allows awareness of it. Paulo Freire argued, regarding the interrelation of the educator and the learner, that we should educate ourselves together because, if not, it's an authoritarian education, an imposed education that isn't education. I remember once, speaking with my friend José Saramago, in a meeting we had at the Polytechnic University of Barcelona, he said: 'the school doesn't educate' and there was a great debate. I consider that

the school informs, the school instructs, but the ones who educate are the family and the community. These are the spheres in which direct contact is established, although parents often refer everything to the school. What is the parents' involvement in education? Are you only educated at home? Education is in the community. From there, we can recreate a liberating education, an education with a critical conscience and in this, collective memory is fundamental. It's the only way in which we can build another country: a sovereign country, free, with dignity, where children do not die of hunger, in which there are no unemployed...

Can you tell us how you communicate and relate with your students?

I'm going to give a practical example: in this room we close the door and if someone has to come in I have to open the door for them. Now why do I open the door? The problem is what I open the door for. I can also open the door and close it again and there's no communication, no dialogue. Many times I meet my students, even at university, and you have to arouse their interest. How do we do it? Through the word. The word is energy. With one word we can love, with one word we can destroy. Communication is often in the look, the power to hear, listen; we can see without looking and we can hear without listening. Then, we open that possibility of intercommunication. I learn a lot with my students at university, I have a method that I'm going to share with you. For example, in the university classes, in courses of 280 students, of which about 30 are foreigners, we plan to talk about collective memory, human rights, the culture of peace. But how can we talk about human rights if they don't know each other or don't look at each other? The first thing we have to do is try to communicate, to get to know each other. Say our names because when you say your name you are recognized as a person. How simple! How do we communicate with young people? What is the relationship we establish? Are we there on the podium and we look down and the one who is below looks up or do we put ourselves on an equal footing? It isn't that the teacher's going to transform into the student because they represent different life experiences, and different knowledge, but the student has knowledge. So, we learn from each other.

How is collective memory learned and how is it transmitted?

We are transmitters of memory. At this moment, we are survivors, but at some point we'll pass it on to younger generations. In native peoples, there's a transmission of the word and I believe this is important, not just writing.

Recording word and image is very important. History is often written by the rulers. So we must try to write history through the voices of the peoples, what they're doing, to collect testimonies, to meet harsh realities. What for? To know where we stand today, what country we want, where we are going, what path of hope is there to build because, otherwise, we're left on the path of existential anguish.

What do you take away from the exchanges in schools?

You always take away things in your mind and heart. The way children look at you, the attention, the bombardment of questions that begin to arise in them, a series of concerns. Young children already have experiences, good and the other ones, so for me it's important in what way they do catharsis or communicate. I believe that all this is valuable, we have something to share and something to receive. I always learn from human groups. When I go to the indigenous communities, the things I learn are incredible: to celebrate the earth, the Pachamama is the altar and there we celebrate, the seeds to plant are blessed, these are things that seem so simple, but have a deep, cosmic meaning. I believe that we must recover that in education, the deep sense of communication with mother earth, with the seed, with the treatment we give to water, to brother tree, not to punish the animal. And how we communicate. This is education, it isn't just knowledge. That is, you have the seed and you put it in fertile soil, but you can't force it because it dies. It has its time, as every child, who also has his own time. And not all germinate at the same time. That seed has to be watered properly. You don't have to put too much water because you drown it and you shouldn't leave it without water because you dry it. This is the daily attention in education for that seed to germinate, strengthen, grow and bear fruit. That is education ...

ADOLFO, PRESENT AND FUTURE

Currently, Pérez Esquivel continues with intense social work from SERPAJ both in the country and throughout Latin America. He also promotes the project 'Aldea Niños para la Paz' on environmental matters, he is working on the design of an international campaign to create an International Criminal Court on the environment.

