

Ouachita Baptist University

## Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita

---

Honors Theses

Carl Goodson Honors Program

---

2015

### Uncovering the Truth About Argentina's Dirty War

Macy Fouse

*Ouachita Baptist University*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarlycommons.obu.edu/honors\\_theses](https://scholarlycommons.obu.edu/honors_theses)



Part of the [Cultural History Commons](#), [Film and Media Studies Commons](#), [International and Area Studies Commons](#), [Islamic World and Near East History Commons](#), and the [Peace and Conflict Studies Commons](#)

---

#### Recommended Citation

Fouse, Macy, "Uncovering the Truth About Argentina's Dirty War" (2015). *Honors Theses*. 176.  
[https://scholarlycommons.obu.edu/honors\\_theses/176](https://scholarlycommons.obu.edu/honors_theses/176)

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Carl Goodson Honors Program at Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita. For more information, please contact [mortensona@obu.edu](mailto:mortensona@obu.edu).

Uncovering the Truth About Argentina's Dirty War

Macy Fouse

Honors Thesis  
Spring 2015

## introduction

Major historical events that blatantly defy human rights are typically common knowledge and recognized by most historians. For instance, everyone knows about the Holocaust. Even smaller-scale massacres, like Tiananmen Square, are included in most history textbooks. The Dirty War of Argentina, a brutal seven-year ordeal that violated the basic human rights of thousands of people, is not usually an era discussed by history textbooks. The society of Argentina is still healing from the effects of this war, but how can they be expected to heal when history will not even acknowledge their past or their pain?

While commonly referred to as the “Dirty War,” this event was not actually a “war” at all. A war generally infers two combatting sides, typically of equal advantages and equal power. The Dirty War of Argentina is more accurately called genocide, killing an estimated 30,000 people and deeply affecting many more. This dark past has scarred the lives of Argentines of the last four decades, and the depth of these wounds are portrayed in popular culture, particularly the 1985 film *La Historia Oficial (The Official Story)* and the 2003 documentary *Los rubios (The Blonds)*. With the help of Martin Edwin Andersen’s historical accounts in *Dossier Secreto*, analyzing these films within their context is possible. The depiction of each of these works helps one put into perspective the truth of what happened during the Dirty War, realize the painful effects it has had on Argentine society, and assess how these films assisted in the healing process for the culture as a whole.

## the beginning

For decades Argentina had both politically and economically unstable, particularly beginning in 1955 with the forced exile of President Juan Perón by the country's military branches ("Argentina's History..."). The military ruled the country once again in 1966 when Juan Carlos Onganía seized power. Although Perón returned to rule in 1973, he was succeeded by his wife Isabel after his death in 1974. Not much later, Jorge Videla took advantage of the country's chaos and instated yet another military dictatorship in 1976 via coup d'état ("Argentina's History...").

Jorge Videla, a longtime military officer, was named general commander of the army by Isabel Perón in 1975 ("Jorge Rafael Videla"). With the help of the heads of the air force and navy, Videla ousted Perón. The country welcomed the overthrow, however, because of recent attacks from death squads and guerilla groups—Argentina had hopes that the military junta would end the violence. Argentina's economy had also been in a state of incredible inflation, and many believed Videla's rule would remedy the situation ("Jorge Rafael Videla"). Instead, though, Videla instated the "Process of National Reorganization" which aimed to reform the whole of Argentine society to conform to the regime's conservative, militarized, Catholic-focused ideologies.

This "process," which in theory should have targeted dangerous guerilla activity, actually waged war on left-wing activists because they were perceived as terrorists ("Argentina's History..."). The dictatorship pursued mostly civilians, including "thinkers, professors, writers, and any politically-inclined people" who

were thought to disagree (Andersen). These political subversives, as they are often labeled, were taken into custody and denied even the most basic human rights (“Argentina’s History...”). These victims became the *desaparecidos*.

