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ReVista

HARVARD REVIEW OF LATIN AMERICA

MEMORY

IN SEARCH OF HISTORY AND DEMOCRACY

EDITOR'S LETTER BY JUNE CAROLYN ERLICK

The Past Is Present

Irma Flaquer's image as a 22-year-old Guatemalan reporter stares from the pages of a 1960 *Time* magazine, her eyes blackened by a government mob that didn't like her feisty stance. She never gave up, fighting with her pen against the long dictatorship, suffering a car bomb explosion in 1970, then being dragged by her hair from her car one October ten years later and disappearing.

I knew she was courageous. I became intrigued by her relentless determination—why did she keep on writing? However, the case was already old even in 1996, when the Inter American Press Association (IAPA) assigned me the investigation for its new Impunity Project. Irma was one of Guatemala's 45,000 disappeared—one of thousands in Latin America, men and women forcibly vanished, mostly killed. Yet I learned from the investigation that disappearance is a crime against humanity, a crime not subject to a statute of limitations.

And I also learned from Irma's courageous sister Anabella that it really is a crime that never ends. "They took my moral support, my counselor; in killing my sister, they stole my human right," Anabella told IAPA members at a Los Angeles meeting. "I was orphaned again, condemned for the rest of my life to not know what happened to my sister..."

Anabella taught me that the past is always present. In Miami, where she has lived for more than 40 years, she might just seem to be the pet-loving, doting grandmother that she indeed is. She might have chosen to remain invisible—a silent victim.

Instead, spurred by my investigation, Anabella's determination and the steadfast leadership of the IAPA's Ricardo Trotti, Irma's case became the first the organization brought before the Inter American Commission on Human Rights. In 2001, in a so-called friendly agreement with the IAPA, the Guatemalan state acknowledged its responsibility. Reparations were paid; monuments were built; scholarships were set up. And a funeral mass was finally held in Guatemala for the disappeared journalist. Ricardo and Anabella showed me how reconstructing memory could help strengthen democratic institutions.

My investigation turned into a book, ***Disappeared: A Journalist Silenced, The Story of Irma Flaquer*** (Seal Press 2004), but when I sought to publish it in Spanish, I was told, "People are tired of hearing about the war. They want to forget the past." I wanted to tell the publishers that it wasn't the past; it was the present; survivors still feel the guilt and the pain and the anguish of not knowing; perpetrators have not been brought to justice; Irma's bones have not been found.

Finally, after many years, the book has appeared in Spanish: ***Desaparecida, Una Periodista Silenciada*** (Sophos/Hoja del Norte, 2012). I get e-mail messages now from young Guatemalans wanting to know about Irma's legacy.

That is why this ***ReVista*** issue on Memory and Democracy, which accompanies two months of events and a major conference at the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, focuses on the present. It highlights the disappeared, the press, education, museums, and the fascinating ongoing experiment in Colombia—a laboratory for historical memory. These are all ways in which the past becomes the present and morphs into the future.

I'm tempted to dedicate this issue to the memory of Irma Flaquer, who would not be silenced until she was forcibly taken on October 16, 1980—33 years ago. But instead, I'll dedicate it to Anabella and to all the relatives and friends and witnesses who keep the struggle for truth and justice alive, who have taught us that the past is never really past.

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Director
Merilee S. Grindle

Executive Director
Kathy Eckroad

REVISTA

Editor-in-Chief
June Carolyn Erlick

Copy Editor
Anita Safran

Publication Interns
Gabriela Farrell
Carlos Schmidt Padilla
Alicia Zamora

Design
2COMMUNIQUÉ
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Printer
P & R Publications

Contact Us
1730 Cambridge Street
Cambridge, MA 02138
Telephone: 617-495-5428

Subscriptions and Reader Forum
jerlick@fas.harvard.edu

Website
www.drclas.harvard.edu/publications/revistaonline

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ON THE COVER

Marcos Adandia made this portrait of Ana Barimboim de Kierszenowicz, mother of Clara Kierszenowicz, arrested and disappeared in Argentina on October 28, 1976.

Memories and Their Consequences

BY MERILEE S. GRINDLE

I VISITED THE MUSEO DE LA MEMORIA Y LOS Derechos Humanos in Santiago, Chile, two years ago. It was a heart-rending experience. To enter the museum, I moved through a stark and subterranean passage and found myself in a somber space of transition. There, a wall of photographs transported me back in time—long ago in a messy graduate student lounge in Cambridge, Massachusetts, four of us stood in shock, watching television footage of airplanes strafing the government palace, La Moneda, tanks rumbling down city streets, and people fleeing, stumbling, looking backward in fear. I remembered how we began to sense that we were witnessing the end of a dream shared across a student generation that believed in the possibility and promise of peaceful revolution. For us, these images from Chile in 1973 evoked Armageddon. In Cambridge, we held hands and we wept.

Almost four decades later at the museum, I watched the same television footage of airplanes, tanks, and people and I stopped to read the newspaper articles and the red and black posters promising a new world. The artistic energy of the protesters lived on in their communication: injustice and inequity could be vanquished. Then I was confronted with how this message had been rebuffed—I walked past the iron bed intended to accentuate electrical shocks, the tiny shoes and dolls of the children held captive with their parents, the letters, journals, and mementoes of lives cut short. Gradually, however, the museum's prison-like feel gave way to an architecture of light and hope as the exhibits unfolded over four floors.

Along the way was a soaring atrium, lined with candles, the photos of the disappeared forming a broad, vertical collage, faces caught in a moment. This was my generation. Had these young people not been killed without a trace—disappeared—they would now be active in many walks of life: they would have become parents and grandparents; they would have experienced the hopes, disappointments, joys, and sorrows that the rest of us have known. Some might have made important contributions to the arts, or to the sciences, or to public life. Some might have continued to work for a more just society. In Argentina, Brazil, Guatemala, Peru, Uruguay, El Salvador, Paraguay and other countries also, so many lives of that revolutionary generation of the 1960s and 1970s are lost to us.

At the same time, all these years later, my own understanding of the very real threats embodied in radical social and political change had grown, and I could imagine the extent to which these young people represented a scourge of upheaval and insecurity to many in their societies. I appreciated the idealism of the young, and hoped I had not turned cynical in wondering what might have happened had the forces of order not put a stop to their experiment in protest and participation. The museum captured the moment, it evoked memories of shared experiences, and it forced me to reflect on how authoritarian and democratic political institutions are born, sustain themselves, and die.

When I returned to my office at the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, I spoke with colleagues about my museum experience in Santiago. Many of them had similar experiences, and the gray-haired amongst us shared personal stories of where we were and what we

PHOTO COURTESY OF MUSEO DE LA MEMORIA Y LOS DERECHOS HUMANOS, CHILE

There is much to remember of that time in Latin America about the lives lost and beliefs betrayed; of the consequences of protest, repression and violence.

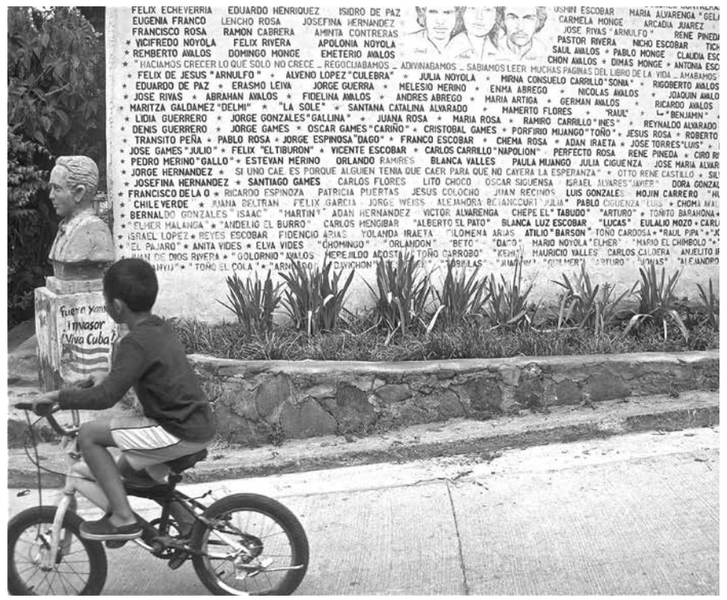
were doing when violent conflicts and political changes took place. One remembered being part of a march in Montevideo that ended brutally when the military cleared the streets on horseback—not in the 19th century, mind you, but in the 1960s. Another mentioned literary works that interpreted those times; another the work of a famous sculptor who evoked collective experiences of the past; another spoke of the altars to memories created for the Day of the Dead; another of the advances in brain science that are helping us understand how memory works; yet another of the ways that histories of violence and repression influenced new constitutions based on democratic expectations; while still another warned of unresolved tensions in some countries about how to understand the past.

Yes, we agreed, there is much to remember of that time in Latin America about the lives lost and beliefs betrayed: of the consequences of protest, repression, violence, and resistance, of regime changes and political aftermaths. Through scholarship and testimony, we are now well aware of the extent to which military governments in Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil and Guatemala made systematic use of violence, repression, disappearances, and fear to suppress resistance, protest, and human rights. But someone also spoke about the case of Mexico, where the military was largely marginalized from direct engagement in politics, but the machinery of the dominant party-state was nevertheless effective in subduing conflict and claims for democracy, including the use of systematic co-optation and repression of dissent. In Peru, another colleague made reference to how a civilian regime re-established state authority in the context of an ongoing and violent rebellion and, at the same time, significantly narrowed the space for democratic dissent. In these and other countries, when civil and military authoritarians held power, tens of thousands of individuals were imprisoned, killed, or disappeared, and millions lived with restricted freedoms and heightened vulnerability, despite many brave moments of resistance.

Repeatedly, my colleagues and I discussed the importance of understanding how such experiences become woven into collective memories of particular times and places and how they influence societies and their future. It was through such discussions that the Democracy and Memory in Latin America Collaborative was born in the months after I visited the museum. At the broadest level, we decided, the Collaborative would assess the authoritarian past and the collective memories it embodied and their implications for the development of democratic governments in the region. Our approach would be broad and multidisciplinary. We would focus on the experiences of many countries in Latin America, and we would seek to spark discussions across disciplinary, geographic and institutional boundaries. In time-honored academic tradition, of course, we would organize a conference, but that was clearly not sufficient for all the suggestions that emerged. In the end, we decided that we should also schedule special lectures, art exhibits, theatrical and musical events, courses, and films. We could engage our sister organizations across the university in planning and augmenting these events.

The ideas kept coming. One colleague suggested that these events should begin on September 11, 2013, the 40th anniversary of the Chilean coup, and another indicated how fitting it would be for the events to culminate in an altar and memorial at Harvard's Peabody Museum of Archeology and Ethnology on November 2, the Day of the Dead. Our Brazil Studies Program was eager to mark the 49th anniversary of the 1964 coup in Bra-

Clockwise from above: Sign on Guatemalan bus reads, "Yes, there was genocide"; mothers in wartime Managua; a memorial in Cinquera, El Salvador; Sculptor Lika Mutal created El Ojo Que Llora (The Eye that Cries) memorial in Lima, Peru.



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: MARY JO MCCONAHAY; © SCOTT WALLACE WWW.SCOTTWALLACE.COM; MARY JO MCCONAHAY; MAARTEN SCHETS.

zil, and those with particular interest in Argentina and Guatemala were not to be denied. Staff members contributed ideas and set about compiling lists of films, artists, organizations and scholars. With time and collaborations from other organizations, we filled the calendar between September 11 and November 2 with a variety of activities. This issue of *ReVista* was planned to mark these events and June Carolyn Erlick immediately began to canvass for voices and images that would represent diverse perspectives and encourage further discussion.

In planning the Collaborative, we wanted to learn about how democracy and memory are brought together from different perspectives, not only through political science, sociology, and history, but also through anthropology, philosophy, psychology, law, and human rights. We hoped to focus additional attention on how journalism and archeology have played important roles in providing evidence that helps form collective memory. We wanted scholars of religion to help us understand rituals and beliefs related to memory and public life, and to engage archivists, novelists, essayists, poets, and artists in our discussion, as well as architects and city planners who consider how to capture memory in public spaces, and the scientists who study how memory works in the human mind.

The Democracy and Memory Collaborative looks at—among many other issues—how memories survive and are transmitted across generations.

Early on, then, we agreed to focus on the relationship between democratic governance and collective memories of violence, repression, and resistance and subject this relationship to a series of interconnected questions. For example, we wanted to encourage participants to consider how collective memories of past decades of violence and authoritarian rule affected the discussion, creation, and introduction of democratic institutions meant to replace them in the 1980s and 1990s. We hoped that others would help us understand the extent to which politics in some Latin American countries may still be marked by tensions and conflicts over the interpretation of traumatic political pasts. And we thought it important to connect the past, the present, and the future in questioning how memory survives and shapes future commitment to democratic institutions.

Similarly, we wanted to recognize that collective memories of what happened in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s are also debated and contested. In recent years, for example, divisions about how past crimes are to be understood and judged have sparked controversy in Argentina, Chile and Peru. Likewise, plans for memory museums and public monuments have been opportunities for debate about the meaning of historical events and how they should be represented. Those who place high value on order have sought to provide alternative lessons from the past, indicating the importance of restoring stability in societies wracked by violence and division. Military organizations have had to reassess their traditions of political activism. Throughout Latin America, civic and religious organizations, academic institutions, philanthropists, artists, and others have been involved in discussions over public recognition of historical events. There are many questions about what is to be remembered, but even more important, perhaps, how past events are to be interpreted.

Thus, we hoped the Collaborative would encourage exploration of these conflicts and provide an opportunity to investigate the extent to which memories are altered through time and political experiences. Certainly, memories take on added significance as those who experienced injustice and violence die and new generations emerge who do not have first-hand knowledge of the impact of authoritarianism and know of repression only through the interpretations of others. For some of these newer generations, authoritarian responses to protest are a more current reality; could our initiative generate lessons relevant to on-going conflicts about democratic institutions and participation in them? We hoped that among many issues to be considered in the events we planned would be how memories survive and how they are transmitted across generations. Such discussions would bring us back to considering the use of museums and public spaces and to assessing the obligation of current and future generations to honor past struggles and to engage in discussions about differing interpretations of the past.

None of the events planned for the Democracy and Memory Collaborative would, of course, put these many issues and debates to rest. The Collaborative would be one set of initiatives among many to explore such themes. Nevertheless, it is our hope here at the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies that our activities will help put the events of the past and the challenges of the democratic present in perspectives that can obviate breakdowns of democracy in the future. And may the artifacts and histories that honor memory in architecture, books, works of art, public spaces, films, and altars continue to invigorate our conversations about how we can learn from the past. For this reason, I will return to the Museo de la Memoria in Santiago in the future.

Merilee Grindle *is the director of the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies (DRCLAS) and Edward S. Mason Professor of International Development at the Harvard Kennedy School. Her most recent book is* Jobs for the Boys: Patronage and the State in Comparative Perspective *(Harvard University Press, 2012).*

THE DISAPPEARED

To disappear is to vanish, to become missing, to be suspended in a limbo without physical evidence of what might have been. To disappear causes friends and relatives anguish for years and decades. Legally, forcible disappearances are crimes against humanity—they have no end.

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PHOTOS BY GUSTAVO GERMANO WWW.GUSTAVOGERMANO.COM

Gustavo Germano portrays the effects of disappearances in his series *ausenc'as.* Left: Suzana Keniger Lisboa, Milke Valdemar Keniger and Luiz Eurico Tejera Lisboa in a 1969 family portrait. Right: Suzana and Milke are the survivors. Luiz disappeared in Operación Condor in Brazil.

Because They Were Taken Alive

Forced Disappearance in Latin America BY KIRSTEN WELD

IN GUATEMALA CITY, A SINGLE GARAGE LIGHT has been burning continuously for almost thirty years. The garage's owner, a woman now in her nineties, cannot bring herself to turn it off.

On May 15, 1984, her son, Rubén Amílcar Farfán, left the house early as he usually did, headed for the university. But later that afternoon, friends of his rang the doorbell of the family's house, anguished, to report the worst: witnesses had seen strangers force the young man, a literature student and union activist on his way home from work, into a waiting car and then drive away. Farfán, like many of his university contemporaries during this period of fierce state-sponsored violence, would never return home; he had joined the ranks of Latin America's *desaparecidos*, or "disappeared." Today, cold logic dictates that Farfán is almost certainly dead, but still his mother and sister keep the light on—so that when he comes home, they say, he will know that his family never gave up on him.

Over the course of the Cold War and beyond, well more than a hundred thousand Latin Americans were made to enter the netherworld of forced disappearance—some 40,000 in Guatemala, between 1,000 and 2,000 in Chile, as many as 30,000 in Argentina, 60,000 in Colombia, perhaps 6,000 in El Salvador, 15,000 in Peru, and, more recently, over 25,000 in Mexico. The numbers are necessarily imprecise because the crime itself is designed to produce uncertainty, leaving no corpses, no traces, no explanations, and hence, no accountability. Even the terminology that has evolved to describe it—the transformation of "to disappear" into an intransitive verb, as in *to be disappeared* or *to disappear* someone—is awkward and incomplete, communicating the involuntary nature of a person's disappearance but nothing about that person's destiny. It is a language that obscures as much as it reveals, as a *desaparecido* is neither quite dead nor alive, simultaneously present and absent. The Guatemalan sociologist Carlos Figueroa Ibarra describes the disappeared as "those who will always be nowhere"; for the Chilean theologian Mario I. Aguilar, they are "those who will never grow old," men and women and children forever frozen in time at the precise moment of their vanishing.

As a systematic practice of calculated state repression in Latin America, forced disappearance was first deployed in Guatemala. The year was 1966, more than a decade after the CIA-sponsored ouster of the democratically elected president Jacobo Arbenz. By that year the country's military and police, fortified by U.S. weapons and training, had embarked on a broad crusade, under the banner of anti-communism, to crush any and all forms of political dissent. As part of *Operación Limpieza*, or "Operation Cleanup," state security forces rounded up at least thirty members of the country's Communist party, tortured them, and dropped their bodies by plane into the Pacific Ocean. Some of their remains washed ashore, some didn't.

As the Latin American Cold War heated up in the 1970s, the tactic was exported beyond Guatemala's borders, as was a new epistolary form: the wrenching plea from a victim's family, addressed to the state and often published in newspapers, for their loved one's safe return. Families may not have known where a sister or son had been taken, but they knew that their governments bore the blame. *Porque vivos se los llevaron, vivos los queremos*—because they were taken alive, we want them back alive—became, for a generation of heartsick relatives, their central and consuming demand. It was too often unmet.

In Chile, General Augusto Pinochet cracked down on the opposition to his 1973 coup with a withering ferocity. Those trade unionists and students whom the regime tortured to death or summarily executed had their corpses spirited away, piled in remote mass graves in the Atacama Desert. There, their aging family members still walk the rocky plains in the thin air, searching for bone fragments, like ghosts.

In Argentina, the military junta that took power in 1976 elevated forced disappearance to a perverse art form. Expert manipulators of language to chilling effect, the generals thundered that *desaparecidos* were "absent forever." They developed an elaborate process by which disappeared detainees were interrogated, tortured, bundled into airplanes, drugged into submission by licensed medical professionals, and dropped into the sea by the thousands. As one of the pilots of these so-called "death flights" later remembered, the sedated prisoners would plummet from the planes down into the dark waters of the Atlantic Ocean "like little ants."

We know, from accounts of those detained and eventually released, a little about what many disappeared persons in Cold War Latin America endured in captivity—the interrogations, the electric shocks, the rapes. We know more about the impact those disappearances had on families, a powerful and multigenerational multiplier effect. Figueroa Ibarra chronicles family members' recurring dreams and nightmares; their inability to mourn, since the disappeared could not be proven dead; the intensity of the social pressures on women whose partners had disappeared, especially if those women eventually found new partners; the guilt of resuming anything approaching "normal" life. State-sponsored disappearances were both political and psychological crimes, aimed to muzzle and shatter in order to tighten social control.

And yet, it was the singular horror of forced disappearance—what legal analysts Reed Brody and Felipe González call "perhaps the cruelest form of government abuse" for the torture it inflicts not only on detainees but on their emotional networks—that gave rise to some of the continent's most iconic 20th-century social movements. These were groups, predominantly of women, who met each other in the course of their daily visits to the morgues in places like Buenos Aires and Guatemala City. (Such is the twisted nature of disappearance—it puts families in the grim position of actually *hoping* to find the physical remains of their kindred.)

The first such organization was the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, who in 1977 began marching in front of Argentina's presidential palace, demanding the safe return of their disappeared children. For their efforts, which shook the foundations of the dictatorship's legitimacy, several of the Mothers were themselves disappeared. A similar story unfolded in

PHOTOS BY GUSTAVO GERMANO WWW.GUSTAVOGERMANO.COM

Above: Omar Darío Amestoy and Mario Alfredo Amestoy together in 1975. Below: Omar Darío alone in 2006. Mario Alfredo was one of the 30,000 disappeared in Argentina.

Guatemala, where the Mutual Support Group, founded in 1984, saw a number of its founding members disappeared or assassinated by state security forces. To speak out about a disappearance was a tremendous risk. As the Colombian peasant farmer Blanca Meneses Nieves recounts, when she sought help from local authorities—both elected and paramilitary—regarding the disappearance of her four daughters, the paramilitary commander instructed her to "disappear yourself if you don't want us to kill you too."

Almost worse than the original crimes were government functionaries' official denials, phrased to deflect blame away from the state and onto the disappeared individual. The Argentine dictator Jorge Rafael Videla agreed that there were "missing persons" in Argentina, but he contended that "they have disappeared in order to live clandestinely and to dedicate themselves to subversion," while one of his Guatemalan counterparts, military strongman Oscar Mejía Víctores, argued that many of the supposedly disappeared were "perhaps in some Communist country with some scholarship or in Havana, Cuba." A common rejoinder to the anguished entreaties of wives, in particular, was to suggest that their husbands had only "disappeared" to take up with other women.

And then there was the matter of the disappeared children. In El Salvador, soldiers on military sweeps through guerrilla-controlled communities would snatch babies and toddlers—allegedly, in some cases, as war trophies. In Argentina, pregnant women detained in torture centers like the Navy School of Mechanics, or ESMA, were kept alive long enough to give birth, whereupon their infants were taken away and placed with army families in order to "eradicate the seed" of subversion. Organizations like the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo, now a separate organization from the Mothers, and El Salvador's Asociación Pro-Búsqueda, work today to locate these children—now adults—and, using DNA matching, to restore their birth identities.

Some countries have developed policy instruments in order to resolve the unresolvable and measure the unmeasurable. When the Argentine dictatorship fell, the new civilian government, headed by President Raúl Alfonsín, launched the National Commission on Disappeared Persons (CONADEP), the first of the hemisphere's many truth commissions seeking to tally and account for the disappeared and dead. Years later, in attempting to create a reparations program for victims of the dictatorship, the national government crafted a new legal status for *desaparecidos*—"absent by forced disappearance"—that conceded the state's responsibility for a person's absence without presuming his or her death. (Reparations were another terrible practicality: did accepting reparations mean accepting that a brother or daughter had died?) As of 2013, the Argentine census will formally include *desaparecidos* as a population subcategory.

And yet the legal and logistical challenges posed by having a subset of citizens absent but officially considered alive continue to bedevil. Sebastián Piñera's administration accidentally placed approximately a thousand individuals considered disappeared on the voter rolls for Chile's upcoming presidential elections, proving, in the words of human rights activist Lorena Pizarro, "that this is a

PHOTOS BY GUSTAVO GERMANO WWW.GUSTAVOGERMANO.COM

Above Left: Orlando René Mendez and Leticia Margarita Oliva at the "Happy Turtle" beach, Entre Ríos, Argentina. Right: Both disappeared. They are shown on p. 7 with their baby Laura Cecilia Mendez Oliva, photographed as a young woman in 2006.

state that is not adequately confronting the issue of forced disappearance." Also in Chile, a series of families had their *desaparecidos*' remains returned to them during the 1990s—which, while a wrenching experience, at least brought closure—only to find after DNA testing that they had been given the wrong bones. State security archives contain many clues, including, potentially, confirmation of some *desaparecidos*' deaths, information withheld from families even after dozens of *habeas corpus* requests. But in countries where armies remain powerful, winning access to the bureaucracy of state terror can be an uphill battle.

Largely as a result of the Latin American experience, international legal norms now accommodate and delineate the parameters of forced disappearance. The Organization of American States ratified the Inter-American Convention on the Forced Disappearance of Persons in 1994, and as of July 2002, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court stipulated that forced disappearance is a crime against humanity. The distinction is an important one, as it means that perpetrators can no longer claim protection under national amnesty laws, such as those passed in Guatemala and El Salvador when these countries' civil wars concluded. And due to the indefatigable efforts of victims' advocacy organizations, led by families like Farfán's, prosecutions for the crime of forced disappearance are being mounted across the hemisphere, although these remain rare amid the staggering number of total cases.

But the law is, ultimately, an imperfect instrument for reckoning with the sublime horror of a person being erased from the earth by her government. Instead, disappearance has perhaps been best engaged with by art. The Colombian sculptor Doris Salcedo has long worked on the subject; her *Atrabiliarios* series uses shoes to represent the missing, because "whenever you see a shoe abandoned on the street, you ask yourself, 'What happened here?'" Noemí Escandell's *Disappeared* depicts an empty-armed Pietà wearing one of the kerchiefs of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo. The Argentine photographer Gustavo Germano, whose brother was disappeared, painstakingly recreates decades-old family photographs, retaking the image with only the surviving family members. (One of Germano's photosets refigures a 1970s-era photo of a young, ecstatic couple dandling their baby beside a bed. In the recreated photo, that baby, now a striking woman in her twenties, stares alone at the camera; her parents are both *desaparecidos*.) And, mixing performance art with political theater, different chapters of the group HIJOS, representing the children of the disappeared, stage noisy guerrilla protests, or *escraches*, outside the homes of accused perpetrators.

While generations of Latin Americans transformed into activists by the disappearance of their family members fight on to clarify the crimes of the past, forced disappearance continues to be practiced today. Since 2006, when outright war began between the Mexican government and drug trafficking cartels, some 30,000 Mexicans have gone missing, and an estimated 70,000 more have been killed. The poet Javier Sicilia planned to march, alone and silently, from Cuernavaca to Mexico City in protest after his son's murder; spontaneously, some 150,000 fellow citizens, appalled at this ongoing bloodbath, joined at his side. "I cannot write more poetry," Sicilia told reporters after his journey. "Poetry no longer exists inside me."

The geography of Latin America is now, irrevocably, a geography of forced disappearance, a landscape of deep and jagged chasms that can never be bridged. But there is another way to visualize an America, from Ciudad Juárez to the Tierra del Fuego, forever transfigured by enforced absence. Picture it as a distant satellite image at night, revealing a hemisphere dotted by thousands upon thousands of tiny lights—garage lights, burning bright with the impossible determination that because they were taken alive, alive they will return.

***Kirsten Weld** is Assistant Professor of History at Harvard University. Her book,* Paper Cadavers: The Archives of Dictatorship in Guatemala, *is forthcoming in March 2014.*

Patchwork Memories

Arpilleras and Reflections on Disappearance

BY MARJORIE AGOSÍN

IN EVERY SEASON OF THE YEAR, VIOLETA MO-rales would dress exactly the same: a jacket, black skirt and a pair of worn-down shoes. A leader of an artisans' group engaged in making intricate patchwork memory tapestries, Morales talked and created when others dared not.

Practically the moment I arrived back in Chile, she became my safe haven, my refuge, my anchor in a country in which no one was talking about anything relevant to human rights. Where silence reigned together with fear. Every single day.

I'd ask her over and over again, "Violeta, aren't you hot? I always see you wearing the same clothes." She would look at me with her olive-colored, always sparkling eyes, answering, "No, Marjorie, both I and my clothes have been frozen in time. Even my worn-down shoes accompany me on this perpetual journey."

She taught me what it means to disappear, be forcefully disappeared, *desaparecer*. This extremely complex concept is almost impossibly untranslatable, causing us to reflect on this sinister condition invented by the military dictatorships of Latin America. To disappear is to be neither dead nor alive. It is to enter into a state of shadows. An act of violence, altered destinies, loss of lives, loss of illusions: a borderline state. And we seem to feel that the disappeared are evaporating bodies, ghosts that can only return to us through memory. To disappear is to be part of the history of absence. To search for the disappeared is to recover them so they do not dissolve into the forgetting that the repressive forces so cruelly intended.

Since 1973, I've worked very closely with the original group of women who make these *arpilleras*. This memorial patchwork honors the life of the relatives of friends who have disappeared. Working with all sorts of delicate materials often donated by charity organizations, the women cut out pieces of cloth and then these artists of memory recreate life through cloth, evoking the life of the home and hearth, the empty seat at the table, the first steps ever taken, the first day of school....

The *arpilleras* are true compositions and works of memory. The process of making them is a healing process, as well as a memorializing one. From the scraps of fabric that are sewn together emerge disappeared lives that materialize once again.

For these brave women, to disappear is to not cease to exist; it is not only to search for a body, but to reclaim the memory of a daily life. The *arpilleras* are sent to many parts of the world. They form part of a collective memory of a lost generation with its many who disappeared; other people will hang the patchwork tributes on the walls of their homes. The women will manage to always live with their pain and the memories—and to reconstruct those memories.

The patchwork art is similar to memorializing texts about the disappeared. Both have the ability to dredge up memories, to awaken the conscience, to make the absent present and in this fashion attempt to make the awful horror that disappearance implies transformed into the possibility of remembering what it means to exist. Fully human and not truncated lives, frozen at such an early age.

I frequently remember my encounters with the *arpillera* makers and our conversations about their disappeared relatives. These disappeared ones had names and fruitful lives. Irma Muller, mother of a disappeared son, observed that the tactile experience of the *arpilleras* reminded her of a soft caress. The *arpillera* maker who shows us a large window and a woman who looks out over the horizon, Violeta Morales would say to me, represents hope and the possibility of return.

With the arrival of democracy in the Southern Cone, the names of the disappeared indeed appeared on lists and in reports such as the well-known Rettig Report, officially the National Commission for Truth and Reconciliation Report, but even before then, relatives and community groups in support of human rights were remembering these names constantly; memory transformed into a demand to know the truth.

The crime of disappearance, considered a crime against humanity, affects entire societies and more than anything destroys the family fabric in a slash. Newborns never knew their parents. And they, those who disappeared, never watched their children grow up or their parents get old.

To remember them and to keep them from just becoming names relegated to official lists compiled by the human rights community, the *arpillera* makers, with nimble hands, create wall hangings with images embodied with gestures of solidarity, fruit-filled trees, rivers flowing with deep waters. They honor the memory of them, the disappeared, with images of life.

After the wars and the catastrophes that followed, the dead, the wounded and the disappeared in combat appeared on list after list. Relatives flocked to human services offices to ask about their loved ones and they congregated in those places united in grief and in a common history. However, the victims of forced disappearances in Latin America and particularly in the area I know the best, the Southern Cone, do not appear on any lists. Exactly the opposite. Military

This detailed *arpillera* entitled *Exilio 1974-1984*—exile—depicts a sad airport scene as families and individuals were forced to flee Chile because of political persecution.

PIDEE LINARES, CHILE. FONDO PIDEE. COURTESY OF THE MUSEO DE LA MEMORIA Y LOS DERECHOS HUMANOS, CHILE

For the 40th anniversary of the 1974 coup against the democratically elected government of Salvador Allende, *Chile: from within* is being released as an e-book. Chilean photographers, working for small magazines and underground newspapers, risked their lives to document the brutality of the "Pinochet years." U.S. photographer Susan Meiselas and her Chilean counterparts created a collective account that reflects their hopes for change after a long period of isolation. To contextualize the original book, published in 1990 and now out of print, new material includes audio interviews with the photographers, Spanish-language versions, contact sheets, CIA documents on the coup and archival footage. The publication can be downloaded from www.mappeditions.com/publications/chile-from-within.

authorities deny their very existence. Many mothers of the disappeared from the harsh years of the 70s and 80s told me that they were told at military headquarters that their children had gone over the mountains and abandoned them. Sometimes, as Irma Muller recounted about her son Jorge who disappeared off a Santiago street in 1974, the military would charge, "Your son went to Cuba. He is a terrorist."

Argentine writer Julio Cortázar once said that to disappear in Latin America was a "diabolical invention" of its own countries' citizens. The disappeared simply do not appear anywhere except in the memory of those who so stubbornly look for them.

The frozen memory, the memory suspended forever and ever, the exhausting search, are all part of the daily experience of those whose loved ones disappeared. At first, the search is solitary, but later acquires a collective force when groups of desperate women encounter each other in places like jails and morgues to inquire for their family members.

In simple words—clear yet profound: Where are they? These three words convey the power of language to clamor for the lives of thousands of people whose existence was truncated, suspended. The moment that they disappeared was the moment they began to be looked for, and that search has not ended.

So many times, I've asked myself what kind of language to use in talking about the disappeared so they do not turn into mere legal statistics or a mere name on a list, at the petition of family members.

To talk about the disappeared, it is necessary to dwell in memory. To live and to feel, to imagine the disappeared in the spaces of the present, not in the void. In the coffee house, the concert halls, in schools, in the spaces of daily life, every day, every moment, and to maintain the memory of those disappeared as vibrant and fully there. And to try above all to create communities in which they are remembered, such as the movements that emerged in that period and continue on: the Mothers of the Plaza del Mayo and Active Memory (Memoria Activa), both in Argentina, and Women for Life (Mujeres Por la Vida) in Chile.

These movements are essentially activities in which the memory of the disappeared does not conflict with the official memories of history (some spell this "history" with a capital "H"), but works in a dialogue with that history; in the process of reconstructing through memory, witnesses and art in its various forms, ranging from music to the Chilean *arpilleras*—patchwork testimonies.

The memory of those lives transforms into presence, writing that recalls them is an act of conscience, and the mothers who embroider their stories and their names with fragments of cloth convert them into luminous memories that journey from one place to another.

We, the witnesses of these fabrics and these memorializing gestures, also contribute with our gaze in solidarity by not forgetting, in denouncing this sinister and diabolical crime.

I learned from these *arpillera* makers that with the love and the delicacy of the handiwork with which they craft these histories of them, the disappeared, and of us, that in this fashion perhaps they can negate the terrible plan of the Southern Cone dictatorships and others who wished to wipe out an entire generation, a generation for the most part of dreamers and of believers in solidarity. They did not achieve their evil goal.

An *arpillera* accompanies me above my desk. I feel its presence always nearby. Every day I look at it and I sense that the disappeared are not ghosts hidden in the shadows, but they are there, accompanying us in all our actions and in our active memory, seeking justice and light.

***Marjorie Agosín** is Luella LaMer Slaner Professor in Latin American Studies and Professor of Spanish at Wellesley College. A poet and writer, she is the author of* Tapestries of Hope, Threads of Love, *as well as dozens of other books.*

Our Disappeared/Nuestros Desaparecidos

The Act of Memory BY JUAN MANDELBAUM

MEMORY HAS A WAY OF FINDING ITS WAY INTO the present through small cracks. Ruins of an ancient city, a sign on a street or a poem can keep the past in the present.

One evening about eight years ago I was wondering what had become of Patricia Dixon, a girlfriend of mine in 1973. We had met at the Sociology Department at the Universidad de Buenos Aires, at a time when the school was a recruitment place for revolutionary organizations. Juan Domingo Perón was in the process of returning to power after 18 years of exile, and many in my generation had expectations that he would lead to deep structural changes in Argentine society.

Patricia was a beautiful petite brunette, full of energy and humor. Strangely, in all the years up to that moment I had not thought of looking her up. When I googled her name I expected to find that she had become a teacher or a psychologist. Instead I was shocked to find her name on a list of people who had disappeared during the dark years of the 1976-1983 military dictatorship. She was taken from her home in the early hours of September 5, 1977, and never seen again.

In March 2005 I went to Buenos Aires to try to find out more about Patricia's fate. A friend helped me locate her file, which included her sister Alejandra's deposition from 1984. In one of the many small miracles of this story, Alejandra was still listed in the phone book, 21 years later! I called with a certain hesitation, not quite knowing what to say. But when Ale picked up her reaction was: "Ohhhh…" She knew exactly who I was: that young man who had dated her sister, who was eight years older. It was almost as if she had been

Clockwise: Juan Mandelbaum in ESME basement; Ale Dixon with portrait of Patricia; anniversary of coup; Patricia's family with tile.

PHOTOS: TOP LEFT ABOVE: FRANCISCO GARCÍA FAURE; OTHERS BY OR COURTESY OF JUAN MANDELBAUM.

waiting for my call. All those years she had kept a photograph that I had taken of Patricia by her bedside.

That was the beginning of a profound creative and life experience that led to my making a feature-length documentary film, *Our Disappeared/Nuestros Desaparecidos*, that explores what happened to Patricia and to other people I knew who disappeared during that reign of terror.

