

**THE COLLECTIVE TRAUMA STORY: PERSONAL MEANING AND THE
RECOLLECTION OF TRAUMATIC MEMORIES IN VANCOUVER'S
CHILEAN COMMUNITY**

By

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

In

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

(Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology and Special Education)

We accept this thesis as confirming
To the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
April, 2002

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Date APRIL 26, 2002

ABSTRACT

The subject of recollection of traumatic collective memories resulting from a single, unexpected event is still a new phenomenon in the trauma-related literature, especially in the context of exiled political refugees. The focus of this research is to explore the nexus between Chilean exiles' personal meanings of Pinochet's unexpected arrest and release in England, and the construction of group memories of traumatic life experiences triggered by these events.

To access the individual and collective meaning experiences of the members of this community, this study used narrative inquiry. The participants created individual narratives of these events, and they shared them in a group format. Through sharing these experiences in a group setting, the participants created a "cultural group narrative." This embodied their individual and collective experiences, their lived experiences of exile, their adaptation to a new culture and their re-experiencing of traumatic memories and life events when hearing the news of Pinochet. Because the researcher is also Chilean and because Latin American culture is collective in nature, she played a dual role as both investigator and participant.

This study has several implications for counselling practice, education and supervision. It provides further knowledge and understanding of the historical, political and cultural issues related to traumatic experiences in both individuals and groups, as well as further understanding of the events or situations that trigger the re-appearance of traumatic memories. The results of this research also provide important information for therapists working in the areas of cross-cultural counselling and the development and improvement of therapeutic approaches for dealing with traumatic memories among political refugees and immigrant populations.

In a broader context, this study enhances the understanding of similar processes in other ethnic communities. Finally, this study contributes to the documentation of the collective trauma processes of the Chilean community in Vancouver, Canada.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

On October 16, 1998, the news of Augusto Pinochet's arrest in London, in response to an extradition order from Spain, spread throughout the world. As a Chilean-Canadian, my emotions fluctuated from surprise to intense happiness and then to sadness. The images of tanks entering Santiago, the presidential palace in flames, and the military with machine guns came to my mind once again. I also remembered the bombings, the panic in people's faces, the noise of the helicopters, and the countless atrocities of the military at the time of the coup and in the years that followed. However, I also experienced a feeling of hope for justice and a sense of validation that the horrors we lived through as individuals and as a society during the dictatorship were finally being recognized and acknowledged publicly in the eyes of the world. This gamut of conflicting feelings was shared by many Chileans in our community.

During the weeks that followed Pinochet's arrest and in response to a specific request from the lawyers handling his prosecution in London, Chileans in exile around the world submitted testimonies of their experiences of torture and imprisonment in Chile in 1973-74. In Vancouver, during a very intense week, I assisted members of the community in collecting testimonies of those who had suffered imprisonment and torture. This experience led to the re-awakening of traumatic individual and collective memories for all of us involved.

Over a year later, on March 2, 2000 the legal prosecution of Augusto Pinochet in London took an unexpected turn when the British Government freed him, arguing that he was mentally unfit to stand trial on charges of human rights abuses. The following day he was flown back to Chile after spending almost 16 months under house arrest. The news of his release and the end of his imprisonment had a deep impact on my Chilean friends and on me. Instead of the joy and the expectation of international validation that I experienced after his arrest, I now felt we had

been misled; a strong sense of betrayal and anger took over. Our confidence in the possibilities of justice, which came from the international support that his prosecution had attracted around the world, now felt misplaced. Instead, international, economic and political pressures and a series of appeals and legal maneuvers had ended in Pinochet's release on order of the British Prime Minister.

The period marked by Pinochet's arrest and his release had a profound impact on people both in Chile and abroad. What I experienced myself and what I observed in my friends and fellow compatriots after hearing this news was a process of re-victimization. During the time of his imprisonment, every social gathering was a venue to talk about him, sometimes with joy, sometimes with anger. Iwona Irwin-Zarecka (1994) developed the concept of *communities of memories* to define "a group of people who share a sense of bonding and who get together because of a shared experience in an attempt to find meaning of a particular event." (p.47). During this period, I found myself moving in and out of these communities of memories. In these communities, I saw people breaking down and talking about the horrors they experienced in concentration camps and torture chambers. I heard and translated personal testimonies of what happened to people. We cried from joy and sadness.

However, I also sensed people's need to talk about the past. I felt profoundly affected by people's stories. I felt I could no longer find the limits between my pain and theirs. An invisible wall of denial had broken down for me and perhaps for them. I began to try to understand my emotions, my friends' emotions, the relationship between them and their connection to these two events. In addition, I explored the meaning-making process that unfolded for many of us through the process of individual and collective remembering and sharing of our experiences of the coup d'etat, the dictatorship and our lives in Canada.

The process of sorting out my feelings and emotions about the unexpected news of Pinochet's arrest both individually and amongst my Chilean friends, the experience of gathering

evidence for his prosecution and the news of his release made me realize the need to further understand the individual and collective processes that are involved in the re-awakening of traumatic memories: the events that trigger these memories and the meaning-making process that takes place in the context of those groups outside Chile, in particular the Chilean community in Vancouver.

The individual and collective nature of the research I have conducted led me to the exploration of the following concepts: individual trauma, collective trauma, socio-political trauma, individual memories and traumatic collective memories.

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV-) describes trauma as:

the result of experiencing an event that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury, or other threat to one's physical integrity; or witnessing an event that involves death, injury or the threat to the physical integrity of another person; or learning about the unexpected or violent death, serious harm, or threat of death or injury experienced by a family or other close associate (APA, 1994).

The French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1992) asserts that all memories are formed and organized within a collective context – that is, each individual memory is part of or an aspect of the social group. In his view, virtually all events, experiences and perceptions are shaped by individual interactions with others, and memories are most likely to be formed if people talk and think collectively about events. This sharing process is also essential in remembering collective events (Halbwachs, 1992). It is in this process of creating shared memories that “we construct visions of the past rather than chronologies.” (Watson, 1994, p.9).

Traumatic memories can be defined as those recollections of horrible events like torture, imprisonment, the disappearance of loves ones, rape, witnessing killings and other atrocities. People who have endured these events suffer predictable psychological damage. People

gradually lose the ability to distinguish one's own experience from others. (Herman, 1992).

According to Herman "the knowledge of horrible events periodically intrudes into public awareness, but is rarely retained for long. Denial, repression and dissociation operate on the social as well as on the individual level." (1992, p.2). Remembering and telling the truth about terrible events are prerequisites for both the restoration of the social order and for the healing of individual victims (Herman, 1992).

The purpose of this research is to study the nexus between the personal meaning of Pinochet's arrest and his release and the construction of group memories of traumatic life experiences triggered by these events in the Chilean community in Vancouver. In this study I explored the following research question: How do members of the Chilean community in Vancouver link the personal meaning of Pinochet's arrest and release in England and the construction of group memories of previous traumatic life experiences triggered by these events?

Historical Background

The military dictatorship headed by Augusto Pinochet starting in 1973 initiated a process that completely transformed Chile's social fabric and its institutional structures. The political repression that followed the Coup d'etat included mass detention of political opponents, summary execution, torture, disappearances, illegal searches of homes, factories, schools, hospitals, and public buildings, the dismantling of political and social organizations and mass exile. The systematic violation of human rights, the persecution of opposition leaders, and the institutionalized violence against citizens created an atmosphere of political threat and chronic fear (Lira, 1998). Those who supported the socialist government of Salvador Allende were considered enemies of the state who had to be either eliminated or suppressed. They included political leaders, priests, nuns, trade union leaders, members of leftist parties, human rights activists, community leaders, students, intellectual and members of the general population. The

purpose of this repression was to create fear, to dismember organizations, to intimidate the population and to stop people from organizing themselves (Riquelme, 1994). As Augusto Pinochet stated at the time, “We are going to apply Martial Law to everybody found with weapons or explosives! They will be shot immediately, without trials.” (Augusto Pinochet quoted in Verdugo, 1998).

Impunity was a key factor in instilling fear and silence among the population and demonstrating that the armed forces exercised absolute control. Those who had been victimized by the state terrorism were completely helpless. The authors and executors of the crimes were protected by concealment, in which the news media, the courts and the police actively participated. Although hundreds of people were involved in carrying out the repression, there was no one to blame, no one to hold responsible. The crimes and the criminals remained hidden. Under these circumstances, individuals had no possibility of recourse to formal justice, nor even the chance to choose their own death. Victims were deprived of their essential human dignity. (Rojas, 1998). This situation lasted for 17 years until a democratic government took over in 1990.

The transition process from military to civilian government raised political, social and cultural issues for the new government. Memory is one of the central themes of this process. In societies emerging from periods of violence or trauma like Chile, there are often competing and conflicting understandings of the past, and intense struggles emerge over memory (Jelin, 1998).

The transition process has proven disheartening for those who fought the military regime. During the dictatorship, the cult of remembering was the fuel of the political struggle. Remembering was a necessary exercise for those who participated in the fight against the dictatorship; it was a way to reinforce their commitment (Moulian, 1998). Before coming to power, the *Concertación* – the coalition of the centrist Christian Democrats, the Socialist party

and the Pro-Democracy party that came together to defeat Augusto Pinochet in the plebiscite of 1988 – emphasized the crimes of the dictatorship as a central element in their political discourse.

However, in 1990 the politics of memory of the Concertación experienced a dramatic shift, embodied in the election of Christian Democrat Patricio Aylwin as president. Just before the military government yielded power to Aylwin, it dictated a provision which prohibited the Congress from investigating the crimes of the dictatorship or bringing constitutional accusations against its leaders (Moulian, 1998). The task of the new democratic government was to mediate between two positions: the military, whose aim was to ensure a legacy of oblivion in the name of social peace; and those sectors of society affected by the years of repression who demanded not only justice but also a full airing of the truth about the past.

The Aylwin government established the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (which issued the so-called Rettig Report, 1993) to investigate the human rights violations of the Pinochet regime in an attempt to build a bridge between private suffering and public recognition of past events (Lira, 1998). The investigative Commission did not have the power to bring charges, initiate legal proceedings, or impose penalties on those involved. However, it did represent the “official story” of the repression. Although torture and exile are not mentioned in the Rettig report, it does acknowledge the existence of state terrorism.