## los desaparecidos

The term *desaparecidos*, or “disappeared” refers to those that were kidnapped, detained, tortured, and eventually killed by the military dictatorship. Modeled after Hitler’s methods in Europe, the military “practiced a forced disappearance of people that was systematic, massive, and clandestine” (Andersen 205). Most prisoners never even saw a judge or faced a fair trial. The victims were taken to one of over 340 detention centers called *Lugares de Reunión de Detenidos* (Places for the Meeting of Detainees). The military government continued to deny the camps’ existence, and even after his rule, Videla claimed in court that he “never knew of procedures that took place outside legal norms, nor the detention of people in clandestine places...There was a sort of generalized rumor spread mostly from outside the country” (Andersen 206). The military personnel responsible for torturing the prisoners in the camps were often holders of special intelligence clearance in the hierarchy, indicating just how involved the government was involved in this vicious organization. The camps were often built in old military bases, but “it was the nonmilitary sites that best captured the impunity with which the military regime operated” (Andersen 210). These sites ranged from old schools and hospitals to former government offices and historical sites, even including the seized homes of the prisoners.

Five principal concentration camps served as the foundation of the entire system: Vesubio, Campo de Mayo, Navy Mechanics School, Club Atlético, and La Perla. These camps went through 14,500 prisoners collectively. Although operating with varying protocols, the goal was the same: to destroy and eliminate every subversive.

Vesubio, named after the volcano Mount Vesuvius which destroyed the Napoli town of Pompeii, got its name from military men that joked that the prodigious black smoke over the camp was visible from afar. The smoke, in fact, was produced by the incineration of corpses mixed with tires (Andersen 205). This location had been used for illegal cruelty since before the coup and served as base for devious military groups. The walls in Vesubio were painted with swastikas, and the Jewish prisoners were tortured most intensely (Andersen 210).

Campo de Mayo once served as the country's most significant army base. The prisoners at this site were chained in locked sheds with hoods over their heads, prohibited from talking or moving as they sat on the ground, forbidden to shift to a more comfortable position for fourteen hours per day. The punishment in Campo de Mayo was not restricted to men and women—even the worst forms of torture were performed on the children and elderly. One of these methods involved a powerful electrical rod that emitted long and intense shocks every three seconds administered during interrogations. Campo de Mayo also served as the transportation base for aircrafts that moved detainees or disposed of them.

The Navy Mechanics School camp held more than 5,000 prisoners over the span of the war. The officers slept on the first two floors, and the prisoners stayed

on the third floor and attic, subject to extreme temperatures of frigid winters and intense summers. The sadistic officers resorted to creative and merciless methods of torture, including the mutilation of genitals with razor blades or hungry rats eating their bodies alive. In one interrogation tool, one prisoner was even forced to witness his newborn baby being afflicted with electric cattle prods (Andersen 211).

Club Atlético was located in the nation's capital, previously given the official name *Central Antisubversiva*, or Anti-subversive Center. The prisoners were kept in the basement of the old building without any ventilation or light with their lives at the mercy of their "two psychotic interrogators" (Andersen 212). Loud music played at night to drown out the screams of those being tortured, and several bodies hung from the ceiling. If the prisoners survived interrogation, they were forced to stay in small, suffocating cells without light or ventilation called the Tubes; "it was a netherworld in which prisoners tried to adapt without going insane," writes Andersen. A young female prisoner of this camp recalls that they electrically shocked her entire body, especially her eyes, genitals, breasts, and eyelids: "In those moments...the only thing I wanted to do was die" (Andersen 212).

The final of the five main camps was La Perla, which was also known as "the University." The principal overlord of La Perla harbored extreme right wing, nationalist sentiments, and his several subordinates that helped run the camp were known for their openly Nazi beliefs. The officers of La Perla were joined with their superiors as members in a "secret lodge," part of a larger military organization across the nation. Uniquely, this group wanted to eliminate their opponents in addition to conspiring against the national military dictatorship rule, accusing them

of supporting, in their opinions, economics that encouraged “colonial domination.” To ensure their silence, these officers were made to partake in a “blood pact” (Andersen 212).