The film aired on the PBS series "Independent Lens" in 2008 and "Global Voices" in 2011 and played at more than thirty festivals worldwide. Audiences from India to Colombia to New Zealand have related to the universality of the stories. At the Mumbai International Film Festival there was no discussion period after the screening, so I waited outside the theatre to meet viewers and chat with them. A number of people came forward to greet me, held my hands while looking me in the eye, and moved on, not saying a word. An Indian friend told me that this was a sign of deep respect. At the Docúpolis Festival in Barcelona, several Argentine exiles in the audience found ties to the stories I tell in the film—a former boyfriend, a *compañero* in a revolutionary organization, the mother of a close friend. When I present the film at colleges and universities, students connect with the deep commitment held by young people who were their own age. They ask probing questions and write thoughtful papers about the film and this dark period in Argentine history.

Since the film was finished in 2008, the judicial process in Argentina has made great advances and hundreds of cases have been reopened: 250 perpetrators have already been convicted. Every day there is a new case in the newspapers. Julio Simón, a.k.a. "Turco Julián" (a former secret detention-center guard who appears in the film bragging in 1995 about torturing and killing militants), was sentenced to 25 years in prison. Former junta leader and President Jorge Rafael Videla recently died in jail, unrepentant. He was sentenced for the theft of 34 babies and other crimes. Unfortunately one of the most sinister characters, Admiral Emilio Massera, became senile and died unpunished. Many other criminals are going to their graves with their secrets unrevealed.

Of the more than 500 babies who were kidnapped or born in captivity, 108 have been identified and reunited with their natural families, thanks to the relentless work of the *Abuelas de la Plaza de Mayo*, the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo.

The children of the disappeared whose stories I tell in my film could have all been stolen. Two of them were taken with their parents but later returned to the families. One of the most powerful developments is that now they are all parents themselves. Juan Manuel Weisz had Marcelo, the baby who appears in the film. Natalia Chinetti had a baby girl. Antonio Belaustegui has a baby boy. Tania Weisberg had twins two years ago. And on September 5th of this year, on the anniversary of Patricia's disappearance, Ines Kuperschmit gave birth to her third boy. As Juan Manuel says in the film, "Life wins in the end."

A movement in the city of Buenos Aires is slowly creating a very particular memorial space for the disappeared. *Barrios por la Memoria,* "Neighborhoods for Memory," helps families and friends of the *desaparecidos* fabricate and lay tiles, *baldosas,* near where they lived, worked or from where they were taken. In March 2012 we laid one in Patricia's memory in front of the building from where she was kidnapped. There was music and dancing. Family, childhood neighbors, friends and work colleagues recalled stories that reflected her beautiful soul. Everyone present felt that the act of laying the tile and remembering Patricia in this deeply felt way had been very healing. It became the memorial service she had never had.

In March 2012 we laid a memory tile for Patricia in front of the building from where she was kidnapped. It became the memorial service she had never had.

There have been a surprising number of "coincidences" during the making of the film and since. In preparation for making Patricia's tile, Alejandra and I met with two people from the group *Barrios*. Ale suggested that they see my film, but asked them not to copy it because an older woman who appears in the film still harbors some fears and doesn't want the film widely distributed in Argentina. Mauro Rapuano, one of the organizers, asked her name. "Ruth Weisz," I replied. His face went white. He had been the best man at her disappeared son's wedding!

For many years the disappeared have been remembered on the day of their vanishing with remembrance ads in the Buenos Aires newspaper *Página 12*. On the 15th anniversary of Patricia's disappearance Alejandra wrote a poem, and enclosed the photo I had taken. The last lines of the poem read, almost in a premonition:

> "Duerme en medio del naufragio y sueña
> que se despierta en el corazón de un
> hombre que se sacude la pena"
>
> "She sleeps amidst the shipwreck and
> dreams that she awakens in the heart of
> a man who sheds his sorrow."

Patricia has awakened in my heart and in the hearts of all who have come across her story. Patricia and the thousands of others who were taken are *nuestros desaparecidos*, our disappeared, and we have a duty to always remember them.

Juan Mandelbaum *is an Argentine documentary filmmaker living in the United States since 1977. Mandelbaum was a producer on the PBS series AMERICAS. His independent films have been shown on PBS and in many festivals worldwide. For more information visit www.ourdisappeared.com.*

COLOMBIA

Colombia has become a vibrant laboratory for historical memory. At the same time that the country is simultaneously engaged in civil conflict and a dynamic peace process, citizens are seeking ways to understand the past to construct the future.

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Liquid Tombs for Colombia's Disappeared

Sounds and Images

BY MARÍA VICTORIA URIBE

COLOMBIA HAS BEEN A COUNTRY WITH AMNE-sia for a long time.

The country has been at war—a social catastrophe since 1948, sparked by the murder of the revered liberal leader Jorge Eliécer Gaitán. Although his death took place in Bogotá, during the following 16 years Liberals and Conservatives waged a war mostly in the countryside that took 250,000 lives. Despite deaths of this magnitude, for decades no one talked about victims nor mentioned the word "memory."

It was not until 2005, after the enactment of the Law of Justice and Peace, that these words appeared in the public Colombian vocabulary. If we analyze the texts written about *La Violencia* or look at the countless photographs taken in towns and villages during those years, we see many dismembered corpses, but we do not find victims. This is a tremendous paradox that underscores how this *Violencia*, excessive and fratricidal, remained buried along with its crimes, which were never brought to justice. The country shrouded itself in a mantle of impunity and opted to bury its disgraceful past. And from 1980 on, this unresolved violence continued in the form of drug trafficking and paramilitarism. If societies do not examine themselves through the mirror of memory, the cycles of violence repeat themselves.

REPRESENTATIONS OF THE DISAPPEARED

In Colombia, murdered bodies are often tossed into a river to conceal the crimes and do away with the evidence; stories about this disposal method date back to the 1950s. During the past thirty years, some communities along the Cauca River have become accustomed to seeing mutilated bodies float by, headed downriver from towns where dealings are resolved through bullets or machetes. To this day, in the northern part of the Valle department (the Colombian word for "state"), which has been under the domination of the regional drug cartel, mutilated bodies sometimes are still seen floating down the river. As so many other rivers in Colombia, the Cauca is a liquid tomb through which countless bodies of the victims of the armed conflict have journeyed toward anonymity and forgetting.

In the face of such a desolate panorama of chronic violence—which is not yet over—art has managed to extend a conciliatory bridge between the representation of the conflict and its unrepresentable suffering. Several Colombian artists have sought to represent violence through different media. Using video, performance and photography, they have sought to give shape to what cannot be represented, has no expression, what we anthropologists and historians have been incapable of putting into words. One of the recurrent themes of these artists has been the void that the disappeared leave behind.

In her book *Revolt, She Said*, literary critic Julia Kristeva observed how artists mediate violence through their work. In appropriating what is not their own, artists manage to build a bridge between the self and the world. This alchemy is a delicate one, whose worth we tend to underestimate. It is an act of creation that is located precisely in that space that separates the individual from the world, a privileged space in which metaphor, metonymy and other figures of speech are all called into play. The role of the artist is not to make a faithful copy of reality. It is to give a form to our attitude in the face of this reality.

In a bend of the Cauca River, just by the town of Marsella, bodies and other objects tend to get stuck as they come floating down the river. A woman living there, Esperanza, also called "death lover" ("la enamorada de los muertos"), worked as a secretary in the small hamlet of El Alto during the chilling period of the narco-paramilitary violence. Like Hecuba and Medea in Greek mythology, Esperanza disobeyed orders from local killers not to retrieve the bodies that came floating down the river so they could be buried. Esperanza told me that she rescued the bodies because she felt a moral obligation to these people and their families. She recounted how she always made the effort to register each death and any appropriate details in an archive she was assembling: "I couldn't let those bodies just float down the river; I knew that behind every body was a mother or a wife crying, hoping that perhaps someone would rescue the body and bury it. Moreover, it seemed to me this was the least I could do as a gesture of Christian charity. I put a lot of effort into the writing of each death certificate; I took notice of every detail, the brand of clothing, any particular characteristics that would allow families to identify them."

This humanitarian labor was constantly threatened by lack of support from the municipality; indeed, she received overt orders from her bosses to stop retrieving the bodies. Because of frequent episodes of intimidation and pressure, Esperanza quit her post in the municipal administration in 2001. Her husband was a fisherman and she often accompanied him on his fishing trips. When she would see a body floating down the river, she would take it out with her own hands and would advise the authorities, obliging them to record and process the death. As a result, she received death threats and constant pressure to abandon her rescue missions. The threats continued until 2005, when her riverside home was burnt to the ground. She was warned that if she did not leave her neighborhood, the next attack would be directly against her life or that of her husband. She left and went to live far from the riverbanks.

The Marsella cementery was recently declared historic and architectural patrimony of the nation by the Colombian Minister of Culture. After the declaration, the Beautification Society of the town ordered the tombs painted. This procedure erased the data that had been handwritten on the tombs of more than four hundred people, who had been buried as "NN" ("No Name") with only the information about their gender and the year the body reached Marsella. Likewise, no one thought of making a map that would help locate and identify the remains. This act of painting over the information transformed the bodies into unidentifiable beings, an act that created a double disappearance.

Artist Gabriel Posada set rafts adrift in the Cauca River with vinyl paint images of the disappeared in "Magdalenas by the Cauca."

As an act of reparation for what had transpired in Marsella and so many other towns along the Cauca River, the artist Gabriel Posada conceived an ephemeral work known as "Magdalenas by the Cauca," a work of historical memory funded by a Culture Ministry fellowship. Posada designed some rafts from tropical guadua bamboo cane and added sails. On each sail, he used vinyl paint to depict, from remaining photos, the faces of some of the disappeared victims. Posada set the rafts adrift in the Cauca River, carrying along the images of men and women whose fate had been erased. The intent of the performance was to cleanse the stamp of the deaths that the Rio Cauca bore for having received so many mutilated bodies over so many years. The artist recreated this moving spectacle on several occasions, ephemeral art since the rafts crashed against the riverbanks to eventually become shipwrecked further down the river. The performance included the victims of the Trujillo massacre—actually a series of murders that took place along the Cauca River from 1988 and 1994—and was witnessed by the fishermen who lived along the riverbanks.

Another work of art that alludes to the disappeared is artist Clemencia Echeverry's *The Bier's Funeral Song* (Treno Canto Fúnebre). By means of a video installation, Echeverry shows the invisible destruction that has characterized forced disappearances in Colombia. While we observe the turbulent and dark waters of the Cauca River on a double screen, the room is invaded by a soundtrack of the heartrending screams of loved ones who search for their vanished loved ones. Through this blending of image and sound, the artist performs a delicate alchemy to appropriate some

PHOTO: AFP/GETTY IMAGES

PHOTO BY MARÍA VÍCTORIA URIBE

sounds that are heard on both sides of the river and, by association, creates an echo in the psyche of the viewer as in the psyches of so many other Colombians.

The recent history of Colombia is filled with voices and sounds that recall the violence—sounds like the cries of "viva" (long live! cries of affirmations) and "down with!" boos for each political party during the 1950s; or the clanking of chains on the truck that set off during the night to pick up members of the Liberal party and disappear them; or the melancholy, deep sound of a deer horn that was played to warn about the arrival of "*chusma*," a riffraff mob from which one could anticipate the worst. More recently, there's the strident sound of motorboats that have come to form part of the repertory of horror for the inhabitants along the Atrato River or the Great Swamp of Santa Marta because it recalls the arrival of paramilitary forces; or the hushed cries of those who search for their relatives disappeared in the whirling river.

Today, in the midst of the general clamor for peace that accompanies the negotiations between the Colombian government and the FARC guerrilla group, we still imagine hearing voices of men and women that cannot be identified because they do not form part of the national narrative. They are voices without a body; they are the No-Names, the disappeared whose faces watch us without asking questions. Voices that belong to those who are invisible to the society, whose bodies disappeared and whose remains lie piled up on the bottom of the rivers.

María Victoria Uribe *is an anthropologist at the Universidad del Rosario in Bogotá, Colombia. Her current research involves a comparative analysis of political violence in Sri Lanka, Colombia, and Northern Ireland. She is the author of* Anthropologie de l'Inhumanité *(2004).*

PHOTO: FABIO LÓPEZ DE LA ROCHE

Prospects of Peace

Sharing Historical Memory in Colombia

BY PAOLO VIGNOLO

ON APRIL 9, 2013, TENS OF THOUSANDS OF CITI-zens filled the streets of Bogotá in a massive demonstration "for peace, democracy, and the defense of the public good." Many of them had traveled from the farthest reaches of rural Colombia to march with poor, working, and middle class city-dwellers in support of the negotiations being held between the government and the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) guerrillas.

These demonstrators—fed up with the militarization of daily life— had been mobilized by a coalition of the government, labor unions and some leftist politicians. Among them could be found the invisible and marginalized face of the country: settlers from the agricultural frontiers, indigenous people defending their traditional form of property, representatives of black communities on the Pacific coast with their own collective property rights, and campesinos from every part of the country.

Sign in the April 23, 2012, march, a "dress rehearsal" for the April 9, 2013, Marcha Patriótica, reads, "The state returned the body of my dead son, a false positive."

This event, a new vision of the country's national memory, promises to be remembered as a turning point when relations among allies and foes entered uncharted territory, opening possibilities theretofore considered unimaginable.

The physical setting chosen for this dress rehearsal for national reconciliation was the Avenida El Dorado, sometimes referred to since the early years of this century as the Avenue of Memory, a reference point from which to recount the country's past for those of the new millennium. Along the avenue, two memorials have arisen, each representing an opposing vision of the country's history.

The first is the Monument to the Heroes Fallen in Combat, built by newly-elected President Álvaro Uribe in 2003 and located across the street from the Ministry of Defense. From its beginnings, the grounds of the monument have been used as a staging area for military parades and other commemorative events organized by the armed forces. Over the course of his eight years as president (2002-2010), Uribe insisted that the main problem in Colombia was that groups of criminals, outlaws, and terrorists held the great majority of good people hostage, hindering the country's social progress and economic development, and that only the courage and dedication of the armed forces could bring about the revival of the fatherland.

A publicity campaign was launched, proclaiming that "Yes, there are heroes in Colombia," initially referring not only to the police and military, but also implicitly to Uribe, the strongman who would pacify the country at whatever cost by implementing the hardline anti-insurgent policy called "Democratic Security." Paradoxically, those who supported this aggressive approach also denied the existence of the armed conflict, since to have acknowledged its reality would have required them to recognize that the insurgents had a role to play in the country. It was not surprising that the former president lashed out at the April 9 mobilization as a "march with the terrorists."

The second memorial is the Center for Memory, Peace, and Reconciliation, built on the grounds of the city's Central Cemetery, where many victims of political violence are buried. The Center is a monolith that resembles a large gravestone, penetrating into the earth and into the entrails of the city's past—the very roots of the Colombian conflict, from which its victims may symbolically reemerge.

The Center was established on the initiative of civil society organizations with the support of the city government, to demand the right to memory as an exercise in active citizenship. The goal was to open in 2010, but in 2009 excavators working on the site unexpectedly uncovered the city's historic Paupers' Cemetery. The city government then had to decide whether to proceed with construction.

At the same time, it was discovered that between ten to thirty thousand people had been buried in thousands of mass graves around the country in recent years. They were the victims of selective killings, massacres, and extrajudicial executions carried out by paramilitaries, guerrillas and the armed forces.

Terror at the horrific discoveries coexisted with the all too common indifference, and in this climate it was decided that unearthing the largest mass grave in the capital city's oldest cemetery could not be treated as a routine administrative problem. Construction of the Center was delayed while 3,000 sets of remains dating from 1827-1970 were carefully processed. It turned out to be Latin America's largest archeological project involving modern urban history.

Thus, the site of the memorial was until recently but a large hole in the ground where engineers and laborers toiled alongside forensic anthropologists working to restore dignity to the anonymous dead of Bogotá, just as their colleagues were doing with the remains of victims of the conflict hastily buried in isolated rural fields all around the country.

A mass grave underlying the Center of Memory was an apt but terrible metaphor that only emphasized the urgent need to come to terms with the past and exorcize the demons of war. The Center finally opened its doors to the public in late 2012.

The institutional events of April 9 were meticulously choreographed to maximize their symbolic value. President Juan Manuel Santos began the day by delivering a highly patriotic speech to an audience of generals and other military and police personnel at the Monument to Fallen Heroes.

Then he walked up the Avenida El Dorado to the Center for Memory, Peace and Reconciliation with a group of top government officials to pay respects to the civilian victims. They were met there by Bogotá's Mayor Gustavo Petro, Vice-President Angelino Garzón, a group of foreign diplomats and other top city officials.

The event brought together a president who had been minister of defense during some of the most violent years of the conflict, a vice president who was a former union leader and former vice president of the leftist *Unión Patriótica*, and a mayor who was a former member of the M-19 guerrilla movement. Together they planted a tree of peace in the cemetery where anonymous victims of the *Bogotazo* lay buried. This remarkable event received the backing of the international community, the blessings of the high command of the ELN (National Liberation Army guerrillas) and the approval of the FARC negotiating team in Havana.

The date chosen by the organizers marked the first-ever official commemoration of the April 9, 1948, assassination of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, a traumatic event which had led to a spontaneous insurrection called the *Bogotazo* and a civil war known as *La Violencia,* leaving gaping wounds that remain unhealed to this day.

Until a few months ago it seemed that the Colombian state had nothing to say with respect to the day that had fundamentally changed the country's destiny. For decades there were no public commemorations or military parades, not even symbolic acts. A systematic policy

of forgetting sought to erase any memory of these events from the public sphere.

Grass-roots organizations, however, tried to keep the collective memory alive. On the 60th anniversary of the *Bogotazo* in 2008, for example, they undertook a multiplicity of independent initiatives, including street theater, mural painting, musical performances and flash-mobs.

This situation took an unexpected turn when Juan Manuel Santos became president. In order to promote large-scale mining, agricultural exports, and infrastructural development, the new governing coalition led by Santos decided to seek a peace agreement with the FARC.

After all, the ravages of an ongoing war would preclude capitalist investment in the many rural areas battered over the previous 20 years by the forced displacement of more than four million people through death threats, selective killings and massacres; the illegal seizure of more than 12 million acres of land by drug traffickers and paramilitaries; political or for-profit kidnappings; the indiscriminate use of anti-personnel mines by the guerrillas, and a chaotic land titling regime. All these obstacles to development had been caused or exacerbated by the armed conflict.

Indeed, the new government's 2011 Law on Victims and Land Restitution was passed as an important tool to bring about an overall reorganization of rural territory and determine the fate of the beleaguered rural population.

As minister of defense under Uribe, Santos had denied the existence of an armed conflict, despite glaring evidence to the contrary. As president he was forced to alter this position, given the need to implement transitional justice. Remarkably, Colombia transitioned from a non-conflict to a post-conflict scenario without ever coming to terms with the conflict itself. In addition to economic reparation, the need for visible acts of symbolic reparation led to the proclamation of April 9 as National Victims Day, to mention just one example.

The government was not alone in revisiting the traumas of the past with an eye to its current political interests. The opposition also hoped to gain political space by pointing to unresolved crimes committed against it. Some sectors of the left under the leadership of Liberal Party activist Piedad Córdoba came together in a new organization called the *Marcha Patriótica* (Patriotic March).

The new organization's name clearly evokes the *Unión Patriótica* (Patriotic Union), the electoral party that emerged decades ago from a previous set of peace negotiations with the FARC and other guerrilla groups. The *Unión Patriótica* was virtually exterminated in the 1980s and 1990s when more than 3,000 party candidates and other members were systematically gunned down.

The message is clear: the reference to the *Unión Patriótica* calls public attention to the specter of a peace process that ended in an exterminationist campaign whose perpetrators enjoy impunity to this day. Peace with the guerrillas will be possible only if the state can provide guaranties that this macabre history will not be repeated.

On April 9, 2013, the *Marcha Patriótica* took its impressive political and electoral potential to Bogotá streets. Long-deceased victims of unpunished atrocities were vicariously endowed with legal standing and embodied by the demonstrators, raising their voices to demand an end to hostilities.

On the very day of its 65th anniversary, a tragic and forgotten but pivotal event became a reference point for the memory of its immolated victims in a conflict whose existence was officially denied just a few months before. The phantasmagorical presence of a past unacknowledged in official versions of history now has a role in influencing the course of present-day struggles.

A marcher holds up a sign reading "Never Forget" in the Patriotic March of April 23, 2012, which became a dress rehearsal for the April 9, 2013, march.

PHOTO: FABIO LÓPEZ DE LA ROCHE

The most noteworthy aspect of the April 9 march was the unexpected convergence of antithetical ways of remembering the past, interpreting the present, and imagining the future. Two very different narratives underlie these visions of national life.

One describes a country full of happy, hardworking people who live at peace in a paradise of natural beauty and great natural wealth, defying the vile misdeeds of a handful of criminals. This is the vision promoted by populist neo-nationalists, best encapsulated in the advertising slogan and exercise in national branding *Colombia es Pasión* (Colombia is Passion).

An alternative narrative emphasizes the pervasive violence, insecurity and corruption that have marked the lives of generations of Colombians: an entirely different kind of passion that recalls Jesus's suffering on the Vía Dolorosa before his inevitable resurrection.

These alternate visions reflect the two mechanisms used in Colombia today for the public use of history, presenting contending poetics and political orientations. One of these mechanisms makes use primarily of the country's cultural patrimony and the other its historical memory.

Those who prioritize cultural patrimony seek to produce least common multipliers, focusing exclusively on fragments of the past that generate consensus based on what are assumed to be universal values. Any reference to class, race, or gender-based conflict is suppressed or relegated to a distant place and time.

In contrast, the mnemonic technique engaged by historical memory stresses the greatest common divisors of social life: unameliorated offenses, unresolved conflicts and dreams deferred. This approach emphasizes making conflicts visible but hinders an appreciation of life-affirming projects and the texture of daily life.

The mechanism of cultural patrimony tends to evoke the everlasting glory of the idealized nation and relegate the exotic other to the realm of folklore, while that of historical memory tends to memorialize victims and reify the past. Each operation highlights the rescue of certain legacies to be bequeathed to future generations, at the same time running the risk—if no form of dialogue and accommodation between the two is found—of undermining the potential for the active citizenship and cultural agency required to produce a collective, durable reinterpretation of the past.

By participating in the mass march on April 9 Santos hoped to conciliate antagonistic anniversaries, spaces and narratives and to conciliate these two uses of memory. Hopefully his gesture will help bring into being the much-yearned-for ceasefire with the FARC. If the government fails to come to terms with the many unresolved problems that contribute to the Colombian predicament, on the other hand, the president's participation may turn out to have been nothing more than a short term maneuver to further his prospects for reelection.

The Colombian situation is one of a kind. First, unlike the Nazi Holocaust, the democratic transition in the Southern Cone or post-apartheid South Africa, the dispute over memory in Colombia is taking place in the middle of an armed conflict with no negotiated solution yet in sight. Any eventual FARC demobilization would not in itself be sufficient to bring about peace, since armed criminal gangs, drug traffickers and ELN guerrillas also operate at this time.

If policies to generate a culture of memory and to turn the page on decades of systemic violence are to bring about true national reconciliation, they must also confront the country's generalized impunity and its social inequality, which are among the highest in the world and reflect deeply ingrained social oppressions based on race, class and sex.

A second factor that makes Colombia *sui generis* is that a process of transitional justice cannot be limited to a reparative act by the state to compensate for its own criminal acts, since the state is only one of the actors that have systematically violated human rights. What can be made of historical memory when a conflict is dominated by criminal organizations and illegal armed groups?

A third characteristic also makes Colombia a unique theoretical and practical laboratory for historical memory. For decades, the struggle against forgetting and impunity has been conducted from below by victims' associations and other grass roots organizations, often at the cost of violent repression.

Only in the last three years have these movements been supported by public institutions, and this has frequently led to cooptation. The participatory practices necessary for decentralized grass roots decision-making must be institutionalized in order to make the distribution of powers more equitable.

A possible solution is to think of the past as a common good that cannot be reduced to an official public history proffered by the state, nor to a collection of private, fragmented, and unconnected personal stories.

Given the extraordinary social energy displayed in massive citizen mobilizations against forgetting, it is possible to imagine the construction of a collective memory that allows for the agency of subjects previously relegated to the margins of national life, in the process reducing the armed actors' room for maneuver.

This would also require the state's repressive apparatus to accede to the rule of law, allowing for the viability of a participatory government based on a shared past. In this sense the struggle for memory establishes the conditions for a negotiated peace and a consensual future. This is an enormous challenge, but the events of April 9 allow us to discern it taking shape on the horizon—as a possibility.

***Paolo Vignolo**, PhD in History and Civilization at the E.H.E.E.S of Paris, is Associate Professor at the Center of Social Studies of the National University of Colombia, Bogotá. He was a DRCLAS 2012-13 Julio M. Santo Domingo Visiting Scholar. **Andy Klatt** translated this article. <www.andy-klatt.net> <andy.klatt@gmail.com>.*

A Search for Justice

After the Colombian Holocaust

BY ANA MARÍA BIDEGAÍN

In July 2007, Colombian artist Doris Salcedo created an installation "Acción de Duelo"—"Action of Grieving"— with 25,000 candles placed in the Plaza de Bolívar in Bogotá.

PHOTO BY ALEX FATTAL

Dear June,

IN 2004, WHEN I LEFT HARVARD AND LAST SAW you, I thought I would never learn the truth of what exactly happened to Carlos Horacio in the horrendous holocaust of the Palace of Justice in Bogotá. Yet fate was holding a tremendous surprise for my daughters and me, filled with pain and future challenges, which would uncover an important part of the story.

More than twenty years after the attacks on November 6 and 7, 1985, the Supreme Court embarked on a great effort to reconstruct the events. At the same time, it began a judicial process to discover what happened to the 11 people who disappeared from the conflagration. [Court magistrate Carlos Horacio Urán, Ana María's husband, perished during the events of the Palace of Justice takeover by the M-19 guerrillas and the subsequent Army siege of the palace.]

In 2007, agents of Bogota's prosecutor's office discovered a safe deposit box hidden in a Colombian military compound, which would change our lives. The box—kept by the Colombian Army for more than 20 years—contained my husband's wallet with a bullet hole, and other personal effects: documents; photographs of our family, four religious scapular medallions—I assume for our four daughters—his Kellogg Institute carnet and his driving license from the state of Indiana, where we had lived for some time.

There was also a typed list in the box with the names of the guerrilla members who had been killed in the attack. The names of magistrates Manuel Gaona and Carlos Horacio Urán had been scrawled in pencil and added to the list.

The discovery of the box reinforced the results of the autopsy performed after his death. There was little doubt that, unbeknownst to my daughters and me, my husband's death had been a homicide with the involvement of the Colombian Armed Forces. But the public told me that the statute of limitations for homicides in Colombia is 20 years. The time had passed. I was devastated. I felt that the prosecutor's office had returned Carlos Horacio's remains to me, to then leave me with no place where to deposit them.

I knew that Carlos Horacio was only one of many victims, but pursuing justice for one meant memory for all. The outcome of the fateful M-19 subversive guerrilla attacks, followed by the Army's reckless retaking of the Palace, using tanks and bombs inside the facilities, was frightful. Almost one hundred people died, among them most of the Supreme Court and Council of State justices of the time, including my husband, as well as other government officials and workers. Eleven people disappeared and have never been found.

Carlos Horacio also disappeared for more than 48 hours. From the very beginning, there were conflicting stories about his death. When the attack was over, I got a call from a journalist I did not know, urging me to look for my husband. She had seen Carlos Horacio leaving the building alive; "He has an injured foot, but he is alive," she said. We couldn't find him anywhere, however, no matter how much we looked.

At 7:30 p.m., a local news station showed a series of images of the last hostages leaving the Palace. Among them, we glimpsed Carlos Horacio limping on one foot and escorted by two uniformed men. With the help of some other journalist friends, I got a copy of the tape. The next day I brought the newsreel to the Defense Ministry. I could not find my husband without their help. Yet the Ministry Officials dismissed me, stating that they had no information. The Army nevertheless kept the tape. Hours later, Carlos Horacio's lifeless body was found in the morgue.

Confusion reigned over his death and the autopsy results revealed no clear indications of how he had died. I was given many versions of the last moments of his life, but one became the official version: a surviving magistrate told me that Carlos Horacio had been killed by Army crossfire. According to his account, together with magistrate Manuel Gaona and Dr. Luz Estela Bernal, my husband had been gunned down by the Army as they tried to rescue hostages holed up in the bathroom; he had perished on the staircase.

At that point, I thought that my source, a magistrate of Colombia's Highest Administrative Court, a public figure, and someone I knew, had no reason to lie to me. The magistrate, who held a right-wing ideology and was close to the Army, had absolutely no reason not to blame the guerrillas, I thought. In the midst of my pain, I accepted this version of Carlos Horacio's death, which became the official version.

A lingering doubt remained in my mind, however: the journalist's version, someone I had never met, coincided with the images in the video. Could Carlos Horacio have survived the guerrilla attack? But at that point, whom could I turn to?

Like many, we were not sure what had happened to our loved one, and like many victims, we and our dead were stigmatized by the victimizers. In addition to finding out what happened to my husband, I had to defend his honor. After the attack, a right-wing journalist, Darío Silva Silva, tried to tie Carlos Horacio to the M-19, the guerrilla group that originated the attack on the Palace of Justice.

This was so hard on me and my daughters; it was hard to grieve when we were constantly on the defensive and uncertain about the events leading up to his death.

Carlos Horacio's ardent Christianity, closely tied to early Liberation Theology (of the 1960s-1970s) and his defense of democratic political participation through social movements, were interpreted in the most negative light. However, the facts speak for themselves. Carlos Horacio was not only a lawyer, and a member of Colombia's Highest Administrative Court; he was also a young legal scholar with interdisciplinary training. At the time of the attack, he was completing his doctoral dissertation in political science on the participation of the Colombian Army in the Korean War at the University of Paris-I, Sorbonne. He had previously completed masters' degrees in Philosophy of Law and Administrative Law, respectively and worked briefly at the French Conseil d'Etat. Just before the tragedy, we'd spent time at the Kellogg Institute at Notre Dame and in the Washington DC National Archive, in order for him to continue his doctoral research. One of his most recent publications had been a working paper on President Belisario Betancur's peace process, later published in the reputable French newspaper *Le Monde Diplomatique*. None of this seemed to matter to moderate the hostility.

To add fuel to the fire, a person who claimed to be an Army official kept showing up at my office at the University of Los Andes, inviting me to give lectures at the War School. When I said I wouldn't do it, this person began to tell me that I should leave the country with my four daughters because "rivers of blood were going to flow in Colombia." I panicked.

In December 1987, I made the difficult decision to go into exile with my family, taking advantage of a generous invitation from Duke University in Durham, North Carolina. After 18 months there, we left for the Universidad de Alcalá de Henares in Madrid, Spain, until 1992. Things seemed to be changing in Colombia with the enactment of the 1991 Constitution and the establishment of an amnesty for the M-19 group. I decided to return and resume teaching at Los Andes and at the National University in Bogotá. What had actually happened at the Palace of Justice was still a mystery, and the families of the eleven people who had disappeared continued fighting to find out the whereabouts of their loved ones. The ghosts of the events reappeared constantly in the memory of many Colombians, and finally a Truth Commission was established in 2005 to unveil the true story. My daughters and I had made every effort to continue with our lives, albeit with great difficulty.

Then the discovery of the secret box in 2007 sent our lives into a spiral. After the Prosecutor had called me to inform me of this discovery and explained the difficulties we faced to commence a criminal proceeding in Colombia, I profoundly felt the need to get to the bottom of Carlos' death. I had to do it, not only for me and for my daughters, but for the country as a whole.

I began desperately searching the videos of the surviving hostages, without success. Then, in August 2007, both the prosecutor's office and I separately,

found two different versions. The prosecutor's tape had been found in the house of the colonel who had directed part of the Army's retake of the Palace of Justice in 1985; he was being investigated for his actions in such events. It contained images similar to the video I had found just a day before meeting the prosecutor. By coincidence, the day after our meeting, a well-known journalist contacted me; he had found yet another video. The search was finally paying off. In addition, the report issued by the Colombian Truth Commission acknowledged subsequently that Carlos Horacio had left the Palace alive in company of members of the Armed Forces and that he was later found dead. This time, we were closer to finding out the truth. Months had gone by, though, and no legal proceedings had been initiated. I thought I was going to go crazy.

I approached the families of those eleven people who had disappeared from the Palace of Justice. They had more experience than I had, and they gave me some new tips. Their search had never ceased and they had brought a petition before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, and had initiated criminal proceedings in Colombia. Finally, at the beginning of 2009, the public prosecutor's office opened the case: the statute of limitations could not apply because Carlos Horacio's extrajudicial execution by the Colombian Army qualifies as a crime against humanity.

With our authorization, the prosecutor in charge of the case exhumed Carlos Horacio's body and performed forensic studies, including ballistics testing. In June 2010, suspicions became certainty: he had been executed, presumably by the Colombian Army, after being tortured and subsequently brought back to the Palace of Justice to cover the homicide.

The case's lead prosecutor, Ángela María Buitrago, a brave woman, summoned the three generals who had directed the counterattack for questioning. The next day, she was removed from her post, ironically on grounds of inefficiency. A new, lower-ranking prosecutor was appointed. To date he has done nothing but weaken the evidence. It took 18 months, and several petitions, for the body to be returned to us after being exhumed—even more pain.

With these investigations, we believe we have established the truth—as tough as it is—but we are lacking justice.

The Colombian courts have sentenced two of the officials who led the operations relating to the disappearance of the 11 people. However, shortly after the sentences were handed down, both Presidents Álvaro Uribe and Juan Manuel Santos have publicly announced their disapproval of the decisions, clearly affecting and infringing on the judiciary's decisions. Carlos Horacio's case is still pending before the Colombian criminal justice with little or no progress.

In 2011, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights found the Colombian State responsible under international law for these events, and submitted the case before the Inter-American Court on Human Rights. In this latter proceeding, Colombia, represented by an allegedly independent inter-ministerial agency created to defend the state in these and other legal proceedings (ANDJE for its Spanish acronym), is now denying that the disappearance and executions ever took place. Even more importantly, current or former members of the Colombian Army appear to be controlling the ANDJE (by, among other mechanisms, imposing the line of arguments and vetoing which counsel shall be retained). This is of great concern to us as a family and as citizens.

By permitting the intervention of the Armed Forces to cover up grave violations of human rights, the ANDJE, and thereby the Colombian State, is not only compromising the agency's institutional integrity and failing its mission of protecting the state as a whole, but it is also attempting to cover up crimes against humanity and ensuring the impunity of those responsible for the death of my husband and for other crimes committed as a result of this painful and controversial episode in Colombian history.

As you can see my friend, the truth about the facts themselves and their historical significance has still not been clarified. At the present time, the Colombian executive is making renewed efforts to put an end to the armed conflict. In order for the current peace process to prosper, it is fundamental to satisfy the demands for truth, justice and reparation. The case of the Palace of Justice is an emblematic one, fixed in the heart of Colombians. Thus it calls out, perhaps more than any other case, for an end to the impunity and the lack of truthfulness about what happened. Since that day in 1985, Colombians have watched as the system of justice grows weaker by the day while militarism is strengthened.

Without truth, there is no justice and without justice, there can be no peace, well-being or economic prosperity. Without truth, there is no strengthening of a legitimate state and accompanying democracy.

The importance of seeking the truth of the Palace of Justice conflagration was even underlined in U.S. Department of State reports presented to the Congress in 2010 and 2011, in which the failure to clarify these events was held up as proof of Colombia's continuing human rights challenges.

The Inter-American Court on Human Rights has called for a hearing in October 2013. Let's see what that court rules, and whether the Colombian state chooses to abide by those decisions. The videos and the secret box have changed my life since I last saw you. Let's see if they can work for justice.

Ana María Bidegaín *is the research director of the Latin American and Caribbean Studies Center at Florida International University and a professor in the Department of Religious Studies. Bidegaín founded the History Department at the University of Los Andes in Bogotá and opened the field of Religious Studies at the National University. She was a Visiting Professor at the Center for Women in Religion at Harvard Divinity School in 2003-2004.*

Displacement and Community Organizing

Shifting Memories and Identities Around a Mocoa Kitchen Table BY JULIETA LEMAITRE

WE WERE HAVING LUNCH AT MARÍA'S HOUSE IN Mocoa, Colombia, when it struck me how much the story of her past was shaped by the legal framework that defines her today as a victim, and when I first met her, in 2011, as an internally displaced woman. Over the extended year of our collaboration, I witnessed Maria's subtle transformation to fit the shifting legal frame. However, that lunch illuminated the extent of the weight of law, and its silences, on memory and identity.

Mocoa, a town of approximately 45,000 people, nestles in the Andes as they slope down to the Amazonian basin. It is the capital of Putumayo, a frontier state of intensive coca fields and the bloody exploits of various armies. Mocoa itself, however, is relatively peaceful. Thus its population has almost doubled over the last ten years, with men, women and children fleeing the war in the south, a multitude called, since the adoption of a 1997 law, internally displaced people or IDP.