However, according to Chilean sociologist Tomás Moulian, the commission provided the Concertación with a formula to sidestep its campaign promise to abolish the 1978-amnesty law. The report spared the new government from having to challenge the military’s self-proclaimed impunity (Moulian, 1998). Therefore, the new democratic government, fearing military reprisals and attempting to hold together the unstable political coalition, promoted a model of reconciliation instead of justice. This model of transition as reconciliation entailed a demand for forgiveness without a complete revelation of the past and acknowledgement of wrong-doing and

without broad access to justice (Frazier, 1999). However, public acknowledgement of the atrocities did provide a step towards healing.

According to the Rettig Report (1993) out of a population of 10 million inhabitants at the time of the coup d'etat, 1.6 million people were forced to migrate or seek asylum, 50,000 were detained as political prisoners and 3,000 were killed or disappeared. For many people, the past has become an “open wound,” a constant reminder of their traumatic experiences (Lira, 1998). In this context, exercising one’s right to remember allows for a retrospective analysis of and a reflection on the past. But this process of analysis has to focus on the relationship between the painful experiences of the past and the current and ongoing processes of a search for meaning. There are, therefore, active and ongoing political struggles about meaning taking place, about the meaning of what occurred, as well as about the meaning of memory itself. Therefore, remembering and working through the pain of this open wound may provide new meaning to the past and the possibility of healing the wounds (Jelin, 1998).

Political Exile

The political exile of a large number of Chileans was another form of repression and traumatization used by the dictatorship. This mass exodus took different forms. A great number of people asked for political asylum in different embassies in Santiago in the months following the coup d'etat. A number of political prisoners were sent into exile directly from jail in exchange for serving out their sentences of those tried in military trials. Another group left the country soon after being released from jail for fear of being imprisoned again. Finally, some went into exile because of receiving threats on their lives, losing their jobs or being refused work because of their political affiliations (Committee for the Defense of People’s Rights, CODEPU, 1989).

The exact number of Chileans who left the country after the military coup is difficult to determine. The highest estimate made by a Catholic migration organization in Chile (INCAMI) is that one million people (a tenth of the population) left the country for political or economic reasons since the military coup. (Kay, 1987)

The psychosocial consequences of exile include: the abrupt rupture of a life project; the loss of social and emotional networks such as family, friends and co-workers; the loss of a familiar landscape and geography; the end of people's active participation in the everyday life of their country and therefore the loss of personal history, biography and sense of identity (Dominguez, 1994).

One of the alternatives left for those in exile is to go back to their country, but this alternative in many cases poses a threat to life or a new form of dislocation. The ongoing emotional dichotomy between staying in the host country or returning home experienced by people in exile is captured in the following quote by Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1998).

"Suffering exile is accepting the tragedy of rupture, which characterizes the experience of living in a *borrowed context*. One suffers exile as one deals better with the difficulties associated with being unable to return to one's home. One suffers exile as one reconciles the contradictions between the present where one lives, in a space where one has experienced no past, and the future, which has to be built in uncertain space." p.67.

The issue of memory not only affects Chileans within Chile, but also exiles. For the Chilean exiles in Vancouver, the issue of memory has been highly contested over the last 25 years. The contradiction between forgetting the past or remembering it gives rise to conflicting feelings amongst all of us. On the one hand, living for a long time in a different culture and speaking a different language seems to help make the past disappear. On the other hand, the need to belong to a group, to maintain one's cultural roots, identity and history makes remembering an individual and group need.

The migration of Chilean refugees to Canada started soon after the coup d'etat in 1973. The Canadian government, through a special program for Chileans called *The Special Chilean Movement*, was able to provide political asylum to many. By the end of 1978, 6,225 refugees had registered in this program, including 200 political prisoners who arrived directly from jail (Gilbert & Lee, 1986).

According to members of the community, the first political exiles arrived in Vancouver in 1974; however, the exact number is unclear. Gilbert & Lee (1986) suggest that once they established themselves in Canada, some of the new exiles tried to maintain an avid interest in the political situation in Chile. Through this interest, solidarity and humanitarian links were first established amongst Chileans, but this was not a homogenous process. On the contrary, these relationships tend to follow the political trends and affiliations that the exiles had in Chile (Gilbert & Lee, 1986). Consequently, political and solidarity organizations were formed to support particular sectors. These do not prevent them from organizing joint activities and projects when necessary.

In addition to the organization of political, social and cultural groups, the process of reconstructing public life in exile focused on the creation of a political space. The early community of exiles did not want to remain victims of history but rather hoped to transform their defeat into a new political platform. Many exiles wondered about the role they could play from such a distance. Initially, however, the panorama looked promising. The overthrow of the Allende government had made headlines around the world, and international solidarity movements were organizing worldwide. A solidarity campaign seemed to be the best approach since it could accelerate the demise of the Pinochet government by helping to isolate the regime internationally (Kay, 1987). Therefore, people involved themselves in this solidarity campaign, holding on to the hope that their return was just a matter of time.

The local committees of solidarity with Chile provided the space needed to denounce the Pinochet regime and publicize their plight. Personal testimonies of torture and imprisonment created a strong impact amongst Canadians and helped boost the Chileans' campaign. To the politicized Chileans who had lived through a "political age" in Chile, the experience of working in solidarity provided them with a renewed sense of political commitment (Kay, 1987). In addition, the political work also increased a sense of bonding provided by the experience of finding themselves in what Paulo Freire (1998, p.67) has denominated a "borrowed context."

However, according to what I have heard from my friends, many people could not deal with the painful experience of exile. Instead, they cut off all contact with the Chilean community by forcing themselves to integrate into Canadian life as soon as possible in an attempt to forget their past.

The institutionalization of the dictatorship in Chile, together with the political conflicts in Central America in the early 1980's, changed the dynamics of the solidarity groups in Vancouver. The arrival of large numbers of refugees from countries such as El Salvador and Guatemala renewed the political work of the Chilean organizations. At the same time new solidarity groups were formed to denounce the continued violations of human rights, to secure the release of political prisoners, to find people who had disappeared for political reasons, and to organize fundraising activities. (Gilbert & Lee, 1986).

These new Latin American solidarity groups organized joint activities as a way to express solidarity amongst exiles as well as in support for the different political struggles that haunted the continent. However, as the political situation in many countries changed in the 1990's, so did the nature of these events. The transition to democratic governments in Chile, the end of civil wars in Guatemala and El Salvador, and the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 changed the basis of the strong solidarity movement of the 70's and 80's.

In the case of the Chilean community, the transition to a new government in 1990 meant the redefinition of the internal politics of each party. With Pinochet relegated to a different role and the promise of a new democratic government, most people experienced conflicting feelings about their political life in Canada.

Lessie Jo Frazier (1999) suggests the concept of "*orphans of the past*" to identify those veterans of the dictatorship who are now politically orphaned, but who still write, think and rebuild networks in an attempt to work their way out of despair. In the case of the community in Vancouver, this feeling of being orphans of the past is augmented by the marginality we experience, that is, the vicarious way in which we live, feel and react to the events happening in Chile. The lack of information, the misinformation, and the absence of political debate enhance political ambiguities that lead to divisions among the community members. By being in exile, we are somehow absent from the ongoing conflicts about memory that are taking place in Chile. Furthermore, the discussions of the past that need to take place in our community need to be rooted in what Elizabeth Jelin (1998) has called the "hard facts"; that is the physical violence, the encounters and confrontations in lived experience, in order to make meaning of the past and integrated into the present and the future (p.25). However, a discussion of the past has to start with the understanding that there is no unified interpretation of the past, rather there are multiple versions of what happened and why (Jelin, 1998).

The Chilean migration was not the only one to affect Canada. In the last two decades, a large number of political refugees from other war-torn countries and military dictatorships have sought asylum here. The individual and collective traumas people have brought with them as a result of torture, imprisonment and the loss of their families, homes and communities have introduced the following challenges to the field of cross-cultural counselling:

- the need to understand the complex issues related to exile;

- the need to understand social, historical and cultural issues related to traumatic experiences both in individuals and groups;
- the need for better knowledge and comprehension of the events or situations that trigger the re-appearance of traumatic memories;
- the need to understand culturally appropriate healing processes and therapeutic approaches to deal with these traumas

Studying the individual and collective memories that were re-awakened by events outside individual control, like Pinochet's arrest in London and his subsequent release, will further help us to understand traumatic memories, how they operate, and the importance of forgetting and/or remembering in healing them. In addition, it will help us to grasp the nexus between the personal meaning of these events and the construction of collective memories when sharing individual experiences.

Approach to the Research

The research approach I have selected for this study is narrative. The human practice of storytelling is a basic method that people use to create, sustain and transmit meaning in their lives (Holland & Kilpatrick, 1993). According to Riessman, (1993) narrative analysis allows for systematic study of personal experiences and meaning: how events have been constructed by active subjects. This methodological approach examines “the informant’s story and analyses how it is put together, the linguistic and cultural resources it draws on, and how it persuades the listener to authenticity.” (p.2) People are meaning-making organisms; they construct their identities and self-narratives from building blocks available in their common culture, above and beyond their individual experience (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilver, 1998). This methodology allows the researcher to access a description and interpretation of self and group narratives, individual and collective identity, meaning-making systems, and the participants

cultural and social world. Furthermore, given the need of members of the Chilean community to meet, talk and analyze in order to understand and reflect on the political situation in Chile, this particular method seemed to be the most appropriate to answer my research question.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The following literature review will provide an overview of the most relevant concepts and research done in the areas of collective memory, the nature of memories, individual trauma, collective trauma, socio-political trauma and trauma treatment. First, I will attempt to define the social nature of collective memories. Second, I will explore the concept of “flashbulb memory” and its relevance as a phenomenon that involves personal circumstances and unexpected events. Third, I will identify the main characteristics and long-term consequences of individual trauma. Fourth, I will define collective trauma, and I will expand on this definition with the concept of socio-political trauma. I will focus on the effects of socio-political trauma in Chile. Fifth, I will review two studies that focus on the effects of trauma on children and young adults. Finally, I will discuss the therapeutic benefits of connecting present, past and future by telling and re-telling the trauma story.