I represent the Servicio Paz y Justicia in Latin America. We began our work in 1960 from Mexico and, currently, we are in fifteen Latin American countries with different programs with indigenous communities. In Argentina,

we have two youth villages for peace, one in General Rodríguez and the other in Pilar. We also work with poorly called "street" children, who are victims of violence, paco (cocaine base paste), prostitution, persecution. We provide support and orientation in the search for solutions. Pollution problems are very serious in the world, they demand a worldwide organized work. With the Academy of Environmental Sciences of Venice, we're going to launch an international campaign for the creation of the Criminal Court on the Environment. Along a different line of work, we've just published all the works on the role of the Armed Forces in the construction of democracy, in conjunction with these forces and with the Federal Police so that their members change their mentality and are at the service of the people and don't end up being occupation troops of their own country. If there's no change in this sense, we can't build a country. For example, once we were in a meeting on Collective Memory, in Puerto Belgrano, talking to the admirals, and at one point they told me: 'Look, Esquivel, when all this happened, we were boys, we were sixteen or seventeen years old. We know that as members of the Navy we have to carry a very heavy backpack that we didn't load, but as an institution we have to take it on.' And that was very important because I answered them: 'Look, we can't build a country project if the forces are absent, but these should be forces that are at the service of the people and not as occupation troops for their own people.' Personally, I'm working with problems in Africa and Asia. I was in Iraq twelve days after the bombings by the United States and Great Britain on the City of Baghdad, I travelled 3,000 kilometres of desert between Jordan and Baghdad.

What leads you to continue working in the defense of Human Rights?

A life commitment and a necessity because, if we do nothing and only criticize without building, we don't advance. Many times I travel to different parts of the world. I remember my friend Leónidas Proaño, a bishop from Ecuador (they called him the bishop of the Indians because he was a lot in the indigenous communities) who died several years ago. He taught us a method to work on literacy with the communities: 'together we are a force, together we can lift this, but if I have to make a greater effort, I need to ask each of you to add your hand to mine. If we're able to unite, this has a name that is fundamental: solidarity. Together we can build, together we can create, together we can think, let's start thinking together.' Education must be the practice of freedom.

Will you ever be able to retire?

Retire? Sure, when I become 250 years old, I'm going to retire.

FINAL WORDS

Adolfo transmits in every word and in every gesture his ideas about freedom and the path that brings us closer to it. This narration is an example of his wisdom:

I want to leave you with a story: a teacher who fought for freedom was arrested. Her eight-year-old daughter was waiting to visit her mother in jail and the girl drew a picture for her. They were birds and the happy girl went to the visit with that drawing. When the prison guard saw it, he said: 'No, birds cannot enter, birds are free and the prisoners cannot think about freedom.' Then, he tore the drawing apart and the girl was very sad. The girl anxiously waited to visit her mother again and did not draw a picture of birds this time, she made a picture of trees, several trees, and the guard, when he saw the picture, said: 'Yes, trees can enter because trees are always in the same place, on the ground, and they can't escape.' Then the happy girl handed the drawing to her mother and said: 'Mom, I brought you a drawing of trees.' The mother said: 'Thank you, love, it's very beautiful! And what are these colourful little fruits on the tree?' And the girl said: 'Ssshh, mum, don't speak loud because the guard can hear. Those are not fruits, they are the eyes of the birds hidden in the foliage of the trees', from 'Forbidden birds', by Eduardo Galeano.

Cecilia De Vincenti

Azucena Villaflor's daughter

As the daughter of Azucena Villaflor, one of the founders of *Madres de Plaza de Mayo*, who also became a direct victim of the last dictatorship, Cecilia transformed her life from her early years through active social participation and work in defence of Human Rights.

My mother was a woman committed to her family and to society. She was always attentive to everything that happened to us, she took care of household matters, she cooked our favourite dish for the four of us and I also remember that, as I was her only daughter, she took me to whatever activity I chose to do, be it: folk dance, guitar, or drawing.

In addition to being a very committed wife and mother, Cecilia highlights Azucena as a woman who was always attentive to what was happening outside the doors of her home. The family lived in Sarandí, a quiet town in the Avellaneda district, where the neighbours knew each other. When Azucena was young, natural gas service passed very close, but it did not reach her block. So, she busied herself gathering signatures to ask the company to extend the line, and she succeeded.

And from her social commitment, she did what she could to help those most unprotected by the State. 'Your customers are coming,' her children would say to her when they saw some boys approaching each afternoon to look for food. Azucena would wait for them with a sandwich. Always.

CECILIA'S STORY

Were politics present at home?