Despite the minor differences in the camps, all of them had a common theme of extreme methods of torturous interrogation. The previous instances of torture are just minor examples of the cruelty the military was capable of. The interiors of the camps, including their layouts and daily routines, gave the impression that their purpose “went beyond the physical elimination of their captives...They sought to destroy and prisoner’s identity, to alter his concept of time and space” (Andersen 209). The different experiments of torture were designed to cause pain, collapse, a breakdown of resistance, fear, and humiliation—“beyond the limits of imagination itself” in order to reduce to prisoner to a primal, animalistic state (Andersen 209; 213). One officer went so far as to claim ownership of one prisoner who he tied to a dog chain: “I used to take him into the patio and walk him around on all fours, making him bark. One day he didn’t want to, so I shot him in the head” (Andersen 209).

The most common acts of aggression the prisoners faced included physical blows by fists, sticks, or feet, or boxing their ears with both hands repeatedly in order to burst their eardrums. Karate was often used to torture and kill prisoners, and new torturers would practice their lethal martial arts on detainees that were hooded. Captives would also be hung, with hands and feet bound, while their subjugators beat them or shocked them. Similar to tactics used today by the US in Guantanamo Bay, prisoners were often drowned, as their heads were placed into



tanks of dirty water or human waste. One prisoner, who had lost both of his legs and used a wheelchair, was forced to drag himself to the bathroom while guards beat him. Others were blindfolded for so long they developed painful eyesores in the harsh heat of the summer (Andersen 212).

Another style of physical torture included brutal sexual torture. Many female prisoners were often raped by officers, and most prisoners were subjected to little clothing or complete nudity. Even children and pregnant women were sexually tortured in a common practice of using an electric metallic rod to rape them (Andersen 213).

Aside from the physical torture, psychological torture was also inflicted upon the prisoners. The officers often simulated firing squads to cause unnatural stress levels resulting in psychological damage. Detainees were also forced to watch or read about their families' deaths. Prisoners were constantly humiliated and often became depressed or even insane (Andersen 213). They lived in continual fear and torture, constantly aware of their impending death.

The disposal of prisoners' bodies also attempted to erase any evidence of the crimes. The majority of the bodies were either buried in mass graves or incinerated with old tires and gas oil, which assisted in hiding all traces of the bodies and masked the smell. Countless prisoners were thrown into the oceans from aircrafts, often still alive. . The "transfer" days, as prisoners called them, included detainees being called by number, led to a series of white buildings, and taken to a nursing station in the basement where they were injected with a tranquilizer. Their bodies were loaded into trucks, taken to the airport, and loaded onto planes where they

were thrown out alive into the open sea by officers that joked, “Now the fish will have something to eat” (Andersen 209). One prisoner of La Perla reported that the “prisoners were tormented by that uncertain and mysterious future” of not knowing what happens when detainees were “transferred” (Andersen 206). When these scared prisoners asked guards about their fate, the responses were all different, and all lies.

Other methods of “transferring” included execution via firing squad as the prisoners, hands tied behind their backs and blindfolded, were already kneeled in front of their own graves. Their cadavers were then doused with gas and burned. Eventually, though, many of the bodies were dug up. One lieutenant revealed that since some prisoners’ documents were discovered in the graves, the bodies and any other evidence were placed “into barrels of lime to make them disappear without a trace” (Andersen 207). The military was commanded to destroy all forms of documentation to eradicate any evidence of crimes. These mass graves, however, later proved to the rest of the world that there were, indeed, *desaparecidos*, as there were over 200 large, clandestine burial sites discovered in the Buenos Aires province alone (Andersen 207).

Earlier in the genocide, when bodies began to wash ashore along coasts and rivers, the situation became intolerable. Several cadavers were found in Uruguayan waters, some bearing deep cuts, some missing limbs, and most missing fingernails and toenails. The body of an adolescent boy was found with bound hands and feet, a broken neck, and signs of rape and murder by rectal impalement, giving him severe lacerations and internal bleeding. This child and his mother had been kidnapped

and held hostage until his father, a labor activist, was captured. These “floaters” even washed up in a luxurious beach resort, where upper class Argentines complained that the bodies were spoiling their vacation (Andersen 208).