Collective Memories

The collective nature of memories has been described by a number of authors (Halbwachs, 1992; Lowenthal, 1985; Nora, 1994; Paez, Basabe & Gonzales, 1997; Watson, 1994). The French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, one of the first to study the phenomenon of what he called “collective memory,” asserts that all memories are formed and organized within a collective context. This suggests that each individual memory is part of, or an aspect of, the social group. In his view, virtually all events, experiences and perceptions are shared by individual interactions with others, and memories are most likely to be formed if people talk and think collectively about events. This sharing process is also essential in remembering collective events. Furthermore, this collective process of sharing is mediated by language. Halbwachs

(1992). Asserts that “it is language, and the whole system of social conventions attached to it, that allow us at every moment to reconstruct our past.” (p.173). Another important aspect of collective memories is their role in creating and maintaining individual and collective identity. Becoming a member of a social group involves assuming and internalizing the common traditions and social representations shared by the group, in other words, sharing the group’s collective memories (Halbwachs, 1992). People seek to understand their identity through the reconstruction of their past. The bases for collective memory are oral stories, rumors, gestures, or cultural styles, in addition to written stories and institutionalized cultural activities such as national celebrations and anniversaries (Paez, Basabe & Gonzales, 1997). In addition, shared or collective memories produce powerful images by taking up themes, telling stories, and allowing people to re-experience events in ways that are different from the history of the professional historian.

According to Iwona Irwin-Zarecka (1994), a “*community of memory*” is one created by the memory itself, that is, a community created by people to feel a sense of bonding with others solely because of a shared experience (p.47). Furthermore, Irwin-Zarecka asserts that the meaning given to a particular event, rather than the event itself, is what defines communities of memory. Individuals with not only common experiences but also a shared sense of meaning and relevance form these communities.

Communities of memories also enable people’s memories of victimization to serve as the focus of communal unity. These narratives of victimization help define and shape the boundaries of these communities. Self-definition as a victim clearly marks the boundaries between the “us” and “them”. To construct a sense of community, these groups inevitably need the presence of the Other (Irwin-Zarecka, 1994, p.60). In the case of the Chilean exiles in Vancouver, there are two potential Others: the first is the mainstream society in Vancouver but the second and more significant is the Other Chilean represented by the image of Pinochet.

Given the heterogeneous and changing character of the Chilean community in Vancouver, I find the concept of *communities of memories* particularly relevant in describing the flexible boundaries of the groups involved, but also the transitory aspect of moving in and out of these communities of memories according to political affiliations, identity needs, social class issues, feelings of victimization or changes in political or social interactions both here and in Chile.

Memory Research: Flashbulb Memories

Research into the nature of memories is consistent in demonstrating their social and collective nature. The term “flashbulb memories” (FB memory) coined by Brown and Kulik (1982) defines a phenomenon that involves a mixture of personal circumstances and extreme, unexpected, historical events. They argued that these memories are the result of a neurological mechanism not used for memory of most events. They postulate that when a person encounters a surprising event, aspects of the immediate surroundings are imprinted in memory.(Gaskell and Wright, 1997). Brown and Kulic (1977) asked 40 participants, 20 white and 20 African-Americans, to remember nine different and unexpected events (mostly assassinations) and a single, self-selected, personally relevant event. The shooting of John F. Kennedy 13 years earlier in 1963 represented the most prominent self-selected event. Ninety-nine percent of the participants recalled with almost perceptual clarity where they were, how they learned about the assassination, what they were doing at the time, how other people reacted on hearing the news, their emotional reaction, and what they did immediately after hearing the news (p. 192). The research suggests that this specific type of memory allows people to remember the event, as well as their personal circumstances when they heard about it. These memories are described as “vivid,” and people have the ability to remember them later.

For flashbulb memories to be created, the original event must be unexpected and produce surprise in the individual. In other words, the unexpectedness of the event determines the level of surprise. Furthermore, African-American participants showed significantly more FB memories about leaders who were active in the civil rights movement in the United States such as Malcolm X and Martin Luther King. This suggests that events entailing more personal consequences and importance for the individual determine the level of elaboration of FB memories.

Brown and Kulik (1982) also identified two other characteristics of FB memories: overt and covert rehearsal. Overt rehearsal is the conversations that people have about the event, and covert rehearsal takes place internally when the individual thinks about the event. Overt rehearsal constitutes a social process of creating and maintaining collective memories through the constant telling and re-telling of the memories. In addition, the emotional impact of the FB memories causes people to talk more about the event, especially if it is extensively covered in the media. Consequently, this overt rehearsal of people's own and collective narratives enhances the process of reconstruction of collective memories.

Finkenauer, Gisle & Luminet (1997) expanded on the social factors in the memory formation and maintenance identified by Brown and Kulic. In their research on people's experiences of the sudden death of Belgian king Bedouin, they interviewed 399 French-speaking Belgians of various age groups and backgrounds 7-8 months after the event. Participants were asked to recall the circumstances in which they first heard the news. The researchers concluded that by talking about the event and being exposed to the news media, the memory is improved. However, recall, in form of overt rehearsal, is almost always (re)constructive because it takes place in a social context. Overt rehearsal thereby affects the FB memory and its contents. In addition, it contributes to creating a collective memory of the events, that is, it constructs the event politically (Finkenauer, Gisle & Luninet, 1997, p. 206).

These studies focused only on the creation and maintenance of FB memories and do not explore the re-awakening of previous traumatic memories caused by these events. The relevance of FB memories in the context of my research is that in this type of memory, an unexpected event is linked to the creation and later vivid re-collection of memories.

Individual Trauma

The literature dealing with trauma defines it as extremely painful individual experiences that disrupt the systems that allow people to create and feel a sense of control, connection and meaning. They involve intense psychological and physical suffering. These experiences are likely to result in psychological dysfunction in both the short and long term (Agger & Jensen, 1996; Caruth, 1995; Herman, 1992; Lira, 1998; van der Veer, 1998; Viñar & Ulriksen, 1993). The effects of traumatic life experiences have been investigated from a variety of perspectives: emotional numbing (Litz, 1992); torture and political violence (Agger & Jensen, 1996; Ritterman, 1990; Lira, 1998); trauma effects of Chilean exiles in the U.S. (Gonsalves, 1990); sexual trauma (Lebowitz, Harvey & Herman, 1993); natural disasters (Erikson, 1995); and secondary traumatic stress (Arvay, 1998, Ruderman, 1992, Pantoja, 2000a).

The DSM – IV (APA, 1994) in its Text Revised Version (APA, 2000) identifies the following symptoms resulting from exposure to extreme trauma:

persistent re-experiencing of the traumatic event (Criterion B); persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma and numbing of general responsiveness (Criterion C); and persistent symptoms of increase arousal (Criterion D). The full symptom picture must be present for more than one month (Criterion E), and the disturbance must cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning (Criterion F) (p.463).

Effects of Political Trauma

In the context of political violence or war, people's experiences include a range of feelings: pain, anguish, fear, loss, grief, displacement and the destruction of a coherent and meaningful reality (Kleinman, 1995). In the particular case of Chile, the effects of political violence have been identified by the clinical team of the Psychological and Mental Health Program of the Foundation for Social Aid of the Christian Churches (FASIC). This organization created in 1977 during the dictatorship provides counselling services to people affected by torture and political violence. They place their clientele into three main groups: first generation, second generation and third generation. The first group is comprised of mothers or relatives of people who were detained, disappeared or executed for political reasons. The effects of trauma in this group include strong feelings of sadness, a tendency to isolation, depression and health problems.

The second generation group are youth and adults who were directly targeted during the dictatorship for political reasons and who had a leading role in the social and political processes before and after the coup d'etat. In this group there is a clear neglect of their physical health. At the psychological level, they show difficulties reading and expressing their emotions and feelings. Their behaviour is aggressive and detached; they feel helpless and in some cases emotionally numbed. Moreover, depending of the level of emotional damage, they live in social isolation and unemployment.

The third generation group includes children, nieces, nephews and grandchildren of people who have suffered political violence. This group shows a difficult relationship with authority figures, including problems setting limits. Often, there is an ambivalent relationship with their parents that is reflected in a tendency to overprotect them. In some cases, the youth or children do not perceive themselves as being affected by their family trauma. In others, they tend to blame themselves for the family conflicts. (Pantoja, 2000a). In addition, political

violence affected the general population, instilling feelings of helplessness, defenselessness and impotence not only in those affected, but also and especially in those who were unable to discern the real dangers they faced (Lira, 1998).

Finally, the effects of working with victims of political violence and repression on the therapists has been identified by (Morales and Lira, 1996; Pantoja, 2000b, Ruderman, 1992). Argentine psychologist Matilde Ruderman explains that “for the psychologists working in a contexts of violence and institutionalized state terrorism, it is almost impossible not to be affected by the horror related by the patient.” (p. 231). This horror translates into a psychological pain, guilt, shame and silence, none of which is processed, which ends up deteriorating the social and professional interactions and eventually leading to the fragmentation of the clinical team (Ruderman, 1992).

Similarly, Chilean therapists working with victims of political violence experience the personal dynamics that affect them and their teams as a result of the political violence and its sequelae. Jorge Pantoja (2000b) clinical director of FASIC, identifies a type of denial among team members who avoid addressing the emotional impact of their work. Aggressiveness, distancing and competitiveness are behaviours often displayed by team members. Finally, staff rotation, diverse physical illnesses and depression are common among team members (Pantoja, 2000b).

Lastly, Morales and Lira (1996) have identified the interrelation between the generalized feelings of hopelessness, abandonment and destruction related to the political violence that impede reparation and justice and promote oblivion and impunity. They argue a bi-polarity omnipotence-impotence often the heart of mental health teams. The omnipotence is linked to an over-justification of their role (we can save people from the pain and damage) and therefore a loss of their personal boundaries. The feelings of impotence, on the other hand, lead to hopelessness (what I am doing is not worth it) (Morales and Lira, 1996).

The personal and institutional challenges outlined above which are experienced by mental health teams when confronted with the lasting effects of trauma can be reduced to the extent that they understand that the damage inflicted cannot be repaired in the absence of the “other.” That is, for healing to occur, we need not only the individual, personal work but also a collective effort (Pantoja, 2000b).