PHOTO BY JULIETA LEMAITRE

MONEY FOR PROJECTS

María and I first met in the context of an academic research project on internally displaced women leaders. From the start, I was intrigued by her. She constantly took notes, as we researchers did, asked us questions right back, and asked us for money and "projects." She understood the legal framework well, moving comfortably among the dense network of regulations and Constitutional Court decisions that gave IDP special rights. She also understood NGOs and research projects, and the possibility of her benefiting from them. Her insistence on working with our project resulted in a year-long collaboration in which, with a group of graduate students, we helped the Municipal Committee for Displaced People design and conduct a survey of IDP in Mocoa.

The survey provided a way for us to better understand grassroots organizing, and for María a way to gain greater legitimacy for the committee. The Municipal Committee had started out as a government-organized network of IDP settlement organizations, but she aspired to more: she wanted the group to collect its own data and to have its own office and computer. She insisted it was the committee's job to learn the number of internally displaced people and to understand their actual situation. She added references to women, indigenous people and Afro-Colombians, seeing that we were interested by what she, like the Constitutional Court, called "the differential approach."

With the same persistence she had exerted to convince us to help her with the survey, she had helped construct "San Lázaro," a model refugee settlement where each house has a large garden, shares a communal fish farm and sugar cane fields, a communal sand mine, a community house that doubles as a child-care center, running water (although not drinking water), latrines and electricity. Each of the 22 families in the settlement received first a temporary wooden house and then a two-bedroom house in brick and mortar complete with a bathroom. Noticing my admiration at the end of our first tour, María remarked: "You see we have all this, but if you look in our pantries, there is nothing." That, it seemed, was also true: like most IDP, no one in her family had formal employment or the likelihood of finding one, and they were cash-strapped and often hungry.

"BEING SOMEBODY"

Over repeated visits María went further into her complaint—the issue was not so much the present difficulties, but how much they had lost through displacement. She remarked bitterly, "We used to be somebody." "Being somebody" went beyond a respectable domestic life: María had also been the President of the Association of Rural Community Development Boards (*Juntas de Acción Comunal Veredal*). She ran meetings in her home, organized long work days, marches, community meals, elections and budgets. She held her own with the 32nd Front of the FARC, which was active in the region and often applied rough justice. Well known as a *Junta* leader, she was one of the few women in this frontier region who held such a post.

However, her life before displacement was not part of her official identity when we first met. She was in a sense "all IDP," and her reference to the past was of wealth lost, woven in with demands for restitution. She repeated that before the war, they had asked nothing of the government and even paid taxes; and that now, all the government offered was meager "assistance" (*puros programas asistenciales*). We heard from a feminist non-governmental organization that ran healing workshops in Mocoa that María had led resistance among local women to these workshops, demanding business skills training instead: "We are not crazy," she allegedly said "all we need is work."

María refers to herself as "almost a lawyer," and after calling me "doctor" (the honorary title for lawyers), one day started calling me by my given name, informing me that she always called "doctor" people who needed everything done for them. The sudden surge of empathy did not hide that I was a potential source of work. Work of course meant cash changing hands, from mine to hers, underlining the unfairness of a situation where I, who needed her help, had a steady paycheck and she didn't.

AND NOW A VICTIM

During our collaboration, Colombia adopted the Victims' Law, Law 1448 of 2011. New institutions and new participatory spaces, and of course, new opportunities emerged. María's story now included more of the circumstances of her displacement, a story she had told before, but which now took a new depth and moral weight.

María had not only been the President of the *Juntas de Acción Comunal*; she had also taken an active part in the *cocalero* marches in the mid-nineties. These marches, which paralyzed southern Putumayo, demanded that the government stop fumigating coca and start investing in the region. Stigmatized as FARC guerrilla collaborators, many of the *cocalero* leaders were murdered in the years that followed (1999 to 2006) when the paramilitaries, often in alliance with the Army, took over the towns in southern Putumayo.

Because María and her husband had participated in the marches, when the paramilitaries arrived to her municipality, which we'll call Puerto X, she was signaled as a *guerrillera*. In a context of brutal massacres, she faced up to Mario, the local commander. The story of her resistance in the months she stayed on became the hallmark of her new identity, one that gives her legitimacy both in the new Municipal Victim's Committee and in other transitional justice spaces.

STORIES OF DEATH AND SURVIVAL

After the survey was over, I hired Maria as a field assistant for another project. Overtly, the project concerned low-intensity coca cultivation, but it was really to finance a way for me to go back to fieldwork in Mocoa, where I still had unanswered questions. She gladly assumed the (paid) task, and organized a series of interviews and a lunch in her house with five *cocalero* leaders.

However, when I got to "San Lázaro," I found out that only one *cocalero* leader, Martín, and his college-educated new wife, had accepted the invitation. Once Martín told me his own story of the marches, and the repression that followed, María filled an uncomfortable silence saying she wanted to tell him what had happened in Puerto X after he fled. As she related them, her memories of paramilitary control seemed aimed at establishing her own political credentials, namely, that she had not been a collaborator. In fact María, like some of the other women we worked with, managed to negotiate with the warlords not only for her life, but her work as a leader, using gender as a shield. As a woman in her forties, and a mother, María insisted on the distance between her and the war, adopting the apolitical, and hence legitimate, role of caretaker of her family and her community.

There is no apparent structure to give collective social— and moral—meaning to civilian collaboration which is an ordinary part of war.

As told by María, the paramilitaries in their first encounter threatened her with death because "people" had told Mario that she was a *guerrillera*. She faced her death to her full five-foot stature, and convinced Mario to hear her out alone in her kitchen while she made coffee for him, leaving his weapons outside. She explained the nature of her leadership, convinced him of her non-partisanship, and got him to promise her not to massacre local peasants.

It seems Mario grew to like her or respect her, refusing to believe the many rumors which "gave him a constant headache." Trust came with a price. Once she was asked to identify whether or not a man belonged to one of the *Juntas*, and the man, tied up and tortured, was placed before her. The local priest murmured the man's name and address, and María lied and said she knew him, saving his life, endangering her own. Mario placed her thus in the ambiguous role of caretaker, trusting her and threatening her at the same time. She tells of the horror of retrieving mangled corpses after Mario told her where they were; of returning the bodies to grieving families. The final encounter, and reason for her displacement, is also framed by her role as mother/caretaker. In her telling, the real reason Mario expelled her from Puerto X was that he had not been invited to her eldest daughter's fifteenth birthday party (*quinceañero*).

I had heard this story before, but Martín's presence gave it a new weight, grounded in María's family disgrace. María's youngest child, now in his twenties, was in jail, condemned for kidnapping in collaboration with paramilitaries. The family had varying versions of this, and it was unclear to me whether he was recruited or forced to collaborate. In any case her son was in jail, and María called this situation being "dead in life" (*muerta en vida*).

This central fact of her past troubles her victim identity, and memory. There is no corresponding structure to give collective social, and moral, meaning to the civilian collaboration which is an ordinary part of war. Both identification as an IDP and as a victim assume that, as so many human rights NGOs insist, for ordinary people the war is "not our war." Hence, the available legal identities erase the grey zone where victims become informants and collaborators, as well as the existence of political sympathy with paramilitaries and guerrillas.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZING IS LIKE WOMEN'S WORK

Near the end of the lunch Martín admonished María to give up community organizing and concentrate on her family, as he had done. "You need to look out for yourself," he insisted. "Community organizing is ungrateful work (*muy desagradecida.*) It's like women's work (*como el trabajo de las mujeres*)," he adds. "You are always starting over. And no one thanks you for it."

María nods to this. I think of all the trouble I know she's had with the families of "San Lázaro," including the almost violent confrontation with the man who runs the fish farm. Her constant community work is not only "like women's work," it is in fact "women's work," woven around a deeply gendered identity of mother, non-combatant and caretaker, resonant in those of displaced woman and victim.

However, in her self-presentation within the categories of the law, María insists that the circumstances that make her a person deserving of special state attention do not destroy her pride and her sense of self, of competency. Her identity is deeply rooted in her past and her various community leaderships. Whatever identity laws ask her to assume, whatever memories middle-class professionals now want to hear, she remains in charge of the performance of her past, guarding the secret of her son's, and possibly her own, political identity. She remains in charge, taking on the state as yet another guest in the kitchen where she has asked so many people for lunch or coffee in the years before—and after—Mario showed up at her door; before, and after, I and other "*doctoras*" did the same.

Julieta Lemaitre *(M.A., SJD 07) is Associate Professor at Universidad de los Andes' Law School.* *This text is based on research funded by the Norwegian Research Council, in collaboration with PRIO at Oslo, and by the CESED (Center for Security and Drug Policy) at Los Andes. Names and identifying information have been modified to protect María and Martín's privacy.*

The Alchemy of Narrative

Estaba la pájara pinta sentada en el verde limón

BY FRANCISCO ORTEGA

SIX-YEAR-OLD ANA PEEKS OUT OF A KEYHOLE onto her middle-class Bogotá street even though her parents had forbidden her to do so. It is Friday, April 9, 1948, and popular presidential candidate Jorge Eliécer Gaitán has been assassinated, an event that triggered an era of unprecedented collective fury and intense social violence in Colombia known as *La Violencia* (1948-66). Ana witnesses the police murder a man in cold blood. She stares at the bludgeoned body and sees a policeman pick up the dead man's cap, an image that haunts her for the rest of her life.

Even though Ana leads a sheltered life, she is a victim of excessive family control censorship, rape, aggression and even state intimidation. As a young woman she discovers that her best friend, Valeria, a political activist, has been murdered, and later learns that her own boyfriend, Lorenzo, has been imprisoned and tortured. Twenty years after the *Bogotazo* Ana tells us that 1948 "was the same year in which [she] lost her first tooth and they killed Gaitán, the year she made her First Communion and that her grandfather died from diabetes." Ana's intellectual and emotional awakening is bound up with the origins of national history.

Ana is ideally poised to provide an account of the events, but she chose not to write a history or an illuminating testimony. Unlike Joaquín Estrada Monsalve, the country's Minister of Education during the *Bogotazo*, who wrote a recollection so that the youth of the country could comprehend "the greatness and miseries of the darkest night of [our] country," Ana does not write an instructive memoir. Instead, she is the fictional narrator and protagonist of Alba Lucía Ángel's novel, *Estaba la pájara pinta sentada en el verde limón* [*The Speckled Bird Was Sitting in a Lemon Tree*] (1975). The author spurned prevailing realistic conventions and appealed to avant-garde strategies—such as the alternation of multiple perspectives and narrative voices, the use of flashbacks and non-sequential narrative time—to produce a text that is difficult and recalcitrant; that stutters; that does not find its thread; that does not disclose the causes and the meaning of so much violence and terror.

Historians and social analysts of Ana's generation shared her difficulty in grasping the logic and consequences of *La Violencia*. In the preface to the landmark study *La violencia en Colombia* (1962), the authors—Germán Guzmán Campos, Orlando Fals Borda and Eduardo Umaña Luna—wrote that

> ... [Colombia] lacks the exact notion of what this violence is: neither it has understood it in all its aberrant brutality, nor does it have evidence of its dissolvent effects on the structures, nor its etiology, nor its impact within the social dynamics, nor its meaning as a social phenomenon, much less its importance in the peasantry's collective psychology(23).

Shared perplexity is surprising, especially if we consider the obvious differences between a modernist novel and a sociological analysis: while social scientists are driven to identify variables with precision to provide a coherent narrative, avant-garde novelists—or at least this one in particular—resist coherence and stage disorientation. The authors of *La violencia en Colombia* characterized their lack of knowledge as the disorganized proliferation of subjective impressions and the absence of an organizing principle for an analysis of social decomposition. *Estaba la pájara pinta*..., on the other hand, artfully offers narrative disorder to its readers as its most outstanding formal feature. Its formal governing force is made up of a stream of voices interrupting each other, the absence of chronological linearity and the mundane character of many of the text's anecdotes. But why would anybody write a narrative about social violence that—instead of seeking coherence—stages disarray? Is there a lesson here for historians, political analysts and other social scientists who want to explore the scene of social devastation?

Readers soon discover that the novel's style is a thoughtful—if challenging—response to the dislocating effects of intense social violence. Writing bends under the weight of brutality; it demands careful rethinking of the available forms of reporting in order to grasp the eluding logic of destruction. The idea is rehearsed throughout the novel:

> Very difficult, I tell you. Because to understand, just like that, so suddenly, so many things, is like wanting to crash through the sound barrier with a bicycle. It's not a given. One has to remain alert, always looking up at the universe, with one's skin and eyes wide open, spying the vibration of the colors; the aura of the birds; the movement of the wind; the swaying of the trees; the flow of the water; the dynamism of the clouds; the rotation of the sun, which keeps on burning while your pores dilate and everything in you is as if it were born anew, as if one has finally, finally found the form of all things.... (173).

Ana's claim is not only that the scenarios of social destruction are highly complex and must be described in depth. She also

The murder of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán led to the uprising known as El Bogotazo.

EL SAQUEO DE UNA ILUSIÓN: EL 9 DE ABRIL: 50 AÑOS DESPUÉS. PHOTO BY SADY GONZALES

impugns realism—the belief that reality possesses its own narrative—as the most suitable discursive form for the representation of social experience. "The memories of childhood have no order and no end," says Ángel, quoting Dylan Thomas, at the beginning of the novel. When coping with intense social conflict, realism might be an ideological straitjacket that obfuscates and impoverishes interpretation. In such cases, narrative order is no more than organized social disorder.

Finding the appropriate *form*, as the quote implies, is tantamount to comprehending. That is the reason why Ana remained ambivalent about Tina, her childhood friend and only successful storyteller in the novel. On the one hand, she was enthralled by Tina's inventive talents, her apparently endless imagination and her ability to "[find] words and [let them] fall as they will, not mattering if the public captures them" (79). But although Tina's stories were quite clever and unexpected, they follow the classical conventions of popular tales, always returning to the word of princes, monsters and fantasies. Ana's turbulent world, however, required an unyielding form of narration, one that transformed unmalleable truths and exploded traditional discursive forms. Knowledge is not just information, Ana would say if asked: it is information in a certain form. In the case of intense social conflict, conventionally sanctioned forms of reporting might be a hindrance.

Literary forms imbue stories with expectations and values, even if their objective is to defy them. Thus, *Estaba la pájara pinta…* invokes the traditional *Bildungsroman* or the coming-of-age story in which Ana, the young sensitive artist, seeks to overcome social obstacles in order to find her place in the world. Ana demonstrates her vocation early on, as she expresses her fascination with words, copying in her diary those with the most beautiful sounds. Language becomes a utopian refuge, a space for mourning, desire, difference and even rebellion. She makes friends who, like Valeria, also a writer, become mentors and models, and the text suggests at several points that what we read is Ana's own attempt to give meaning to her life. The discursive frame usually invoked by this type of narrative makes the elements available with which the story constructs a moral and social universe. That the novel resists such conventions—instead of fulfilling its expectations—shatters all the more effectively our readerly expectations.

In Ana's account there is no knowledgeable authoritative subject to guarantee growth and learning; no one can uncover the structuring logic behind social chaos or organize traumatic memories and convert them in a coherent history of progress and development. Not that the narrative does not gesture in that direction. It draws from memoirs and other documents providing composed and conclusive interpretation of the tragedy. These are historical documents authored by the political elite, such as Doña Bertha, President Mariano Ospina Pérez's wife, and the already mentioned Minister Estrada Monsalve. Their interpretation hinges on the view of Bogotá as South America's "Atenas"

Left: A view of the Central Cemetery on the Avenida El Dorado, also known as the Avenue of Memory; the Center for Memory, Peace and Reconciliation is built on its grounds, where many victims of political violence are buried (see the article by Paolo Vignolo on p. 20 of this issue). Right: An image of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán is painted onto a present-day Bogotá wall.

PHOTOS BY SYLVIA PERCOVICH

or Athens, as it was proudly hailed, the aristocratic seat of a refined and cultured civic tradition. "The destruction of the most civic-minded, most spiritual and intelligent city in all of Latin America," writes Monsalve, "caused great bitterness." In this narrative, the Bogotazo and its aftermath were barbaric interruptions by morally debased people lacking in education and civility. These accounts lamented the invasion and violent displacement of the cultured city by the *chusma*, the dregs of society, and showed a topsy-turvy world in which social hierarchies were suspended and both moral and political authority ceased to exist. Authorial voices appear as obstacles to understanding.

In contrast, the text inscribes vivid accounts of non-elite first-hand witnesses, such as Sabina (who works in Ana's house), Don Anselmo, a displaced peasant who lost all his family, and *Flaco* Bejarano, or the story of Flower, the striptease dancer shot to death during the Bogotazo. Their accounts ridicule elite composure, but they do not converge in an authoritative interpretation. They permeate the narrative with moral indignation and contribute to the sensa-

The graffiti announces the Patriotic March of April 9, 2013, and calls for a political solution to the armed conflict in Colombia.

tion of uncontrollable chaos and despair. Upon learning of Gaitán's assassination one of his sympathizers evinces a shattered sense of hope:

> ...I began to shout furiously, like everyone else...and I sobbed, crying out for my God. It was as if they had killed my mother and my father and all of my family altogether, such anger, such impotence, brother. Here is what has to be done: to go all out; there's no other remedy.

Telling and listening to stories—a multitude of diverse and often contradictory stories—is related to comprehending. Only when listening to those we hastily label "victims" does the possibility of true understanding emerge. These testimonies not only provide multiple points of view to satisfy our intellectual curiosity. Most importantly, they allow for mourning, the process of subjective reconstitution and the re-elaboration of a collective sense of belonging. Empathy, the relational connection between the inquirer and the subject whose experience constitutes the field of investigation, can thus take place and be part of comprehending.

The novel alternates between the proliferation of testimonies and the reluctance to inform; between an impulse to give account and the disinclination or incompetence to speak. As a child, Ana often found herself with a "horrible urge to cry and did not know why." Don Anselmo survived possessed by the kind of extreme vivid images that characterizes traumatic experiences. Exhausted from those images, Don Anselmo

> ... completed the porridge and remained silent, thinking of all the bodies floating in the rivers. Of the elderly and children who had been shot. The old man did not hear her. ... Ana saw Don Anselmo with his arms folded across his chest, praying on his knees while tears were hanging, cradled in his wrinkles.

Our intellectual and creative pursuits are located between these two impulses: telling or mournful reconstitution and withholding or melancholic remembrance. Ana's implied argument is that interpretations might further the work of mourning or constitute a disavowal of the other's pain. In all cases, our lack of attention and imagination in the reception and processing of testimonies denies pain and constitutes a double act of violence. Overall, it inevitably becomes a generator of new violence.

Anselmo's scene elaborates what might be the most serious challenge to researchers of social conflict: the intransitive character of emotional pain, the fact that I can feel my pain but cannot show it or point it to someone else. Furthermore, by isolating Anselmo's suffering, the scene highlights the absence of technical languages that can communicate its nature, that can alert us to its insidious effects, the modes in which it works in memory and construes daily life. But pain is also a beckoning, a desperate call soliciting recognition, and testimony is our precarious but precious mode for apprehending it. It is the vehicle through which learning about the pain of others is possible. To receive somebody's testimony, that is, to be a witness to his or her suffering, demands we understand with intellect and emotions. Testimonies make evident how people absorb painful memories and root them into their everyday, use them to their advantage, or simply evade them by coexisting with them. Anselmo's testimony bears their imprint: the ways he suffers, perceives, persists and resists such violence; remembers and mourns his losses. Knowledge of what happened —what happened to Don Anselmo and to others, but also the role others played in what happened to him—silently structures social relations. His knowledge is poisonous, but his testimony affirms the will to live.

Clearly, silences are not lacunae of information. Most frequently they inscribe a resistance to yielding; they insist on the difficulty of comprehending and the labor of recognition; they challenge and return to the unreason of suffering; they set up interpretative limits to the voraciousness of scientific inquiry. Most evidently, they speak of the incidence of the violent past in the present. But they never represent a renunciation of the telling. The novel might be teeming with silences, but they are all contained in the *act of telling*; and the telling inscribes silences as part of the story.

Listening to testimony requires imagination. If the language of science remains impervious before the scene of social devastation, those who speak scientifically will have to borrow, steal, concoct words, insinuate and modulate in order to break up the silence. Like Ana. After all, it is such exercise of imagination that makes empathy possible, the attribute that knowledge lacks in order to arrive at true comprehension. Telling and listening, therefore, are integral parts of understanding. They are related to three important and clearly differentiated functions: they name the violences; they are the means by which victims re-establish a relation with others; and they make possible mourning.

It is not surprising that such knowledge is deemed dangerous. Ana is forbidden to get near the door during the Bogotazo; she is not allowed to listen to the stories about the violence at the family farm or to read newspapers during the student massacres. Her mother scolds her when Ana begins to express interest in books. As part of a middle-class respected family she is kept from seeing, hearing and knowing—from becoming a witness. The novel reproduces—and parodies—this need for control: an image of President General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla's ban on any report or editorial about the student massacres of June 8 and 9, 1954, appears on the front page of *El Tiempo,* the country's main opposition newspaper. The repeated figuration of writing as transgression, such as Lorenzo's letters from jail or Valeria's writing and her death at the hands of the police, suggests that narrating history is dangerous, even fatal.

Estaba la pájara pinta ... is a meditation about apprehending, comprehending and representing difficult, poisonous knowledge in the midst of social conflict. Its starting point is that Ana's social experience—as the experience of those who lived through *La Violencia*—demands a type of inquiry and reporting that takes into account its intense nature. Eschewing received notions of fiction and history, its stylistic choices and notorious difficulty embody this meditation for the reader. It insists on apprehending the way memory works and thus seeks to transform information into testimony, while nameless victims become human subjects. The novel seeks to give testimony on the devastation that took place in the country during the ten years between Gaitán's assassination and the bipartisan agreement that put an end to *La Violencia.*

All of this makes the novel relevant for social researchers today, as the country moves towards a peace agreement and faces massive demobilizations, truth commissions and the reparation of victims. Much as what happened in the aftermath of *La Violencia*, when Liberals and Conservatives, the two parties responsible for instigating fratricidal violence, reached a peace agreement in 1957, contemporary political figures stake out their claims on the past and saturate public discourse with their view of the conflict. Most of the country greeted the cessation of the conflict, but grew weary of a National Front that harked back to the civilist myth of the South American Athens and shut off most non-elite from political dialogue. The following years saw the birth of the two main guerrilla groups, FARC and ELN, and the sowing of the seed of the conflict that still grips the country today.

Contemporary researchers might want to look back at the creative ways in which the country responded to *La Violencia*. Like *Estaba la pájara pinta...*, other works, such as Arturo Alape's *El Bogotazo* (1983) and Alfredo Molano's *Los años del tropel* (1985)— sought to testify and record the silences and nightmares of the Anselmos, Flowers, Sabinas, and thousands more, who remain at the margin of history. Today, once again, arts, literature and social sciences are called forth to play an important role in the recovery of languages and memories of pain, true laboratories to construct to conviviality of the future, one in which death is no longer the structuring center of social life. We cannot renounce such an urgent task.

Francisco Ortega *was a Visiting Scholar and Teaching Assistant at Harvard's Department of Romance Languages and Literatures from 1995 to 1999 and one of the founders of the Colombian Colloquium at Harvard in 1997. He is an Associate Professor of History at the National University of Colombia in Bogotá.*

PHOTO BY SYLVIA PERCOVICH

Democracy, Citizenship and Commemoration in Colombia

Performance of "Plural and Exceptional Memories"

BY MAITE YIE GARZÓN

MILITARY DETACHMENTS COSTUMED IN THE historical uniforms of the patriotic army journeyed on foot, by mule and on horseback on a long journey promoted as the Liberty Route to celebrate Colombia's bicentennial. The media showed the inhabitants of different towns of the country celebrating the arrival of the marchers, fulfilling their own role in this polemic recreation of the official stories about national independence. Against the backdrop of a politically polarized country deeply affected by the armed conflict, this game with fragments of history sought to associate President Álvaro Uribe Vélez's polemical Democratic Security policy with the 1819 Campaign for Liberation.

This act was part of a 2010 program known as the Bicentennial of the Independences. This included the so-called Bicentennial Routes, which took visitors along four historic circuits—including the Liberty Route—each one associated with some military or scientific endeavor that would have given life to the Colombian nation. Colombian citizens were encouraged to pay homage to their roots and also to experience the immense cultural and geographic diversity of their national territory. "Live the Colombian history and explore the country's geography," said one of the campaign slogans.

But the stories included in the celebration were more than the ones found in school history textbooks. They included the different memories of Colombians especially those ordinarily excluded from official history. The state called upon Colombians to go beyond the mere celebration of the past of the nation, and to honor those multiple memories taking root throughout the land. Indeed, one of the linchpins of the bicentennial program was called Diversities of Memory. This included the creation of local centers in several towns throughout the country, designed to "recuperate, register and save the common local memory." The local centers were led by cultural agents known as "keepers of memory." In the same spirit, another linchpin of the bicentennial program named Pluralities of Memory presented three documentaries entitled *Memorias de la Libertad.* These films recreated the emancipatory struggles of Colombia's ethnic minorities: the Ika tribe from the Sierra Nevada of Santa Marta, the Nasa group from the southwest Andean region and a collective of Afro-Colombian women from the Cauca Valley, all of whom rose up against "distinguished agents" of the nation.

Such programs promoted the notion that local and ethnic communities made up specific varieties of national memory—something similar to the national industry of "typical" artifacts. The basic idea is that memory itself is a richness, a patrimony, whose worth derives from its diverse nature—as happens with the biological, ethnic and cultural wealth. Thus, not only the state but also the citizens are considered responsible for the recuperation, recording and rescue of memories. It is clear that this patrimonial concept of memory is closely linked to the two decades-long emphasis on multiculturalism in Latin America. Indeed, in the Colombian case, multiculturalism had been elevated to a constitutional principle in 1991, obliging the state and its citizens to protect cultural and ethnic diversity conceived as part of our cultural patrimony.

From the viewpoint of the state, this nationalization of the memories of ethnic groups and local communities could be seen as a way to achieve social inclusion. In fact, the Local Centers for Memory have as their slogan "All of us are memory," another way of saying that all of us are a nation. However, this recognition of the diverse nature of the Colombian memory creates dilemmas that limit this goal of inclusivity. The three documentaries grew out of state recognition of the plurality of independences. Nevertheless, different social struggles are included under the same umbrella ("liberation movements"), assuming that all are part of the same process. So, the contradictions between different stories are unknown—and the profound historical inequalities that they show us can be evaded. When memories are treated as an expression of diversity and not also of inequality, they are permitted to coexist unquestioned "in a lighter fashion," each kept in its own place. Thus, it is possible to evade the tension between a history that tells us about national independence and others that assert that not all social groups were emancipated, some of which carried out their own heroic deeds, even against the project of nation that emerged from Independence.

This patrimonial concept of memory does not coverall its current meanings—the memory is being linked in many ways and by different actors to democratic practice. Today, in Colombia, it is common to talk about memory as a right and to "make memory" ("hacer memoria") as an exercise in citizenship. Together with ethnic and local memories, the memories of the victims of social and armed conflict have come into play in the last decade, spurred on by human rights activists and transitional justice policies. An entire legal and institutional apparatus has been created to carry out these policies. In 2005, the Uribe Vélez government signed an agreement with the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC). a paramilitary umbrella group, to adhere to the Law of Justice and Peace (Law 975, 2005). This law provides legal incentives to indict paramilitary chieftains involved in crimes against humanity and supplemented already existing norms that favored the demobilization of paramilitary and guerrilla groups and individuals.

A memorial to memory and to Colombia's thousands of victims on the Avenida El Dorado.

The Law of Peace and Justice created institutions such as the National Commission for Reparation and Reconciliation (CNRR) with its Group for Historic Memory (GMH) that performed a double task: to undertake "historic reconstruction" of the causes and effects of the recent armed Colombian conflict, and to identify "the distinct truths and memories of the violence, with a differentiated focus and a preferential option for the voices of victims who have been suppressed or silenced." (See the GMH website, http://www.memoriahistorica-cnrr.org.co/s-home/). Fulfilling this double function, GMH, which is now called the Center for Historic Memory (CMH) has produced several reports on small municipalities—such as Trujillo, El Salado, Bojayá, La Rochela, Bahía Portete, among others—that reveal them as emblems of the violence and suffering experienced in the context of the armed conflict. But the work of the CMH has not consisted in just registering "preexisting memories," but also in promoting and orienting the production of these memories and their public diffusion. Just like Culture Ministry officials in charge of the Local Centers of Memory program, the CMH members tend to give workshops and produce manuals to guide the work done in local communities. Although this effort has positioned victims themselves as agents of national memories, it also implies that their voices are filtered and modulated.

CMH is also collecting testimonies of former paramilitary soldiers who were not involved in crimes against humanity, as a result of "an agreement to contribute to authentic history and reparation" in exchange for legal benefits, according to a law (1424) enacted the same year as the bicentennial. Until now, these testimonies have occupied a marginal place in CMH as compared to testimonies containing the "memories of victims." While the testimonies of victims are usually valuable as memories, the intrinsic value of the testimonies of perpetrators depends on its contribution to the historic construction of truth about the conflict. Although these testimonies are important insofar as they communicate a history outside themselves and recount a "truth," the actors' own experience as paramilitaries or guerrillas is partially or completely excluded. Of course, there are exceptions. A few years back, the Bogotá Mayor's Office spearheaded a project called Testimonial Conversations about the Armed Conflict and Peace. In the same setting, former combatants from the guerrilla movements and the AUC, as well as representatives of victims' organizations, told their life histories. These conversations took place in neighborhoods where these former combatants live, and they sought to help create acceptance among their neighbors and to prevent the recruiting of minors by telling them "the truth about the war." The Defense Ministry also used the strategy of these conversations as part of its campaign to stimulate the individual demobilization of guerrilla members. Going in a different direction from the state use of these testimonies, the Collective of Former Women Combatants demanded the right to memory of combatants, giving new meanings to their own role in the insurgency as part of a broader life project aimed at achieving peace with social justice.

Both the multicultural and transitional strategies seek to make national and public the memories of social groups that have occupied a marginal or opposition position, and whose citizenship has been restricted in practice. Both ethnic minorities and the victims and perpetrators are considered subjects of the nation—but exceptional rather than the norm. Both represent something that—in theory—is not typical of the majority of Colombians. The two projects, with apparently different concepts and aims, would both be ways to incorporate silenced voices into the process of the construction of a national memory which, one supposes, will this time be integrative and not excluding.

However, the democratic creation of a public platform for memories carries

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important risks to democracy itself. On the one hand, there is the risk that the memories of the sectors that have been historically marginalized can be displaced by their own memories in the exercising of democracy. On the other hand, ethnic and local memories, as well as those of the victims and perpetrators, run the risk of being "purified"—cleaned up—of their disturbing content, losing their critical and creative potential before becoming available to the public. We Colombians thus are in danger of contemplating an antiseptic exhibition of our memories of the type one might find in a museum display of some objects from the Independence period.

Going against this current, some organizations and social movements have been combining acts of social protest with commemorative acts. Such is the case of the social movement Marcha Patriótica (Patriotic March), an umbrella group for several social organizations, mainly leftist. Its first public act was a march against the neoliberal policies of Uribe Vélez on July 20, 2010, the date of the historic "Cry of Independence." More recently, on April 9, 2013, in commemoration of the assassination of popular liberal leader Jorge Eliecer Gaitán, the same movement convoked a march in memory of the victims of the armed conflict. Both activist organizations and even President Juan Manuel Santos participated in the march. Nevertheless, the social organizations paid homage to their own "fallen heroes" with symbolic funerals, but also raised banners with economic, social and political demands. Indeed, some people who used the public space as a site of mourning claimed the right to truth—and not only to memory. Beyond a doubt, it is a time in which diverse memories can coexist without touching in the same space. A commitment to the truth could be a way of turning on its head the isolating and paralyzing effect of the state treatment of memory.

Maite Yie Garzón *is a professor of anthropology at the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana in Bogotá, Colombia.*

The Language of Public Memory

La Asociación Minga and the Authentic Image of the Victim

BY J. LUKE PIZZATO

A GREEN MIDSIZED RENAULT SEDAN SITS ON A ramp lifting the car´s open hood and revealing an engine stuffed with palm seeds. Entitled *Renault 12*, the piece is part of an exhibit *Somos Tierra* developed as a result of a large group dialogue. In a series of workshops that discussed the death of young taxi drivers, the arrival of the palm cultivation in the region, and massacres, the exhibit came into being as the brain child of Asociación Minga, a human rights organization that has turned to art to preserve and transmit victims' stories.

Minga co-founder and artistic director Francisco Bustamante described how the image of the car emerged after "smaller group sessions developed a series of ideas, histories, memories, stories and drawings." Ultimately, the group decided the image of the car would be an apt representation of the young taxi drivers they hoped to memorialize, many of whom had been killed as they were forced to transport paramilitaries and guerillas after the palm oil industry entered the region and exacerbated the violence there.

The scope of the problem in Colombia is enormous. According to statistics collected by the Colombian newsmagazine *Semana*, 5,405,629 Colombians have been direct victims of the Colombia armed conflict since 1985 (*Semana*, June 10, 2013). Think about it: nearly five and a half million have suffered torture, sexual assault, homicide, forced displacement, and injury from shrapnel and crossfire. Driven by this impossible reality various recent national and local governmental initiatives have sought formal reparations for this incredible number of victims. These include Law 1448 of 2011, popularly known as the Law of Victims, which has energized a process that intends to "establish judicial measures, administrative, social, economic, individual and collective for the benefit of victims that they might enjoy their right to truth, justice and reparations" (*Ley de Víctimas y Restitución de Tierras*, June, 2011). Pivotal within the social aspect of this project has been the development of a public history of the conflict, specifically the memorialization of these victims' recent experiences.

Minga emerged in response to the "necessity to protect and accompany communities from far away territories forgotten by the state that had begun to suffer the impacts of the conflict in a very significant way." The political reality of memory, therefore, has provided profoundly important work for human rights organizations like La Asociación Minga as they fight to ensure that the victims' authentic accounts are communicated.

Although the Law of Victims explicitly states that memory should be allowed to develop openly without the bias of an official State Memory, Article 143 "On the Duty of State Memory" seeks the ideal of a free economy of memory wherein "society, through its different expressions such as those of victims… just as those of state organizations, can give account with competency, autonomy and resources" (*Ley de Víctimas y Restitución de Tierras*, June, 2011). Such an inclusive ideal, however, has proven problematic. Elizabeth Jelin, a Spanish academic in memory studies, asserts that though memory is necessarily public and social, public memory is never "collective memory." It is rather, "shared memory, superimposed, the product of multiple interactions, framings in social contexts and in relations of power" (*Los Trabajos de la Memoria*, 2001).

Renault 12 **is part of an art exhibit** ***Somos Tierra,*** **developed as a result of a group dialogue in a series of workshops.**

PHOTO BY J. LUKE PIZZATO

Public memory is only ever developed within a contest of interacting perspectives, all with various arsenals of power and therefore varying degrees of agency in the debate. An excellent example of this dynamic is found in the Colombian false positives scandal of the past 10 years in which politically uninvolved civilians were killed by the Colombian Army and "subsequently presented as guerrilla casualties to inflate the combat 'body count'" in the war against the FARC and other guerilla groups (The US National Security Archive, www.gwu.edu, January 2009). Mothers of victims have had to fight the state, not only in a legal battle over their loved ones' remains, but also as part of semantic contest over the memory of a victim. Their perspectives have only recently developed a forceful voice.

Minga has dedicated the past 20 years to the task of effectively and authentically communicating the perspectives

of the victims themselves. Originally a group of artists, activists, psychologists and sociologists working on a volunteer basis with victimized communities in Catatumbo, Asociación Minga, by 1990, was formally registered as a human rights protection organization, offering primarily pro bono legal assessments, casework and representation, and long-term community involvement. As Minga continued to grow, it began to parallel its traditional human rights advocacy with a series of art projects dedicated to enhancing the public visibility of the communities with which it had worked. Given a public that director Bustamante says was "indifferent, asleep, anesthetized", he says they were "left with no alternative but to evidence their reality, to make it known, to bring it to light for the public." Art had become a necessary tool in this mission.

Minga is most recognized for a series of projects they've called "Galleries of Memory." Beginning with a project that emerged from work with war-torn communities in Putumayo and San Onofre, a traveling exhibition called *Nunca Más* toured libraries in Bogotá from 1994 to 1996. The tour was realized in collaboration with a long time partner organization, the Manuel Cepeda Foundation. *Nunca Más* was followed by another collaborative project at the end of the decade which they called the *Buceo de la Memoria*. This project brought various art exhibits to sites around Bogotá, public squares, schools and the national university. When members of the Manuel Cepeda Foundation received a series of threats that forced them to leave the country, they continued to put their exhibition on tour in France and Switzerland. When Minga and the Manuel Cepeda Foundation were reunited in Colombia in 2004, they developed a new exhibition with these same communities that they named *Recuérdame*, which toured the United States. With *Recuérdame*'s success, they were then able to develop a fourth gallery of memory, an exhibition they named *Somos Tierra*, this time informed by work with communities in Catatumbo and Montes de Maria, which is currently on tour in Bogotá.