As evidenced by these methods of disposal, the military went to great lengths to ensure the victims’ bodies were never discovered. Even military personnel had relatives that were kidnapped and killed, and they were not granted any special privileges. One former military president made accusations against a police official for delaying the identification of his cousin’s body, which was found in a river delta. The police replied, “Don’t forget...that you people have thrown more than 8,000 bodies in the river. How do you expect us to recognize each one?” The bodies found were never returned to their families for proper burial; they were only given death certificates. As one colonel told an angry father, “Bodies don’t get handed over” (Andersen 209).

## a society in the dark

The military dictatorship of Argentina did its best to create a “society of fear.” In fact, fear was the primary weapon utilized in the efforts to “seize, purge, and remold Argentina” (Andersen 214). In the aftermath of the coup, aggressive and armed soldiers began to occupy and patrol peaceful neighborhoods without reason, randomly checking documents and making indiscriminate arrests. Civilians lived in a constant state of insecurity and anxiety as the daily news brought forth information about clashes between security forces and guerilla groups. Aside from the unwelcome intrusions by the military, civilian life remained eerily calm,

interrupted only by the collisions that occurred “along deserted roadsides in the hours of the evening” (Andersen 214).

Under the tyranny of the military, the media was hushed and the legal system became a mere semblance, even as death and torture without trial reached extreme proportions. Beginning in 1976, the media received instructions from the press secretariat strictly prohibiting any “reference, information, or comment about subversive episodes, the finding of bodies, kidnappings, disappearances, the death of seditious elements and the assassinations of military men.” The junta’s press policy called for up to ten years imprisonment for anyone that utilizes the press to publish or expose news or images that damages “the reputation of the activities of the armed forces, security forces, the police” (Andersen 216). Because of these gags, countless members of the media actually *contributed* to the “disinformation campaign launched by the armed forces” (Andersen 215). Andersen asserts that the country’s political and religious leaders were totally aware of what was occurring in the country, and like the press, the failure to do their job only increased the public’s ignorance and misinformation. Since the country’s history had never seen anything so forceful or divisive as Videla’s military regime, the population mostly discounted any rumors of concentration camps or mass executions. Society either remained silent and compliant or, in their naïveté, became mindless sympathizers of the reorganization cause (Andersen 215).

## the light at the end of the tunnel

Near the end of Videla's reign, various human rights campaigns and organizations, especially from the United States, began to intervene. Additionally, the Argentine defeat against Great Britain in the battle for the Falkland Islands led to the fall of the military dictatorship ("Argentina's History..."). A forty-five-minute "final report" of the war was televised, reporting that all those who were not in exile or in hiding were presumed dead. Not only did the report fail to fully explain the state of the missing, but it also claimed that the drastic security forces were totally necessary in combatting the guerilla's actions. Furthermore, the documentary unapologetically showed scenes of chaotic protests, destruction, and mutilated bodies with a voice-over complete with an unrepentant tone. The announcer even claimed that the country had been "besieged by a huge and hidden army who...had infiltrated every area of national life" (Andersen 303). When Videla was finally defeated, a long-time opponent of the military and member of a human rights organization Raul Alfonsín was elected president of Argentina (Andersen 304).

To help the country recover from these national wounds, Alfonsín prosecuted the major members of the military, including the trio that ruled the junta. He also repealed a law that granted amnesty to people guilty of crimes or human rights violations during the Dirty War. Hundreds of military personnel were prosecuted as well ("Dirty War"). In his efforts to promote national peace and democracy, Alfonsín initiated the National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons, which, as the name states, investigated missing persons. Despite the good intentions, this commission proved largely ineffective due to incorrect data

collection. By preventing any pertinent lawsuits and keeping records top secret, the government continues to conceal the whole truth of the past (“Argentina’s History...”).

### *la historia oficial*

Luis Puenzo’s 1985 film *La historia oficial* (*The Official Story*) was released a mere two years after the end of the Dirty War. Rather than focusing on the victim’s of the junta, the film follows Alicia, who has gained a child as a result of the war. This interesting perspective reveals the point-of-view held by most upper-class civilians during the controversial years.