When my brother Nestor joined the Juventud Peronista (Peronist Youth Movement) my family began to talk more about politics and there were arguments because my father would tell him that what he was doing was pointless. My father believed that the poor did not make an effort to work. My brother would answer and explain about the differences between the possibilities of study, work, access to housing and health... My mother, different from my father, would support my brother's points. It was only when she disappeared that my father was able to rethink some ideas, which he had held to even after the disappearance of my brother.

Nestor began his social activism by going to the slums to teach reading and writing. Later, he left his job in an architecture studio (he was studying for a degree), became proletarianized and started working at La Bernalosa.

He was consistent in his words and actions.

Cecilia turned fifteen the first year of the last coup d'état, the year her brother disappeared: on November 30, the Army kidnapped him from his home in Villa Dominico along with his partner, Julia.

After the serious news, both Azucena and her husband, Pedro, began looking for him. While Pedro was in charge of making calls to commissioners or authorities with whom he had some contact, trying to obtain help, she got a lawyer to sign the habeas corpus and checked in every hospital, police station and barrack.

How do you remember the time of creation of *Madres*?

I know that my mother first went to the League for the Rights of Man and came back disappointed, because they asked her the same thing the military wanted to know: where Nestor participated. 'What do they care if he is a peronist, a radical or from the Communist Party? The only relevant thing is that our children do not appear', she told us angrily. Then, she realized that mothers had to get together in a different way.

And they made it happen.

It's that in the Church they felt rejected by the priests, the soldiers always gave them the same answer and by necessity they transformed all the pain they had into love and action.

How did they organize themselves?

My mother recognized women because she ran into them in the corridors of the barracks, the vicariato castrense, the hospitals. Then, one day she proposed that they meet in Plaza de Mayo, 'which is where our elders used to meet.' The first meeting was on April 30, 1977, a Saturday, and fourteen mothers in total came. But they decided to change to Thursdays so that others could join in and so that their demonstration would be more visible to society and to the Casa Rosada.

"Azucena, do not expose yourself, you do not realize the political moment that we are living," Pedro repeated. And he also asked her to take care of Cecilia and Tomás, who were the youngest, although this woman who loved Evita never held them back despite her new obligations.

I admire my mother for the movement she managed to organise, but also because she never lost the reins of the house, the morning mate was always ready for my father, our after school snack and homemade dinner for the family.

Did you still have a certain joy despite your brother's disappearance?

No, that was lost. We didn't celebrate birthdays or the end of the year. It was a normal home, but without joy.

Did you understand at that time the magnitude of the task faced by your mother?

No, not at all. I saw her meeting with other ladies who I knew were trying to find her children, but was not aware of the significance they were going to have. Nor did we think that the military were so bothered by all this. In that sense, I had believed what my mother said: 'We're women who are looking for our children, how are they going to do something to us?'

AZUCENA'S DISAPPEARANCE

The night before her disappearance I knew that something had happened because I saw her with teary eyes and she told me that they had taken other Madres from the Church of the Holy Cross. She was distraught because she didn't know how to tell Dad.

But she never did because the next morning, on December 10, 1977, the date on which a press release was published demanding information on the disappeared, Azucena was kidnapped in the middle of the street in a military operation.

We had to tell my father about it... My older brother took care of that while I looked for my mother's blue notebook and told the other mothers. Before my Dad arrived, I put the papers with the names of the disappeared that they had collected for the press release in a shopping bag and got it out of my house.

The following days were days of enormous anguish. Pedro suffered the most, but everyone expected that at any moment Azucena would be released and would come back. It was her husband who resumed her steps: he got a lawyer to sign a habeas corpus, he went to marches every Thursday, and he went to meetings with foreign organizations. A couple of years later, Cecilia got a job near the centre and she herself began to integrate the rounds after Pedro's death, in January 1981.

FINAL WORDS

Today, more than four decades in retrospective, I can see in another way the historical role played by my mother and the other women who fought to search for their children and grandchildren. It seems to me quite incredible that it occurred to them, at that moment and with all the dangers around them, to go to the Plaza with the aim of looking for their children. I think they always understood that this collective fight was necessary, but they didn't come to imagine then that it was going to become a worldwide movement that would set a precedent for the struggle of women. I'm proud of the achievements made by Madres and all Human Rights movements thanks to their perseverance and unity.