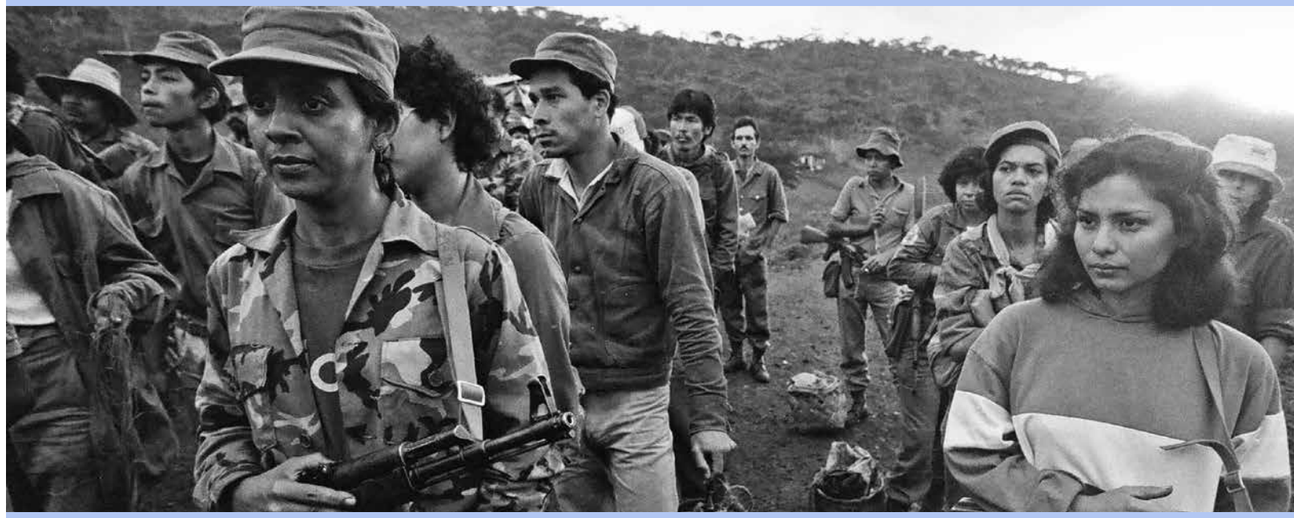
According to Bustamante, these exhibitions have been the product of a common goal between Minga and the Manuel Cepeda Foundation to find "alternative languages that can generate more solidarity" between the victimized communities and the general public. As their galleries of memory present victims' stories to audiences in Europe, the United States and in Colombia, Bustamante says that the role of his organization is only that of an intermediary. This passive attitude in project development is a critical element of Minga's work, as all of their projects seeks to function through what Bustamante calls "horizontal dialogue." He says Minga isn't interested in their artists working as the "enlightened minds" who consult the community but then design projects independently. Minga is dedicated, rather, to the inclusive development of the artwork. "In a collective dialogue with the affected individuals, they tell their stories and we ask questions," and on the basis of images and symbols that emerge from conversation, plans for the pieces take shape

Minga devotes itself to the inclusive development of artwork through a collective dialogue with individuals who have been affected by Colombia's violence.

This unique artistic methodology has been in part affected by Minga's use of a similar research paradigm in their more classical human rights work. In various projects wherein Minga has sought to develop local infrastructure for victimized communities, they have applied Orlando Fals Borda's *Participatory Action Research (PAR)* method which seeks to empower communities to act for self-improvement by teaching systematic research methods that allow locals to lead data collection projects themselves and formally discuss their communities' development interests. Minga led a project under this methodology with a group of women in Cauca to discuss food distribution and health care provision along with a contracted researcher. Bustamante says these women were able to use their "conclusions to discuss their case with authorities, and they could then begin to make their own proposals that agreed with their reality." In parallel with PAR, Minga's art-making process makes sure that communities with which they work are directly involved in the formation of the reality presented.

With projects like *Somos Tierra*, Bustamante says that Minga hopes to foster a greater sensibility for dialogue that might "permit an understanding, a comprehensions that would translate, in the future, to the reconciliation of our country." It's for this reason, Bustamante continues, that they use "a language of symbols and images. Because we believe symbols and images are less biased that words." The goal would seem to be a language of memory that escapes the power play of political discourse and merely delivers the reality of the victim's experience as explicitly and authentically as possible. Although the complex network of superimpositions present in any system of public memory make such a goal hugely difficult, Minga's dedication to the support of the victim's self-representation is an earnest attempt to achieve such an ideal.

J. Luke Pizzato *is a sophomore at Harvard College. He spent two months this past summer working in Bogotá at the Center for Memory, Peace and Reconciliation through the DRCLAS summer internship program in Colombia. His academic interests include psychology, epistemology, and memory studies.*



JOURNALISM

Journalism—as the saying goes—is the rough draft of history. At its best, it uncovers official lies. At its worst, it perpetuates them. Journalism forms the archives of tomorrow and poses questions about the past.

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Keeping the Silence, Breaking the Silence

The Role of the Published Word BY ROBERT J. COX

AS EDITOR OF THE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE *BUENOS* *Aires Herald,* I lived through the worst years (1976 to the end of 1979) of the dictatorship in Argentina, and I was constantly astonished by the way the general population accepted military rule. It is true that the media silenced themselves in complicity with, or out of fear of, the special task forces that resembled the Nazi *Einsatzgruppen*. However, ordinary citizens denied what they could see with their own eyes as leather-jacketed thugs drove their sinister unmarked cars, usually Ford Falcons, through the streets of Buenos Aires, threatening anyone who got in their way with their machine guns. Daylight abductions were also a familiar sight, and word of mouth when a neighbor was taken away spread the terrifying reports about the "Dirty War" far and wide.

The coup on March 24, 1976, that overthrew the elected government of President Estela Martinez de Perón, widow of Juan Domingo Perón, appeared at first to be yet another military takeover in a country accustomed to frequent periods of military rule since 1930. The commanders of the three armed forces announced that they were launching a Process of National Reorganization to save the nation from atheistic communism, which began with a pre-arranged plan to exterminate people the military considered to be "subversive." But anyone who questioned the military, not just the armed members of revolutionary organizations, was at risk, and thousands of people were abducted from their homes to be tortured and killed.

The *Proceso* proved to be the most brutal dictatorship in Argentine history.

Despite the evidence of their own eyes, most Argentines managed to pretend that all was well, apart from the ever-present threat of so-called subversion, which could only be imagined, and terrorism, which was very real. This extraordinary apathy in the face of what philosophers term "radical evil" has yet to be accounted for, let alone explained. Notably, however, in an article on the death of Jorge Rafael Videla, the nominal dictator of Argentina from March 24, 1976 to March 29, 1981, the essayist Beatriz Sarlo tackled this painful subject. Sarlo, who describes herself as "a Social-Democrat, former Marxist and ex-Maoist," breached a taboo in a May 18, 2013, column in *La Nación*, which was openly and still unapologetically supportive of the military.

How, she asked, was it possible that millions of Argentines could go along with the military in the first years of the dictatorship? Where were the press, the politicians, and the few who resisted; how was it that they changed their attitudes and altered their positions?

She noted that Videla "never repented his actions, never publicly considered them a fatal error." In my opinion, his belated admission, before he was sentenced to life imprisonment at a trial in Córdoba in 2008, that he was a mass murderer was an act of false bravado. He was serving several life sentences and knew that the re-election of President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner in 2010 meant that he that he would never be pardoned again (as he was by President Carlos Menem) or released from prison.

So he admitted his deeds in what was the opposite of a confession. He acknowledged that under his orders "7,000 to 8,000" people were murdered. He did not admit that they were held in clandestine prisons and their bodies secretly disposed of by cremation or burial in unmarked mass graves, or were thrown, drugged but alive, from military transport planes into the waters of the estuary of the La Plata river or the South Atlantic.

Last year Videla broke a silence of almost three decades when he gave a series of interviews in his comfortable quarters at a military prison at the Campo de Mayo garrison to author and journalist Ceferino Reato. The title of Reato's book, echoing in Argentine Spanish the Nazi's "Final Solution," is *Final Disposition* (*Disposición Final*, published by Sudamerica, 2012).

One of the consequences of Videla's claim of total responsibility for mass murder was that he was punished by being moved to a cell in a civilian-run prison, where he died aged 87 on May 17 of this year. His admission that he ordered the murder of those 7,000 to 8,000 people "in order to defeat subversion" was spurious because he was never fully in charge of the Army, let alone the Navy, which under its commander Emilio Massera not only set up its own torture centers and death camps but also targeted civilian members of Videla's cabinet for assassination.

The aged dictator's statements did prompt a public outcry and general condemnation of Videla, but privately, in circles close to the military, he is still admired by people who believe the military "did what was necessary."

I discovered that there is residual support for the military dictatorship when I wrote a Sunday column from November 2011 until May 26, 2013, for the *Buenos Aires Herald*, where I was editor from 1968 to the end of 1979.

In response to my columns, the newspaper received and published a number of letters that expressed veiled admiration for the military. In messages to my own e-mail account I encountered utterly vile statements in open support of the dictatorship.

I do not think there is any danger today that the military will return to power. While there are still people who deny the horrors committed during the "Dirty War," the trials initiated under the administration of the late Nestor Kirchner, following a ruling by the Supreme Court that declared the Menem blanket amnesty unconstitutional, have established beyond any reasonable doubt that massive and horrendous crimes against humanity were committed during the dictatorship.

Memory has been restored. Those who lived during the horror of the '70s and '80s cannot convincingly claim they did not know what was going on.

Memory has been restored. Those who were alive during the horror of the '70s and '80s cannot convincingly claim that they did not know what was going on. It is encouraging too, to see that there is finally some movement toward reconciliation through forgiveness. In an article in *La Nación*, Hector Leís, a former Montonero guerrilla, wrote: "[We] Argentines lost the opportunity to do ourselves a good turn by not knowing how to forgive old man Videla so that he could die in peace at his home with his family." The column carried the headline: "The task of pardoning the unpardonable." It aroused such a vitriolic furor against him that Leís, who lives in Brazil and is a professor of philosophy at the federal university of Santa Catarina, said he regretted entering the public forum.

There have been other notable incursions into the no man's land of reconciliation, which suggest that Leís, who followed in the footsteps of former militants Héctor Schmucler, Oscar del Barco, Pilar Calveiro and a few other intellectuals, is not alone in seeking to restore that part of national memory that relates to actions in the 1970s of the many guerrilla groups that were termed "subversive terrorists" in the lexicon of the dictatorship.

Effectively, Leís acknowledges that the Montoneros, in which he was a combatant unil he escaped to Brazil in 1976, were terrorists, almost as bad as "state terrorists."

In an interview with Astrid Pikielny in *La Nación,* he asked for "forgiveness for the suffering caused by my actions. Our madness led to an encounter with madness. In this sense I understand the ill named 'theory of the two demons' expressed in *Nunca Más* by Ernesto Sábato: the two sides of the conflict in the '70s were equally blind and mad."

Leís' new book, *Un testamento de los años 70: Terrorismo. Política y verdad en Argentina,* has two prologues, one by Sarlo and the other by Graciela Fernández Meijide, who was a member of the Permanent Assembly for Human Rights during the dictatorship and who served as secretary of the The National Commission on the Disappeared.

Fernández Meijide is also the author of a recently published book *Eran humanos, no héroes* (Sudamericana), which looks at the "Dirty War" through a different lens. Referring to Leís and other self-critical former guerrillas, also in an interview with Astrid Pikielny, Fernández Meijide emphasized that "every one of them was a militant with direct participation in the armed organizations. I wasn't." Pikielny said that Fernández doesn't accept the Kirchner government's "epic vision" of the '70s guerrillas. Fernández doesn't believe that "the best of the best" died in the struggle. She argues that both "good and bad" died and "good and bad" survived. Her view has particular force because her 17-year-old son,

Laura Conte is the mother of Augusto Conte Mac Donell, arrested and disappeared in Argentina on July 7, 1976.

PHOTO BY MARCOS ADANDIA

Pablo, was abducted on Oct. 23, 1976, and remains one of the Argentina's ten thousand to thirty thousand "desaparecidos." It is significant that there is not even a generally accepted rough estimate of the number of people seized, tortured, murdered by the military and whose bodies remain unrecovered.

A third book that seeks to restore memory is by Norma Morandini, a senator who ran as a center-left vice-presidential candidate in the 2010 elections. *From Guilt to Forgiveness* (*De la culpa al perdón,* Sudamericana) is a passionate appeal for reconciliation and for a national commitment to rebuild democratic society.

"I lived in dark times" she told Cadena 3, a television station in her home city of Córdoba, "and saw my two brothers disappear and how my mother overcame this huge blow. I took with me into exile a generational cemetery: friends, colleagues, neighbors, family members, lovers. It was a banishment that sent me into the depths of suffering, but also allowed me to see more profoundly."

The blindness of the general population to the horrors of the dictatorship is a malady that has passed. But today in Argentina there is willful blindness to the danger facing democracy as another government, elected but scornful of the rights of minorities, seeks to use its power to change society in its own image. The failure of the press to report what was happening during the dictatorship gave the military carte blanche. While almost totally polarized into pro- and anti-government blocs, the media today have not been silenced and the voices that call for tolerance and reconciliation are being heard.

Robert J. Cox *was the editor of the* Buenos Aires Herald *from 1968-1979. He was awarded the Maria Moors Cabot Prize in 1978. After receiving multiple death threats, he left Argentina and became a 1981 Nieman Fellow at Harvard.*

Covering Central America in the 1980s

A Memoir in Words and Photos

BY SCOTT WALLACE

THE WIPERS SLAPPED ACROSS THE RAIN-smeared windshield as we sped through downtown San Salvador. Nelson Ayala clutched the steering wheel to keep us on the road through the torrential downpour. It was already two hours past dark, and it felt way too late to be out on the streets in this part of town.

Suddenly, a body appeared in the headlights just ahead of us, sprawled on the pavement. Nelson swerved to avoid it and kept going. "Shouldn't we stop to help?" I asked. "It's not convenient," he replied, wagging a finger. "You don't know who that person might be or why he is there. We'll call an ambulance from the house."

It was my first day in El Salvador, my first day as a professional reporter. I'd arrived that afternoon as a freelancer fresh out of journalism school, and with only $50 in my pocket, I'd made a beeline from the airport to the Camino Real Hotel, headquarters for the foreign press agencies covering the civil war. Most importantly, I had credentials from CBS News, and Nelson, the CBS driver whom I met in the network's bureau, offered to put me up while I saved money and looked for a place of my own.

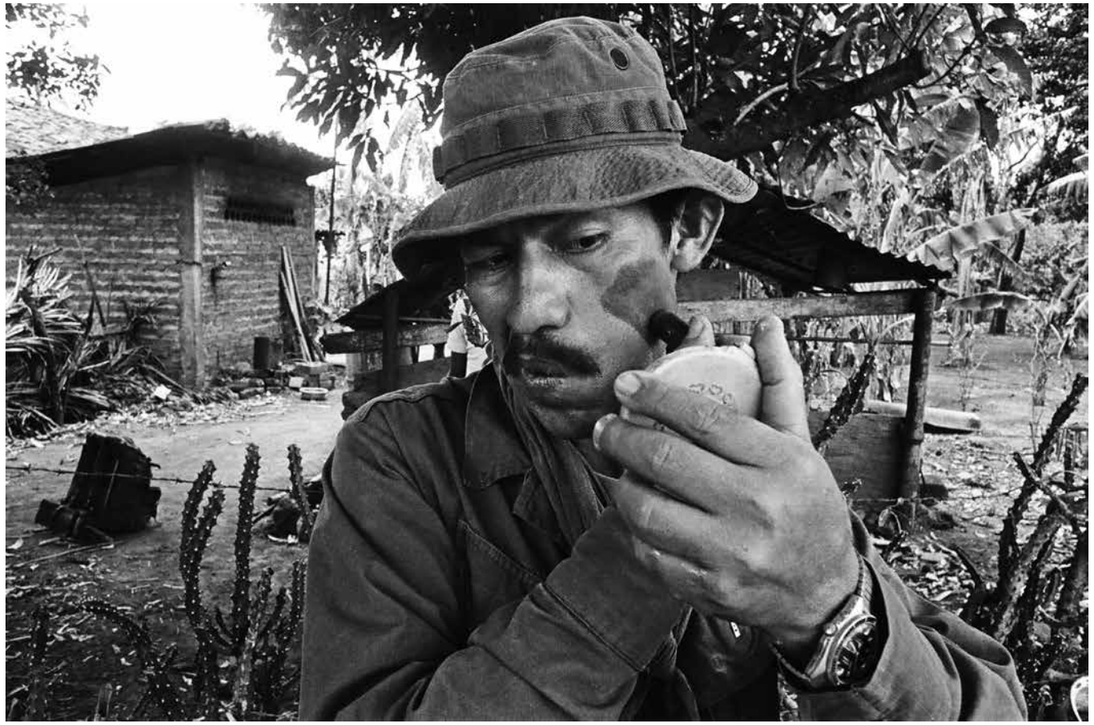
Nelson steered his Land Cruiser through a gate and into his garage just down the street from the motionless body. He made the call from an upstairs room and turned out the lights. Twenty minutes later, an ambulance silently approached, sirens off, its red strobe flashing in the rain. Two silhouetted figures stepped out, loaded the body into the vehicle, and drove off. "You have to be careful," Nelson said didactically, like a grade-school teacher. "That person is dead for a reason. You stay away from dead people if you don't want to end up dead yourself."

This was my first lesson in how to survive in a war zone. For myself and a whole generation of young journalists arriving in Central America in the early 1980s, the armed conflicts in El Salvador and Nicaragua–and to a lesser extent Guatemala—were to become the crucible where we learned our trade and forged our careers. Many of us arrived as idealists, with passionate conviction that our work could make a difference.

We'd grown up with images of Vietnam on the nightly news, and we saw another Vietnam in the making in Central America. Perhaps through our reporting we could help stop a catastrophe before it happened. Public opinion mattered to U.S. officials. But as the conflicts throughout the isthmus intensified, we came to understand that reality wasn't as black and white as we'd initially thought; it was far more nuanced.

Thirty years from my arrival in El Salvador in 1983, it seems an opportune moment to look back on those times and reconstruct how I—together with my colleagues—came to perceive the many shades of gray in the people, policies and events we covered. Indeed, what has happened in Central America in the ensuing years has confounded any predictions we could have made at the time.

I eventually found a small apartment in upper-class El Escalón, where interspersed among smaller middle-class homes were the walled mansions of coffee barons, factory owners, army generals and government ministers. These were impenetrable fortresses topped with guard towers, flood lights, barbed



Top: FMLN guerrillas on New Year's Day, Tenancingo, El Salvador, 1985; Bottom: Government soldier applies camouflage paint at start of army sweep, San Miguel Province, El Salvador, 1984.

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I am haunted when I look back through my photographs of Central America. In an instant, calm could be shattered by flying bullets.

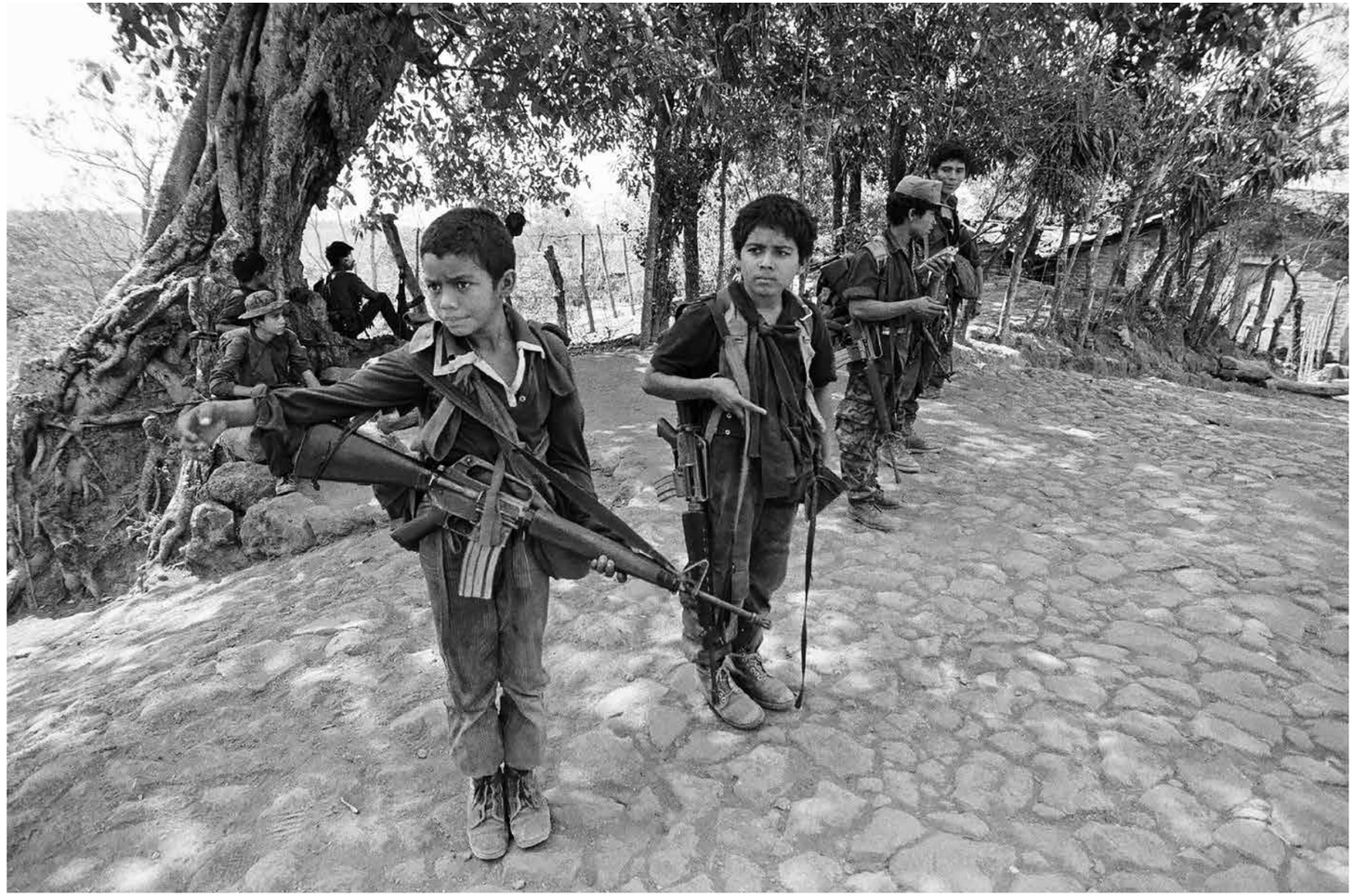
wire—the last lines of defense in a joint-venture of public and private capital and U.S. aid that stretched all the way out to the search-and-destroy units combing the hills of Morazán for the guerrillas of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front, or FMLN.

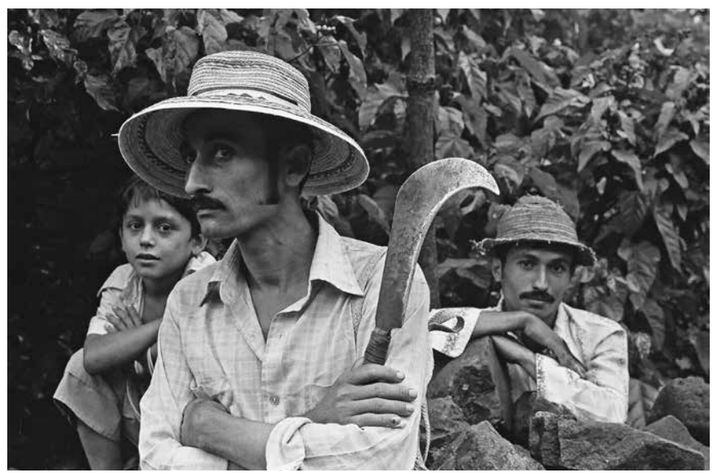
Across the narrow street from my place was a towering, garrison-style wall, with gun slits and peep slots through which a pair of eyes studied my comings and goings. I never met those neighbors. In fact, I never even *saw* them. They entered and exited through a steel gate in a bullet-proof Cherokee jeep with smoked windows, attended by a small army of men in aviator sunglasses and polyester suits bulging with Uzis, pistols and ammunition belts. Getting to know the neighbors was no easy feat in El Escalón. I had no idea that an academic lived on my block until he was already dead. I heard the report of guns in the night, not the burst of an automatic weapon, but the punctuated and deliberate single shots that betrayed a fatal intentionality. The following day my housekeeper told me that a professor two doors down had been found slumped over his desk. His live-in maid and gardener had also been executed.

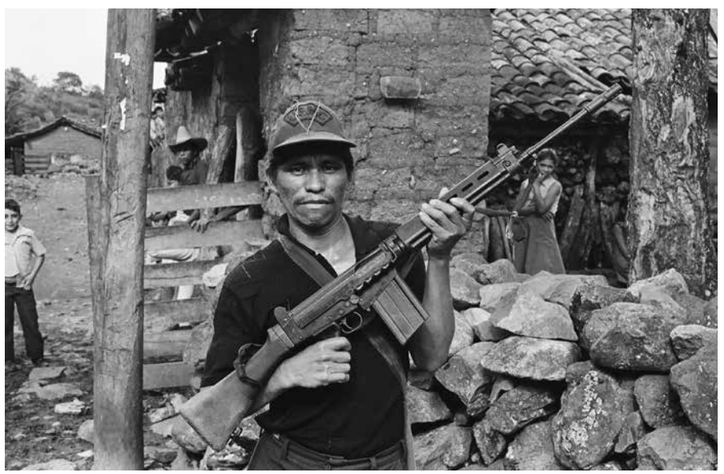
Mostly I read about the unfortunates in the next day's newspapers. Barefoot boys would thrust them through the car window at the intersections. I'd toss the kid a few grimy bills and speed off, horns blaring behind me, no time to wait for change. What caught my eye were the brief, tersely worded captions beneath the photos—black-and-white head-shots of extinguished life, streams of blood across their faces. The captions never changed; only the names: "Juan Perez, laborer, resident of Ilopango, *ultimado* —literally, "finished off" —last night in his home by unidentified men, heavily-armed and dressed as civilians, whereabouts unknown. The authorities remain ignorant of motive. An investigation is underway."

Whatever prowess might have existed among El Salvador's detectives was directed toward facilitating the extra-legal war effort. The investigators just signed the death papers; they didn't *want* to know the details. Their reports were remarkably meticulous when it came to describing the wounds, the caliber of the bullets that produced them, and from what distance the weapons were fired. Most often, it was *a quemarropa*—point-blank range. The reports were equally remarkable for their failure to identify the perpetrators. It was as though you'd entered a world of Hitchcock's creation, where black sorcery had staged a coup d'etat, and M-16s were invested with magical powers to appear at the location of their targets, aim themselves, and pull their own triggers.

Just being journalists made us suspect in the eyes of many. A full-page ad from the Secret Anti-Communist Army, a renowned death squad, denounced the U.S. press as "agents more dangerous and sympathetic to the terrorists than anyone in Moscow." I smirked at the time, but I came to appreciate the logic behind such subliminal threats and how right those faceless people were, in their twisted way, how little Moscow really had to do with El Salvador; and how much we U.S. journalists did. The Soviets may have helped arrange some arms shipments from Hanoi or Tripoli via Cuba that eventually found their way to Chalatenango, but it was hardly the Ho Chi Minh Trail. In El Salvador, the Russians were totally peripheral to the conflict. But the government was completely dependent on U.S. aid, and our reports represented the only real counterweight to the flow of propaganda that helped sustain it.







Clockwise from top: Child FMLN guerrilla fighters, Usulután, El Salvador, 1989; militiaman, Chalatenango, El Salvador, 1984; day laborers, Chalatenango, El Salvador, 1984.

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The newly appointed defense minister, General Eugenio Vides Casanova, told his troops that the battle for American opinion was one of the war's major fronts— "as important as San Vicente or Morazán." The U.S. reporters covering El Salvador straddled both fronts. We found ourselves at the intersection where the war on the ground and the one back home converged. We were in its crosshairs.

A huge topographic map of El Salvador, 1:100,000 scale, sprawled across an entire wall at the CBS office in the Camino Real. Every bureau on the second floor had one, covered by clear plastic overlays smeared with grease pencils showing the zones controlled by the five rebel armies of the Farabundo Martí, zones that were up for grabs, Army garrisons, the alleged routes of arms smugglers. I would park myself in front of that map with its brown and green contours suggesting steep hollows and meandering brooks. There were countless hamlets with exotic names—Anamorós, Santa Clara, Yamabál—places where few, if any, reporters on the second floor had ever reached, places where I knew I'd find the war in all its living color and intensity.

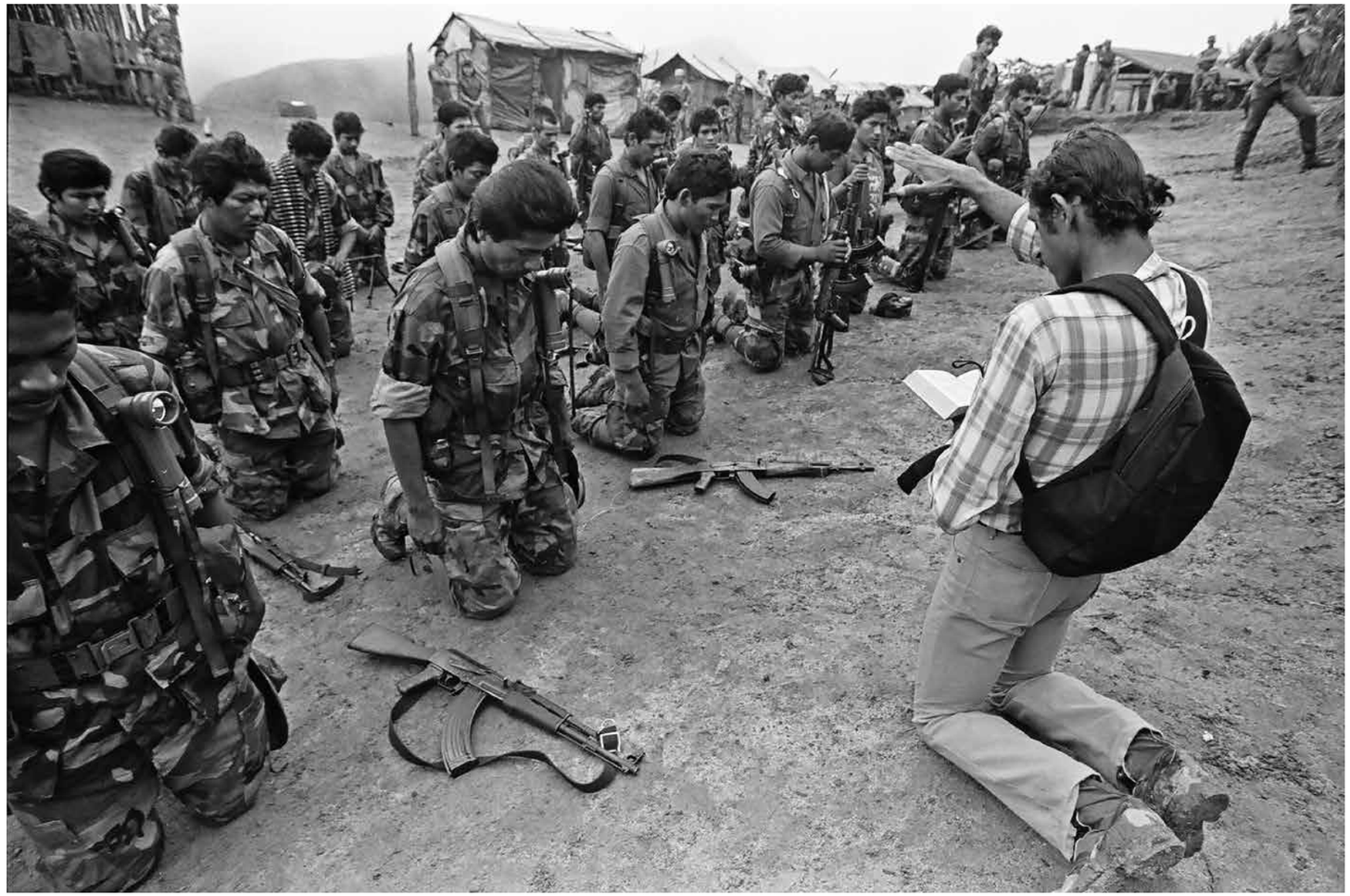
No other country in Central America, much less any others locked in guerrilla war, made maps of such detail available to the public. They came in six separate pieces, and we began to carry them with us on forays into the countryside, a critical guide for exploring the war zones. But we had to keep them under wraps, not strewn out on the backseat. Being caught with them at a roadblock of either the army soldiers or the rebels was bound to spell trouble.

One afternoon, driving alone in brilliant sunlight, I turned off on to a back road toward the mountain-ringed village of Anamorós in far-eastern El Salvador. The rebels had overwhelmed the army garrison there days before, and I expected to run into them somewhere along that road. After consulting the map at the turnoff, I tossed it on the backseat and forgot it there, until a half-hour later, when I rounded a bend and saw a dozen or so armed men blocking the dirt road up ahead. I had no chance to turn back, no time to reach around and hide the map. The men were wearing black uniforms, with no insignias or shoulder patches, and they were waving me to a halt. Some of them had beards, not normal army protocol. But I'd heard that government soldiers had begun to operate in such a fashion, to confuse and intimidate.

I saluted them through the windshield, presented my army press credentials. I preemptively grabbed the map, spread it over the hood of the car, and said: "So tell me, brothers, what's going on in the zone?" It caught them off-guard. "We're on a sweep through here," their evident leader said. "But what are you doing—looking for the terrorists?" It was no time for equivocation. "Not at all," I replied with a touch of indignation. "My Colonel Cruz told me the army had regained control of the area, so I've come to have a look." They let me pass, but I stuffed the maps under the seat and vowed never to get caught with them out in the open again.

Over time, alone and in the company of other reporters, I came to know the back roads and back towns of El Salvador better any comparably sized piece of real estate in the world. I knew where to find the guerrillas, where there was a high probability of running into an army sweep, which hamlets were ruled by jackbooted paramilitaries and which towns lived in a perpetual twilight zone— where neither the government nor the rebels had the strength to maintain a permanent presence. I liked to think that this knowledge enabled me to offer my readers more compelling and thorough reports than I could have otherwise provided.

The task of distilling and interpreting information was challenging enough for journalists covering a single country. But it was all the more complicated for those who covered the rest of Central America, particularly the Contra War in neighboring Nicaragua.



Clockwise from top: Preacher blesses Contra fighters, Yamales, Honduras, 1989; Contra rebel, Nicaragua, 1987; Miskito rebel leader and Comandante Tomás Borge, Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua, 1987.

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El Salvador's civil war cut right across the country and into even the most well protected redoubts of the privileged. The conflict was everywhere. But in Nicaragua, the war unfolded deep in the backwoods. Unlike the FMLN in El Salvador, the Contras never managed to establish a serious urban presence. The main cities along the Pacific coastal plain, including Managua, were thus free from the war's direct impacts. Under a trade embargo imposed by the U.S., there were severe shortages of goods, and funerals aplenty for officials and conscripts killed in the far-off battle zones. But Managua felt remarkably safe for the capital of a country in the midst of a war that was exacting a terrible toll in lives and treasure.

To cover the shooting war there, journalists had to venture deep into the countryside, often far beyond any settlements. Back roads were often sealed off by Sandinista Popular Army checkpoints, and it could take a measure of bluff to get past. Such was the case one July afternoon when *Newsweek* photographer Bill Gentile and I persuaded some young recruits to let us pass down a dirt road that snaked back into the mountains of northern Jinotega. Several hours later we found ourselves in Bill's jeep wedged into a 40-truck military column ferrying an entire battalion of the Sandinista army into battle.

At dusk two evenings later, we witnessed the Sandinistas rake a Contra encampment with rockets and machine-gun fire. When the operation resumed at dawn, the Contras had fled, leaving behind two dead and two wounded. The wounded sniped at the advancing troops from the brush, the Sandinistas screaming all the while for them to surrender. Neither of them did. It took more than a half-hour for the Sandinistas to overwhelm and subdue the two Contras. Their refusal to give in seemed to fly in the face of Sandinista propaganda: if the Contras were merely mercenaries in the pay of the U.S., as the Sandinistas contended, why would they fight to the finish as those two did?

The events that played out that morning added one more piece to the broader mosaic that I was constantly constructing in my head. First-hand experience is always the only real way to distinguish between information and its opposite. In the midst of claims and counter-claims from so many different sides, that ever-changing mosaic was my only guide toward an approximation of the truth. You had to keep in mind that your understanding was always tentative: at any turn it could be thrown off in a new direction if the next piece in your mental jigsaw puzzle didn't fit where you were expecting it to.

Today the international reporters covering those distant wars are long gone. Daniel Ortega has returned to govern Nicaragua as head of a fractured Sandinista National Liberation Front, FSLN, after losing national elections three times. Throughout the 1980s, the nine-member FSLN directorate led by Ortega found wide sympathy for resisting President Ronald Reagan's efforts to drive them from power by arming the Contra rebels and turning them loose in the Nicaraguan backwoods. Many of Ortega's former comrades-in-arms are now his most vociferous opponents, alleging that he has subordinated Sandinista ideals to a self-serving quest for power.