Alicia, a history teacher and wife of a corrupt but rich businessman, begins completely oblivious to the horrors occurring right under her nose. She is seemingly content in her ignorance, even when it comes to the origin of her adopted five-year-old daughter, Gaby. Unable to have children, Alicia asks no questions when her husband brings home a baby for them with no adoption papers or official documentation, as her husband tells a colleague, “She doesn’t care if we got Gaby from the stork or some gypsies” (*La historia oficial*). A visit from an old friend Ana, who has endured the camps and vividly recounts her experience, awakens somewhat of an awareness inside Alicia as she slowly realizes she has not been told the truth.

Through various scenes in her classroom, at confession, at upper-class gatherings, and interactions with a co-worker, Alicia’s curiosity and thirst for truth continues to increase. In her various investigations, “Alicia learns too much, and

comes to know her society as she had never imagined it" (Goodman). She is especially inquisitive about Gaby's parents, as she suspects Gaby was illegally taken from a camp where her parents were held and killed. Eventually her searches lead to find a woman who is potentially Gaby's grandmother, who is part of the picketing "Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo." Alicia is deeply emotional and conflicted, as she obviously sympathizes with this woman, but she loves her daughter too much to give her to her rightful grandmother. Additionally, Alicia continually attempts to talk to her husband Roberto about it, but he becomes angry and refuses to answer her questions, keeping the dark truth he knows from his wife. In the intense final scene, Alicia and Roberto have their once and final battle, with completely uninhibited emotions, and Alicia decides to leave after giving Roberto one last embrace.

The first major instance of Alicia's quest to awareness is the visit from her old best friend Ana. Ana, who was formerly married to a subversive, was detained and tortured in a camp in order to find out where her ex-husband was. Ana first tells about how she was kidnapped: "They stormed in, threw a sweater over my head and destroyed everything" (*La historia oficial*). She reveals she was hit with a rifle before waking up nude on a table as they tortured her. Evidence of her psychological torture can be seen when she states, "I almost lost all sense of time. I felt something inside me was broken. I still wake up feeling I'm being drowned" (*La historia oficial*). During interrogation they electrically prodded and drowned her. Ana mentions that pregnant women in the camps had their babies taken, visibly upsetting Alicia, especially with the statement, "Their babies went to families who buy them without asking questions" (*La historia oficial*).

The unexpected and shocking account of Ana's experience jolt Alicia's conscience, as Ana is still suffering from her time in captivity: "After seven years, I'm still drowning" (*La historia oficial*). Despite Ana's experience with the *desaparecidos*, she is unwilling to assist in Alicia's search for Gaby's parents in fear of being found out and taken again.

Several scenes in Alicia's classroom show her students challenging her version of history, as she continues to claim that written text is the "official story" and nothing else can be proven. In a pivotal scene, one student shouts, "There's no proof because history's written by assassins!" (*La historia oficial*). In the following scenes, Alicia has clearly loosened up in regards to her strict historical beliefs. She also has several informal meetings with a fellow instructor at the school who reveals he was unceremoniously removed from his last teaching job: "They visited me in my absence, and shredded every paper I had" because, he jests sarcastically, "I'm dangerous" (*La historia oficial*). Implying that he had leftist beliefs, he came to his current job in order to lay low. The following scene is of Alicia walking in the plaza as the protestors sing a grave song about the country's corruption, and the audience watches as the words sink in and Alicia's perspective begins to shift.

These scenes are also punctuated with conversations between Alicia and Roberto as she implores the truth from him. She finally states her theory out loud ("Maybe she didn't even know her child was being taken away.") and he becomes both angry and dismissive (*La historia oficial*). He indicates that they previously agreed to never talk about it and treats her serious questions flippantly in order to avoid revealing to her that he knows the truth. Unwilling to drop her pursuits, Alicia



inquires Roberto's brother about the "missing babies," but she only discovers more truth in her individual pursuits.