Trauma Research

The life-long psychological consequences of traumatic war experiences were investigated by Harvey, Stein & Scott (1995) in a qualitative study conducted with Normandy combat veterans. Fifty years later they interviewed 43 veterans who were present at the invasion of France in June 6, 1944. They used a narrative approach to gather evidence on the experiences of loss and grief associated with their involvement on D-Day. They collected narrative accounts in personal and telephone interviews which were later coded and classified. These categories included: (a) general degree of trauma associated with their D-Day losses; (b) types of long-term effects; (c) reports about the psychological experiences of depression and guilt; and (d) reports of story development and talking or confiding in coping, as well as other ways of coping that were employed (p.321).

Most of the long-term traumatic memories reported by the veterans were related to witnessing a fellow soldier being killed or injured by mines or unexpectedly encountering recently dead bodies, including the corpses of their friends. But also they reported acts of courage, valor and leadership as part of their vivid long-term memories. As for negative psychological experiences, 30 out of 40 mentioned bouts of depression associated with thinking (sometimes obsessively) about the events that occurred (Harvey, Stein & Scott, 1995).

The narrative evidence in this study shows support for the value of account-making and confiding to others in veterans’ positive adaptation to their losses. They linked their silence to

dysfunctional behaviour such as excessive drinking. Almost all of the participants indicated that their memories of their experiences from D-Day were highly vivid and real to them. These reports suggest that these “flashbulb” memories (Brown & Kulik, 1982) have affected the lives of the respondents over time (Harvey, Stein & Scott, 1995). Perhaps one of the limitations of this study is that it focused on the events of that particular day (D-Day) and on the grief process associated with it, thus reducing their experience to one event and disconnecting it from the entire war. Finally, individual narrative accounts provide a partial recollection of their individual experience, but they do not elaborate on the collective impact of that event on the veterans as a group.

Collective Trauma

On the other hand, collective trauma represents a blow to the basic fabric of social life, damaging the bonds tying people together and impairing the prevailing sense of communality. Erikson (1995) suggests that the social tissue of a community can be damaged in similar ways to the tissues of mind and body. Traumatic wounds inflicted on individuals can combine to create a mood, an ethos –a group culture, which is different from (and more than) the sum of private wounds that make it up.”(p. 185). This form of shock causes the individual to gradually realize that the community no longer exists as an effective source of support and that an important part of the self has disappeared (Erikson, 1995). Furthermore, collective trauma can affect those members of a community, society or group who were absent when the catastrophe or persecution took place. (Suárez-Orozco and Robben, 2000).

Socio-Political Trauma

Martín-Baró (1994) expands this definition of trauma by proposing a new psychosocial approach. In his view, trauma needs to be understood as a dialectical process between the

individual and the society he/she is part of. Not only are social traumas produced by societies through civil wars, dictatorships and political oppression, but also the nature of trauma depends on the particular social relations of which the individual is a part. This social characteristic of trauma implies that its treatment and healing must include an exploration of its social roots, that is, pre-existing social conditions and the historical context. This concept of social traumatization integrates the political and social contexts as a component of the traumatic event, thus placing the trauma in a historic continuum. The traumatic event is not only a restricted episode but part of a traumatic sequence. Therefore, the concept of social trauma incorporates the history of the individual as well as the collective history (Martín-Baró, 1994).

Martín-Baró also asserts that social trauma affects individuals in their social character; that is to say, as a society, as a totality. The result of trauma is not only traumatized Chileans or Palestinians, for example, but rather traumatized Chilean and Palestinian societies. In the particular case of Chile, the effects of the systemic political violence experienced by people during the dictatorship can also be understood from a social perspective. At the social level, the military regime brought a profound collapse. This existential rupture is characterized by a break in the existing close relationship between social identity and individual identity (Neumann, 1990). Being an active member participating in changing and improving the society constituted a deeply-rooted social practice strongly associated with diverse forms of commitment to the social and political situation of the country.

By dismantling social and political institutions and repressing every form of social participation, the military regime broke abruptly this style of national coexistence. With the brutal experience of the dictatorship, new experiences emerged for people such as, vulnerability, physical and emotional suffering, fear, mistrust and suspicion, and personal crisis that drastically changed Chileans' previous way of life. This change in the way people experience life inhibits and makes difficult normal development and expressions of social identity by invalidating the

social relationships amongst people and between people and their social reality. This experience affects the entire society (Neumann, 1990).

Furthermore, van der Veer (1998) asserts that this societal process of traumatization also affects people who were uprooted and exiled. He has identified three phases of traumatization and uprooting, particularly in the case of political refugees:

The first phase: an increase of political repression and persecution in their native country. This includes the political and social changes preceding the most extreme traumatic experiences, people's involvement in these changes, and the consequences for their personal lives.

The second phase: the period in which the refugee becomes a victim of torture, terror, battlefield experiences, home searches, witnessing the killings of friends and relatives, or other torments.

The third phase: life in exile, which includes continuing involvement in what is happening back home, the painful after-effects of the traumatic experience, and the problems of adapting to a new culture and language. In this phase the refugee is constantly haunted by the possibility of going back home if new political changes happen (p. 9).

This possibility of returning home brings up memories of traumatic events as well as old feelings of loss and grief. A similar process occurs when people receive news from their home country about political events or about the condition of relatives who are still living there (van der Veer, 1998).

Consistent with Martín-Baró (1994), specific characteristics of collective memories of traumatic events are suggested by Paez, Basabe & Gonzales (1997). They postulate a "conspiracy of silence," (p.147) imposed by force, which does not allow people to talk about past traumatic events. This conspiracy plays an important role in legitimizing an existing society. In

other words, forgetting becomes a key element of the new collective memory. People censor their words and activities in an attempt to avoid returning to the horrors of the past, therefore allowing the past to govern and pacify the present (Lira, 1998). But without social validation, traumas become private suffering that cannot be addressed.

The social validation needed to heal the past wounds comes from remembering the trauma. The deep desire to simply forget the past becomes impossible because in order to forget, it is necessary to remember (Lira, 1998). The destructive power of terror affects communities and culture and also undermines individual well-being. Furthermore, it destroys the present and forces a constant re-thinking of the past, while also threatening the future and the next generation's capacity to affirm aspects of their cultural life and history (Lykes, 1995).

The following two studies look at the effects of collective traumatization on societies through the experience of children and young adults from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives.

Paez, Bazabe & Gonzalez (1997) conducted a quantitative transcultural comparative study using young students ($M=22.6$ years) from four different countries (Chile, Spain, the United States and Great Britain). They examined several remembered events that had taken place during a 40-year period in the four countries and then contrasted them. They analyzed confrontation and inhibition processes and their relation to the evaluation of their country's emotional climate. In this study, if any member of the participant's family or acquaintances had suffered any of a series of traumatic events during the past 40 years, the participants were asked to indicate: (a) if they had talked about it (social sharing); (b) avoided talking about it (inhibition);(c) thought a lot about the event when they did not want to do so (rumination); (d) or thought a lot about the event in order to understand, assimilate and explain it to themselves (re-evaluation).

On the basis of remembrance of traumatic events they found that in Chile, the Basque Country and Catalunya (both Spanish samples) there was a higher number of remembered events related to political persecution, violent acts, economic emigration, and returning to the country after exile. They also found that confrontation and social sharing might help the cognitive and emotional assimilation of traumatic collective events. In fact, the results of how individuals in Chile, Catalunya and the Basque Country cope with traumatic events experienced by members of their group confirm the idea that people talk more than inhibit, and confront more than avoid the topics of torture, political prison and exile. The study also shows that there is more social confrontation, reappraisal and rumination in Chile, the country with the most recent traumatic collective past, than any other country in the sample.

Finally, the results suggest that after a traumatic and forced inhibitory period, the social dynamics usually involve social sharing and confrontation. Furthermore, after this period, there is a search for meaning and a need to express the emotional events at an individual and collective level. (Paez, Bazabe & Gonzalez (1997).

This study offers an interesting entry point into an understanding of the effects of past traumatic events in young people's lives. However, given the size and the comparative nature of the study, it does not provide a comprehensive understanding of how each individual event and its historical, social or political relevance affect the individual perceptions of the participants.

M. Brenton Lykes (1996) studied the effects of the war in Guatemala among a group of children. This research was part of "Creative Workshops for Children" developed by health promoters, child care workers and educators to accompany Mayan child survivors and develop a firmer base from which to give meaning to their experiences of losing their relatives, their land and their cultural traditions during the war (Lykes, 1996). She defines her methodology as "activist participatory research" (p.165). This method is a process through which the researcher accompanies the participants or subjects over time by participating and observing while

providing resources to the participant and his or her community. They in turn, "inform" the researcher (Lykes, 1996).

These creative workshops were designed in part to facilitate communication and to help break the silence. The objective was to create an environment in which children could integrate theater, body movement, music and language as resources for recovering their natural capacity to play. One aspect of the workshops entailed inventing collective stories. Through these stories the researcher was able to identify different themes such as: the children's conflicts, their experiences, their memories and their ideology. The stories were created and re-created through dramatization and drawings as a starting point to re-create and re-construct their communities.

This research clearly outlines the benefit of conducting integrative workshops in which the children participating in the research were able to reconstruct their past and reclaim their culture through a ludic methodology. However, it is not clear how the observation of this process over time assisted the researcher in identifying the main themes or whether these themes changed or evolved.

Consistent with the findings of these studies, the literature related to therapeutic treatment of survivors of torture and political violence suggests that the process of telling and re-telling the trauma story helps clients understand and integrate the past and to reclaim the present and the future (Agger & Jensen, 1996; Caruth, 1995; Herman, 1992; Lira, 1998; Viñar & Ulriksen, 1993; van der Veer, 1998). The testimony method initially developed in Chile (Cienfuegos & Morelli, 1983; Lira, 1986) to deal with the victims of the dictatorship also shows the benefits of this story-telling approach. This method encourages the person to describe her/his traumatic experience in full detail as if she/he was giving evidence as a witness for the prosecution. Further research on grief associated with war and violence points strongly to the value of storytelling as conducive to long-term healing (Langer, 1991; Roseman & Handelsman, 1990). By making previous life history as well as future political commitment, personal relationships,

work and social connections understandable, it allows the individual to begin to reclaim a personal space and a sense of worth (Daniel, & Knudsen, 1995). Research in the area of trauma clearly identifies the benefits of talking about traumatic events in one's personal life and in the context of a safe, individual, therapeutic relationship. Nevertheless, it does not seem to address the particular circumstances of people who are not undergoing therapeutic treatment and who face the re-awakening of traumatic memories as a result of events outside their control, like the arrest and release of Pinochet. Further, this gap in the knowledge also includes a need for more understanding of collective traumatic processes.