The former guerrillas of the FMLN have attained power in El Salvador through the ballot box, embracing a far less radical approach than their Marxist forebears of the previous generation. But it will take years, perhaps decades, before Central America recovers from the intense violence that undid much of its social fabric.

We left a great deal of ourselves behind in covering these conflicts. And we left behind a highly skilled generation of Central American journalists to report on the ongoing aftershocks.

Scott Wallace *covered Central America in the 1980s for CBS News, Cox Newspapers,* Newsweek, *and the* Guardian. *He is a frequent contributor to* National Geographic *and the author of* The Unconquered: In Search of the Amazon's Last Uncontacted Tribes.

Clockwise from top: Sandinista coffee harvester brigade, Matagalpa, Nicaragua, 1985; Honor Guard, San Salvador, 1983; Air-mobile Sandinista troops, Jinotega, Nicaragua, 1987.

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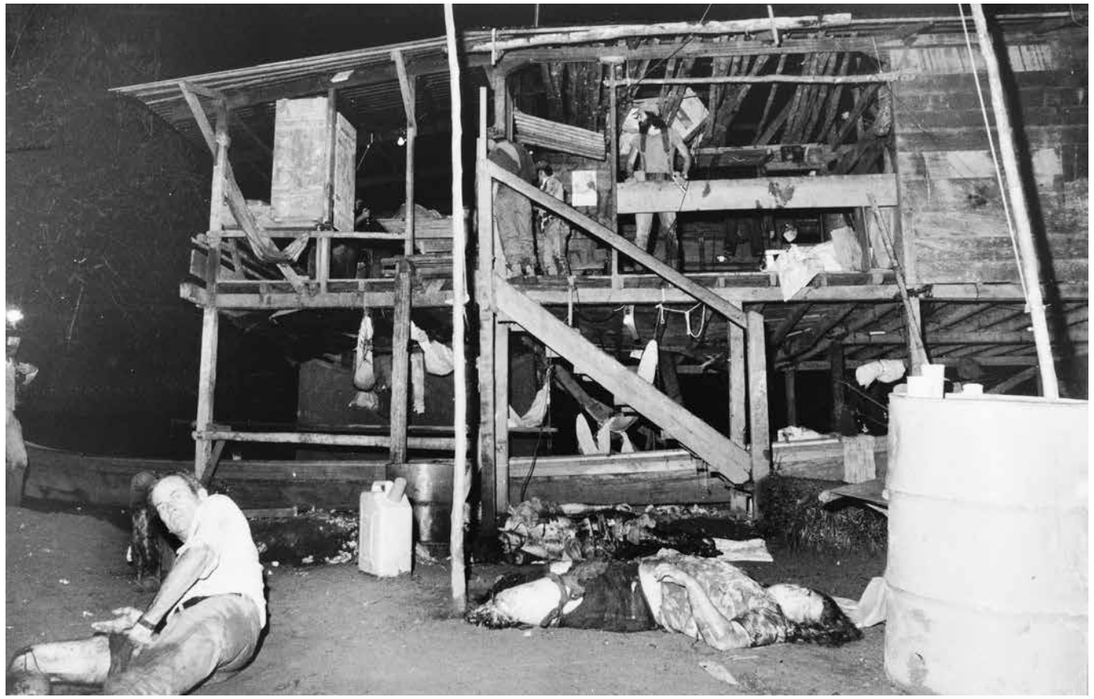

On May 30, 1984, a bomb explosion at the press conference at La Penca in southern Nicaragua took the lives of three journalists and injured many more.

The First Draft of History

The Best and the Worst BY JUAN O. TAMAYO

WHEN AN ASSASSIN'S BOMB TORE THROUGH the La Penca guerrilla base in southern Nicaragua three decades ago, it cast a spotlight on some of the worst and some of the best of journalism.

The blast was meant to kill Eden Pastora, who had broken with the Marxist Sandinista government and launched a war against it along the southern border with Costa Rica while other "contras" pushed in along the northern border with Honduras.

The Reagan administration and Central Intelligence Agency backed the contras in a war that claimed tens of thousands of lives, sparked the Iran-Contra scandal and eventually led to the Sandinistas' defeat in democratic elections in 1990.

Pastora was therefore a legitimate military target of the May 30, 1984, assassination attempt. But the way in which the assassination attempt was carried out was an outrage to the tenets of journalism.

The bomb exploded as Pastora started a news conference, spewing a deadly fan of peanut-sized steel balls that scythed through a dozen journalists who had slipped into La Penca from Costa Rica across the muddy San Juan River.

He survived, but three journalists were killed: American Linda Frazier, 38, a reporter for the English-language *Tico Times* newspaper and wife of Joe Frazier, the Associated Press correspondent in Costa Rica; and Costa Rican TV crewmen Jorge Quirós Piedra and Evelio Sequeira Jiménez.

That the bomb went off during a news conference was a vicious violation of the neutrality that journalists should enjoy to be able to report on all sides of a conflict. Al Qaida violated it in the same way in 2001, when "journalists" assassinated anti-Taliban Afghan leader Ahmad Shah Massoud with a bomb hidden in their TV camera.

But it got worse.

It turned out that the bomb had been brought into La Penca and detonated by a "journalist" using a stolen Danish passport in the name of Per Anker Hansen. He was not injured, was evacuated to Costa Rica with the other survivors and immediately vanished.

And then it got even worse. Horribly, horribly worse.

Peter Torbiornsson, a Swedish journalist who was at La Penca, began confessing in 2009 that he had cooperated with Sandinista intelligence to introduce "Hansen," whom he knew to be a Sandinista agent, into Pastora's camp. Torbiornsson filmed a documentary claiming that he did not know "Hansen" was packing a bomb or planning to kill Pastora.

Soon after the blast, a couple of leftist American freelancers in Costa Rica—Tony Avirgan, who was wounded at La Penca, and his wife, Martha Honey—began reporting that the CIA had ordered the bombing because Pastora was disobeying U.S. orders on the war.

Their evidence was so flimsy that when Avirgan filed a $23 million lawsuit in Miami against 29 contra, CIA and other U.S. officials, U.S. Judge Lawrence King threw it out and dunned the plaintiffs $1 million in court fees.

Yet the Avirgan-Honey reporting led Costa Rican prosecutors to file murder charges against two U.S. citizens for the La Penca bombing: John Hull, an elderly orange farmer in northern Costa Rica who supported Pastora; and Felipe Vidal, a Cuba-born CIA asset who trained and advised Pastora's guerrillas. They fled to the United States, but Hull lost control of his farm and Vidal could not get a legitimate job for years because of the pending charges.

And for the first nine years after the blast, the "CIA-did-it" version was the one that most U.S. and other journalists in Central America believed or suspected was true. Even the Newseum in Washington D.C. for years indicated in its displays that Linda Frazier had died in a "contra" bombing—creating a false historical memory.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF *THE TICO TIMES*

Linda Frazier, reporting for *The Tico Times*, was killed by the bomb at La Penca.

And then in 1993 the La Penca tale got better. Much better.

An unprecedented collaboration between six journalists in three countries identified "Hansen" as the bomber beyond any doubt.

A *Miami Herald* correspondent who knew of my interest in La Penca, Andrés Oppenheimer, was interviewing a fellow Argentine who had worked for Cuban intelligence and asked about the bombing. The source replied that he knew the assassin.

Oppenheimer alerted me and I immediately flew to Paris to interview the man. But he knew the bomber only as an Argentine who worked for Sandinista intelligence and was nicknamed "Martín the Englishman" because of his fluent English.

I showed the source a passport-type photo of "Hansen" that investigative journalist Doug Vaughan had found in Panamanian migration files. Although Vaughan worked for the Avirgan lawsuit, he had shared the photo with me as part of an agreement to cooperate in the search for the killer.

"That's Martín the Englishman," the source confirmed.

The source explained that after the Sandinista guerrillas, most of them poor peasants, toppled the Somoza dictatorship in 1979, they lacked anyone who could run complex counter-intelligence operations. Most could not even hold a fork properly, he added. So the Sandinistas decided to essentially outsource their foreign operations.

A colonel in Cuba's elite Interior Ministry Special Forces who used the name of Renan Montero was seconded to the Nicaraguan Interior Ministry as head of its counter-intelligence unit.

And some of the unit's operations were assigned to members of a Marxist Argentine guerrilla known as the Revolutionary Peoples Army, headed by Enrique Gorriarán Merlo. His men killed a contra chief in Honduras in late 1979, and Gorriarán himself led the squad that assassinated Anastasio Somoza in 1980 in Paraguay.

I contacted Argentine journalists Juan Salinas and Julio Villalonga in Buenos Aires, who had written about Gorriarán, and they provided one of the final pieces of the puzzle: "Martín the Englishman" was a Gorriarán follower named Vital Roberto Gaguine.

Gaguine's parents confirmed that the man in the "Hansen" photo was their son. And a fingerprint expert hired by the *Miami Herald* matched prints also found by Vaughan with a set provided by Argentine authorities to Salinas and Villalonga.

Gaguine was reported killed in 1989, at the age of 35, while leading one of the four squads of Gorriarán fighters that staged a virtually suicidal attack on Argentine army barracks at La Tablada in Buenos Aires.

Felipe Vidal and John Hull remain under murder indictments in Costa Rica. Hull is now farming in southeastern Mexico, and Vidal lived in Miami for a while but now lives abroad.

Gorriarán died of a heart attack in 2006 at the age of 64. Montero is believed to have died of cancer in Havana around 2008. And after I complained to the Newseum, its listing on Linda Frazier now reads as follows:

"Killed May 30 by a bomb blast at a press conference called by a Nicaraguan rebel leader just inside the border with Costa Rica. Three others were also killed, including two journalists. Other rebel factions initially were blamed, but several years later, a journalistic investigation said that the evidence points to an Argentine who worked for Nicaragua's Sandinista government."

That passport photo of "Hansen" still hangs in my office cubicle, a reminder of both the shortcomings and the power of journalism.

***Juan O. Tamayo** has been a* Herald *correspondent in Central America, the Middle East, Europe and the Andean region. A Harvard Nieman Fellow class of '90, he now covers Cuba for* El Nuevo Herald.

That version tended to be accepted because it matched the prevailing biases of the journalists who covered the wars in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala at the time: Reagan was a warmonger, the CIA murdered people and the Sandinistas were driven into the arms of Moscow and Havana by unwarranted U.S. hostility.

But the La Penca bombing made me angry. And I felt a special debt to Linda, Joe and their young son Chris.

Joe and I had been transferred from New York to Mexico City at about the same time in 1979, he by the AP and I by UPI, and we covered the same Central American turf. We lived near each other, our wives were good friends and stayed so after Joe was transferred to Costa Rica and I joined the *Miami Herald* in 1982.

For years, I made it a point of asking anyone I could about La Penca—especially when I became the *Herald*'s European bureau chief, based in Berlin and covering the Sandinistas' former allies in Russia and East Germany. My friend Mark Rosenberg, now president of Florida International University, made fun of my "obsession" with La Penca every time we met.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF *THE TICO TIMES*

CREATING CITIZENSHIP

To remember the past is to participate in the present. It is a way of reconstructing history, searching for democracy and creating citizenship. Schools and museums are an integral part of this process.

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The Rub

Against the Proud Grain of Chile's History

BY DORIS SOMMER

BRACE YOURSELF AS YOU ENTER THE MUSEUM of Memory and Human Rights in Santiago de Chile. Galleries of missing people will glare back at your glance, from a wall so enormous the collective calamity exceeds the span of your vision. The photographed faces float over funerary candles in the above ground altar, and another subterranean crypt designed by Alfredo Jaar shows an eerie nothing at first. Then the slow illumination lights up a repeated emptiness outlined by rows and rows of head-shot silhouettes. Throughout the main building video viewing rooms run endless loops of testimonies by victims, including women who report the insertion of rats into their vaginas after routine rapes. Hallways host more videos of footage from the long period of repression: footage, for example, of public beatings in broad daylight, and also of admirable protests. There are maps that document the despotism, poignantly personal artifacts that once belonged to eliminated persons, statistics that confirm the enormity of officially sanctioned crimes against Chileans.

The museum substantiates the horror of Pinochet's assault on citizens, in case anyone is in doubt. It commemorates their lost lives, lost to the ultimate blow of death but also lost in trickles, by dispirited survivors. Citizens who lived through those years are haunted by the horror of a national army that ravaged compatriots. This was no civil war of brother against equal brother, ugly and desperate though that kind of conflict

Parque O'Higgins, Santiago, Chile, November 18, 1982

PHOTO BY MARCO UGARTE, PHOTO COURTESY OF MUSEO DE LA MEMORIA Y LOS DERECHOS HUMANOS, CHILE

can be, but a one-way, top-down, scourge of civilians by brute military power.

The bunker-like museum building is a monument to the recent past, erected during Michelle Bachelet's presidency. Her legacy here is a relentless reminder that the wages of authoritarianism far exceeded the alleged establishment of order and decency after Chile freely elected a socialist president. Pinochet's crusade against communism and anything else that came in his way cost Chile even more than the vibrant lives of social reformers along with those of unsuspecting neighbors. His crack-down crushed the collective confidence and hopes that came with a particularly Chilean sense of political pride and dignity.

Chile, you see, has a distinguished political history which surely framed the violent 1973 Coup as a shock, an unbelievable aberration. By the 1830s, while other Latin American countries were busy fighting civil wars, the popular and factional struggles that followed independence movements throughout the continent had been contained through O'Higgins' government. What's more, the successful democratizing experiments launched by Liberals (beginning in the 1820s) gave Chile the enviable reputation as the only stable democracy in all of Latin America (and most of Europe). In 1852 Juan Bautista Alberdi spoke for all the Argentine refugees from Rosas' government when he proposed a toast to this haven from anarchy, "the honourable exception in South America." (Simon Collier, "Chile from Independence to the War of the Pacific," *The Cambridge History of Latin America: Vol III, From Independence to c. 1870* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985] pp. 583-614).

Already a worldwide banking center in the 1850s, Chile had built the first major railroad in South America, and was exploiting coal and copper mines for domestic industries as well as for export. Chile continued to constrain the disintegration of an elite consensus, making the country an enduring model of stability and productivity. With the founding of The University of Chile in 1842, under the leadership of Andrés Bello (that master of conciliation), the state established a training center for a modern citizenry (see Iván Jaksic's *Academic Rebels in Chile: The Role of Philosophy in Higher Education and Politics* [Albany: SUNY Press, 1989], especially pp. 21-34).

There were, to be sure, armed conflicts between Liberals and Conservatives while civil wars raged throughout the hemisphere. In 1851 and again in 1859 Liberals and Conservatives were literally at each others' throats. But the traditionalist bankers and the free-thinking miners learned to make up quickly, before broad-based rebellions challenged the legislative systems that Bello helped to put in place. A Liberal-Conservative conciliation and the consequent political continuity came to seem inevitable. The country achieved distinction as a "democracy of the oligarchy." (John Crow, *The Epic of Latin America* 3rd ed. expanded and updated. [Berkeley, University of California Press, 1980] The quote is his title for chapter 48 of this once popular text, about Chile in the second half of the 19th century: pp. 640-648).

After a century and a half of dependable democracy—however limited the access to power and whatever the inequalities in the distribution of resources—Chileans must have been astonished at the sudden loss of liberties and legality. They were bereft of familiar paradigms. Repression of this blunt and brutal variety was the experience of other countries, countries such as the Argentina remembered in Alberdi's toast. Political exiles from elsewhere had historically fled to the safe and neutral sanctuary that Chile represented.

The Museum of Memory makes no mention of the country's admirable heritage. It has nothing to remind visitors of the positive reasons to take pride in the country as a collective political patrimony, one that could help to rebuild a common sense (in Kant's meaning of shared subjectivity). The museum misses a cue for inclusion, I fear. Many Chileans apparently choose not to visit the museum, alleging its one-sidedness about history. That can hardly be helped in an institution designed precisely to uncover the shameful events and dynamics of a dictatorship that had conveniently hidden or misconstrued the facts of repression. But the laser focus on shame—without framing the longer view—has the unfortunate effect of cutting out the public's cause for pride, the reason why Chile's citizens might be invited to care so intimately about democracy.

During my May 2013 visit to the museum, I walked in along with a local father and his 8 or 9-year-old son. The unhappy child heard his father explain that he may well be in a group photo of a crowd being broken up by armed forces, urging the boy to help locate the image. But their visit lasted only a few minutes, probably ending just after we entered the loop of obscenely detailed testimonies about sexual abuse. I wondered then how long they might have lasted in the museum if there were also galleries of Chilean glory to visit, along with the horror, even if the stamina for pain and fear remained finite. Could an expanded Museum of Memory include a long view to urge citizens to remember national accomplishments alongside national shame? The combined effect might even heighten the horror, given the political dimensions of the loss along with all the rest. But a side effect might be a welcoming embrace of inclusion. The pleasure and pride in this particular patriotism wouldn't have to distinguish between sides of a conflict. It would share a heritage worthy of the struggle against forgetfulness.

Doris Sommer *teaches Latin American Literature at Harvard. She is author of several books including Foundation Fictions:* The National Romances of Latin America, Bilingual Aesthetics, *and* The Work of Art in the World: Civic Agency and Public Humanities *(forthcoming). Sommer directs the Cultural Agency Initiative to develop arts and humanities as social resources.*

Memoryscape

A Documentary Film Explores Memory BY PAMELA YATES

WALKING UP TO 12,000 FEET IN THE PERUVIAN Andes took two entire days. With Ramiro Niño de Guzmán, a Quechua-speaking human rights leader, I set out for his childhood home in Checcasa, along the same path that the army had taken when it attacked his village in 1988, accusing his family of being Shining Path insurgents. His brothers were tortured and killed, his sisters raped and dismembered. But this was 2006 and Ramiro and I were returning to Checcasa to show the villagers the documentary film he was featured in and that I had directed called *State of Fear: The Truth About Terrorism*. Ramiro wanted to have *State of Fear* create a village-wide dialogue about their memories of the war, and, steeped in that painful memory, have them demand action from the local government to provide promised reparations.

State of Fear is a film that looks backwards as well as forward. It tells the story of what the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission discovered about what had really happened during Peru's 20-year war from 1980 to 2000. The Commission contested the official version that President Fujimori had promulgated, saying he had created economic prosperity and saved the country from terrorism. It replaced that narrative and rewrote that chapter of Peruvian history, giving voice to those most affected by the violence. The Commission's findings indict both Shining Path and the government for the massive death toll. They called both for specific military members to be prosecuted, and for a change in the conditions of poverty and exclusion that set the stage for the rise of Shining Path.

My experience of being on the inside filming during the Truth Commission's investigation inspired the making of a film about historical memory, now in pre-production, titled *Memoryscape*. Of course I would have to include Peru's ongoing contested memory in this new documentary.

Our premise for the new film is that memory is fundamental to our humanity. For most of recorded time, history was written primarily by those in power to serve their own interests. Today, the establishment of historical memory is more likely to at least involve debate—and in the best cases negotiation—among competing groups and social forces. Indeed, a society's shared memories are constructed under specific political circumstances. When different sectors of society have conflicting narratives and framing of past events, vested interests manipulate the present political environment to try to ensure that their version of events is accepted. In countries like Peru with violent and painful pasts, unresolved memory issues can have a toxic effect in the present—perpetuating a societal trauma that needs to find resolution.

Today we strive for a process of remembering that is increasingly democratic, collective, exciting and contested.

Left, top: Pamela Yates filming in the Peruvian Andes with Ramiro Niño de Guzmán for *State of Fear: The Truth About Terrorism.* Left, below from left to right: From *State of Fear: The Truth About Terrorism.* Woman in Ayacucho searching for her disappeared husband, Asháninka militia on patrol in their territory against Shining Path insurgents; Child soldier, Ayacucho. Above: In 2007, when former President Alberto Fujimori was extradited to Peru to be tried on charges of human rights crimes and corruption, vandals defaced the Eye That Cries *(El Ojo Que Llora)* memorial throwing orange paint—the color of Fujimori's party—everywhere.

ABOVE (TOP): HTTP://SKYLIGHT.IS; (BOTTOM), VERA LENTZ

PHOTO: GAM KLUTIER

Portraits of members of MOVADEF who are, in their words, followers of "Marxism-Leninism, Maoism, Gonzalo Thought". Gonzalo is the *nom de guerre* of Abimael Guzmán, the founder of Shining Path. From the film *Memoryscape*

When a nation engages in debate over how to memorialize its past in public spaces, the road to consensus is usually fraught with fiercely opposed points of view coming from all segments of society, from the heights of academia and state agencies to grassroots movements. In countries around the world, competing groups now have a voice—though often only through fierce struggle—in constructing the physical, narrative, and emotional landscape of shared memory.

The simple question of who is a victim and who is a perpetrator, who should be remembered and who deserves to be forgotten, remains contested and has wreaked havoc on The Eye That Cries memorial.

These memoryscapes—made up of elements ranging from memorials and museums to street signs—and the process of creating them are the subject of our film. A global trend is afoot with the evolution of historical memory into physical places embodied by sites of conscience and public memorials.

Memoryscape's journey in Peru will focus on why a society must properly remember in order to progress—a process of consensus that seeks to integrate painful memories into a shared historical narrative. In Peru, despite an exhaustive truth commission and high visibility trials, entrenched political forces have made it extremely difficult for the country to properly bury its dead with the sacred rituals of remembering, to grieve deeply, to survive the pain and move forward.

Since the release of the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Final Report in 2003, and its cinematic reflection in *State of Fear*, Peruvian society has been embroiled in a dramatic and often violent battle over how to understand and remember the 20-year "war on terror" with the Shining Path. Was ex-President Alberto Fujimori a hero who vanquished terrorism or a criminal who trampled human rights and used fear of terrorism to undermine democracy? Was it necessary to forfeit civil liberties to achieve security? Instead of definitively answering those questions, Fujimori's recent trial, conviction, and sentence to 25 years in prison for human rights crimes has sparked a new wave of debate and polarization over Peru's history.

In Lima, for example, some Fujimori supporters vandalized El Ojo Que Llora (The Eye That Cries), a memorial that seeks to commemorate a wide swath of those who died in the conflict—the military; government-backed citizen militias; imprisoned Shining Path insurgents; and civilians caught in the crossfire —in an effort to unite Peruvians. Yet the simple question of who is a victim and who is a perpetrator, who should be remembered and who deserves to be forgotten, remains contested and has wreaked havoc upon this memorial, bringing violence into a place intended for healing. It is a fraught political and moral controversy: for example, should the Shining Path prisoners who were killed extra-judicially by the governments of Alan García and Alberto Fujimori be named victims? Through interviews with Peruvians from across the political spectrum, *Memoryscape* will show how victims were not simply those killed by the Shining Path and armed forces, but the many people who continue to live, haunted by physical torture and psychological nightmares of the armed groups from two decades ago. Our film will dramatize how El Ojo Que Llora stands for the potential of a memorial to be a space for reflection and re-humanization, and how when such living memory is reconstructed individually and collectively, it can generate conditions for people to demand justice.

In the absence of a productive engagement with the past, the reemergence of the Shining Path under the Movimiento Por Amnistía y Derechos Fundamentales (MOVADEF) banner is possible. MOVADEF is a political movement made up of young people from the lower middle class who have attended university and are outraged by overwhelming economic inequality, lack of access to education, and other human rights abuses in Peru. These youths are saying that the brutality of Abimael Guzmán and Shining Path is a thing of the past, and are calling for an amnesty, thereby seeking to normalize the past by creating a narrative that says violence is part of what happens in war, and should simply be accepted. While MOVADEF is attempting to be a part of the political process by forming a political party, it has not renounced the nihilist ideology rooted in violence that guided the original emergence of Shining Path in 1980. Through interviews with these youth, *Memoryscape* will show the tragic myopia of historical memory in Peru. In a recent *New York Times* article, Francisco Soberón, executive director of Peru's leading human rights organization Asociación Pro Derechos Humanos, described historical memory as a "vaccine" helping Peru to "prevent the rise of projects that can bring us back down that road of terror and violence."

In conceiving *Memoryscape*, I recognize the inherent challenges and risks of drawing comparisons across very different places, yet am convinced that only a cross-cultural examination of this subject will reveal the essential human need to link together past, present, and future. Our overarching goal in the film is to tell a universal story while illuminating the specific histories and cultural contexts in Peru (contested memory), Spain (repressed memory), Germany (embedded memory) and the United States (mythologized memory).

The visual storytelling in *Memoryscape* will come from a place of profound contemplation. The combination of innovative actors that motivate the modern memory movement, and poetic cinematography that describes the panorama of different experiences, will try to inspire new thinking in the viewers' consciousness. Our trajectory as human rights filmmakers will build the narrative on the notion that truth, memory and justice must powerfully work together.

Moving through time and space, *Memoryscape* will evoke the profound emotions associated with memory: fear, anger, grief, nostalgia and reverie. Viewers will be part of a journey of discovery through architectural spaces, sites of conscience, monuments, and public art works that can illuminate historical and collective memory. At times I will employ a straightforward chronological approach mirroring the linear and mechanical way of how memory is constructed, with each unique event triggering the next. At other times the presentation of images will represent a very different understanding of the structure of memory, as when past events burst into a person's present life reflecting a moment when we experience the importance of remembering as an engine for decision-making in the present. Finally, there will be sequences that are more of a reflection of our memory that has no boundary of time, so that the events of one period may be examined in tandem with those of a much different historic moment.

Viewers will engage with our shared humanity at the core of each story through the people we follow who play essential roles in the film. For example, in Peru we will weave together the stories of indigenous Andean villagers, Fujimori supporters and family members of those killed by the Shining Path, individual artists creating memoryscapes, youths in the MOVADEF movement, and commissioners of Peru's Truth Commission.

A hallmark of all my films is the understanding that the geography in the closeup of the human face is the most beautiful panorama of cinema. We connect visually with the eyes on the screen, and the emotion and memory connected to our limbic brain kick in.

Film is also unique in its ability to explore the dimension of time with the non-linear nature and construction of memory. Legendary Russian Director Andrei Tarkovsky considered filmmaking to be "sculpting in time." The ability to expand and compress time in the film medium makes it a perfect vehicle for the exploration of historical memory. *Memoryscape* will be a part of the modern movement to reflect historic memory in physical spaces, bringing the audience into an intellectual and emotional relationship with contested issues. In this way, we will stimulate the desire to be part of the quest to make historical memory an integral component of human rights and the quest for democracy.

***Pamela Yates** is a documentary film director and co-founder of Skylight. Her film* State of Fear *was translated into 47 languages and broadcast in 154 countries. Her latest film is* Granito: How to Nail a Dictator. *She is now working on the sequel* 500 Years, *about the Ríos Montt genocide trial.*

PHOTOS: HTTP://SKYLIGHT.IS

Historical Footprints

Changing How We Teach Colombia's Violent Past

BY LAURA BARRAGÁN MONTAÑA

GEORGE SANTAYANA'S WELL-KNOWN DICTUM, "Those who don't remember the past are condemned to repeat it," reminds us why it is important to learn history. But what does this really mean? What aspects of the past must we remember? Who chooses them? How do we remember them? Can this understanding really change our attitudes and behaviors? Are we truly capable of avoiding the mistakes of the past?

In a country like mine, Colombia, these questions are very significant as the country is involved in an intensive peace process. On July 24, 2013, the National Center of Historical Memory officially presented a 434-page long report entitled *"¡Basta ya! Colombia: Memorias de guerra y dignidad"* (*Enough Already: Memories of War and Dignity*). No longer can we hide under the excuse that it is too soon or that too little is known. We must embrace this context and really consider how we, as Colombians, are going to face what seems to be an unbearable past. A past that still tarnishes much of our present.

Out of all the possible paths, I have chosen to focus on the role education can play in such a challenge—specifically, on changing how we are teaching and learning about our own history in classrooms across the country.

THE BACK STORY OF OBLIVION

Like the stories of most Colombians, parts of my own story could bear witness as to how our overwhelming and yet quotidian violence has shaped our lives. But none of it could begin to compare to the extreme suffering experienced by victims who probably do not have the opportunity to write an article for a publication like this one. And yet, the core of my conviction came from an experience both utterly personal and relatable to too many.

Ever since I can remember, my grandmother had been losing her memory. It all started with little details, often inconspicuous. But over the years, these sporadic slip-ups eventually invaded her everyday life. Coming closer to the end of her days and carrying with her the weight of a foreign word like Alzheimer's, my grandmother helped me understand the havoc wreaked by oblivion. It is not as simple as saying that those who lose their memory only lose their short-term or long-term past. What is more terrifying to see is how this elusive past takes with it the present and future of people with this disease. How it blurs all of time… because when we lose the ability to talk about ourselves in retrospect, it becomes almost impossible to reflect on and recognize oneself in this moment and, even more difficult, to project oneself into the future.

And it was through this new understanding—probably familiar to anyone who has lived with someone who has this disease—that my role as a historian in Colombia finally made sense. Could this small, private, intimate experience be similar to what was, to what is, happening to my country?

We commonly hear that Colombia is suffering from amnesia. But if we are looking for parallels, I believe that Alzheimer's would be closer. Alzheimer's is a progressive and fatal disease. It gets worse with the passage of time. It goes beyond oblivion of the past, as my grandmother taught me. It encompasses the loss of an already furtive future. So how can we stop Colombia from suffering from this endemic case of Alzheimer's. I am proposing that one powerful tool is through a closer examination of how we are teaching history to our students.

Author Laura Barragán Montaña as a child with her grandmother

HISTORY, MEMORY, AND THE CLASSROOM

Although recent years have seen important steps in terms of education reform, most of the social science lessons seem to have remained the same. Many classrooms are still teaching history the way my parents or grandparents learned the subject. Textbooks and curricula (chosen by the schools) tend to reinforce and perpetuate traditional pedagogies: content-driven, instructional, and centered on the actions of few tarnished heroes.

One of my more pressing concerns is that the narrative we are teaching our children is one that hardly fosters any agency—both in pedagogical and historical terms. On the one hand, we are reducing the role of the student to a passive recipient of content-delivery, rather than an inquiring and critical mind who can understand that history is a construction. On the other, we seem to be replicating the belief that we are so deep into our conflict, into decades of corruption, and into mounds of unfulfilled promises, that nothing will ever change.

A teaching of history for this *brave new world* of the conflict and post-conflict schizophrenia we are living in requires fundamental changes. How can we bring into our classrooms the many narratives that the National Center of Historical Memory has produced? It is not as simple as just printing and shipping copies of the reports or battling for the inclusion of a new chapter in a textbook. We cannot fall prey to the danger of replacing one "truth" with another. The solution lies somewhere else. We must find a way to face *what* we are teaching, as well as *why* we are teaching it and *how* we are teaching.

Remembering the 2000 massacre by paramilitary forces of civilians in El Salado, Colombia.

I believe that it all begins with the teachers. We must understand that no epistemological claim of objectivity can counteract the fact that we are not teaching this history as outsiders. It is the history of our families. The history of our neighbors. The history of our dead. The history of our lives. The story of our present.

However, what we may need as adults, as teachers, is different than what students need. We must process the meaning of this context as victims, bystanders, participants, even perpetrators, before we decide how we can teach this history in our classrooms.

HISTORICAL FOOTPRINTS: YOUR STORY IS HISTORY IN THE MAKING

It is with this in mind that I and some colleagues have created a nonprofit called *Historical Footprints* (HF)™. Through one of our main programs, we seek to provide a rigorous teacher training and support system through which social science teachers can ask themselves all these questions, reflect about their practice, and learn new and old methodologies that can counteract the charge that we are teaching an inevitable and irrelevant history.

The principle behind the HF model is that we all have our own Historical Footprint. This term is inspired by the idea of the *"carbon footprint"* that has done so much to bring environmental concerns into public consciousness. It has done this because it illustrates, in clear and simple terms, how much our habits impact the environment. Thus, "helping" the environment is no longer something that only governments or big corporations can do, but an action that any one of us can accomplish by being mindful of everyday actions. We want to establish a similar notion but in terms of how we impact history.

Therefore, the heart of this proposal is to create new pedagogical methodologies to gauge how everyday life actions determine the course of history. By calculating the Historical Footprints of others in the past, students and teachers can more easily understand how ordinary people have positively and negatively influenced a specific moment in time. It is about learning the past not only through what politicians, heroes, or a few others have done, but by studying how even the worst of atrocities are possible through the multiple actions or inactions many of us have taken.

Our curriculum is a three-step process. Inspired by the already successful model of Facing History and Ourselves, the curriculum begins by analyzing an international case study. Whether it is through examples from the Holocaust, South Africa, Northern Ireland, Peru or Guatemala, this distancing effect is important as a first step. It is not about neglecting our own history. It is about starting with a mirror that can allow us to face many of the issues that we may not be able to articulate if we were to begin with the massacre that happened next door.

After using primary and secondary sources to measure the Historical Footprints of different people in these past international events, the teachers will repeat the process but with a national case study linked to our recent violence. The narratives published by the National Center of Historical Memory will be fundamental to study how ordinary people have caused, suffered and/or endured our violence.

The final step will invite teachers (and through implementation, their students) to gauge their own Historical Footprint. To think about their own history and try to assess the effects their own choices and actions have had. This will not only allow us to have the cathartic effect of storytelling, but will spark a projection into the future.

Yes, Colombia needs bold and significant top-down policies to guide us

PHOTO COURTESY OF LAURA BARRAGÁN MONTAÑA

PHOTO BY JESÚS ABAD COLORADO; COURTESY OF THE CENTRO DE MEMORÍA HISTÓRICA, BOGOTÁ, COLOMBIA

through this post-conflict path. But we also need bottom-up actions that can, once and for all, prove that changing our history is not something *they* have to do, but that *I*, that *we*, can start to do too. The actions each of us takes vary depending on where and who is reflecting on his or her own Historical Footprint. It may be as small or big as striving to stay in school, creating a more participative classroom, forgiving someone who has wronged us, learning about the reality of rural areas, or actively choosing the hard path of honest work. After all, the metaphor of Historical Footprints is only useful if we harness the ripple effect of our actions to begin to make small changes, small steps that can bring us closer to a peaceful future.

THE URGENCY OF NOW

It is still hard to imagine if we will ever find the right words, images, even silences to properly express the violence we have been through. The violence we are still going through. However, it is equally important to ask ourselves what words we shall use to describe what the future can look like. To envision what we can become. Perhaps Historical Footprints can be part of such a new vocabulary. A vocabulary where we can indeed find new and old paths to combat the Colombian Alzheimer's by remembering the past and defying our condemnation to repeat it.

***Laura Barragán Montaña**, who recently completed a Masters in Education at Harvard, is co-founder and CEO of Historical Footprints in Bogotá, Colombia. During her years in the Colombian Ministry of Education, she worked in the Citizenship Competencies Program and was the creator and project manager of "History Today," a nationwide program to commemorate Colombia's Bicentennial of Independence. Barragán earned a Summa Cum Laude in History and Literature from Los Andes University. She has just finished a summer consultancy for Facing History and Ourselves, in Brookline, MA. She can be reached at laura.barragan@historicalfootprints.org*

Educating the "Good Citizen"

Memory in postwar Guatemala

BY MICHELLE J. BELLINO

ON MY MANY FIELD TRIPS, I TELL GUATEMALAN teens I'm interested in how they learn about the 36-year *conflicto armado* (armed conflict). I then study their faces. If not baffled, they avert their eyes and share refrains passed on by many adults in their lives: "We have no historical memory," or "In Guatemala, there is no historical consciousness." School teachers say, occasionally with concern, "We don't talk about that here," or with more worry, "Young people don't care about the past. There are too many problems today."

Guatemalan youth are equally pessimistic about their lack of educational opportunities. They shake their heads and tell me, "Our education here is the worst." With sunken eyes, they describe how education has become privatized, exclusionary, and yet remains mediocre.

Youth perceptions of Guatemala's deficiencies are intertwined with their impressions of the unresolved past and the way a history of violence resonates in democracy's failures. There is a long list of *what Guatemala lacks*.

Collectively acknowledging historical injustice is central to the project of transitioning democracies. But the violent past is not easily examined in "postwar" Guatemala, where contemporary crime seems to eclipse decades of military brutality, even while today's political repression of popular movements echoes and entangles past and present violence.

The past is indeed taught in the schools, but for many survivors its moral and political erasures are so substantial that it is rendered invisible. Social studies curriculum in Guatemala relies heavily on two narrative "templates" for interpreting the *conflicto armado*. The first presents an account of a war that erupted between "two devils," the state and guerrilla armies. Presumably developed as "compromise" narrative in other Latin American countries contending with their own histories of state repression, the portrayal of mass violence taking place between "two devils" (or "two fires") functions as a significant equalizer of accountability. Rather than explore asymmetrical power dynamics between the two groups and the particular responsibility borne by the state to uphold human rights under all conditions, conflict between two devils serves to nullify culpability, constructing a net-zero sum. There is no moral accountability or unfulfilled justice; because everyone was accountable, no one is accountable.