If Roberto's venality was not apparent before, a quick yet intense scene in his office space does much to reveal the shadiness of Roberto's business and colleagues. An angry citizen is demanding to see Roberto's boss because he does not want to go to jail. After countless attempts to dismiss this man, the men finally acquiesce his request. Seconds later the man is briefly seen through a cracked door being held down and choked by one of Roberto's colleagues. Roberto's character is further exposed when he and Alicia are visiting Roberto's family. His father, a devoted opponent of the right-wing military regime, openly accuses Roberto of being one of the corrupt, since "the whole country's collapsed" except for his eldest son (*La historia oficial*). Roberto becomes enraged, spouting hurtful insults at his father and brother, suggesting they are poor because they are "losers" due to their political and societal standings.

In one scene, Alicia is seen confessing to a priest, admitting, "I always believed what anyone told me. But now I can't" (*La historia oficial*). Throughout the terse replies of the priest, Alicia realizes that he knows the truth about Gaby and the rest of the controversy. The priest, however, ignores her questions and leaves, depicting Andersen's assertion that the religious leaders of the nation knew the truth but continued to keep society in ignorance.

In the final scenes, Alicia arranges to introduce Roberto to Gaby's possible grandmother. Predictably, Roberto is furious at Alicia's relentless pursuit of fact, but he hides the real reason for his anger behind a façade of incredulity and hypothetical

questions, like “Do you want to get rid of the girl?” He receives her honest inquiries as loaded accusations, finally asking the indicative hypothetical question, “What am I? A torturer?” He quickly answers his own question when he grabs Alicia’s head and proceeds to slam it against the wall several times before smashing her fingers in the door. Alicia gathers her things, embraces Roberto one last time, and leaves, proving to him that power and force cannot hide the truth forever. The embrace “signals not reconciliation but resignation to their now separate fates,” even though the audience is not privy to these fates (Goodman). Roberto is left standing and crying while Gaby sings her lullaby to him over the phone.

*La historia oficial* depicts an unexpected side of the Dirty War. Puenzo’s decision to focus on a privileged family, seemingly exempt from the hardships the war caused, only further reveals the depth of the wounds caused by the turmoil of the time. Not only were lower-class citizens affected, but this high-class family was also deeply marked. Not only were political leftists’ or the subversives’ families torn apart, but even this rich family was destroyed. Roberto, who had at first prospered so much, finally became the victim of his own underhanded business. In this film, Puenzo reassures the Argentine society that *everyones’* lives were somehow disturbed by the war. *La historia oficial* aims to create a sense of solidarity among Argentines, suggesting that no specific group has been exempt from this national tragedy. In both the suffering of the past and the restoration of the future, Argentina is a united people.

## *los rubios*

Albertina Carri's 2003 documentary *Los rubios* (The Blonds) follows Carri herself and her film crew as she searches for the truth about her parents, who are called *los rubios* throughout the film. This film is a stark contrast from *La historia oficial*; the only characteristic the two movies share is their topic of the *desaparecidos* and the Dirty War. When Carri was four years old in 1977, her parents disappeared with no explanation as victims of the military junta. Unlike *La historia oficial*, *Los rubios* is Carri's personal story written by her, directed by her, and filmed by her. The narrative is a mix of behind-the-scenes candidness, interviews with people, reenactments by an actress portraying Carri, and stop-motion dolls that come together sort through her memories and facts as both the audience and Albertina Carri investigate her parents' lives.

The film opens as the actress playing the role of Albertina reads a quote from a book by Isidro Velázquez:

The population are the masses, a school of fish, gregarious, indifferent to social issues, obedient to power. Inactive in the face of evil.

Resigned to their pain. But even in this routine state of dispersion, subdued, in the spirit of the masses, there is a profound feeling of a collective past. Injury and injustice make resentment fester, emotions churn, until one day in a quarrel, like a lit fuse they explode into passion. The crowd becomes the people. The flock, a collective being. Egotism, personal interest, the worries of individuals disappear.

Individual will melts away and becomes the will of the collective.

This quote reveals Carri's personal sentiments about the war and Argentina's past as well as the current state of society. The society of Argentina begins as indifferent individuals, but their sufferings cause their passivity to evolve into a common passion, which reunites them once again. After the Dirty War, Argentines needed to feel a sense of unity again in order to heal from their painful past and feel connected once more. Carri intended for this film to be a stepping-stone that assisted in the sense of closure and healing Argentina needed.