This review of the literature related to the construction of collective memories of traumatic events shows an interesting body of research. This literature attempts to provide some explanation of how these memories are created and maintained. It explains the social and collective nature of memories. The literature related to traumatic events offers an explanation of how these memories are created and socially maintained. It also suggests the need to examine these memories from a socio-cultural and historical perspective. It shows the contradictions of memory faced by groups of people who have faced traumatic events. Within a therapeutic context, the literature suggests individual and group benefits in talking about past traumatic events in an attempt to integrate the past into the present and the future.

However, greater understanding is needed of how processes related to collective memory operate as a result of unexpected, uncontrolled events, like the arrest of Augusto Pinochet, his release, and the personal and collective meaning of these events. In particular this is needed for groups that live in a different cultural and social context, but who remain emotionally, socially and culturally connected to their country of origin, like the Chilean community in Vancouver. Given the gap in the literature, my research project will enhance the existing body of knowledge.

CHAPTER 3

A NARRATIVE RESEARCH METHOD

The focus of my study is on how members of the Chilean community link personal meaning and the construction of collective memories through the re-experiencing of traumatic life events upon hearing the news of the arrest and subsequent release of Pinochet. In this section, I will briefly review some methodological approaches to the study of trauma, the approach I have selected to answer my research question and the process I followed to conduct this study.

Traditional quantitative methodologies designed to study trauma and its effects have focused on stress models to measure the distress produced in a person who has undergone a traumatic episode (Kleinman, 1995). M. Brinton Lykes (1996) points out that traditional positivist approaches to trauma separate the subject (person) who experiences an object (terror, torture) in timeless space and creates meaning from the atrocities and terrors through descriptions of effects at an individual level (p.164). Although this type of research has proven to be especially important in identifying specific symptoms and stressors, this research fails to capture the collective nature of the individual experience.

The DSM-IV (APA, 1994), the official American Psychiatric Association's diagnostic system, defines Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as trauma "the person has experienced as an event outside the range of usual human experience that would be markedly distressing to almost anyone" (p. 427). This definition presupposes standards of normality that can be applied to almost "everyone." By the use of the singular word "everyone," the definition fails to include not only the individual but also the collective experiences of many people for whom trauma is and has been the result of ongoing political, religious, ethnic or social struggles like the Kosovar, Palestinian, Nigerian, Bosnian or Guatemalan people.

Likewise, in my view, symptom checklists, impact of events scales, structured interviews or standardized measures, while useful, cannot fully capture the reality of complex individual and collective socio-political traumas. Traditional social science methodologies suggest longitudinal, controlled studies with representative samples to test hypotheses about the effects of trauma on individuals over a period of time. However, they often are unable to access the individual and collective meaning of these traumatic events which are rooted in complex and ongoing social, historical, political and cultural interactions. These types of studies can categorize, label and generalize individual and collective sufferings.

My personal approach to the understanding and healing of individual and collective political trauma is anchored in the historical, social, cultural and political roots of the events causing the trauma. The traumatic events and the memories of these events need to be contextualized and located within a continuum of people's lived experiences. As Stephen Madigan (1997) points out, memory and the act of remembering are situated within cultural discourse. The domain of possible remembering is vast and is directly influenced and restrained by the discursive "perspective." Who, what, where, how and why memories are remembered is directly mediated by the influence of the other (p.342).

A Narrative Approach

Based on my understanding of this research topic, the collective individual and collective experience of trauma, I believe that narrative inquiry is the most appropriate method to answer my question. The basic premise of narrative inquiry is that humans are storytelling organisms (Denzin & Lincoln 1994; McAdams, 1993; McLeod, 1997; Polkinghorne, 1988). Narrative researchers argue that narrative form is the basic way people make meaning of their life experiences (Bruner, 1986; Mishler, 1986; Polkinghorne, 1988). Therefore, narrative entails storytelling or story construction as a way of knowing our world and the world of others. Stories

inform us; we live in and through stories. What we tell in our stories and how we choose to represent ourselves in our stories is the way we create meaning.

In narrative research, emphasis is placed on both what is said and how the story is told. It is in the telling that the story becomes meaningful to the participants and the researcher (Arvay, 1998). Consequently, the plot of the stories are interwoven to the context, and because the contexts of our lives are always changing, research narratives are continually being rewritten and reconstructed. Therefore, the implications for research are that our findings are not fixed, rather they constitute both products of the research and modes of knowledge for both the researcher and the participants (Arvay, 1998).

My choice of a narrative method is grounded in my belief that reality is socially constructed. Narrative inquiry is anchored in the theory of social constructivism, which considers the relationship between knowledge and reality. This school of thought assumes that people do not directly apprehend reality but rather construct models to make sense of their experience (Holland, Thomas & Kilpatrick, 1993). As an immigrant in a multicultural society who is constantly moving and crossing linguistic and cultural borders, I have come to understand the experience of constructing and interpreting meaning in diverse contexts and languages.

This understanding is also anchored in my belief that meaning-making processes are both individual and collective. As Jerome Bruner explains, “Our culturally adapted way of life depends upon shared meanings and shared concepts and depends as well upon shared modes of discourse for negotiating differences in meaning and interpretation.” (p.13).

For this research, I am proposing a mixture of individual and collective narrative method. This research approach has not been implemented before, and there is therefore no information or standard methodology available. Taken from my own individual experience when I first learned about the arrest of Pinochet and how my experience was later re-shaped and re-defined

by virtue of being part of several communities of memories, I have used both an individual and collective narrative method.

In my search for a method that satisfied my research and cultural needs, I was struck by Mishler's proposal that research be guided by the aim of empowering respondents." (p.x). Given the traumatic nature of the topic of my research, I was concerned with the re-traumatizing aspect of telling and retelling the story. However, I am convinced of the healing power of this practice and therefore the empowerment that comes from telling one's story and being witnessed by others. Mishler (1986) also maintains that respondents are empowered by having their voices heard and by participating in the process of interpretation. In addition, he notes that sharing narratives often inspires people to take action on defense of their own interests.

With my research, I sought to engage in a conversation which would lead us to validate our individual experiences as well as the collective one. I wanted a method that allowed us to construct meaning in a collaborative process in an effort to re-member together, that is, to put back the pieces of our history that were dis-membered through our traumatic lived experiences.

Mishler (1986) proposes a negotiation of meaning emerging from the reformulation of questions and responses in an attempt to arrive together at a meaning that both can understand (p.65). This idea of negotiating meaning is particularly important in my research, given the variety of political, traumatic and generational experiences that the participants brought with them. As a participant and researcher, I was very aware that I do not have direct experience as a political party member. I was 13 years old at the time of the coup d'etat, and my most transformative traumatic experiences took place later during the years of the dictatorship. These elements were essential in negotiating meaning during the interviewing and group process and later during the interpretation and analysis.

In my own search for the reconstruction of the historical memory of what happened in Chile and in many other Latin American countries, I turned to the methodology used in

Guatemala in the REMHI report, *Recuperation of the Historical Memory* entitled, *Guatemala: Never Again*. The objective of this project initiated by the Archbishop's Office for Human Rights was to collect testimonies of the violations of human rights by the military during Guatemala's 36 years of armed conflict. The significance of this project for Guatemalan people is captured in the words of Archbishop Juan Gerardi, director of the project, in the following segment of the speech he gave at the public launching of this report on April 24, 1998:

REMHI's work has been an astonishing endeavor of discovery, exploration, and appropriation of our personal and collective history. It has been an open door for people to breathe and speak in freedom and for the creation of communities with hope. Peace is possible – a peace that is born from the truth that comes from each one of us and from all of us. It is a painful truth, full of memories of the country's deep and bloody wounds...It is a truth that challenges each one of us to recognize our individual and collective responsibility and to commit ourselves to action so that those abominable acts never happen again. This project has made a commitment to the people who gave their testimonies to assemble their experiences in this report and to support all the victim's demands. But our commitment is also to return these collected memories to the people. (REMHI, 1999).

Archbishop Gerardi was assassinated two days after by members of the Guatemalan military.

The research model used for the project comprised categories traditionally used in human rights work in the field of collecting, analyzing and understanding the experience of populations affected by war (Beristain, 1998). This research model involved the participation of interviewers who came from the same communities being investigated. This gave people confidence, but it also created other problems, including training in understanding the value of the testimonies, facing up to fear, handling questions during the interviews, techniques for conducting the interviews, and use of analytical tools and processes. Many workshops turned into collective

opportunities in which the interviewers themselves could give their own testimonies before concentrating on the testimonies of others. Depending on the needs of the communities, the research method allowed in some cases for individuals to testify; in others, whole groups presented a collective testimony (Beristain, 1998).

Among the many methodological and ethical challenges encountered by the REMHI's research team the most difficult were categorizing the horrific atrocities that had been committed against indigenous communities. In addition, the investigators were very aware of the dangers of re-victimizing the survivors by focusing only on people's traumatic experiences. Therefore, the testimonies needed to be handled in a way that not only recognized the pain but also rescued the sense of dignity that the violence had tried to suppress.

Finally, Carlos Martín Beristain (1998) a member of the research team, lists some of the key factors in assessing the value of the testimonies: the time elapsed since the traumatic events; the impact of the violence on the ability to focus the memory; the possible evaluation of the violence by the interviewer; the memory's own process (simplification, exaggeration of certain events, or adapting the version to current conventions or demands). Given these limitations, the project complemented the testimonies with secondary sources, an analysis of the local context of many of the communities, interviews with key informants and testimonies of those involved in the violence (p. 4).

The accomplishments of this project were many. It allowed a categorization of the horrors endured by people during the period of armed conflict. In some cases, it identified the perpetrators and it initiated a process of international denunciation of the atrocities committed. It also compiled a number of recommendations directed to the compensation of victims and to the initiation of the peace process. At the human level, it allowed people to reveal their hidden truth and to restore their sense of dignity through the public recognition of the events they survived. The material gathered in this report represents the foundation of the process of *returning* the

collective memory to communities torn apart by violence and displacement. As archbishop Gerardi explains: “the search for truth does not end here. It must return to its birthplace and support the use of memory as an instrument of social reconstruction through the creation of material, ceremonies, monuments, etc.”(REMHI, 1999, p.xxv).