The second narrative locates the *conflicto armado* in a dark past, a tragic event from which Guatemala has recovered in its march toward peace and progress. The horrors of the war have been collectively addressed and swiftly archived, so that they only require a single paragraph in many texts, surrounded by lengthy sections devoted to the peace process, peace values, and human rights principles. Although the war encompassed the "suffering of all Guatemalans," the conflict was resolved, and today's Guatemala has learned from its past. The narrative of historical progress conjures the hoped-for but ultimately elusive postwar reality, wherein young citizens ostensibly inherited a peaceful and pluricultural democracy where all people are equal. Importantly, this imagined future requires looking forward toward shared goals, rather than backwards at shared suffering.

Although the national curriculum applies to public and private, urban and rural schools, teachers represent the *conflicto armado* and its relationship to the current fragile democracy in strikingly diverse ways. Sometimes they take great care to balance the "two devils." Sometimes they offer subtle or explicit cues that one side was actually more in the right than the other. Teachers themselves have survived the conflict or inherited its legacy; they are invested in its memory or its omission. The inaccessibility of primary historical resources situates *testimonio* (testimony or witness accounts) as a useful historical source—often the sole source—of historical knowledge. Meanwhile, primary historical sources such as truth commission findings, are almost never discussed in classrooms. Incorporating these accounts chances merging two devils into one.

For the most part, educators, parents, and community leaders face uncertainty about how to teach new generations about the past, when it seems to remain affixed to the present. Interpreting a history of massive human rights violations committed by the state, even when state power changes hands, continues to influence citizens' attitudes toward democracy, especially when democratic systems are relatively new political arrangements and lack a record of stability. Memories of the violent past are continually accessed, performed, and disputed as citizens make everyday decisions about the nature and level of their civic participation, even while they are uncertain what the war was for. Young people may not *know* the historical details of this past, but they feel its presence in their lives.

Curricular materials strongly rely on the passive voice, obscuring the agency of historical actors who caused harm, endured suffering, or risked their lives to create a more just society. Erasing the political agency of historical actors, notably the *guerrilla*, long cast as criminals whose "involvement" threatened national security, creates an impression that little was at stake during the protracted violence. Though the rebel movement's turn to violence was not without its own excess-

Ixil women sit in their traditional clothes and hold flowers during the Efraín Ríos Montt trial in Guatemala.

PHOTO BY MARY JO MCCONAHAY

es, it grew from wide-reaching popular movements, and began with nonviolent demonstrations repressed by an increasingly authoritarian government. The goals that joined diverse people in insurgent movements centered on social justice in the form of social, economic, and cultural rights. Depoliticizing the *conflicto armado* portrays decades of conflict as yet another bad thing that "just happened" in the succession of colonialism, natural disasters, and the infiltration of the global drug trade. Suffering—whether in extreme poverty, direct combat, or habitual fear of riding the city bus—is conveyed as inevitable, while those who intervene to change the status quo are cast as criminals, killed as martyrs, or become some tormented amalgamation.

What space does this leave for the "good citizen" in a weak democracy, especially when one is situated on the margins? Amidst pervasive refrains that "we learn the past so as not to repeat it," one of the most salient lessons of the two devils representation seems to be the rigid and autocratic relationship forged between citizens and the state during times of turmoil. The persistence of blame placed on activists today (characterized as agitators and even terrorists) reinforces a myth that loyal citizenship resides in "noninvolvement." Accordingly, the criminalization of civic action is a strong indicator of an unexamined legacy of the war, one that remains a significant challenge to democracy. Youth themselves are often scapegoated for much that is wrong in the country, blamed for their alleged disregard for the past, absence of moral values, and failure to embrace their roles as citizens in a democracy.

Historical interpretations manifest as civic intentions. While some teachers believe that knowledge of historical injustice comprises essential civic knowledge, others frown upon historical memory as a source of social division and political polarization, and others view discussions of the past as impractical distractions from current challenges facing the country. Good intentions (in most cases) underlie these diverse approaches, but impressions of civic responsibilities remain as polarized as the past itself. Traces of the past and detections of historical continuity breed their own hopes, expectations, and fears about Guatemala's future, namely, whether it will remain a democracy or return to a military regime. While former head of State General Efraín Rios Montt stood trial for genocide, incipient hopes of justice for the past were couched within everyday concerns over remilitarization. Young people question whether the fact that the current president is himself a former wartime general constitutes a "military government," and whether there is a legitimate threat to Guatemala's tenuous peace. Democracy hovers over the list of *what we lack*.

Young people in Guatemala may not actually know the historical details of the violent past, but they feel its presence in their everyday lives.

Despite promises made in the Peace Accords to transform the educational sector, Guatemala's school system continues to reflect a highly divided and unequal society. These conditions cannot be overlooked when analyzing what young people learn in schools about their civic roles—some seated at modern desks with glossy textbooks and others staring out broken windows and with no books at all. Despite efforts at civic education, Guatemalan youth reveal one of the lowest levels of trust for their government in the Latin American region. In this sense, strong knowledge of democracy's ideals cannot guard against everyday experience with Guatemala's democratic failures.

Educational policymakers in the "postwar" years have significantly restructured primary school curriculum and increased access to early childhood education. Current efforts to improve the quality of schools have prompted the Ministry of Education to professionalize teacher preparation, an important step (though highly disputed among teachers-in-training) in transforming the educational sector. Yet amidst these changes, little has been done at the level of secondary schools, where nearly half of Guatemalan youth drop out to pursue jobs in the informal sector, at high risk for criminal pathways. Efforts to revise curricular representations of the *conflicto armado* are continually "in process," meet with various forms of opposition, and remain a challenge at the central policy level. The uncertainty about how to move forward permeates all sectors of civil society: is historical memory a hindrance to shared hopes for peace; is its critical acknowledgement central to the postwar future; or has it lost relevance entirely in the post-postwar?

It remains uncertain how Guatemala's secondary school curriculum will be revised, especially given the ups and downs of the Ríos Montt trial. While the guilty sentence, its overturn, and subsequent uncertainty might significantly alter the historical narrative, it will also undoubtedly breed new counter-narratives and efforts to reclaim the past. "Postwar" generations will determine whether these democratic gaps and historical silences are filled in. The flawed democracy young people inhabit is the one they inherited, with deep and unresolved authoritarian legacies. It is up to them to renew their parents' dreams for peace and justice.

Michelle J. Bellino *is completing her doctoral studies at Harvard Graduate School of Education. She has been selected as a Peace Scholar by the United States Institute of Peace and a John H. Coatsworth Fellow by the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies for her research on Guatemalan youth civic development.*

A New Museum for Independence

Renovating Memories

BY DANIEL CASTRO AND CAMILO SÁNCHEZ

THIS IS A VERY SHORT STORY OF HOW A SMALL museum in Colombia underwent a profound process of change and renovation, tackling sensitive and controversial issues of memory in recent Colombian history.

The independence of Colombia is celebrated every July 20, because on that day in 1810, a group of creoles (children of Spaniards born in America) started a fight with a Spaniard who refused to lend them a flower vase. That initial fight sparked a riot that eventually ended in a declaration of independence.

In 1960, 150 years later, the house where the fight started was restored and made into a museum. This house-museum, a memorial for the veneration of the country's heroes, not only was anachronistic but really boring for visitors at the beginning of the 21st century. A change was necessary.

However, real change (not just the cosmetic change in display cases and graphic design that most museums dream of) is hard to achieve. It takes a lot of time and resources, but also demands a change of attitude, both in the way the museum views the visitors, and most difficult, the way visitors see the museum.

In 2002, we (one of us the director and another a close advisor) started to think about how to make that change. Several questions came to mind: How to involve visitors actively, (not just as survey numbers)? How to challenge historical preconceptions? How to defy the sanctity of the museum? As it is the birthplace of the nation, change might feel like sacrilege. The museum had also evolved as a place of memory; it had been the staging ground for the Army during the horrific Palace of Justice siege in 1985 that left half of the Supreme Court justices dead. We wanted to honor old memories, but we were not sure about incorporating the newer ones.

The new Museum for Independence honors victims of the conflict in its hot spot project.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MUSEO DE LA INDEPENDENCIA-CASA DEL FLORERO

From top, clockwise: Children learn about Colombian history in the Flower Vase Room; activity bustles in the independent actions hall; a view of Llorente's shop hall.

The first initiatives were of course based on the old exhibition design. We started to ask visitors about the very essence of the museum, the concept of independence (understood as a concept and not as a historical fact). Visitors were invited to write their own independence declaration, to sit on a sofa from the collection and "feel" independent (it was a play on words, as in Spanish the word "seat" [*sentarse*] is very similar to the word "feel" [*sentirse*]), to "break" the historical flower vase (at least a jigsaw puzzle of it) and then reconstruct it.

A survey even consulted the public about changing the name of the museum (it used to be called the "Museum of July 20, 1810"). People agreed with us that it should be called "The Museum of Independence." Based on the survey, we developed a new plan following a participative, interdisciplinary and inclusive model, trying to bring in as many points of view as possible (architects, museum professionals, anthropologists, historians, politicians, artists, journalists, conservators and many others). The result was then presented, evaluated and approved by experts in Colombia and abroad. We finally had a plan for change.

Magnetoscopio, an internationally renowned exhibition design firm, was hired to materialize the concepts of the plan, and finally ideas started to take a physical shape. Colombians would have an innovative space to think about new ways of understanding the concepts of autonomy, liberty and independence.

However, one question still had no answer...

That was what to do about the relationship of the museum to the Palace of Justice siege 28 years ago. To make a political statement, a group of the M-19 guerrilla took over, in 1985, the building housing the Supreme Court directly in front of the museum. The Army— using the museum as its operation center — entered the Palace by force, killing several employees. After a couple of hours, the Army takeover became a slaughter. To make a long story short, the result was: around 117 people killed, 12 people still disappeared and the building burnt down to the ground.

After the massacre, the museum went back to its normal life, avoiding the issue as a subject of its exhibitions, as if nothing had happened. We knew we had to change this in our renovation, but there were several considerations.

The case is not closed yet and investigations are still ongoing.

The museum is a National Museum, operating under the Ministry of Culture, and hence everything the museum offers is basically an official message; in a way, it is the government speaking. Most of the accused (for using unnecessary force) are members of the Colombian Army, and because of that, there is a feeling that the government does not agree with the accusations made against them.The guerrilla group signed a peace treaty in 1990 and most of its militants were pardoned. However, at the time of the museum reopening (2010), they faced open opposition from then-President Álvaro Uribe, who accused them of being "terrorists."

In 2009, at the Reykjavik annual ICOM/CECA (International Council of Museums/Committee for Education and Cultural Action) Conference, a Swedish museum gave a presentation that related its experience with a project called "Hot Spot: Awareness-Making on Contemporary Issues in Museums." That concept was exactly what we were looking for. We contacted the people responsible for the Hot Spot project in order to get their permission to duplicate their initiative. Their reply went even further:

> "I [the project director] believe that the museum can play an enormously important role to mediate burning issues and invite the surrounding society and open up for debates. To connect a hot

PHOTOS COURTESY OF MUSEO DE LA INDEPENDENCIA-CASA DEL FLORERO

spot exhibition to the more 'traditional' exhibition is a very good idea. I recommend you invite people, collect their stories, invite experts that have unique experiences about the issues. Try to take some risks, use strong photos, films, and objects."

Now we had a strategy that we could follow. We thought of some ideas for the display, and we brought in some objects from the Palace of Justice; a video showing news from the time; an introductory text with four kinds of information (the facts or "cold figures," the motivation of the guerrillas, the motivation of the army and a plea for a truce made by a magistrate caught in the crossfire); a list of all the people killed; images of the people who are still "disappeared" and we provided a mechanism for visitors to record and display their feelings and opinions about the issues.

Although it was a very sensitive topic, most of the elements listed above were easy to find. However, the problem was how to pose the question to the public. We did not want people to just read the information given and "take a side." We wanted to, somehow, make visitors realize that there were several motivations for each side to do what they did. We aspired to activate critical thinking, rather than polarize opinion. After long discussions, we ended up formulating five questions that we hope can trigger critical opinions: To forget? To remember? To forgive? To condemn? To repair?

Then the real challenge began. How would people react to the exhibition? Would they be annoyed? Would someone feel attacked or just indignant? Would such a person break something in the museum, or damage the exhibition? Would people complain to the press or directly to the Ministry of Culture? And most importantly: Would people even care?

Since the museum reopened, we had had more than 500,000 visitors. Only about a hundred have complained they do not like the change. They miss the old museum. Some don't like the fact that there is not guide (they seem to reject independence!). However, there had been just five complaints about the Hot Spot. Visitors actively participate by answering the questions (which are then exhibited, along with pieces from newspapers that come up virtually every day with judiciary decisions about the incident). Indeed, many even say that this is their favorite part of the museum.

Maybe the most interesting complaints come from people that were involved in the 1985 events. We have received a couple of "rights to petition" from the lawyers handling the cases of the people disappeared in the Palace of Justice and more recently, one from the lawyer of the family of one of the coronels that has been sentenced to jail for misuse of power. In both cases we have had to seek legal counsel and reply to their claims with museological arguments.

When you get reactions like these (when both parts affected feel that the other part should not be displayed, with arguments like "those who *forget* their *history are* bound *to repeat it"*), the first reaction is often an angry one. There are of course many arguments to defend the presentation of all the actors involved. But then, most of the time, a simple explanation of why we did things the way we did suffices to diffuse angry feelings. And at the end of the day, it is great to see that people actually read what is displayed, and get touched by it. The museum made people active. We would rather have a legal complaint every week than have no reactions at all.

Finally, we think that participation (and most importantly, involvement) of our public is a key element in everything the museum does. Given that participation is one of the principles of the new 1991 Colombian Constitution, we deliberately want to be consequent and take action as a result. It was not something we did just for the renovation. We keep asking our visitors about their feelings for future exhibitions: What would you want to know?, What would you like to see? What do you think? How does something make you feel?

It is not just a way of giving them the false illusion of participation; it is the way the museum wants to be, a place for dialogue. That is why our motto is "a place where history is built by your own history."

It may sound like a utopia, but it is certainly one we would like to involve our visitors in, at least two ways: poetically and politically. Poetry implies the way in which we share knowledge and experience, and politics is seen as the compromise we have to accomplish as active citizens.

The new Museum of Independence in Bogotá seeks to create a dialogue with a multiplicity of Colombia's pasts. Its motto is "a place where history is built by your own history."

Daniel Castro *is an artist, musician and educator with an MA in History from the National University of Colombia. He is director of two historical museums of the Ministry of Culture of Colombia (the Museo de la Independencia-Casa del Florero and the Casa Museo Quinta de Bolívar).*

Camilo Sánchez *is an Industrial Designer and MA in Museology from the University of East Anglia. He is currently the museological advisor of the Museo de la Independencia-Casa del Florero and the Casa Museo Quinta de Bolívar.*

UNEARTHING THE PAST

Sometimes unearthing the past is literal: digging up remains to find the truth. And sometimes it is a figurative unearthing of the past, the exploration of childhood experiences, adoption and exile to reconstruct painful histories.

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In Search of Miss Esme

Memories and History of the Spanish Civil War

BY MARYSA NAVARRO

AS A HISTORIAN I HAVE NEVER WORKED ON THE Spanish Civil War. My concerns were Argentine History and women in Latin America. Yet the Spanish Civil War has been central to my life and that of my family.

The war years left deep scars in all of us, scars that bled profusely as soon as we began to speak about certain topics. Although we lived through two wars, "The War" was the Spanish Civil War, it was everything that had happened to us, including our exile. Any attempt to engage my parents in a conversation about a specific event or decision affecting any or all of us was useless. They just refused to answer my questions or explain what I wanted to understand or simply know.

As my retirement was approaching, I decided to write a long essay or a book about the trials, tribulations and meanderings of my family from the moment the Spanish Civil War began on July 18, 1936. We—my parents, my 8-year-old brother Alberto, my 7-year-old sister, Dorita, and my toddler self—were living in Pamplona, the capital of Navarra. An ultra-conservative province on the western border with France, it was fanatically opposed to the new Republic, born of the municipal elections of April 1931. Its Military Governor, General Emilio Mola was one of the leaders of the July 1936 coup. Having failed to topple the government, they found enough support in several provinces to transform it into a civil war, "a crusade" in the words of General Francisco Franco. Navarra was one of its most reliable strongholds.

My father, who was 41 at the time, was a teacher who loved his profession and had risen to the rank of Inspector of Primary Education recently. A member of Izquierda Republicana (Left Republican Party) he enthusiastically supported the Republican government reforms, especially those in the field of education.

On the morning of Saturday July 18, as three planes flew low over the city, Pamplona was invaded by an army of Falangists and right-wing monarchist militias known as Carlistas. In the afternoon, the Commander of the Guardia Civil who refused to support the coup was assassinated. The following day, General Mola proclaimed Navarra under the State of War; his troops occupied all government buildings and arrests began. My parents decided that my father was not safe and should try to slip into France, which he did, helped by my mother's brother. He left the afternoon of Tuesday, July 21, but returned the following day by Irún into Basque territory loyal to the Republic.

A few days later, as arrests and killings multiplied and cadavers appeared on the sides of the roads, my mother, my siblings and I were detained for nearly a month. We were released and eventually exchanged for children and adults who were caught by the war vacationing in San Sebastián and wanted to return to Navarra. My mother's fear subsided only when we reached the Republican zone. We then went to Bilbao where we were reunited with my father who was working with the Basque government.

The years of the Spanish Civil War left deep scars on all of my family, scars that bled profusely as soon as we began to speak about certain topics. In time, I began to toy with the idea of writing about us to see if I could begin to understand everyone and especially myself.

On September 5, 1936, Mola, by then Commander of the Army of the North, ordered an offensive against the Basque region. His forces took Irún and pushing to the west, entered San Sebastián on the 15th. In March 1937 they began the assault on Bilbao, this time with the support of the German Condor Legion. Dorita still remembers the siren calls as the planes approached and despite her fear, taking Alberto's hand and following our mother who held me in her arms, all of us running towards the refuge we were assigned, a railroad tunnel near the station. After the destruction of Gernika on April 15, 1937, the Basque government decided to evacuate the children. Some 20,000 children were sent to several countries, among them France, England, Mexico, Belgium and the Soviet Union. My sister, the only one among the three of us who could travel because my brother was mentally retarded and I was too little, left in a group of some 3,000 children that boarded the Sontay for the Soviet Union on June 13, 1937.

Six days later, on June 19, 1937 Franco's troops entered Bilbao. The day before, my mother, Alberto and I were evacuated to Santander. We left Spain for France before the city fell to Franco's troops on August 26, 1937. We arrived in St. Nazaire and were sent to a village near Lyon with the support of a teachers union. We lived there for almost a year; no one seemed to speak Spanish, there were no other refugees and mother did not speak a word of French. As she told me once, it was a sad and very solitary time for her. She had no news of Dorita and did not know whether my father was dead or alive. "I cried myself to sleep every night, hoping not to wake up in the morning, but since I did not die during the night, I had to try to live one more day."

My father also left Spain from Gijón but he returned once again to the Republican zone, this time going to Valencia where the government had moved. By late 1938, he joined the last wave of Spaniards escaping Franco's troops. This time he left Spain never to return. He crossed the border in Cataluña and was put in a concentration camp by French authorities. We were reunited with him after he was released, but to the despair of my parents, Dorita remained in the Soviet Union. World War II began before she was able to leave, so we waited for her ten long years. She joined us in France in 1948, thanks to the efforts of the Basque government in exile.

We never had the intimate, wrenching conversation I thought we should all have wanted. In time I began to toy with the idea of writing about us to see if I could begin to understand everyone and especially myself. I did not know whether I would write a historical narrative or a personal memoir. The first thing I did was to go to France and visit the place we had lived after my father left the concentration camp and became the co-director of a colony of Spanish refugee children. I knew that it was supported by "cuáqueros" (Quakers) as he said, and that the person in charge was a Miss Esme. My parents did not know whether it was a name or a surname, she was just Miss Esme, and the name of her organization was something like "The Foster Parents." I remembered that we lived in an enormous estate, that it was called Chateau Le Bridon or so I thought, and that it was on the back road to Le Boucau. When I returned to Bayonne, the center of town had not changed. I even found the Café du Teatre where my father had met for years with other refugees every Sunday, but I could not find the back road to Le Boucau—things had changed too much, too many new streets and too many houses.

I went back on two other trips and failed. I was even told that there had been no colonies in Bayonne. However, I persisted and did find the road, part of the estate wall and a small gate. I also learned that the house had been destroyed and a Youth Center had been built on the grounds as well as houses with gardens.

My search for Miss Esme proved harder. In 2007 I googled both her and the Foster Parent organization without success. There was a "Plan" but no information about the 1930s and neither a Foster Parents Plan founded for Spanish children nor colonies. On one occasion, after giving a lecture at Swarthmore, I went to the Society of Friends Archives in Philadelphia to see if they had any information about Le Bridon and/or Miss Esme but found absolutely nothing. During a three-month teaching visit to University College London, I spent many days in the Quaker Reading Room looking for Miss Esme, again without success. When several books appeared in Spain about the Civil War children and the colonies, once again Le Bridon and Miss Esme were absent.

Quite by chance I met Nancy Clough, who approached me after a panel on children and the civil war at Williams College four years ago. She wanted to write a book about her uncle, Barton Carter, a handsome and charismatic young man who died fighting in Spain at age 23. She generously gave me access to an incredible amount of information and documents, including the solution to the Esme mystery.

Barton's story belongs to Nancy, but suffice to say that the summer of 1936 the young Williams College student went to Spain where he became involved with an English Aid group headed by the Duchess of Athol, a Conservative MP from Scotland. He drove a truck from Valencia to Madrid, bringing supplies to the capital and returning with children. While in Spain, he met two Englishmen, John Langdon-Davies and Eric Muggeridge, who in April 1937, with the support of the Spanish government, founded an organization which they named the Foster Parents Scheme for Children in Spain. They created colonies for children who were evacuated during the siege of Madrid or other cities, had lost their parents or were separated from them. Barton joined them and shortly after, so did Miss Esme Odgers, a young Australian woman with a radiant smile, member of the Young Communist League. She went to Spain with the Secretary General of the Australian Communist Party, with whom she had an affair. Once there, she left him to work with Barton, Langdon- Davies and Muggeridge. That was not all, Nancy also discovered that the University of Rhode Island held the papers of the Foster Parents Scheme. It had changed its name when WWII began and is presently called Plan. In the summer of 2009, I was able to see my brother's name and my own on the list of children in the Le Bridon colony.

The real shock was to learn that Miss Esme was a Communist and not a Quaker. I could not believe that my father had made such a mistake. If his information on Miss Esme was so wrong, how could I rely on his memory, my mother's, Dorita's or my own? On the other hand, I kept telling myself that if I had not insisted, trusting my memory (and the old pictures I had) when people kept telling me that there was no Le Bridon, I would have never found its traces. So I concluded that the thing to do is to trust my family's memory, but anchor it in documents, anchor it in history and that is what I am doing.

***Marysa Navarro** is the Charles and Elfriede Collis Professor of History Emerita at Dartmouth College and Resident Scholar at the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies.*

Discovering Dominga

Adoptions and Tangled Truths

BY MARY JO MCCONAHAY

IN THE OPEN CENTRAL MARKET ONE MORNING IN Rabinal, Guatemala, 28-year-old Denese Becker picked up a bolt of *corte* cloth, woven fabric used by Achi Maya women to make their skirts, and brought it to her face. She closed her eyes. "My mother," she said. "This smells like my mother." I knew which one she was talking about.

That was more than a decade ago; we were in Rabinal to shoot the PBS documentary *Discovering Dominga*, the story of an Iowa housewife—Denese—a survivor of the 1982 Rio Negro massacre in which both her parents died. Denese, the former Dominga Sic, was returning to look for the bones of her father and to untangle the truth of a lifetime of nightmares. On that journey she also discovered a world of memory that might have remained hidden in small-town Iowa, where she arrived at age eleven, adopted by an evangelical pastor and his wife. Her adoptive parents were loving and attentive to her, their only daughter. However, as I watched Denese Becker in the Guatemala highlands, among trees and flowers once familiar to her, I couldn't help thinking how much this young woman had lost by being taken from her roots to live in a strange land.

"What is this tree called?" she would ask. "I know you can eat its leaves." Or, "I think I recognize that flower. It's bad. Don't touch it."

Like Denese, thousands of children during the Central American conflict were adopted by foreigners, mostly from the United States and Europe. When my husband and I arrived in Tegucigalpa from San Francisco with our 8-month old in 1987, the hotel clerk glanced at the infant slung across my chest and said, "I assume you want the adopting parents' rate." During the week it took us to find a rental house, we learned that a dozen U.S. couples at the hotel, and several single individuals, had come to Honduras not to live, but to adopt.

When conflict, displacement and extreme poverty were national conditions in the 1980s and 1990s in Central America, "orphans" was a term used indiscriminately for youngsters separated from their families, whether they had a living parent or close relatives or not. Reasons were myriad: both parents might indeed be dead, killed in the violence, as in Denese's case, although close relatives said later they had searched for her fruitlessly in Guatemala; soldiers and other armed authorities took children after families were killed; in many cases desperately poor single mothers, pregnant again, gave away newborns or sold them to *enganchadores*, front men for corrupt lawyers connected to ostensibly legitimate operations that can only be called "the baby trade." In Honduras, and sometimes in Guatemala, newspapers periodically ran stories about the latest discovery of a *casa cuna,* houses where multiple infants were fattened up from low birth weights before presentation to prospective adoptive parents.

We will never know the true answer to the endless question, "Weren't those children better off raised elsewhere?" We simply won't know. What we can suggest in the wake of those terrible spasms of violence in Central America, at least, is that those of us who were meant to be watching events so closely did not track the region's youngest and most vulnerable inhabitants to the degree they deserved.

Their stories are many. In 1980s El Salvador, for instance, a six-year old being adopted by a blind Italian man and his wife at our hotel approached me to say her mother sold grilled meat near the Parque Libertad. She wanted to return to her mother. Engaged with my own toddler, covering post-earthquake events daily, I never investigated, and the moment slipped away. At a holding camp for civilians "rescued" by the army from Guazapa, a rebel stronghold, an elderly woman said her grandson had been taken by an officer; she feared he would raise him as his own. In mountainous Las Vueltas, known as territory sympathetic to rebels, a man showed me where he had lain in tall grass as his seven-year old was taken away in a helicopter during an army sweep, while she cried out, "*Papi*!" He wept to recall he could not reach out to her without endangering others who hid around him.

"Do you think they will know that she is not an orphan?" he asked. "That I am her father and I am alive? Will she know that wherever she is?"

Left above: A couple in In El Salvador. Here too, journalists and academics often overlooked stories about adoption because of time pressures. Right: Denese Becker/Dominga Sic holds a portrait of her biological father in Rabinal, Guatemala, during the filming of *Discovering Dominga.*

There are reasons why journalists, academic researchers and others do not investigate such stories at the time, including the urgency of other coverage and the general confusion of war. Some feel that any child removed from the risk of war or life of poverty is indeed better off, and questions ought to stop there for the good of all.

During the weeks we filmed *Discovering Dominga* in 2001 and 2002, Denese could not bring herself to accept invitations to sleep in the dirt-floor houses of her relatives; their lives and living conditions were too foreign to her. One day, we met an *ajq'ij,* a spiritual guide charged with giving thanks to the Creator lords, keeping the Maya calendar and performing ceremony. "What does his red kerchief mean?" she asked me later. "My grandfather wore one." Now an evangelical Christian, she seemed to struggle with the knowledge that her grandfather had been a guardian of Maya spirituality, so inimical to the beliefs of her extended adoptive family. In the film Denese says that as a child in Iowa she never "fit in"; but off camera in Rabinal, it seemed clear that neither did Denese Becker/Dominga Sic "fit in" any longer among the people to whom she was born.

An advantage of peace is the gift of space and time to ask questions about what has come before. How much of the memory of the homelands is carried in the minds of children, now adults, as they live far from where they were born? Should adoptions during time of war be forbidden, or truncated in any way? They are questions we might consider before we are forced, should the occasion arise, to answer them again.

***Mary Jo McConahay** is the author of* Maya Roads, One Woman's Journey Among the People of the Rainforest *(Chicago Review Press). She wrote the original story for the PBS documentary Discovering Dominga and co-produced it with producer Pat Flynn.*

PHOTOS BY MARY JO MCCONAHAY

Notes from Exile

Horizons of Democracy BY IVÁN JAKSIC

IT CERTAINLY SOUNDED GLAMOROUS AT THE time—and even might sound so today. In October 1981, I flew from Berkeley, California, where I had been visiting, to attend an academic conference at Yale University on political scenarios under the Chilean dictatorship. I had an airline ticket in my pocket to take me, after the conference, to Lund, Sweden. So far so good, except that the student visa I had received upon entering the United States in 1976 had just expired.

At that point I was considering Sweden as a potential place of residence after receiving an invitation to present a paper there on Chilean Marxist philosophy, a topic I had analyzed in my dissertation. The Swedish conference was a gathering of mainly Latin American exiles seeking to address the increasingly agonizing question whether Marxism was still relevant in the early 1980s, when workers in Poland, just across the Baltic Sea, were rebelling against their Marxist masters. I was on my way to lots of questions and uncertainties about the future.

My host at Yale had been Daniel C. Levy, a specialist in Latin American higher education, who'd told me that there would be several Chileans at the U.S. conference. I was starved for Chilean company, so I was grateful for the opportunity to attend and catch up with compatriots. I had given up on ever returning to Chile. In 1974 I had barely escaped arrest and fled to Argentina, where I managed to stay for a year working as a machinist, and where the political situation soon deteriorated. I returned to Chile briefly, but was again forced to leave the country, this time in defiance of the draft. I thought I could claim an amnesty a few years later, and in fact went back to Chile to claim it, but instead I was tried and sentenced for violations of military law. A return to the country under the circumstances would have been foolhardy, and surely a route to further trouble. Sweden, where I had friends and an academic purpose, sounded like the best prospect at the time.

This is what was in my mind when I listened to the presentations on Chile at Yale, analyzing the impact of eight years of dictatorship. I felt somewhat detached, experiencing what I now recognize as symptoms of denial. My horizon was no longer Chile, but rather any place where I might be able to live. Among the Chileans at that meeting was Sol Serrano, a historian like myself. We had a brief conversation about issues that were rather incongruous in that particular setting: the decade of the 1840s, when a sort of cultural and political renaissance had occurred after a long authoritarian experience. Sol had been a journalist in one of the opposition journals, and was now at Yale pursuing an M.A. in history. It was a short conversation, but it lingered in my mind when I arrived in Sweden. It became clear to me that for Sol the future of the country was still an open-ended question, and that she clearly understood that intellectuals, both inside and outside of the country, could play a role in it. She saved me from cutting off all ties to Chile, though I did not know it at the time, when I was still searching for a place to live.

Intellectuals—inside and outside the country— played a role in the struggle for democracy of Chile, both during the dictatorship and in the reconstruction of post-dictatorship institutions.

Giving up on Sweden for the time being, I returned to the United States thanks to an invitation from historian Tulio Halperín Donghi, which allowed me to settle in Berkeley briefly in 1982, and for a longer time beginning in 1983. My job as a researcher and then as program coordinator in the Center for Latin American Studies at UC-Berkeley was to put together activities relating to hemispheric issues. At the time, Central America, with the Nicaraguan revolution and the Contra War, was at the center of public attention. But so was Argentina, with the fall of the military government and the rise of Raúl Alfonsín, who became president of the country and was later honored at Berkeley for his role in leading the country back to democracy.

I had meanwhile become involved in human rights issues through the Latin American Studies Association (LASA), writing a report on the Mapuche of southern Chile, whose lands had been privatized under Pinochet, disrupting and rupturing their communities. And under the guidance of Lars Schoultz, who was then the head of the Task Force on Human Rights and Academic Freedom, I was also able to submit and pass a resolution condemning the assassination of three human rights workers in Santiago in March 1985. I thus found a way to break out of my selfish denial and collaborate with colleagues committed to alleviating in some fashion, or at least, denouncing egregious violations of human rights.

Left: The poster demands freedom for political prisoners; Right: "Chile, 2,500 disappeared. Pinochet, where are they?"

Chile was also present in some of the lectures I helped organize, and very much so when the time of the plebiscite approached in 1988. It was in that context that I contacted Paul W. Drake, who generously accepted a proposal to collaborate, institutionally and personally, on a project that brought leading scholars of Chile to analyze the prospects for a transition to democracy. Such a transition had been contemplated in the 1980 Constitution, but there were doubts about the sincerity of the government in implementing it. The response from Chilean academics was extraordinary, partly because the space for public discussion had become very limited in Chile after the failed assassination attempt against Augusto Pinochet in 1986. Although we organizers of the event strongly believed that Chileans would orchestrate their own transition to democracy, it was in academic venues like this where issues were laid out and subsequent policies developed. Many of the participants in our conference, which took place in San Diego, and many of the authors in our *The Struggle for Democracy in Chile*, became leading figures in the Concertación government that reinstated democracy in 1990.

What became very clear to me, both in my own work and in the coordination of academic conferences and workshops, was that the times required a revision of the standard understanding of how our nations became nations, and how political systems evolved into what they had become at the time: in most cases a sad trajectory from formal democracy to authoritarian rule. It became important to me to return to the roots of our history in order to look more deeply into institutional designs, historically bound political decisions, and fundamental values that had been lost along the way, although I certainly did not idealize the 19th century. The excessively long experience of dictatorship made me, and I dare say my generation, appreciate what had been taken for granted in previous decades. Democracy was now certainly more than a set of procedures for electing representative governments; indeed it was a political philosophy that involved a commitment to fundamental values such as human rights.

And yet, the achievement of democracy in Chile in 1990 was not the triumphant end to an odd chapter in our history. For those of us who remained abroad, distance allowed us to be perhaps less celebratory, and certainly more critical than Chileans at home. Because of the peculiar nature of the transition, with a tight civil-military coalition that had been only partly defeated, the work of democratization was not done. Although there might have been some timidity on

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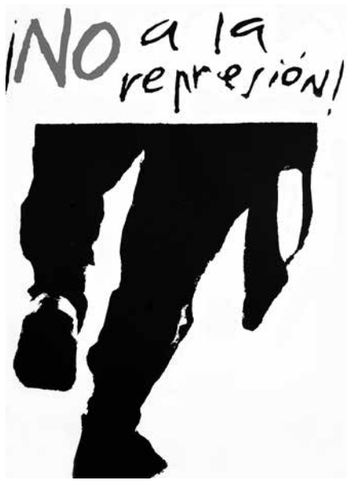

the worst examples of income disparities in the region and beyond. Another issue was human rights. This was dramatically corroborated when we met in San Diego with several scholars and human rights advocates in October 1998. Just a couple of days into our discussions the news arrived that Augusto Pinochet had been arrested in London. The late Patricia Verdugo and others present at the gathering had lost family members or loved ones during the fierce repression of the Pinochet regime. The outcome of the arrest attested to the persistence of memory, and to the sense of justice that inspired the fight for democracy. Clearly, it had not been enough to return to democratic elections in 1989. Democracy required justice, and justice could only be served if

Memory increases our chances of building the democratic procedures that will prevent the recurrence of another breakdown of civilian rule.

the part of the government to push for a more stern policy on human rights, or for further democratization, governing with Pinochet at the helm of the army was not an easy matter. That is why it was still important to observe developments and promote an understanding of the gains and limitations of the transition era. This meant organizing new panels at LASA and other venues, and embarking on a new project with Paul Drake, supported by the Ford Foundation, analyzing the first decade of democratically elected governments. What was eventually published under the title *El modelo chileno: democracia y desarrollo en los noventa* (1999) was an attempt to critically assess what had been accomplished and what remained as blind spots in the search for deeper democratization.

One of the central issues was inequality. We pointed to the successes of the Concertación, especially in terms of reducing poverty, but also to the shortcomings, as Chile was increasingly becoming one of people like our guests retained the memories of repression, and persevered in their quest for redress despite the efforts of the first Concertación governments to settle the issue. The arrest of Pinochet changed everything. Memory would live on and kept pushing the boundaries of the politically prudent.

Extremely significant for me personally was the case of Felipe Agüero, a friend and colleague of many years, who came out publicly to reveal the identity of his torturer at the Estadio Nacional in 1973. The case resonated strongly in Chile, and also in the United States, where it was covered extensively by *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and by *The New York Times*. I expressed my opinion in both venues that the case spoke directly to the unresolved questions in Chile's transition to democracy. But before the issue could gain much traction in the United States, just a few months later, 9/11 happened, understandably moving the public preoccupations and the international policy agenda in a different direction. But something important did take place. Felipe had been there alone with his memory to confront many years of silence and denial. Now he could summon the support of people who, albeit slowly at first, agreed that his testimony was far more valid than anything that his tormentors could muster. He won the specifics of the case, but in the process he also revealed that there was much work, and there still is, to be done to get to the bottom of the injustices committed during the dictatorship. Full democratization will not happen until such situations are openly addressed and the appropriate mechanisms are fully developed to prevent them.