Carri has two older sisters, whose memories Albertina relies on to remember anything about her time with her own parents, including their eventual abduction. Other than their memories and her own vague recollections, Carri must rely on outside sources to discover what the truth is. These children, *all* children of the *desaparecidos*, continue "building their lives from horrible memories" and "want to play a leading role in a history that they're not part of" (*Los rubios*). Carri is driven by not only an unadulterated desire to know the truth, but these lines of narration reveal the struggle of identity she and the other children face. Without parents, one is already inhibited in forming a personal identity, but growing up in such a state of confusion must have complicated the process even more: "To develop yourself without the one who gave you life becomes an obsession, at odds with daily life, disheartening" (*Los rubios*).

Carri and her crew interviewed the neighbors who might have remembered something about the family or the events of the time. One neighbor remembered playing and keeping the sisters when they were small children, but she could not remember much more, barely being able to recall their names. Another neighbor

could not specifically remember the family, but she could recall their presence in the neighborhood: “At night there were soldiers everywhere...On the roof...They had the whole place searched. Everything. They loaded two trucks with what they confiscated” (*Los rubios*).

The woman continued to describe a scene in which the couple, Carri’s parents, attempted to escape from the kidnappers, remembering that Carri’s father “jumped on the roof and escaped to another house. When they got him they burned his face with cigarettes” (*Los rubios*). Additionally, she recounts one of the most monumental moments of Carri’s life: “And then a judge took the girls away. They were three blonde girls” (*Los rubios*). Upon hearing this account, Carri likely felt less alone in this devastating experience knowing that someone else outside of her sisters remembers it. The woman’s reports validated the Carri sisters’ memories as truth; Albertina probably felt less polarized as she found out this woman shares in her memory and her past.

Carri found a photographer whose work she admired who happened to have been held in the same camp as Carri’s parents. While she refused to be interviewed on camera, she provided Carri with insights into her parents’ personas by short anecdotes: “She told me my mother was often very frightened, so he would make jokes so she wouldn’t be afraid” (*Los rubios*). The photographer also told of an officer at the camp that would transport letters to and from her parents from outside the camp; this guard would still torture them, though: “The letter carrier was the guy who later shot them, apparently” (*Los rubios*). Friends and comrades of

Carri's parents were also interviewed, which provided her with more characteristics of her parents, the grounds on which to build her personal identity.

However much progress the film made, the national board Carri submitted the idea to rejected its potential on the basis of inaccurate memories, interpretation of harmful facts, and lack of proper documents. Despite the board's rejection, Albertina was determined to make this movie as a way to cope with the pain she still felt. This outlet for her pain, and thus many other children with the same story that may have identified with her, provided a gateway for healing where none existed before.

## conclusion

At this point, it is quite obvious that Argentina as a nation has suffered immense pain as a result of the Dirty War, leaving national wounds that have persisted since the early 1980's. Despite the scars still inflicting the society today, these films have aided in part of binding up the wounds and processing the pain in a healthy and cathartic way. These films have attempted to make sense of the past and encourage society to grow from it, and most importantly, to heal as a unified nation.

Works Cited

- Andersen, Martin Edwin. *Dossier Secreto: Argentina's Desaparecidos and the Myth of the "Dirty War"*. Boulder: Westview, 1993. Print.
- "Argentina's History and The Dirty War." *Madres De Plaza De Mayo*. N.p., 30 Sept. 2012. Web. 13 Feb. 2015.
- "Dirty War." *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*. Encyclopedia Britannica, 19 Mar. 2014. Web. 20 Apr. 2015.
- Goodman, Walter. "Argentine Love and Loss|Movie Review." *NYTimes.com*. The New York Times, 8 Nov. 1985. Web. 16 Feb. 2015.
- "Jorge Rafaél Videla." *Bio*. A&E Television Networks, 2015. Web. 23 Mar. 2015.
- La historia oficial*. Dir. Luis Puenzo. Perf. Hector Alterio and Norma Aleandro. Almi Pictures, 1985.
- Los rubios*. Dir. Albertina Carri. Primer Plano Film Group, 2003.