I was profoundly moved by the REMHI’s project, particularly by the respect and dignity given to the survivors by the possibility of speaking their truth, by the participation of community members as interviewers and codifiers immerse in a process of reconstructing their own history, by their courage to seek the truth and denounce the perpetrators, by standing up to the silence and fear and by confronting their own pain. Although this project was massive (6,500 collective and individual interviews), it addresses similar issues to the ones in my study. The challenges faced by this project as well as the successes achieved have informed my own investigation and have served as a guideline and a source of on-going inspiration.

The Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher as an active participant in the research process has been identified in recent feminist research (Lykes, 1995; Reinharz, 1997; Richardson, 1997). M. Brinton Lykes describes it as “relationships constructed between the researcher and the subject which constitute sources of data that approximate more adequate bases for knowing than data gathered with more traditional research instruments.” (1995, p.164).

As a counsellor in training, a member of the Chilean community in Vancouver, and a researcher, my role in this study has been threefold: group leader, participant and researcher. I feel it is my ethical responsibility to participate in this research process in order to understand better the phenomena I am studying and am part of. I also recognize that it is my responsibility to inform the reader of my biases, my subjectivity and my interpretative role as an investigator. As a researcher, I moved from constructing knowledge and meaning from the individual

interviews and the group experience to describing it and interpreting it. My cultural knowledge and understanding of the Spanish language and Chilean semantic idiosyncrasies allowed me to grasp the subtleties of the meanings constructed by the participants.

As a researcher and participant, I was placed in a dual relationship with the participants. I attempted to address this ethical concern by establishing a relationship in which I could take a distant stance when necessary. I informed the participants every time I changed roles.

I also understand that given the small size of the Chilean community in Vancouver and my profile in it, I assumed I would know the participants or that they would know me from other social, cultural or political activities. I believe this was an advantage to my research because it attracted participants who were interested in the topic and committed to completion and for whom I am a trustworthy figure.

Selection Process / Initial Contact

Participants

The participants were members of the Chilean community in Vancouver, three men and three women, myself included. They were recruited through word of mouth, personal contacts and posted notices handed out at the Chilean Housing Cooperative in Vancouver and other social venues. The posters were written in Spanish and stated my name, the purpose of the research, the topic, the individual and group format, and the time commitment that would be required of the participants (Appendix A).

The selection criteria of the participants were: people who were articulate, committed to the completion of the project, interested in the subject, and who possessed the ability to interpret their individual and group experience. Both men and women, 30 years of age and older, were

encouraged to participate in the research. The age restriction intended to homogenize the experience of the participants. My concern was that inviting adolescents or younger people might bring into the discussion issues that were not directly relevant to the research, such as childhood dislocation. I believe that having men and women reflects the experience of the larger community and enriched the understanding of the overall process under investigation. Limiting the informants to just men or just women would have jeopardized the study by reflecting only one side of the phenomena studied.

Another criterion was that participants were not to be related to each other (e.g., husband and wife). The purpose for this exclusion criterion was to avoid personal issues or discrepancies that might come up in the group interview. This exclusion criterion also applied to me, in that I did not include personal friends or colleagues in the process.

One additional criterion that I did not articulate when designing the study was the political affiliation of the participants. It never occurred to me that a right-wing, Pinochet supporter could be interested in participating in the study. My assumption was always that only people who shared my left-wing political views would be interested. This was a revealing experience which made me aware of my biases as a researcher.

Ethical Considerations

Perhaps the most important ethical issue that I faced was the likelihood of participants experiencing dissociation, flashbacks, nightmares or other PTSD symptoms during or after the individual and group session. Since I could not predict or prevent this from happening, I could only attempt to minimize it. One important criterion of the selection process was the participants' self-assessment and the researcher's assessment of their suitability to participate in the research. This assessment was based on the participants' awareness and understanding of the possibility of experiencing these symptoms. All the interviews were conducted at the offices of

the Vancouver Association for the Survivors of Torture (VAST) during office hours. This allowed me to seek the assistance of one of the trauma counsellors should an incident arise.

At the end of the group session, I debriefed with each of the participants to ensure that they were ready to go home. I specified at the beginning of the group session and during the debriefing that I would not be offering counselling during the session, given my dual role as participant and researcher. Finally, I made resources available in case they needed further counselling.

The Selection Process

The selection of the participants was a long and interesting process. None of the participants responded to the notices I posted at different venues. Instead, they became interested in the research after I introduced myself and the research project at political gatherings such as the public presentation of a visiting Chilean psychologist who works in Chile with survivors of political violence and torture. I also handed around the notices and spoke to people at other political gatherings. Some of them heard about it through other participants and decided to contact me.

An interesting aspect of this process was the self-selection criteria of some candidates. Although they were interested in the project, they assured me that they did not have anything interesting to say since they had not been tortured and did not have relatives who had disappeared. These comments alerted me about the clarity I needed to have when explaining the study to possible participants.

Much of this selection process was mediated by the activities and events that were happening in the Chilean community and how that motivated people to participate. A couple of the participants felt inclined to help me out because they themselves had gone through similar

processes when they completed their studies. Others were interested in volunteering out of solidarity and interested in the topic.

Registration Process

The registration process included a telephone call or in some cases a personal conversation in which I explained in detail the topic, the objectives of my research, the estimated time commitment to both the individual and group interviews, and the anticipated value of this type of research.

Introductory Interview

The purpose of the introductory interview was to assess the participants' ability to self-disclose, self-reflect and interpret their own and group experiences. I asked questions aimed at determining their level of comfort in talking about their personal experiences to me and later sharing them in a larger group. This was also an opportunity for me to evaluate if the participants were likely to experience re-traumatization by remembering and talking about painful memories. I also explained that the interviews were going to take place at VAST, where other counsellors were available if participants needed personal counselling.

This procedure proved to be extremely important during the course of the study. One of the methods I used to recruit people was also to ask other participants if they knew of someone who might be interested. One of the participants referred me to a friend who had expressed some interest. During the first few minutes of the introductory interview, she mentioned that she really wanted to show her solidarity with me and my research, but that she was uncomfortable talking about these events because they were very difficult and brought her traumatic memories of her experiences in jail and during torture. I spent the next three hours talking with her about her experiences. I telephoned her a couple of days later to see how she was doing and to encourage

her to seek counselling if needed. Although I had not anticipated taking on a role as a counsellor, my only ethical option in this situation was to stop the research process and assume the counsellor role. This experience highlighted the need of researchers to be aware of the traumatic life experiences of possible participants and how to handle the reaction to reawakening the memories, even in a preliminary interview.

After the participants had met the criteria and had agreed to participate, I asked them to sign the consent form (Appendix B). I explained confidentiality issues and their right to withdraw from the process. Given the internal political divisions of the community (i.e. membership in political parties), I felt it was important for people to be able to withdraw from the process upon meeting the other participants in the group interview. In order to avoid tainting the group interview by external political agendas, I decided to disclose the names of other participants during the registration process. Fortunately, most participants did not know each other and had no problems attending the group meeting.

Procedures

Researcher's Journal

Since the beginning of this research, I was very aware of the challenges that I was going to face. One of them was how to remain somewhat objective in light of the personal emotions brought about by the nature of the research itself, by the participants feelings and experiences, and by the duality of my role. As the process unfolded and I felt more confident in my roles, I began to take notes of what I was noticing in myself every time I read something, talked to people, or prepared for an interview. I also took notes and recorded my thoughts and feelings after an interview and while transcribing them. This study proved to be very emotionally

demanding since I was constantly having to take breaks or distance myself from the process or debrief with friends and colleagues.

I also noticed by being part of the Chilean community that this study was clearly affected by what was happened within it. During the period, I was conducting the research, a number of events occurred that affected the study. For example, at least four Chilean people died unexpectedly, including a person who had expressed an interest in participating in the study. These events forced me to take breaks because I knew them personally, but also because I knew it had affected the participants and the general morale of the community.

At the personal level, my training as a counsellor together with my experience at VAST helped me a great deal to be able to listen to the participants as if I were in a counselling session. This form of detachment allowed me to listen to the stories as a researcher rather than a fellow Chilean, but I was also aware of possible traumatic intrusions. I believe that the diversity of our political experiences was key in helping me to be reflective and curious about the participants' experiences.

Pilot Study

I designed this pilot study to be my own interview as a participant. For this purpose, I got a friend to interview me. What I did not consider at the time was the fact that my friend does not speak Spanish and that the interview had to be conducted in English. Although I am aware of the differences in expressing myself in both languages, I did not consider this to be a problem. By having someone interview me, I wanted to experience before I conducted the interviews how the questions I had prepared would work for the participants, in terms of the content and in helping people engage in this recollection process. I also wanted to experience the describing of my emotions as a participant. In this way, I would be able to disconnect myself from the responsibility of conducting an interview and just participate. Although I knew the questions

that I was going to be asked, I was surprised by the flow of my own emotions when I answered them. This experience certainly gave me an insight into the power of retrieving painful memories.

I also realized that the planning and the order of the questions were not relevant since once I got into the flow of emotions, I would move forward or backward at will, without following exactly the format I had designed. Furthermore, when I transcribed my own interview, I found myself moving from a feeling of detachment from my own to being compelled to listen to them. At the time, I thought it was related to my dual role as a researcher and participant. However, in the group session when I was narrating my own experience as a participant, I came to understand that it had to do with the power of expressing myself in my own language. I found myself relating to my own experience in a different way. I added information and feelings that were not present in the previous interview in English, and I felt more comfortable. I believe this transformation was also related to expressing myself in front of Chileans who were going to be able to relate closely to my experience.

Having had to recollect my experience in the two languages added some insight into the overall process, especially in terms of how confining the expression of emotions can be in a different language. In addition, I realized that having an interviewer who was not Chilean made me give her more detailed political and historical information than when I was in front of the Chileans. Finally, I noticed that the transcription of my narration in English is not linear, but rather more circular -- it moves back and forth, and I repeat myself often.