I am back in Chile now, since 2006, after nearly four decades since I first left the country. The issues mobilizing people are different these days, but the forty years that have passed since the military coup of September 11, 1973, serve as a reminder that memory, painful though it might be, allows people like me to retain and process the personal and emotional immediacy that is necessary to move on, both individually and collectively. Memory also increases our chances of building the democratic procedures that will prevent the recurrence of another breakdown of civilian rule with all its consequences. We will be the stronger for it.

***Iván Jaksic** is director of the Stanford University Program in Santiago. A DRCLAS Visiting Scholar (Fall 1997), he is author of* The Hispanic World and American Intellectual Life, 1820-1880 *(Palgrave Macmillan, January 2007),* Andrés Bello: Scholarship and Nation-Building in Nineteenth-Century Latin America *(Cambridge Latin American Studies, 2001), and* Academic Rebels in Chile: The Role of Philosophy in Higher Education and Politics *(SUNY Press, 1989).* *The author wishes to acknowledge with gratitude the careful and insightful reading of this article by Paul W. Drake, Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, Karen Kramer, Katherine Roberts-Hite and Sol Serrano.*

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Unearthing the Past

The Exhumation of Icons and Historical Memory in Chile

BY JEDREK MULARSKI

IN 2010, VENEZUELAN PRESIDENT HUGO CHÁVEZ ordered the exhumation of Simón Bolívar, the most renowned leader of Latin America's 19th century independence movements, to determine whether Bolívar had been poisoned. Venezuelan state television subsequently broadcast the event to the public, blending images of Bolívar, Chávez, and Bolívar's remains with the sound of Venezuela's national anthem in a presentation designed to link Chávez to Bolívar's legacy. In response, Chávez's critics bristled at the idea of Chávez exhuming an "independence hero" in an effort to cast himself as "Bolívar, reincarnated." They called the exhumation a "macabre parody" and a "freak show."

Chávez was not the first politician to manipulate the past in the service of nationalist objectives, so it might appear peculiar that the exhumation of Bolívar's remains would evoke such strong backlash. However, as historian Lyman Johnson has noted, governments "exercise great care to conserve and protect the reputations of heroes regarded as essential to the development and defense of the nation. As a result, school curricula, textbooks, speeches delivered on patriotic holidays and other forms of public memory are routinely scrutinized by bureaucrats and politicians to defend the official versions of these remembered lives from criticism or dismissal." In the case of Bolívar's exhumation, both Chávez and his critics fetishized Bolívar's remains as they competed to attach their own values and versions of history to a powerful symbol as a means of advancing their political agendas.

Attempting to cultivate in Bolívar a deep symbolic meaning that was not about smoothing over the past, but about revisiting old conflicts and reorienting official state history, Chávez played a role generally filled by opposition groups that embrace alternative, often-subversive versions of mainstream histories. These actions added another chapter to a long history of Latin American governments and oppositional groups clashing over the manner in which the remains of icons, from Cuauhtémoc to Túpac Amaru to Santa Anna to Eva Perón, are memorialized.

The practice of exhuming historical icons has increasingly begun to overlap with debates over the value of revisiting the human rights violations of Latin America's Cold War era. This process has been particularly prominent in Chile, where a right-wing military coup overthrew democratically elected Socialist President Salvador Allende in 1973 and established a nearly two-decades-long dictatorship in which thousands of Chileans were tortured, exiled, and killed. In the aftermath of this period, Chile has struggled with the question of how this past should be remembered. As sociologist Macarena Gómez-Barris has argued in *Where Memory Dwells*, these debates are often driven by state-led initiatives that utilize symbolic events and objects related to the past in order to "assist in the process of smoothing over painful memories on the path toward national unity."

The exhumations of Chilean icons such as Pablo Neruda and Víctor Jara have represented a movement against smoothing over the past to achieve national reconciliation.

At their root, such initiatives to smooth over the past form a pragmatic approach to dealing with a difficult history. They facilitate a process of selective remembering and forgetting as a means to cultivate a collective national memory that recognizes selected events through commemorations, monuments, truth commission reports, and human rights trials, while simultaneously emphasizing the need for populations to unify by letting go of past traumas. The premise that underlies this approach is that populations cannot dwell on the past because doing so would only prevent a nation from moving forward towards a better future, which states often define as a path rooted in national harmony and an embrace of neoliberalism. Those who oppose this manner of dealing with the past argue that it has the potential to reshape historical memory in ways that undermine justice, democracy and civil liberties in the present and future.

The question of whether or not to exhume icons has taken on an increasing role in this debate during the last few years, and not unlike Chávez's exhumation of Bolívar, the exhumation of Chilean icons has represented a movement against smoothing over the past to achieve national reconciliation. In 2004, a Chilean court agreed to a request by the family of Eduardo Frei Montalva to exhume the body of the former president, who initially had supported Chile's right wing military coup in 1973, but eventually became a leader of its centrist opposition. This investigation, challenged by

the Chilean right, revealed evidence that pointed to members of the military government having secretly poisoned Frei in 1982. In 2009, some two decades after the end of military rule in Chile, Chilean authorities agreed to exhume the body of leftist musician Víctor Jara after his family presented new evidence surrounding Jara's 1973 death. Forensic analysis of Jara's remains confirmed that military officers assassinated Jara and led to the arrest of several implicated officers. In 2011, the family of Salvador Allende, despite believing that the former President took his own life during the 1973 coup that overthrew him, agreed to allow the exhumation of Allende's remains in order to determine whether or not the military assassinated him. Most recently, a Chilean court has ordered the exhumation of former Communist Party politician and Nobel Prize winning poet Pablo Neruda at the behest of Chile's Communist Party. The April 2013 ruling in favor of this exhumation was based on testimony from Neruda's former chauffeur, who believed that doctors poisoned Neruda at the same clinic where Frei appears to have been poisoned nearly a decade later.

Exhumations raise ethical questions about what rights dead bodies have and when exhumations are justified. Societies often afford certain legal rights to deceased bodies, such as the right not to be trafficked, not to be dissected without consent, and not to be used sexually. These legal rights, however, must be weighed against the value that an exhumation would provide. According to human rights scholar Adam Rosenblatt, the standard justification among international forensic scientists for exhuming and analyzing remains is that an investigation will contribute to an ethical or political goal that will benefit the living, such as ending uncertainty for friends and families of missing or deceased persons, prosecuting war criminals or contributing to political stability. Rosenblatt has argued that dead bodies accordingly are viewed as objects of study, objects of mourning, or objects of political negotiation, but rarely as a direct beneficiary of forensic investigations. Therefore, while we might assume that most individuals would want to have their remains exhumed for forensic analysis if they believed that doing so would help their friends and family find closure or bring war criminals to justice, strong evidence of public good must be provided in order to ethically or legally violate the rights of the deceased.

In response to the ruling to exhume Neruda's remains, the *New York Times* published in April 2013 an op-ed piece by Amherst College Professor Ilan Stavans entitled "Disturbing Pablo Neruda's Rest." In his essay, Stavans contended that Neruda's exhumation is a "pointless" endeavor, an "act of expiation" that is unlikely to lead to convictions and has little historical value. Stavans made a legitimate point about convictions. Efforts to bring Frei's assassins to justice have yet to yield significant results; forensic analysis appears to have confirmed that Allende took his own life; and Jara's accused assassins have not yet been convicted. Furthermore, those accused of dictatorship-era crimes—including Augusto Pinochet, the leader of Chile's military government—often are themselves deceased or able to hide behind claims of being unfit to stand trial due to old age or failing health.

Compounding these difficulties, the value of exhuming icons can also be problematic because their exhumation may cause the public to fetishize them. For example, as anthropologist Carleen Sanchez has argued in her article, "The Apotheosis of Frida and Ché," the tragic death of Ché Guevara and life of Frida Kahlo have contributed to a process in which both individuals have transformed from historical figures into fetishized commodities among audiences that have little interest in understanding the complexities of their ideologies, desires, and agendas. This reality is particularly true in a neoliberal environment where states, commercial industries, and political parties work to appropriate icons and harness their meanings for consumption by the public.

Despite the potential drawbacks to investigating the deaths of icons, posthumous investigations into their deaths should not be viewed simply as efforts to provide false senses of resolution or vindication. In his argument against the exhumation of Neruda, Stavans cited the recently released Pablo Larraín film, "No," as evidence that Pinochet is already being sufficiently demonized without an investigation into Neruda's death. The film illustrates a sharp tension between the main character, a Chilean exile who returns to Chile to create an ad campaign against Pinochet that focuses on a bright future, in contrast to anti-Pinochet political leaders, who lived through the dictatorship and seek to expose the atrocities that the military government committed. Ultimately, the positive ad campaign wins out. The Pinochet regime is undoubtedly the villain in this film, but the film ends with the electorate voting Pinochet out of office and the main character moving forward into a high-profile job with a much-hyped, glamorous soap opera about Chilean jet setters. In a conclusion that dramatizes state efforts to smooth over the past and move forward into a unified, neoliberal future, the film poignantly never returns to the issue of how those who suffered under the dictatorship would cope in this new era with

Exhumations raise ethical questions about what rights dead bodies have and when exhumations are justified. Strong evidence of public good must be provided.

Pisagua 1990, an exhumation site in Chile.

FONDO FUNVISOL. COURTESY OF THE MUSEO DE LA MEMORIA Y LOS DERECHOS HUMANOS, CHILE

their forgotten demands for justice, truth and full disclosure.

Facts about the lives and deaths of historical icons have the potential to preserve and expand historical memories that run counter to official histories that seek to smooth over painful pasts in the interest of national unity. The exhumation of Neruda has captured the world's attention because the poet was an international icon, whose life and death carries tremendous symbolic power that extends beyond his artistic compositions. Regardless of whether an individual knew Pablo Neruda or Víctor Jara personally, Neruda's poems and Jara's songs do continue to speak to people in universal ways that make them "current and vital" to many generations.

Víctor Jara's music has not been forgotten in Chile, where thousands of people took to the streets to honor him when his remains were reburied after the recent investigation into his murder. Their actions demonstrated their strong emotional attachment to the singer and intense sorrow or trauma about his death. Jara, in this sense, represents what historian Steve Stern has referred to in *Remembering Pinochet's Chile* as a "memory knot," or an entity that forces "charged issues of memory and forgetfulness into a public domain"; memory knots stir up, collect, and concentrate memories, "thereby 'projecting' memory and polemics about memory into public space or imagination." The fact that Jara died at the hands of the dictatorship gives both Jara and his music an added significance that reminds all generations of the atrocities that can be unleashed by authoritarian regimes and those who are complicit with them.

Poster reads "No to Torture; Do Away with the Chilean Intelligence Directorate (CNI)"

The meaning that individuals derive from poems is shaped not only by the words that emerge from an author's pen, but also by what readers know about the author. The loss of life due to political convictions generates strong public emotions, and evidence that the military murdered Neruda would irrevocably link the poet's image and words with the brazen atrocities of Chile's military regime. If assassination is proven, Neruda and his poems would become a more vivid reminder of what can happen when democracy and civil liberties are upended. Given the propensity of state forces to "smooth over" the past through actions such as the Chilean government's recent changing of historical vocabulary in elementary classrooms from "dictatorship" to "military period," such reminders play a critical role in keeping alternative versions of the past alive in Chile's collective memory.

Revealing the tragic stories of fallen icons plays an important role in learning from this past. However, investigations into the deaths of icons should not become the defining characteristic of the dictatorship era. This period can only be understood fully if investigations examine on multiple levels the complex web of behaviors that caused it. The human rights violations of this time were the result of various behaviors and events, ranging from the overt actions of the military leadership to the complicity of citizens who supported the authoritarian regime.

Investigations into the death of icons such as Neruda are an important act in the process of learning from this past and coping with the trauma that it caused. But the dictatorship era brought about the torture and deaths of thousands of individuals whose plights must likewise be investigated and humanized. Studies have revealed that knowing the facts about tragedies and gaining closure is part of the healing process for many people who endure traumas; yet many relatives of individuals who were "disappeared" during the dictatorship have become worn-down by years of pain, frustration, and failures by the state to resolve cases pertaining to the deaths of their loved ones. Those who experienced such traumas deserve any information—from identification of remains to cause of death to identities of those responsible for deaths—that might help them find solace. They also deserve a broader, ongoing effort that does not seek simply to "smooth over" the past in the name of national unity, but that strives more deeply to understand and remember the violence of the dictatorship era as a means of preventing its reoccurrence.

The exhumations of icons can serve as valuable starting points in these processes, but they are valuable only so far as they serve as a launching point for cultivating a deeper awareness of the experiences and interactions among individuals at all levels of society that led to the polarization and suffering of this era. As Víctor Jara's widow Joan stated after the arrest of four of the military officers accused of his murder, "If Víctor's case serves as an example, we're pushing forward in demanding justice for Víctor with the hope that justice will follow for everyone."

Jedrek Mularski *received a master's degree in education from the Harvard Graduate School of Education and a Ph.D. in Latin American History from the University of California, San Diego. He is an Assistant Professor of History at Saddleback College, and his scholarship focuses on the relationship between music, popular culture, and political identities in Chile.*

POSTER ART: FONDO SONIA CHAMORRO. COURTESY OF MUSEO DE LA MEMORIA Y LOS DERECHOS HUMANOS, CHILE

Neruda and the Chilean Open Graves

Windows of Hope

BY PAULA MOLINA

CHILEAN GRAVES HAVE BEEN OPENING DURING the last years. Remains of poet Pablo Neruda were removed last May from his tomb facing the Pacific in the small Chilean coastal town of Isla Negra. Before Neruda, in May 2011, remains of former President Salvador Allende were also unburied, to fully determine if he in fact committed suicide while military forces bombarded the presidential palace.

Víctor Jara, one of Chile's best musicians, founding father of local New Song movement, was also exhumed in June 2009, after judicial authorities reopened the investigation into his death. Exams revealed that Jara received 44 bullet wounds, and that he had been tortured and his wrists were broken while detained in the stadium now bearing his name. The Chilean justice system ordered the arrest of eight former army officers—including a demand for the extradition of Pedro Pablo Barrientos Núñez from the United States. "There has been a slight window of hope since the exhumation" said the widow of the artist, Joan Jara.

Former Chilean President Eduardo Frei Montalva, who preceded Allende and died in the same clinic where Neruda passed away, was also exhumed in 2006. Septicemia was the official cause of his death, but his family suspected murder. After forensic exams, a Chilean judge determined that the death of the former president was homicide perpetrated by Pinochet agents. Six persons were arrested in a still ongoing judicial process.

Allende, Jara and Neruda died in 1973, Frei Montalva in 1982. They have been dead for 30, 40 years. Why are their remains unburied now? Are they the dead markers of a failed transition? Or do they represent living proofs of a stronger democracy and how universal demands for truth and justice may resist any artificial limit as they go on for generations?

It is significant that most of these exhumations took place under the administration of President Sebastián Piñera without any real public concern for democratic stability. In 2009, Piñera's election was widely seen as marking the end of Chilean political transition and the healing of wounds that some described as "from the past."

THE ADVANTAGES OF WAITING

Human rights cases are kept alive thanks to the tireless persistence and the permanent sense of urgency on the part of relatives of the victims. They know that mothers, families and friends of victims may get old and die not knowing the truth or receiving justice. There is no excuse for the slow pace of justice; but there must be at least hope in certain cases.

"It may be that at least some aspects of justice prove easier to attain after time has distanced the actors and the society from the events in question" writes Naomi Roht-Arriaza in *The Pinochet Effect*, a book that details the circumstances of the Pinochet detention in London and its unexpected effect in Chile (the conversations it opened, the truth that it revealed, the justice limits it tested). The assertion seems particularly appropriate in the case of recent Chilean exhumations.

Roht-Arriaza has described "the advantages of waiting" in the cases of human rights crime trials, and at the beginning of the 21st century those advantages are seen in Chile. She describes how, as time passed and democracy grew stronger, witnesses lost their fear while those most implicated in human rights crimes retired and lost their influence.

Víctor Jara's widow Joan watched with despair when the inquiry into the death of the musician was closed in 2008 with no conclusive results. But she managed to keep hope and courage, and renewed her public call for information to any of the 6,000 persons, soldiers and detainees alike, who were part of the detention center where Jara was killed. And finally, former conscripts began to talk: "They had been seriously threatened over the years and they had been living in fear," said Joan Jara, who collected enough information to reopen the case that led to Víctor's exhumation.

Time passes for judges too and, in another effect described by Roht-Arriaza, new magistrates may "have less of a personal stake in trying the crimes of the past" decades after repression. New, younger judges, "who don´t feel the guilt pangs from their inaction in desperate times "are (more) willing to follow the evidence wherever it goes."

When special judge Miguel Vásquez issued indictments and arrest warrants against eight former military officials involved in Jara's death, his widow observed "the interesting thing is that the new judge is not from a human rights background; he is a criminal judge. This has produced different results."

Allende was unburied on the first official investigation into his death. The inquiry was part of new investigations into 726 human rights-related cases where no investigations had been undertaken before. Filing the legal complaints on behalf of the victims, the judicial prosecutor said to the Chilean press: "Justice will investigate what has not been investigated yet, and it will reach the relating result. We may clarify some situations, some others we will not. But judicial power will investigate, so that 10 years from now, no one may say: this is still pending."

NEW FORENSICS

The Neruda exhumation was covered globally not only from political perspectives but also from criminal ones. It became a mystery to resolve, maybe a political crime and an attractive challenge for any judge. First forensic results—that proved Neruda had cancer but did not rule out another cause of death—were dispatched in weeks. Amid public attention and international interest, free from the imposed and self imposed political complications of the 1990s, there are good reasons to believe that the case will move as fast as possible in the following months.

Forty years after his death, the search for answers in the remains of Neruda and the bones of political or other victims might also benefit for the developing of new forensic techniques also being applied in countries dealing with similar challenges of justice, like Mexico or Guatemala. In the Neruda case, the forensic team is composed of members of Chilean Forensic Medical Service, experts from the University of Chile, United States and Spain and observers from other countries with expertise in medicine, anthropology and toxicology among others. Sweden, Switzerland and Canada also offered their help.

But the benefits of new forensic techniques do not mitigate the sort of unnatural process of removing human remains, even if the processes are conducted sensitively. When Neruda was "disturbed from his rest," as *The New York Times* observed, classical musicians played a set based on his works, adding solemnity to the ceremony. After the exhumation, Víctor Jara was reburied in a massive funeral where thousands paid homage and respect. Even if they do not erase the pain, such gestures and ceremonies may open public dialogues that are part of a reconciliation process.

Exhumations may be sad and disturbing exercises. But they may also be unexpected parts of the "multitude of strategies" that Louis Bickford described in *Human Rights Quarterly* in 2007, including truth commissions, criminal prosecutions, reparation policies and memorials as elements used "for dealing with past, human rights abuse, atrocity and conflict."

TRIALS AND TRANSITION

Once democracy was recovered, Chilean democratic governments addressed a traumatic past of torture, killing and disappearances in the frame of a political transition with Pinochet still positioned as a life Senator. In a long series of "tacit pacts," Patricio Aylwin, the first elected president after the military dictatorship, offered justice "to the extent possible." Three leaders of Pinochet's secret services were incarcerated, but in a special prison facility, and many perpetrators of human rights crimes and abuses remained in a state of impunity or had wide access to penal benefits.

The Chilean Truth and Reconciliation Commission report, "Informe Rettig," investigated repression between 1973 and 1990. Endorsed by the state, the report brought truth and dignity to the memory of more than 3,000 victims. Nevertheless, in a 2005 Special Report for the United States Institute of Peace, Judy Barsalou described the Chilean commission as "one of the clearest cases of a transitional justice mechanism compromised by politics. Although its work was still of great value, its mandate was limited in three important aspects: it could investigate only deaths and disappearances...all of its hearings were held in private; and it was forbidden to name perpetrators."

Historian of modern Latin America Kirsten Weld, assistant professor at Harvard, describes the effect of the Piñera government, the first government after 1989 not made up of Pinochet opponents. As Chile returned to democracy, former military authorities were a real threat; the vestiges of a drama of deaths, tortures and exile may have kept some politicians from taking measures that could be perceived as too provocative by the military. A certain sense of loyalty to the recovered democracy may have also discouraged the demands for justice. Former opponents became the establishment. Once Piñera was elected, relatives of victims and judges were not afraid of rocking the boat anymore.

In a country where a wave of students protest has lead to a profound debate about the Pinochetian bases of economics and politics and the calls for a constitutional reform, there is no space to repress some pending questions from the past. That Neruda died of cancer, and maybe of grief in the aftermath of the coup was a poetic, but also a politically useful answer to his death. His aide and driver, Manuel Araya, spent years denouncing it as a political murder, but he was ignored as a witness as the Neruda Foundation and the poet's survivors found their own way to deal with the death. Araya may not be right, but he sounded reasonable enough for Judge Mario Carroza who, after two years of investigation, ordered the exhumation of Neruda's remains.

Roht-Arriaza proposes to decouple transition and trials. Even if there is a transitional moment during which new authorities must use a temporary unity and legitimacy to address human rights violations, trials may extend for many decades beyond that time.

This is good news for those who will never stop demanding answers. Chilean relatives of victims value the advances in truth, but resent the lack of justice. Exhumations, even somber and sad, are seen as an important part of keeping their fight alive. Isabel Allende Bussi, daughter of the socialist president, agreed to the exhumation even if she and the rest of the family were convinced that her father had taken his own life: "We have to set the example if we're asking that other actors provide complete cooperation".

The wounds from political repression are now part of Chilean identity; they are not only scars but reminders of the fractures of a resounding fall. It is not simply the past that is haunting; it is the present shown in all its weaknesses and strengths, and the coming future that need to take all this history into an account, one that can always be seen with new, courageous eyes.

Paula Molina *is a Chilean journalist, Harvard Nieman Fellow 2013. She is the anchor and editor of a daily program in Radio Cooperativa, Chile's leading news radio. She also is a collaborator with the BBC of London.*

Violent Legacies, Intimate Photos

A REVIEW BY PABLO CORRAL VEGA

Unsettled/Desasosiego, Children in a World of Gangs
by Donna DeCesare
(*University of Texas Press, Austin, 2013, 164 pages)*

Unsettled/Desasosiego is an honest book that recounts Donna DeCesare's long relationship with Central America and its people in an intimate, personal fashion.

The photograph on page 19 is highly revealing. It captures the movement of people, the chaotic hubbub, the ongoing life of the town and—finally—some armed men who seem entirely out of place. On the left, a little girl embraces a wooden pole. She is the focal point of the image; she holds on to the pole to keep herself from falling and at the same time appears to be holding up the world so that it will not be swept away by the whirlwind. It is an intimate photo —the girl is lost in her fantasies—and DeCesare approaches her with great respect and delicacy.

There is something dreamy, slightly incongruent in that photo. The contrast between the sweet and inward-turning experience of the girl and the presence of the armed men is unsettling. It is evident that her fanciful dreaming could easily be turned into a nightmare.

In spite of the admiration and respect I have for DeCesare, I had some doubts when I heard that she had published a book about the children of violence. It is a prejudice that I carry with me after having seen innumerable photos of children with their large and tender eyes, photo-hooks seeking to entrap the readers, immersing them in easy emotions.

It was encouraging to discover that the photos in this book, product of decades of work, are the result of a dialogue, of an exchange, of shared personal experience.

Donna DeCesare, who is receiving Columbia University's Maria Moors Cabot Award for outstanding journalism this fall, is a well known photojournalist. The most frequent error we photographers make is to publish photos for other photographers, complex photos that demonstrate the sophistication of our gaze. DeCesare's book is not trying to impress anyone. She shows poetic photos of enormous beauty and sophistication, and she also has simple photos, which could be in a family album. All are necessary to recount this history.

The book's subtitle is "Children in a World of Gangs." Children are present in almost all of the images. There are photos of children taken in the 1980s and 1990s. These children have now ceased being children for a long time or perhaps are no longer living. To survive in this world is almost a miracle, and there are very few who have found a path other than violence. Children are messengers who cross time and generations, who carry with them the residues of the horrors they experienced.

Unsettled/Desasosiego is a book that hurts. Its photographs are testimonies of children whose childhood was mutilated, whose images are always made with enormous respect, without affectation or sentimentality. The text, written by DeCesare in a personal and committed voice, offers us a political and historic context that we need to understand the significance of the images.

DeCesare's writing tells us how the counterinsurgency war of the 1980s in Central America, financed by the United States in blatant support of genocidal governments, left an indelible mark on these societies. And we come to understand that the rebels also committed terrible deeds. We learn that many of today's gang members were yesterday's victims. And we conclude that today's children will probably perpetuate this cycle of violence.

The first part of the book discusses the 1980s civil

war—fratricidal war—that tore through the social fabric and produced countless deaths and thousands of displaced people. The photos from this period display the euphoria, the worry, the fragility of civilians. DeCesare avoids graphic or violent photos; rather, her images bring us closer to the humanity of those portrayed and to their innermost emotions.

The second part of the book discussed Central America's displaced people, how, as victims of the violence, they ended up living in the most violent neighborhoods of large American cities, especially in Los Angeles. The tragic destiny of many of those who emigrated is that they found themselves immersed in a new war when they sought a place that should have offered refuge and protection. DeCesare basically photographs the way people relate to each other, and tries at all cost to redeem them by demonstrating their most human and tender aspects.

The third section gives the book its title. *Unsettled/Desasosiego* is the construction of a society that does not have a focal point, a society of eternally displaced people. Gang members, the violent actors in today's society, are citizens of violence, of marginality. They are not Americans in spite of the many cultural references they have constructed in the United States, but they are also not citizens of their own countries because their memories and their traditions were dynamited during a long confrontation without winners and a conflict that continues, seemingly without a solution. The images taken in Central America for the last chapter are the most disturbing in the book. Pain, fear and lack of hope emanate from the photos.

Unsettled/Desasosiego is a book that should be read slowly. The text becomes a revealing compass, a detailed testimony of encounters and misencounters of aspirations and frustrations.

Fred Ritchin's preface is, as always, extraordinary. Ritchin is one of the most lucid thinkers, a visionary of the image. He makes an essential observation, namely, that DeCesare's photos accomplish a goal much more important than that of a reporter who recounts a story to inform the world. These photos return memory to the people who are being photographed.

One of the most important uses of photography is to help construct a family album, a kind of rosary of memories and feelings that bestow identity, especially to those who have lost it. *Unsettled/Desasosiego* is a precious family album, a personal diary written with devotion and care.

The crisis of photojournalism is due not only to the radical democratization of photography. Certainly, now there are millions of people who have access to a camera and who use photography to communicate. Photojournalism is also losing relevance because we photographers have not understood that we are not the owners of photographic language (in the same way that writers are not the owners of the language that all of us use). We have forgotten that our mission is not to save the world nor to redeem it—that is true arrogance—and that no one has an obligation to listen to us.

Our task is much more modest: to tell personal stories —stories that are important to us—and do so with honesty. We should approach the lives of others on tiptoe, with enormous delicacy and respect, just as Donna DeCesare has done in *Unsettled/Desasosiego*.

Pablo Corral Vega *is the founder of nuestramirada.org, the largest photojournalist network in Latin America. He is the co-director of POY Latam, the most respected photojournalistic competition in Ibero-America. His photographic work has been published in* National Geographic *and other international media. He was a 2011 Nieman Fellow at Harvard.*

Writing the Rough Draft of Salvadoran History

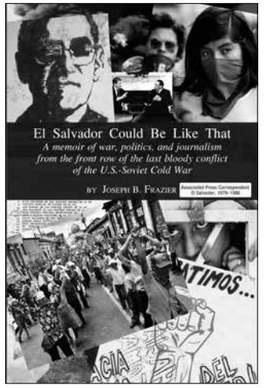
A REVIEW BY JOCELYN VITERNA

El Salvador Could Be Like That: A Memoir of War, Politics, and Journalism from the Front Row of the Last Bloody Conflict of the U.S.-Soviet Cold War
by Joseph B. Frazier *(Karina Library Press, 203 pages)*

"There are no just wars. There are only just causes."

I was sitting in the modest home of a former FMLN guerrilla woman in a rural village in the northeastern corner of El Salvador. It was 2001, and I was nearing the end of my second year-long stint in this small Central American nation, interviewing more than 200 Salvadorans, mostly from rural areas, about their experiences during the civil conflict of the 1980s. My host was not one of my *campesina* respondents, but rather a highly educated woman with urban, middle-class roots. She was small but wiry; an aura of relaxed self-assurance veiled, but could not hide, the underlying sinewy toughness of her personality. She had struck up a friendly conversation with my friend and me as we wandered through her village. Within minutes of saying hello, the former *guerrillera* had invited us to spend the night in her extra bed. After two years of consistently generous hospitality from rural Salvadorans, I had ceased to be surprised by such offers. We graciously accepted.

After dinner, our host's story began to unfold. A university student turned activist turned rebel fighter in the late 1970s, she had spent 12 years fighting with the FMLN guerrillas in the rural war zones, and then elected to stay in the countryside after the Peace Accords were signed in 1992. Her story surprised me on two fronts. For one thing, in my experience, most urbanites had been only too happy to return to city comforts after the war's end. For another, she made a number of statements suggesting that she thought the FMLN's militant actions in the early 1980s might have been a mistake. It wasn't that most of my respondents were knee-jerk FMLN supporters. Most expressed frustration with at least some aspect of party politics, even if they at the end of the day preferred the FMLN to other parties. But none—not one—had ever questioned that war was the FMLN's only option in 1980s El Salvador. The state military was massacring Salvadoran civilians, I was told. The FMLN had no choice but to pick up arms and defend them. After another such moment of questioning the FMLN's militant strategy, I asked, "But didn't you think the war was



just?" To which she responded: "There are no just wars. There are only just causes."

Joe Frazier would have felt right at home in that conversation.

Frazier's book takes us back to El Salvador in the early 1980s, where thousands were killed, tortured and disappeared each month because they expressed the wrong political beliefs, lived in the wrong village, exchanged pleasantries with the wrong friends, or just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Frazier, a foreign correspondent for the Associated Press living and working in wartorn El Salvador recounts the war in a dizzying fashion. His writing is clear and direct, slipping seamlessly from anecdote to interview to colorful jokes to political commentary, but often losing track of dates, places or the significance of the reported event. Indeed, Frazier seems to be nudging us to draw exactly this conclusion: that the events themselves *were* insignificant; what mattered were the lives lost in exchange for the political posturings of the 1980s.

This is a memoir, not academic analysis. As I read, I initially found myself somewhat frustrated at the flatness of the Salvadoran people portrayed in the book. But soon I realized that this was intentional. Frazier wants us to feel his frustration with the flatness of his own interactions with Salvadorans in a situation where so many more powerful emotions—outrage, anger, deep sadness—would have seemed more appropriate. For example, Frazier recollects how well-meaning AP editors repeatedly asked him to get the opinions of the "regular" Salvadorans on the street, despite reminders that "regular" Salvadorans were far too smart to vocalize their opinions to a U.S. reporter if they wanted to avoid torture and death.

By the book's end, the eclectic and dizzying collection of recollected events began to take on a rhythm of its own, and the feel of El Salvador in the 1980s—an El Salvador I've never experienced—began to emerge. This was a time when Salvadorans survived by saying the exactly right nothing. Where is your compañero? Working. Doing what? Working. Where are the other men in this village? Working. This was a time when politicians offered platitudes and excuses, but no real information about the fighting, the deaths, the armaments, or the intelligence that made widespread killing possible. And the greatest silence of all came from the bodies, the relentlessly accumulating bodies, whose appearance on busy sidewalks, along highways, or at the foot of the infamous "Puerto del Diablo" cliffs was so routine that they seldom caused passersby to slow their pace. These bodies are regularly remembered throughout Frazier's manuscript.

Reading this book helped me understand the huge challenges faced by journalists in war zone.

Reading this book helped me understand the magnitude of the challenges faced by journalists in war zones. They are asked to write a story, to define the sides of a conflict, to explain the bodies, to provide accurate accounts of where arms came from or which political alliances were forming, in a situation where such information could (and did) get you killed. It is because of reporters like Frazier that the international community learned about massacres like El Mozote and the Rio Sumpul. It is because of reporters like Frazier that the international community came to understand how "democratic" elections can exist alongside antidemocratic politics. It is because of reporters like Frazier that the international human rights community turned its attention to Central America, at least for a while, placing pressure on the warring sides to significantly reduce the massacre of civilians by the second half of the war, and to help forge a peace agreement by 1992.

Frazier is at his best when he is reflecting about the past. This richness is developed through interviews with hard-to-kill communist leaders, gringo surfers and war orphans. His discussion of the complicated relationship between the Church, the state, art, and the people expertly captured the complexity of political ideas, and the pervasiveness of old power, in El Salvador. Frazier's discussion of the present is understandably less well-developed and tinged with sadness. He draws striking comparisons between deaths caused by gang violence today with those caused by political violence in the 1980s. He laments the continued poverty and suffering of Salvadorans, as well as the state's efforts to forget the past, including wiping the nuances of the civil war out of school children's history books. Mostly, he laments how little the rest of the world seems to care about the continued poverty and violence that wracks El Salvador, after paying so much lethal attention to it in the 1980s.

Frazier never had the luxury of getting to know Salvadorans' opinions about the war like I did—through long, leisurely conversations that lasted into the dark of the night. And yet he sacrificed so much to tell the story of Central America. While in El Salvador, Frazier's friends and fellow journalists were

killed. His wife was killed. Several people who granted him interviews were killed shortly after speaking to him. Yet he stayed on, raising his young son. It is difficult to overstate his commitment to the Salvadoran people, despite the understated nature of his memoirs.

Upon finishing the book, what most struck me was the difference between his Salvadoran experiences and my own. Journalists like Frazier wrote the rough draft of Salvadoran history, often at great personal risk. Since then, forensic scientists have uncovered bodies, former generals have begun to confess their war crimes under new amnesty laws, and academics have started putting flesh on the skeleton of Salvadoran history. I, like Frazier and my Salvadoran host, agree that there are no just wars. But I could have never written about the devastation of the Salvadoran war as did Frazier, who actually lived it. Nevertheless, the fact that Salvadorans are now free to fill in the details of Salvadoran history with data from their own lives, either through their own writing or through long interviews with visiting academics, is, in my view, reason for optimism.

Jocelyn Viterna *is Associate Professor of Sociology at Harvard University. Her book,* Women in War: The Micro-processes of Mobilization in El Salvador *will be published in 2013 by the Oxford University Press.*

Transforming the Andes

A REVIEW BY GARY URTON

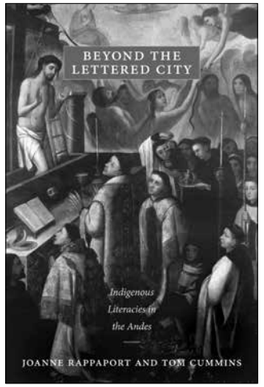
Beyond the Lettered City: Indigenous Literacies in the Andes by Joanne Rappaport and Tom Cummins *(Duke University Press, 2012)*

In the spirit of full disclosure, I begin by stating that the co-authors of this award-winning book* are both close, long-time friends of the author of this review. I attended graduate school in anthropology at the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, with Joanne Rappaport in the 1970s, and I have been in close contact with Tom Cummins ever since we coincided on some of our earliest respective field research in Cusco, Peru, in 1981. Cummins and I currently co-teach a General Education course at Harvard, "Pathways Through the Andes." While I will grouse about one aspect or another of this book—as is perhaps inevitable, when evaluating the work of one's almost-siblings—I first hasten to state that *Beyond the Lettered City* is an exceptionally important, path-breaking contribution to the study of the transformations of society and culture in the northern and central Andes from the time of the Iberian invasion until the early 18th century.

The regional setting sets this work apart from the vast majority of works centering on Andean subject matter. The majority of studies of colonial Andean societies focus on the central Andes, with particular emphasis on Peru and (to a lesser extent) Bolivia. The territory of the latter two nation-states—in the colonial era called, respectively, Lower and Upper Peru—lay at the heart of Tawantinsuyu: the Inka Empire. The northern Andes, the region from Colombia down through Ecuador, received less attention from colonial historians. Rarer still are works that meaningfully draw together the peoples, cultures, histories and environments of the northern and central Andes into a single work of deep historical analysis; this is precisely what this extraordinary work accomplishes.

The central significance and major contributions of this work are, first, that it provides a guidepost for Andeanists to develop a more expansive, integrated perspective on the proper account of colonial history in the region. Unlike other works, the book does not solely concern the central Andes, much less separate accountings of the central and the northern Andes. Second, it builds this new, integrated narrative through a deeply anthropologically informed mode of the construction of history and, simultaneously, a recognition of the centrality of writing and literacy in the histories of the (largely) non-literate populations of the Andes in the colonial era. The great insight of Rappaport and Cummins is that there is no contradiction in this last statement ("the importance of literacy for the illiterate").

The key to Rappaport and Cummins's approach to the topic not just of literacy but of what they term "indigenous literacies" is the centrality of writing in the formation of settled, urban spaces in early colonial Latin America. The central theorist of this perception was the great Uruguayan writer, academic and literary critic, Ángel Rama (1926-1983). In his book, *The Lettered City*, Rama had laid out the principal tenets of both modernism and transculturation in relation to the Latin American experience of conquest and then the long era of colonialism, terminating (but only formally) in the continental movements leading to independence from the European overlords (Spain and Portugal) in the 19th century. Rama's book has had a profound impact on students of Andean literacies, partially inspiring the present work, as well as another book published by Duke University Press, Salomon and Niño-Murcia's, *The Lettered Mountain* (2011). As taken up by Rappaport and Cummins, Rama's work opened scholars' eyes to the fact that the Spanish American world was "…a 'lettered city,' a social constella-



The book provides a guidepost for Andeanists to develop a more expansive perspective on colonial history.

tion built on an ideology of the primacy of the written word; within this system, the urban landscape was constituted as a literate scenario for indigenous conversion and domination, structuring the exercise of power by native actors and Spaniards alike. Legal documents functioned as prime vehicles for transforming native perceptions of time, space, and the discourses of power…" (2012:3-4).

The above description points to the initial, central (though not complete) set of dynamics the authors examine in their book. The difference here is that whereas Rama saw the primary source of actions and creative transformations within the European administrative and ecclesiastical bureaucracies acting on indigenous communities, Rappaport and Cummins offer a much more dynamic and reciprocal account, in terms of foreign and indigenous actors and forms of action. The latter is implied in the subtitle: "indigenous literacies in the Andes." In part, what allows the authors to investigate more insightfully and convincingly than did Rama is the huge body of documents produced by and on behalf of Andean peoples in their confrontation with the imposed bureaucracies. This offering would be enough of a contribution, particularly given how extraordinarily rich these sections of the book are. However, Rappaport and Cummins move beyond it to indigenous actions in a number of "fields" not strictly delimited by writing and reading. That is, the authors take the performances of literacy to be constituted as well by a whole range of practices linked to the order, disciplinary practices and knowledge that came along with the European technology and arts of writing and reading. The latter involved native consumption of and participation in places (e.g., the new towns, known as *reducciones* and/or *resguardos*), institutions (tribute, censuses) and material productions (e.g., painting, music, etc.) that were integral elements of the imposed systems of power and knowledge. Most interesting and striking in this regard are the detailed discussions of the indigenous objects—*keros* (drinking cups), *mantas* (shawls), and other precious items—appearing in church murals, wills, and other productions.

The authors show how native elites and, in many cases, commoners as well, appropriated, innovated on, and in many cases subverted the imposed institutions, procedures and forms of expression. This resulted in a range of indigenous-inspired productions, such as paintings in local churches; documents of various types (wills, land holding descriptions, disputes over local lordships, etc.); and ritual performances that combined Catholic and indigenous characters, images and themes, all of which affords broader forms of "transculturation" from those originally envisioned by Ángel Rama. Their extraordinarily rich exposition of the latter forms of appropriation and production in *Beyond the Lettered City* is what carries the project initiated by Rama to its greatest heights of realization. In this regard, the work presents to the reader an almost ethnographic level of description and analysis of the everyday lives of natives, from Bogotá to Latacunga and points south. I would argue that this represents the greatest and unique contribution of this book. Historians and social scientists of various stripes have long bemoaned the fact that the written record of colonial administrative regimes is principally produced by, and represents the interests of, the foreign (Peninsular) or *criollo* elites. By mining rich lodes of local documents, paintings, and various other expressions of native appropriations of European-imposed, colonial policies, institutions and technologies, Rappaport and Cummins give the reader a "thick description" of the daily lives of the local elites and commoners in communities throughout the Colombian and Ecuadorian Andes.

As is true of all works, with only a few exceptions (e.g., Michaelangelo's painting of the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, etc.), there are a few things left wanting in *Beyond the Lettered City*. In this reviewer's view, principal among the things overlooked (except for one exculpatory footnote: pg. 264, note #6) is the barest of attention to what was the subject matter of the vast majority of colonial documentation: numbers, numerical data, and administrative statistics. The term "alphabetic" is used throughout this work to designate the script of these colonial documents, yet most of the texts illustrated and cited in the book employ Hindu-Arabic numeral cyphers. The written text on a page from a *visita* ("town visit") on pg. 230 is literally framed within cyphers. My use of the phrase "vast majority" to characterize these types of documents is no exaggeration. In his study of the some 34,000 *legajos* (bundles of documents) deriving from Spanish administration in the New World and preserved today in the Archivo de Indias in Seville, Gómez Cañedo in *Los archivos de la historia de America: período colonial español* (Mexico, D.F., 1961:12-13) found that, other than those labeled as *Indiferente* ("miscellaneous/unclassified"), the largest collections

are those categorized under the headings *Contaduría* ('accountancy;" 1953 *legajos*) and *Contratación* ("trade contracts;" 5873 *legajos*). Spanish administrators were obsessive enumerators, and they clearly transmitted this preoccupation to the Andean natives (although central Andean accountants had their own such records, in the form of knotted string records).

Now, I understand that the authors are not interested in examining numerical data. That's fine; we all have our particular interests and contributions to make. However, I think I am raising an issue here about something much more basic in document production practices. For instance, when a native *cacique* or *cacica* wrote, or had written for him/her, a date—e.g., 1615—that string of cyphers represented the litigant's buying into a completely different, alien theory of history from an Andean one. For whoever writes "1615" (or any such date in the Gregorian calendar system) participates in a system of historical causation, teleology, and redemption that is wholly grounded in European Christian theology and conceptualization of history. In short, buying into—i.e., using—Hindu-Arabic numerals was not an innocent act of employing an alien form of notation; rather, it was to submit to a Western disciplinary system of power and knowledge that bound the indigenous subject ever more firmly into the imposed, Western European epistemology and theory of history. I submit that if we were to examine these numerical records more closely, with the sharp and critical eyes Rappaport and Cummins apply to the texts, paintings, and new towns of the colonial Andes, we might identify therein a surprising, creative and subversive record of indigenous numeracy to equal that of the remarkable record of indigenous literacies detailed in Rappaport and Cummins's groundbreaking work, *Beyond the Lettered City*.

***Gary Urton** is Dumbarton Oaks Professor of Pre-Columbian Studies and Chairman of Harvard's Department of Anthropology. His research focuses on pre-Columbian and early colonial Andean intellectual history, drawing on materials and methods in archaeology, ethnohistory, and ethnology. He is the author of many articles and editor of several volumes on Andean/Quechua cultures and Inka civilization. His books include* At the Crossroads of the Earth and the Sky *(1981),* The History of a Myth *(1990),* The Social Life of Numbers *(1997),* Inca Myths *(1999), and* Signs of the Inka Khipu *(2003).*

* *Beyond The Lettered City* was recently awarded the Latin American Studies Association's Bryce Wood Book Award for the outstanding book in the social sciences and the humanities for books published in English in 2012.

The Optimist's Colombia

A REVIEW BY LAURA JARAMILLO-BERNAL

Colombia: A Concise Contemporary History
by Michael J. LaRosa and Germán R. Mejía *(Rowman and Littlefield, Maryland, 2012, 265 pages)*

In 2008, as a Harvard college sophomore, I was getting ready to go back to Colombia, my birthplace, for the first time since I left with my family as a 13-year-old. I read everything I could find, looking for a better understanding of the country than my vague adolescent memories. I was disappointed to find only opinions at two extremes.

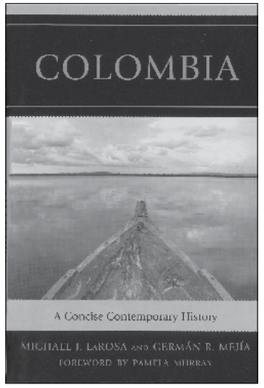
On one hand, the academic literature and international press had only dark and tragic things to say about my fondly remembered homeland. It was a "near-failed state." It was "war-torn." It was unstable, bloody, violent and at the very best, it was a "nation in spite of itself," as the title of David Bushnell's go-to English language history of the country declared.

On the other, the national press, in an effort to counter negative international perceptions, found a way to mix with their more serious reporting near-propaganda stories that were positive to the point of absurdity. One I read when my family was getting ready to leave the country in 2001, was a cover story by the respected weekly magazine *Semana*. It promised "1000 reasons to stay in Colombia." Not surprisingly, the fact that the country was "fourth in nickel production," reason 106, was not quite enough to derail our plans of emigration.

Michael LaRosa and Germán Mejía's *Colombia: A Concise Contemporary History* follows a more recent academic and journalistic trend to see Colombia in a more nuanced light. It is seen as a country that has suffered a catastrophic struggle with armed violence and organized crime, but one that has proved economically and democratically resilient— and is blessed with incredible cultural richness. That is a welcome change.

Without engaging in whitewashing or leaving behind academic rigor and meticulous historical detail, the authors of *Colombia* have maintained an engaging balance between the more tragic aspects of Colombian history and its successes. They do not rely on the standard comparison-based theories of development; instead, they seek to understand why the country has been able to remain unified on its own terms.

Their narrative is present-focused and organized thematically, rather than following a standard chronology. It explores in small, easily digestible sections subjects like demography, political culture, infrastructure development and, of course, conflict. That structure, which jumps back



and forth in time, occasionally confuses the reader, but a detailed timeline at the end is helpful.

The book's second chapter, "The Colombian Nations," sets the stage by describing the country's demographic makeup. Divided by cultural barriers of language, race, religion and geography, Colombia does not fit the common perception of a nation-state as a "unified sociopolitical entity." The authors discuss the challenges of representation and survival of many ethnic groups like the 87 different indigenous ethnicities, Afro-Colombians or very small communities of gypsy and Middle Eastern ancestry.

However, having painted a picture of cultural fragmentation and inequality, the authors go on to identify the forces that helped such a disparate mix of groups, divided by impossible geography, to develop a common national identity and to maintain a relatively stable territorial entity for two centuries.

"The Cadence of Unity," the book's fourth chapter, takes a deeper look at some of those forces. Most unexpected is the argument that the old two-party system—rightfully blamed for a period of unrest so vicious that it is known simply as "La Violencia," for political exclusion, and for corrosive clientelism—was also an important unifying force in the construction of the nation. Because their representation spread throughout the broken territory, because they integrated Colombians of many classes, and because they served as a gateway between ordinary citizens and the services of the state, the authors argue that the Liberal and Conservative parties were essential in creating a national identity that transcends regional bounds.

But political participation is not all that holds Colombia together. Throughout the book, LaRosa and Mejía highlight other factors that played a role. Some were inherited from the colonial system: Spanish as a national language and the Catholic church, with its unified set of beliefs and extensive territorial presence, as well as its important role in education and healthcare. The establishment of a central military in the early 1800s, elimination of internal barriers to trade, consolidation of a national currency, and the building of infrastructure to connect the country marked an active effort by the central government to facilitate unity.

The book, written in English as a collaboration between two historians from the United States and Colombia, is intended for a foreign audience of non-experts. However, it manages to engage, and even surprise, readers that might be more familiar with Colombia. Those that have spent significant time in the country will recognize in the book's pages the quirky details of Colombian life that tell as much about the country as the goriest details of its civil war.

As I first skimmed over the table of contents, I was shocked to find a subsection dedicated to beauty pageants. *Beauty pageants!* In a serious, academic book about Colombian history! As it turns out, the section, no longer than a page, really stuck with me. After finishing the book, I couldn't help but ask myself: how could anyone write a book that could serve as an introduction to modern Colombia and *not* talk about that particular national obsession? Or without a mention of *Betty la Fea*, the traditional chicken stew *ajiaco*, or the ambivalent feelings of many Colombians toward the celebrated and omnipresent Nobel Prize winner Gabriel García Márquez?

"Violence sells, but it also distorts," declare the authors in the epilogue of their upcoming paperback edition, while discussing the rise of violence-obsessed pop-culture in the country as seen in the wildly successful narconovelas. That applies, too, to more academic reading. I applaud Mejía and LaRosa for abandoning the seductive lure of gore in Colombian history and making an honest and serious effort to tell a more complete and complex story.

The new edition, scheduled for October 2013 publication, will include a cleverly titled epilogue, "Chronicle of a Peace Forestalled?", addressing a gap in the first edition by providing an overview of peace talks in the past six decades. The authors walk the reader through myriad negotiation efforts seeking to demobilize various illegal armed actors since the presidency of General Gustavo Rojas in the early 1950s.

The ongoing Havana peace talks between the FARC and the Santos government are scheduled to conclude in November, 2013. The expanded version of *Colombia: A Concise Contemporary History* will have gone to press by then, so this new chapter will be necessarily inconclusive and outdated when it gets to readers. However, it will provide essential historical context for understanding the final outcome, whatever it may be. By outlining the many previous attempts at reaching a deal to end the conflict, the new chapter reminds us that Colombians have been seeking peace for a long time. LaRosa and Mejía close on an encouraging note: "Conflicts eventually conclude through dialogue and negotiation. Modern, civilized nations negotiate. No society wages war forever. And Colombia is no exception." I can only hope that they are right.

***Laura Jaramillo** is a Colombia optimist. Harvard College 2011, she was a political reporter for La Silla Vacía in Bogotá and is currently a writer and producer for the TV show Efecto Naím in Washington D.C. She enjoys traveling and neglecting her blog, www.laurajaramillo.com.*

Mexico's Great Transformation and U.S.-Mexican Relations

A REVIEW BY GABRIEL AGUILERA

Two Nations Indivisible: Mexico, the United States, and the Road Ahead by Shannon O'Neil (*New York: Oxford University Press, 2013*)

As graduate students in Harvard's Department of Government, Shannon O'Neil and I read from the same interminable Mexico reading list handed to us by our mentor, Professor Jorge Domínguez. A few years later, in 2002, we became good friends in Mexico City. Alejandro Poiré, a fellow Domínguez student, was then Chair of the Political Science Department at the Autonomous Technological Institute of Mexico (ITAM), where I was a faculty member. He provided Shannon with an office during her Fulbright stint, and so ITAM fast became an ongoing seminar for a *gringa* and this Mexican-American *pocho* to learn about Mexico's great transformation from our *chilango* colleagues and friends, often over lunch and sometimes in their smoke-filled offices.

Now a Senior Fellow for Latin American Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, Shannon O'Neil has written an outstanding book on U.S.-Mexican relations, *Two Nations Indivisible*. At present this is the best book to hand to anyone eager to learn about contemporary relations between the two countries. It is also an excellent complement to in-depth scholarly examinations of Mexico's political and economic transformation, such as Haber and others, *Mexico Since 1980* (2008, Cambridge University Press) and Hamilton, *Mexico: Political, Social and Economic Evolution* (2010, Oxford University Press).

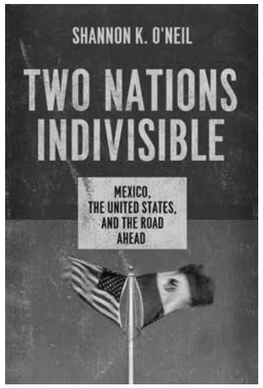
In cheerful and vivid prose, *Two Nations Indivisible* describes and explains how the two countries have become tightly integrated in the last two and a half decades as a consequence of globalization, a closeness manifested in booming immigration, trade, and investment flows. O'Neil analyzes Mexico's astonishing political and economic transformation, its implications for the United States, and what the United States can do to help its neighbor prosper. It is an inveterately optimistic and forward-looking book about two nations that may often have kept a distance from one another but now find themselves in a marriage of convenience.

In addition to its nuanced portrait of Mexican-American interdependence, *Two Nations Indivisible* provides a compelling narrative of Mexico's transition to democracy and efforts to reform the state to achieve a more dynamic and less crisis-prone economy, one that can continue to grow the middle class, reduce poverty, and generate more consistent and faster growth. The author provides a trenchant analysis of how Mexico is attempting to untie several Gordian knots in key policy areas such as security, education, economic regulation, and criminal justice. The book also gives valuable advice for policymakers on both sides of the border for leveraging the benefits of integration.

Two Nations Indivisible, however, is not naïvely optimistic. O'Neil's vision of Mexico's future is rooted in a scholar's understanding of democratization and the challenges of reforming state institutions in a political environment where powerful vested interests—labor unions, corrupt politicos and bureaucrats, monopolists, and, let it be said, narco-traffickers—fight tooth and nail with reformers to block progress at every opportunity. Mexico's electoral system stacks the deck against citizens in favor of political parties and special interest groups through policies such as the prohibition of reelection, the lavish funding of political parties, and fiscal transfers to states with limited electoral accountability. Political parties too often cut deals to protect their respective vested allies.

O'Neil, though, does not get lost in this gloomy forest when she considers the road ahead. After all, Mexico has emerged in relatively good shape from an economic lost decade and a half between the financial crises of 1982 and 1995. It is easy to underestimate the significance of this accomplishment and to forget that economic stability was finally achieved after democratization took root in 1998, when the "official" political party lost control of congress for the first time.

Two Nations Indivisible points out that Mexico today has a sizable and growing middle class that boasts higher levels of education and consumption as well as smaller families. Though poverty levels remain unacceptably high, progress in reducing these rates has been real. The country continues on a trajectory of steady and modest economic growth thanks to economic openness and macroeconomic stabilization. Mexico joined the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade in 1987 and the North American Free Trade Agreement in 1993. It threw its doors open to foreign direct investment after decades of protection and heavy regulation. An independent central bank and successive governments since the mid 1990s have managed monetary and fiscal policies prudently, so much



so in fact that there is room for fiscal expansion to invest more aggressively in education, poverty reduction, and state-building.

The Mexican government and congress, however, need to agree on extracting more badly needed revenues from a woefully under-taxed society that boasts some of the lowest levels in the OECD. O'Neil reminds us that policymakers need to open the internal market to domestic competition, efforts that are resisted fiercely by modern Mexican robber barons that have cartelized markets and pay too few taxes. The government also needs to inject competition in key labor markets—such as education—where unions continue to reign supreme.

Two Nations Indivisible blends unflinching political economy analysis with some good old fashioned faith in democratization, markets and civil society, all of which have taken root in Mexico since the early 1980s. Its accounts of the challenges in specific policy areas such as immigration reform or security cooperation with respect to U.S.-Mexican relations, and anti-trust, policing, or judicial reforms with respect to Mexico, do risk leaving the reader in despair. It is sometimes difficult to reconcile the grave challenges with the book's cheerful optimism. Yet O'Neil bets that its vibrant civil society will, in the decades ahead, defeat many of the troglodytic forces in Mexican politics. I too am betting that Mexican political institutions will continue to evolve and adapt to the rapid social changes and demand for reforms.

Two Nations Indivisible argues throughout that the United States needs to do more to improve the bilateral relationship. It notes, though, that the September 11, 2001, attacks derailed U.S.-Mexican relations for nearly a decade while the United States waged its global war on terror. At the same time, diplomacy has been less prickly since the early 1990s, particularly in the wake of NAFTA, the financial bailout of 1995, and security cooperation under the Merida Initiative. Mexican anti-gringo nationalism thawed considerably, perhaps in part because many high officials have lived and gone to school in the United States and most citizens have a friend or relative living up north. It is hard to reject the proposition that U.S.-Mexican relations have never been better.

Today the most urgent and immediate policy challenge for the bilateral relationship, not to mention the fate of several million de facto Mexican-Americans and their children, is immigration reform. As a former undocumented child of immigrant parents, I found this analysis particularly enlightened. The Obama administration's unprecedented and disgraceful deportation policies have been a cruel and needless blow to Mexican-American families on both sides of the border. O'Neil dispels many misconceptions that pass for knowledge about immigration's economic and social challenges. Immigration flows north have now slowed to a trickle as a function of demographics, the costs of crossing the border, and a growing Mexican economy. Still, U.S. policymakers focus their energy on deportations, walls, and border patrolling rather than other badly needed improvements.

The book argues that getting policy towards Mexico right is the most pressing and important U.S. foreign policy priority. The potential implications of China's economic slowdown, the European banking and currency fiascos, the Middle East turmoil, and the Korean Peninsula remind us that this is debatable. Mexico's real achievements underscore that the risk stemming from Mexican political and economic instability has been mitigated significantly. It is not clear what the U.S. government can or should do to support Mexican progress beyond requested technical and material assistance to aid with state capacity-building efforts, such as the Merida Initiative. The Mexican Congress and the executive would have to agree on broad outlines of a strategy for more ambitious initiatives, and these would have to be coordinated at the state and local level across party lines. This level of coordination on Mexico, except perhaps *in extremis*, is not in the cards in the short run and perhaps never will be.

O'Neil correctly notes that Mexico will do most of the heavy lifting with respect to state-building tasks. Perhaps the best that the United States can do, given domestic political constraints in both countries, is to work quietly with the Mexican government and states as opportunities manifest themselves. These two large and unwieldy federal democracies will continue to tackle challenges piecemeal and in an ad hoc manner. Each contains powerful nativist political forces that welcome walls. The main message of *Two Nations Indivisible* is that the great transformation in Mexico and U.S.-Mexican relations can be prodded constructively along if policymakers and citizens become more aware of the opportunities for deeper integration.

***Gabriel Aguilera** is Assistant Professor of International Security Studies at the Air War College, Maxwell Air Force Base, Montgomery, Alabama. He holds a PhD from the Harvard Government Department. His research focuses primarily on Latin America and international political economy. The views expressed here belong solely to the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy of the U.S. Government, Department of Defense, or the Air War College. He can be reached at Gabriel.Aguilera@us.af.mil.*

Beyond Mad Men: A Secret World War

A REVIEW BY SIMON ROMERO

The Brothers: John Foster Dulles, Allen Dulles, and Their Secret World War By Stephen Kinzer *(Times Books, 2013, 416 pp.)*

At a time when so many viewers are captivated or repelled by Mad Men's portrayal of the lascivious, liquor-drenched behavior which characterized Madison Avenue decades ago, one remarkable true story in the United States during the Cold War trumps that fictional depiction: Don Draper's behavior seems genteel compared with that of the man who ran the Central Intelligence Agency during its frenetic expansion into one of the largest espionage enterprises assembled by any nation in history.

Allen Welsh Dulles, the C.I.A.'s longest-serving director, (from 1953 to 1961), had affairs which numbered well into the dozens despite being married to the same woman for most of his adult life. He carried out some of his liaisons while he was the preeminent spymaster of the United States, overseeing operations including the overthrow of leaders in Guatemala and Iran, secret wars in Indonesia and Tibet and the spectacularly botched invasion of Cuba's Bay of Pigs in 1961.

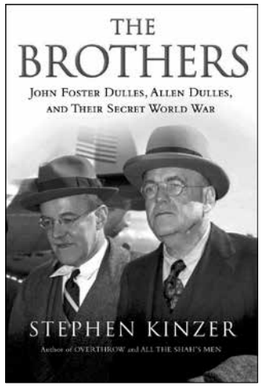
Times have changed. David Petraeus, for example, resigned as C.I.A. director in 2012 over one extramarital affair, with his biographer. Dulles maintained many of his flings without even bothering to hide them, as Stephen Kinzer documents in his new book, *The Brothers: John Foster Dulles, Allen Dulles and Their Secret World War.* Pointing to how standards for public officials have evolved, one 1958 dalliance, with Queen Frederika of Greece, was carried out in Allen's own office at C.I.A. headquarters within earshot of his aides.

Such episodes, dutifully not reported by journalists at the time, did not prevent Allen from seizing on womanizing as a weakness to exploit in others. For instance, he oversaw what may have been the C.I.A.'s first foray into pornography, a film called "Happy Days" in which an actor in a latex mask made by the agency's Technical Services Division claimed an uncanny resemblance to Sukarno, Indonesia's founding president, whom the Dulles brothers despised for not aligning himself with the West. The Sukarno lookalike was filmed in bed with a blonde actress (playing an agent of the Soviet Union!), a scene that aimed to damage the Indonesian leader's reputation. It flopped, like many of Allen's other plots meticulously described by Kinzer in a thoroughly entertaining and informative book.

Allen's older brother, John Foster Dulles, loomed even larger in 1950s Washington, when he roamed the world as Dwight D. Eisenhower's Secretary of State. The brothers were born into privilege. Their father, Allen Macy Dulles, the son of a Presbyterian missionary to India, became a theologian and pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Watertown, a bastion for New York millionaires. Their mother, Edith Foster, was the daughter of a lawyer who had served as U.S. minister to Czar Alexander II's court in St. Petersburg. The Princeton-educated brothers benefitted from a web of family connections at a time when the United States was on the rise as a superpower, but their personalities were remarkably different.

Allen was an extroverted diplomat, lawyer and partyer who spent World War I in Bern, the capital of neutral Switzerland, debriefing spies over glasses of cognac. Around the same time, Foster was an ambitious lawyer with Sullivan & Cromwell, the powerful New York law firm. He cut his teeth by representing clients with interests in Latin America, lobbying with success, for instance, for the United States Navy to send warships to Cuba to protect U.S. owners of sugar mills and railroads from protests shaking the Caribbean island. Commissioned as a captain during World War I, he worked as legal adviser for the War Trade Board, helping the Mumm Champagne Co., a German-owned concern, to avoid being seized by the U.S. government. More subdued than Allen in his personal life and something of a scold, employing a preacher's tone in his public remarks, Foster evolved into an anti-Communist zealot.

By the time Foster was appointed Secretary of State in the 1950s, he had emerged as an undiplomatic symbol of Washington's browbeating and condescending approach to enemies and allies alike. Prince Sihanouk of Cambodia called him an "acidy, arrogant man" and Winston Churchill said he was "the only case of a bull who carries his own china shop around with him." Undeterred, he floated ideas like bombing China in 1954 with nuclear weapons, only to be told that such a plan could kill between 12 million to 14 million people. Named *Time* magazine's "Man of the Year" in 1954, Dulles, a fixture of the foreign policy establishment who spoke fluent



legalese, was known to some as "the most boring man in America."

Such quips obscured the way the Dulles brothers deployed missionary zeal over the role of the United States in world affairs and made use of Cold War paranoia in their games of brinksmanship against the Soviet Union. Working with British spies, they engineered the 1953 coup toppling Mohammed Mossadegh, the Iranian prime minister who had nationalized Iran's oil industry. The brothers collaborated again on the 1954 ouster of Jacobo Arbenz, Guatemala's left-leaning democratically-elected president. At the time, the Boston-based United Fruit Company, a prominent client of Sullivan & Cromwell which had provided both Allen and Foster with legal fees over the years, felt threatened by Arbenz's ambitious land reform project. Irritated by potential diplomatic obstacles to the coup, Foster removed both the U.S. ambassador to Guatemala, Rudolf Schoenfeld, and the assistant secretary of state for inter-American affairs, John Moors Cabot, replacing them with more pliant officials. Allen, meanwhile, picked Tracy Barnes, a product of Groton, Yale and Harvard Law School, to oversee the plot's psychological warfare. The C.I.A.'s "nerve war" included death threats made to Guatemalan army officers and government officials and character-assassination warnings issued in pre-dawn telephone calls.

Predictably, Allen and Foster viewed Arbenz' overthrow as a success. But the coup reinforced a pattern of blatant disregard by some in Washington for political sovereignty in Latin America, ushering in brutal military rule in Guatemala and what Kinzer calls a "cocoon of groupthink and overconfidence" within the C.I.A., poisoning sentiment toward the United States in the region for decades. The errors of the Dulles brothers are vividly described throughout the book, offering, perhaps, a present-day warning of the unforeseen consequences of wielding American power abroad in an age when the C.I.A. has grown accustomed to carrying out so many remote-control killings in its covert drone wars. While Allen's tenure is still viewed as something of a golden age at the C.I.A., Kinzer, a former foreign correspondent for *The New York Times*, compiles the places where the C.I.A. director's covert operations produced failures, including Vietnam, Taiwan, Laos, Tibet and Iraq.

The errors of the Dulles brothers are vividly described in this highly entertaining book—perhaps a present-day warning of the consequences of wielding U.S. power abroad.

For his part, Foster, a man who thought he held moral superiority in his dealings with political leaders around the globe, saw nothing wrong in doing years of legal work on behalf of corporate clients in Nazi Germany. Kinzer, a prolific author of books about U.S. international relations, including the classic *Bitter Fruit* about the Arbenz overthrow, deftly delves into these ties.He describes how Foster wrote admiringly of Hitler, even weeping when Sullivan & Cromwell finally felt obliged to stop representing German concerns. For Allen, his biggest blunder arguably was in Cuba, when he oversaw the disastrous invasion by commandos of the island in April 1961, an effort aimed at overthrowing Fidel Castro. Poorly trained and over-budgeted, and with details about their training camps reported by Tad Szulc of *The New York Times*, the invasion force was overwhelmed by Cuba's military, producing one of the Kennedy Administration's most embarrassing episodes.

President Kennedy forced Allen to resign after that fiasco, saying, "I probably made a mistake keeping Allen Dulles." Allen shifted into after-dinner speaking, writing about espionage and editing collections of spy stories. Some of his top agents also drifted away from the agency. Before he died in 1969, the C.I.A.'s reputation was already coming under increasing strain. In one story collection, he included an excerpt from Sir Compton Mackenzie's *Water on the Brain*, a satirical 1933 novel about the British secret service's attempt to restore a king to the throne of Mendacia, a fictitious nation in southeast Europe. Mackenzie, who drew from his own experiences as a spy in wartime Greece, described how the headquarters of Britain's Directorate of Extraordinary Intelligence in London were turned into an insane asylum "for the servants of bureaucracy who have been driven mad in the service of their country."

Simon Romero *is the Brazil bureau chief for* The New York Times, *based in Rio de Janeiro. He joined* The New York Times *in 1999, and was previously the paper's Andean bureau chief, based in Caracas, and a correspondent covering the global energy industry, based in Houston. Born and raised in New Mexico, he graduated from Harvard College in 1994 with a degree in History and Literature.*

Recupera Chile

You Are the World Experts BY NED STRONG

IN FEBRUARY 2010, AN 8.8 MAGNI-tude earthquake and tsunami devastated coastal towns in Chile. Not much later, Harvard Kennedy School Professor Doug Ahlers traveled to Chile to explore how his university could assist in community recovery. DRCLAS Regional Office staff member Marcela Renteria and I accompanied Ahlers on a trip to the Bio Bio Region to meet with authorities and disaster victims disaster to determine the areas where we could be helpful. His approach has led to stunning results.

Ahlers had led teams of Harvard students and faculty in the now famous Broadmoor Project in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina. One of the world's top experts on disasters, he has provided advice on disaster recovery in places like Haiti, New Zealand and Indonesia. He focuses on the most difficult aspects of the rebuilding process: reviving local economies, reestablishing communities and integrating new built spaces. His experience has led him to novel approaches to disaster recovery.

In our first meetings in Chile two years ago we invited entire communities to meet in Dichato, Cobquecura and Perales, three towns where badly needed assistance was needed. Ahlers' opening remarks in the first meeting in Cobquecura are indicative of his approach.

"You are the world experts about Cobquecura, tell us how we can help," he said.

The reaction of the communities was enthusiastic. They had been accustomed to international organizations telling them what was needed. They were finally being asked.

There was an immediate need to generate employment opportunities. The breakdown of the local economies caused by the disaster erased most means of livelihood. For example, in Perales, a family that depended on its lone cow—dead in the tsunami—for the sale of milk to its neighbors had no resources to buy a new one. In Dichato, the local entrepreneur who managed a newsstand had no working capital to replace it and pay for the publications lost in the tsunami. The owner of a small market saw her store smashed by the earthquake.

Unemployment combined with inadequate temporary and overly crowded living spaces in the refugee camps led to severe community dysfunction— violence, alcoholism and psychological problems, especially among children. Formerly picturesque coastal towns of houses built with adobe were in ruins, eliminating the normal tourist trade.

Based on our first meetings, and help from a number of experts in Chile, including several Harvard alumni, a plan took shape. By January 2012, Doug was leading a team of faculty and students to the area to begin the program. Students worked in teams in the three communities helping to build business plans, awarding 40 business development grants. Through these efforts, additional local entrepreneurs received working capital from a special fund set up by the Chilean government. Judy Palfrey, the Master of Adams House and former president of the American Society of Pediatrics, began a comprehensive program of child mental and physical health with colleagues at Universidad de Concepción. MIT professor Miho Mazereeuw set the stage for introducing new technologies in adobe construction to revive spaces attractive for tourists as well as people from the community.

Two years have passed by now, and the program has contributed enormously to the recovery of these three towns. Families have been able to return to work, children are receiving professional help, teachers in the local schools are being trained, entrepreneurs are starting new businesses, small-scale farming is returning, and construction plans are in place. Looking toward the future, plans include re-establishing shellfish beds that had been wiped out by the tsunami, and encouraging tourism with added attractions such as ATM machines, free Internet, and even a microbrewery.

Doug Ahler's statement, that the communities themselves are the world experts on their own towns, has been the blueprint for the program, resulting in success after success as people advance with the right kind of outside assistance.

***Ned Strong** is the director of the DRCLAS Regional Office in Santiago de Chile. For more information, visit:* http://www.recuperachile.cl/

ARTIST CREDIT NAME AND URL

HARVARD UNIVERSITY
David Rockefeller Center
for Latin American Studies
1730 Cambridge St., Cambridge, MA 02138

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CONTRIBUTORS

92 Gabriel Aguilera, Harvard PhD in Government, is Assistant Professor of International Security Studies at the Air War College, Maxwell Air Force Base, Montgomery, Alabama. **12 Marjorie Agosín** is Luella LaMer Slaner Professor in Latin American Studies and Professor of Spanish at Wellesley College. **62 Laura Barragán Montaña**, Harvard Graduate School of Education '13, is the founder and CEO of Historical Footprints in Bogotá, Colombia. **64 Michelle J. Bellino** is completing her doctoral studies at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. **24 Ana María Bidegaín**, a 2003-04 Visiting Professor at the Center for Women in Religion at Harvard Divinity School, is the research director of FIU's Latin American and Caribbean Studies Center. **67 Daniel Castro** is director of two historical museums of the Ministry of Culture of Colombia. **42 Robert J. Cox**, Nieman Fellow 1981, was the editor of the *Buenos Aires Herald* from 1968-1979. **2 Merilee Grindle** is the director of the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies (DRCLAS).**90 Laura Jaramillo-Bernal**, Harvard College 2011, is a writer and producer for Efecto Naím in Washington DC. **76 Iván Jaksic**, a 1997 DRCLAS Visiting Scholar, is director of the Stanford University Program in Santiago. **27 Julieta Lemaitre** (SJD '07) is Associate Professor at Universidad de los Andes' Law School. **74 Mary Jo McConahay** is the author of *Maya Roads, One Woman's Journey Among the People of the Rainfores*t. **85 Pablo Corral Vega**, a 2011 Nieman Fellow, is the founder of nuestramirada.org, the largest photojournalist network in Latin America. **15 Juan Mandelbaum** is an Argentine documentary filmmaker living in the United States. **83 Paula Molina** is a Chilean journalist, Harvard Nieman Fellow 2013. **79 Jedrek Mularski,** Harvard Graduate School of Education 2004, is an Assistant Professor of History at Saddleback College. **72 Marysa Navarro**, DRCLAS Resident Scholar, is the Charles and Elfriede Collis Professorof History Emerita at Dartmouth College. **30 Francisco Ortega**, a Visiting Scholar in Harvard's Department of Romance Languages and Literatures from 1995 to 1999, is an Associate Professor of History at the National University of Colombia, Bogotá. **38 J. Luke Pizzato**, a Harvard College sophomore, worked at the Center for Memory, Peace and Reconciliation through the DRCLAS summer internship program in Colombia. **94 Simon Romero**, a graduate of Harvard College in History and Literature, is the Brazil bureau chief for *The New York Times.* **67 Camilo Sánchez** is the museological advisor of the Museo de la Independencia-Casa del Florero and the Casa Museo Quinta de Bolívar in Bogotá. **56 Doris Sommer** is the Ira Jewell Williams Professor of Romance Languages and Literatures at Harvard University. **96 Ned Strong** is the director of the DRCLAS Regional Office, based in Santiago de Chile. **52 Juan O. Tamayo**, Nieman '90, covered Central America and the Andean region for the *Miami Herald*. **18 María Victoria Uribe** is an anthropologist at the Universidad del Rosario in Bogotá, Colombia. **88 Gary Urton** is Dumbarton Oaks Professor of Pre-Columbian Studies and Chairman of the Department of Anthropology at Harvard University. **20 Paolo Vignolo**, 2013 DRCLAS Visiting Scholar, is Associate Professor at the Center of Social Studies of the National University of Colombia, Bogotá. **86 Jocelyn Viterna** is Associate Professor of Sociology at Harvard University. **44 Scott Wallace** is the author of *The Unconquered: In Search of the Amazon's Last Uncontacted Tribes*. **8 Kirsten Weld** is Assistant Professor of History at Harvard University. **58 Pamela Yates** is a documentary film director. **36 Maite Yie Garzón** is a professor of anthropology at the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana in Bogotá, Colombia.

With Featured Photography by **Marcos Adandia, Gustavo Germano, Mary Jo McConahay, Sylvia Percovich, Scott Wallace** and Special Thanks to: **Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos, Chile** and **Centro de Memoría Histórico, Bogotá, Colombia.**