Individual Interviews

The first part of the data-gathering process was the individual interviews. These interviews were conducted in Spanish and focused on a narrative of people's experience when they heard the news of Pinochet's arrest, his release and the period in between. These taped

interviews were conducted at VAST and lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. As part of the interpretive process, as soon as possible and while it was fresh in my memory, I reflected on the conversation and audio-taped my comments and thoughts about the interview process and parts or the whole of the story. At the personal level, this was sometimes not an easy process; in some cases I had to take a break in between the interview and the reflective process. Some of the stories were so full of detail, meaning and traumatic experiences that I had to take care of the emotions they brought up in me before I could continue with the research process itself.

As a researcher, I asked questions (Appendix C) to help the interviewees access their emotional and cognitive experience and the meaning-making process associated with it. Although the questions I had prepared served as a guide for the conversation, I did not want in any way to be controlled by the questionnaire or to stop the participants' recollection process. I also participated with comments of my own personal experience. I was very aware of the amount of disclosure I allowed myself to make as a co-participant. I wanted the process to be fluid and respectful of each other as co-creators of the story. As Riessman (1993) points out, "By talking and listening, we produce a narrative together." (p.10).

The interviews were then transcribed by the researcher. Once the transcription process was completed and with the approval of the participants, the narratives were edited into a story. I found each of the participants' experiences to be extremely powerful and representative of the collective experience. Therefore, as part of the interpretive process, I decided to edit myself out of the transcript and allow the narrative of the participants to stand on their own. I chose to leave the stories in Spanish because I believe that the text would lose a lot of its passion and meaning in translation.

The individual narratives were presented to each participant for their comments and corrections and later were presented to the other participants before the group session. In addition, an analysis and summary of the individual interviews was prepared. This initial

interpretation was presented in the group interview. Riessman (1993) encourages investigators to find out from the participants what they think of our work because their responses can be a source of theoretical insight.

The Cultural Group Narrative

In the group interview, participants shared their experiences when they heard the news of the arrest of Augusto Pinochet and the news of his return to Chile. By sharing their experiences, the group constructed a “cultural group narrative.” This refers to the specific Chilean characteristics of the participants such as: the common cultural and linguistic background, the traumatic experiences lived in Chile, the traumatic memories of those events, the forced exile, the adaptation process to a new language and culture, and the re-experiencing of traumatic memories and life events by the news of Augusto Pinochet’s arrest, his release and the period in between.

My analysis and interpretation of the individual and cultural group experience was presented to the participants individually for their comments and suggestions. These comments were added to the final analysis of the research process.

The Transcript

As a first part of the transcribing process and being aware of how the transcribing process is “incomplete, partial and selective,” (Riessman, 1993, p.11) I decided to transcribe the interviews as closely as I could to the tape recordings. The result was disappointing. I found the passion, the sadness, the emotions, the silences that made the interviews so real were missing. Frustrated with the results, I consulted with the participants about turning the transcripts into a story. Once I got their permission, I carefully edited some of the words and sentences, adding punctuation marks to keep it as close to the original as possible. I also removed any information

that could identify people or places. I also edited myself out of the stories to let their experiences stand on their own. Once it was completed, I presented them to the participants for their approval and to make changes or to add information if they desired. All of the participants were very excited about this new format. Four of them made changes and polished the text until they felt satisfied with it. The other two found that I had done a very good job in capturing their stories.

As for myself as a participant, I was also excited to have the chance to work on my own story. The process of transcribing my interview and then turning it into a story was an insightful learning experience. To hear my voice in the text, to rearrange words, to re-experience the emotions, to look at my experience from inside and out, to put the pieces together, to make sense of my own experience, was extremely healing. I realized seeing one's experience on paper generates a sort of validation, that makes the experience real and truthful. Furthermore, to know that my story, their stories, our stories, have escaped silence and oblivion makes the process the more meaningful.

Analysis

The narratives were analyzed using three interpretive narrative readings of the individual transcripts (Arvay, 1998). In the first reading I looked at all the components that made the content of the experience of hearing the news of the arrest of Pinochet – that is, the events, images, emotions and themes that emerged for the participants. The second reading looked at the meaning participants assigned to these events. The third reading focused on the participant's experience and its meaning in relation to others (family, *compañeros*, or society in general). These three levels of analysis were applied to the three different periods involved in the study, that is, the arrest, the release of Pinochet and the period in between. This model proved to be

very effective in capturing the cultural, political and traumatic experience and the many layers of meaning attached to these experiences.

The interview questionnaire was designed to capture these three periods to allow the participants to organize their memories within a specific time framework. In this way, I was hoping that the recollection of events, feelings, images and emotions were going to follow a sequence or at least guide our memory. I also took into account that these events happened more than two years ago.

Interpretation

One of the most challenges I faced as a participant and researcher was to allow myself to have a voice during the process. As a researcher, my commitment was to allow the participants to have also a voice. While in this process to ensure participants' voices to be heard, I realized the difficulties in accomplishing this. I have to acknowledge the fact that I as a researcher I decided what, how and who to study. As identified by Clandinin and Connelly (1998) "there are many questions about voice, both our voices as researchers and the voices of participants as we construct our research text."(p. 424). The issues around voice for both participants and researchers include not only what we decide to give a voice to, but also the silences both those we chose and those we are unaware of. As suggested by Denzin (1998) "in the social sciences there is only interpretation." (p. 500). While there are many realities in all aspects of life, so there are multiple interpretations of the same experience within one individual as new information is uncovered and further experiences lived. Interpretation becomes then "an artful political process" Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 481). Despite the fact that I attempted to have a participative process by including people's interpretations and opinions through the use of quotes, the reality is that the final products will be written in my own words based mostly on my interpretations. One of the ways in which I have compromised with myself in this internal

conflict of representation is by realizing that my voice as a participant and researcher is present in the text in different ways. Moreover, my belonging to a community of memory makes me believe that I am representing “our” collective experience, that is comprised of our many voices represented in the text.

The present study has been for me a form of cross-cultural journey. I conducted the interviews, talked to the participants and interpreted the narratives in Spanish. Once I had this emotional load of information, I immerse myself in the process to transform it into meaningful information in English. In retrospective I realized that the fact that writing the text in English helped me distance myself from the emotional attachments of the narratives, therefore it was easier to take the role of the researcher. I wonder though how different this study would be in Spanish?. Would my writing be different?.

The Cultural Group Narrative

The cultural group narrative was analyzed following the same format as the individual interviews. I applied the three levels of readings to the transcript of the individual stories that were presented by the participants in the first part of the group interview. I compared this analysis to the individual narratives, and I focused only on those aspects that added new information to the development of the group process. My purpose in doing this was to try to establish how the participants were creating a group narrative by taking cues from what was previously said and building on them. I used my own interpretation of this process to arrive at the conclusions that are outlined in Chapter five.

I had originally anticipated conducting a second group session in which I would have the possibility to present my interpretation and analysis of the first group interview. Unfortunately, this was not possible due to time constraints and availability issues of the participants. However, I was able to check this information with four of the six participants. I recognize the challenge

of having the group interpret and re-interpret their experience since this interpretation might be influenced by the impact of the first interview, the group interview or their desire to agree with the researcher's interpretation. However, I feel that adding new elements to the interpretation of group narrative enriches the process. But it also symbolizes the complexities of any meaning-making process.

Language Issues

The individual narratives, as well as the group cultural narrative were conducted in Spanish. The rationale for this was that many people might not speak English or feel comfortable enough expressing complex emotions in a second language, and that would affect the group experience. Furthermore, the power of being able to express one's emotions comes from the safety and control one can exercise in the mother tongue. The psychologist James Pennebaker suggests that speaking in a second language in which people do not have many words or phrases to describe emotions puts people at a major disadvantage in talking and processing trauma (King & Holden, 1998).

Likewise, Catherine Kohler Riessman cautions researchers analyzing narratives of Spanish-speaking participants of the danger of conforming to the linear, temporally ordered structure taken as normal in Western, industrial, countries, as opposed to the sequential, episodic fashion in which Spanish-speaking people structure a story (cited in McLeod, 1997, p. 49).

The analysis of the individual and group narratives was also done in Spanish and later translated into English. I asked a member of the Chilean community to review my analysis and interpretation of the study in order to check for cultural accuracy.

Criteria for Evaluating the Worth of the Study

Currently, there is no standard way to evaluate the worth of narrative research and particularly a combined individual and group methodology like the one I have designed. Catherine Kohler Riessman (1993) warns us of the difficulties of evaluating narratives, given that individuals construct very different narratives about the same event. Furthermore, “describing complex and troubling events *should* vary because the past is a selective reconstruction.” (p.64). For this study, I have evaluated its worth by assessing persuasiveness, coherence and pragmatic usefulness.

Persuasiveness

Persuasiveness helps us identify whether the interpretation is reasonable and convincing. Given the nature of the events and the particular population of my study, my goal in achieving persuasiveness is twofold: first, that the interpretation is convincing and resonates with the experience of other members of the Chilean community; second, that the interpretation is reasonable and compels the general reader to open him/herself to the stories of the participants. Given the specific traumatic components of the experiences being portrayed, one cannot expect the general reader to imagine having lived the events under study; however, the socio-political background and the theoretical claims that support the informants’ narratives assisted me in attempting persuasiveness. As Riessman (1993) states, “What may be the most persuasive interpretation of a narrative text at one historical moment may not be later. Our texts have unstable meanings.” (p. 66).

Coherence

Coherence refers to the narrator's goals and structure, to what the narrator is intending to say. Agar and Hobbs (cited in Riessman, 1993) have developed a coherence criterion. They describe three types of narrative coherence: global, local and themal. Global coherence refers "to the overall goal a narrator is trying to accomplish by speaking. . .to justify an action." (Riessman, 1993, p. 67) Local coherence is what a narrator is trying to effect in the narrative itself, such as the use of linguistic devices to demonstrate how the different parts of the story are related. Themal coherence relates to the content, that is, how "chunks of interview text about particular themes figure importantly and repeatedly." (Riessman, 1993, p. 67).

Although it has been argued that coherence is a subjective criterion (Arvay, 1998) and difficult to apply (Riessman, 1993), I find this particular set of criteria fits the political and cultural background of the participants for a number of reasons. Global coherence is seen throughout the participants' stories in their claims for justice and vindication. Local coherence is also articulated by some participants in relation to their traumatic experiences and how they try to affect the overall narrative. Finally, themal coherence is clearly demonstrated through some of the stories. This might be related to the sequenciality of the Spanish language or by the emotionality of the traumatic events being discussed.

For the purpose of this research project, I have designed a coherence criterion by conducting a two-level peer review. The first was conducted by the participants once the narratives were transcribed in Spanish. (The participants were able to judge whether or not the constructed narratives were coherent). The second was conducted by a member of Chilean community who helped me review the narratives to ensure coherence and cultural accuracy.

Pragmatic Usefulness

Pragmatic usefulness refers to how this study could be personally meaningful for the participants and for the research community, particularly scholars investigating similar issues in Chile or elsewhere. This criteria “is future-oriented and collective and assumes the socially constructed nature of science.” (Riessman, 1993, p. 68). Furthermore, pragmatic usefulness also refers to whether the findings of this study inspire action among participants. A pragmatic criterion was established by the participants themselves in their comments about being engaged in this research project. As Riessman (1993) points out, “Social movements aid individuals to aid their injuries, connect with others and engage in political action.” (p. 4) One of the participants has already started writing his autobiography. Another participant has approached me to work collaboratively on a research paper to look at similarities and differences in our experiences during the dictatorship and in exile. A couple of participants suggested the need to have community gatherings where we can talk about our experiences during the coup d’etat, the dictatorship and in exile. They also mentioned the need to reconstruct and maintain our history, especially for the second generation, through plays or skits, video nights and cultural events. The need to honor and dignify the memory of those *compañeros* and *compañeras* who disappeared or died during the coup d’etat, the dictatorship, or in exile has also been identified. As for myself as a participant and researcher, I am extremely motivated to continue this line of research, and I hope to present the research findings to the academic communities of both North and South America.

Finally, Riessman (1993) suggests that “returning our interpretation back to the communities is also politically important.” (p. 66) I find this point particularly relevant to the Chilean community since trust and the use and abuse of information are of great concern for people. Therefore, I am hoping to bring the results of this study to the community through workshops and public presentations.

Limitations of the Study

Given the different components that made up the research question that is, individual trauma, secondary trauma, socio-political collective trauma, recollection of individual memories, and traumatic collective memories, the present study can only shed some light into the complexity of these issues and how they interrelate.

Having a much larger number of participants and a more collaborative group process would have been ideal. However, the diversity of the group in terms of political experience (political militancy), lived experience (exile, jail, torture, living through the dictatorship) and generational differences provided sufficient information to initiate a process of reconstruction and interpretation of the phenomena under study.

This research study attempted to investigate the link between personal meaning and the construction of traumatic group memories. The results demonstrate the need to incorporate other disciplines such as history, political science and anthropology in the investigation of complex individual and collective process.

From a trauma / healing perspective, the present study also pointed out the need to expand the field of research into the individual and collective experiences of those people who were involved in perpetrating the abuses of human rights described by the participants.

Lastly, due to the narrow scope of the sample, the specific topic, and the particular characteristics of the community studied, this research does not allow a generalization of the phenomena investigated to other communities or events. Nevertheless, the present study indicates that learning and focusing on a particular event, on a particular community, can have important implications for other traumatized communities and their healing processes.

CHAPTER 4

PARTICIPANTS' EXPERIENCES: THE NARRATIVES

In this chapter, I will introduce the participants as well as our narratives. I have decided to leave the narratives in Spanish and present instead translated excerpt to illustrate the themes and their analysis. The reason for this is that I did not want to change or modify the power of our stories by translating them. The only exception is my own narrative that was originally done in English.

The participants were six people including myself. Three women and three men. The ages of the participants fluctuate between early 40's and late 60's. All of us lived in Santiago, the capital of Chile at the time of the coup d'etat. Most of the participants except one have been militants in different left-wing political parties. One person came to Canada directly from jail right after the coup d'etat. Others came later as a result of the dictatorship. After talking to the participants I have decided not to include any identifying personal information to protect them, and to ensure maximum confidentiality.

Leila's Experience

El Arresto de Pinochet

Me parece que yo lo escuché por la CBC: Pinochet había sido detenido en Londres por un auto que había puesto el juez español Garzón, de España, y un poco ya sabíamos de las diligencias que el juez había venido haciendo, porque existía ya en la INTERPOL una orden de detención para una élite, creo que eran doce chilenos que habían sido colaboradores del gobierno dictatorial, a quienes el juez le interesaba interrogar; habían sido promotores del golpe de estado, otros habían sido encubridores de lo que había sido la política represiva de Pinochet durante los

17 años. De todas maneras, vino como tremenda sorpresa que Inglaterra se hiciera cargo de una diligencia de ese tipo y que detuviera a Pinochet. El sentimiento fue de alegría, de alegría porque era la esperanza de justicia, había un sentimiento de que por fin se hacía justicia, por fin tendremos la oportunidad de decirle a este señor, por fin este individuo se va enterar de que el resto del mundo no estuvo nunca de acuerdo con el golpe de estado, que no lo aplaudió, que nadie lo apoyó realmente, y que lo que él hizo no era un ejemplo y que el resto del mundo no se levantaba a aplaudir. Entonces fue como, no sé, ganar confianza nuevamente, en que era posible hacer justicia, que se abrían nuevas puertas para todos, para nosotros los chilenos en especial, pero también esperanza en el sentido de que ante los crímenes de esta magnitud cometidos por la dictadura militar, el mundo, el resto de la comunidad internacional no estaba dispuesta a hacerse a un lado. Y eso era motivador, esperanzador, como decir la celebración de la vida, el derecho a vivir, el derecho a celebrar por último el derecho a que todos tengamos la misma posibilidad de hacer justicia. Tal vez estoy siendo un tanto idealista porque en realidad en la vida cotidiana muchos podemos aspirar a eso, pero las realidades son distintas porque la gente de izquierda es perseguida no importa donde esté, aunque no sea perseguida por una policía secreta o por la policía, pero si en general entre los individuos comunes y corrientes se encargan de reprimir, de reprobar, de juzgar, de menospreciar opiniones que son contrarias a lo que el sistema establece; pero en fin, esa fue mi sentimiento inicial: que bueno, por fin le vamos a decir a este señor que él es un individuo más, que él no es Dios, que él no es superior a ninguno de nosotros, que podemos llevarlo a la corte, podemos juzgarlo y podemos saber lo que no sabemos hasta hoy día.

Yo perdí a muchos compañeros, amigos, gente común y corriente, en el sentido de que no eran perfectos, como individuos, como personas; sin embargo era gente muy noble, ellos dieron su vida por lo que ellos creían, trabajaron antes y durante el gobierno de Allende por una sociedad distinta, como todos nosotros.

Recordando el recital de Inti-Illimani, es decir, cuando Inti-Illimani comenzó. El Inti-Illimani fue para nosotros, tanto como el Quilapayún, expresiones de una vida distinta, una expresión cultural de tipo popular que recogía el sentir de un movimiento obrero, de los jóvenes estudiantes, de las mujeres; se abría en ese aspecto todo un camino en la creación y la búsqueda de nuestra música y nuestro canto, una puerta inmensa que se abría para todos nosotros. Entonces como todos los jóvenes nos sentíamos motivados a participar en esto de la justicia social, en esto de crear un ambiente más positivo, un ambiente en el que todos pudiéramos participar, que nuestra voz también fuera escuchada, entonces en ese contexto mis amigos, mis compañeros siguieron luego del golpe de estado. Y así fue como perdieron sus vidas, compañeros, estudiantes, digamos igual que yo verdad, que dejaron sus vidas y sus futuros como profesionales, todo quedó suspendido por seguir sus convicciones, gente de izquierda muy comprometida.

Recordé a los distintos compañeros muertos, muertos en la calle, detenidos y muertos en tortura, compañeros que murieron en enfrentamientos con la policía secreta y otros que fueron llevados detenidos desde sus casas y en otros lugares y que luego murieron. Eso fue lo más atroz, lo más cruel y despiadado que puede existir, odio, odio, mucho odio, gente trastocada en sus valores. Yo diría que en esos momentos sentí como un flashback de hechos, de cosas que ocurrieron poquitos días o en los días siguientes, en esos días después del golpe, me recuerdo en la casa de mis tíos estábamos tomando once, septiembre, imagínate, 5 o 6 de la tarde un día iluminado con solcito como son los días de primavera en Chile, y entonces en el mero día las avionetas. Me acordé de una vez, me parece que fue sábado por la tarde; también de un helicóptero que disparaba a la población, a qué específicamente, a quiénes específicamente no te puedo decir porque tal vez estaríamos a cinco, seis cuadras de distancia pero podíamos ver perfectamente un helicóptero disparando hacia la gente, me imagino. Este barrio donde estaba la casa, es uno de los barrios más populares y donde tal vez habría mayor concentración de gente de

izquierda y estaba relativamente cerca de donde está la casa hacia el lado del poniente y esta población está al lado del oriente; no podría decirte y si era precisamente allí, pero en todo caso esas imágenes las tengo hasta el día de hoy; cada vez que escucho el ruido del motor de una avioneta no puedo evitar esos recuerdos.

Recuerdos de la humillación que sufrimos, del sentimiento de aislamiento, de sentirse perseguido, de sentirse que no valíamos nada, todos esos sentimientos que fueron implantados en nuestra mente por una prolongada campaña de la TV, de la radio, de los diarios y del ambiente en general que se vivía, de hacernos sentir insignificantes. Entonces el hecho de que el Pinochet de repente apareciera detenido en Londres, era como la tremenda reivindicación; el sentimiento fue liberador, el hecho de que él estuviera allí era como que ahora podíamos hacerlo sentir un poco de la incertidumbre que nosotros pasamos, y además exigirle explicaciones. También lo sentí el año 90 recién. Había salido Aylwin elegido (presidente) y él dijo algo que a mí me impactó muchísimo, te quiero decir que no comparto para nada el pensamiento de Aylwin, siempre lo vi como un mojigato, o sea sus intereses y su agenda escondida, nunca me pareció un hombre honesto, abierto; más allá de que yo no compartiera sus puntos de vista, siempre me pareció que él tenía una carta escondida siempre debajo de la manga, pero en ese instante él dijo algo que me pareció importante, porque él dijo, o sea, en el fondo yo creo que como que intentó reivindicarnos, en el sentido de que dijo, habló de los chilenos en el exilio y entonces dijo algo así como que ellos también tienen derecho a vivir en Chile. Y entonces eso era sin meterse en el ámbito político y sin entrar a analizar nada, él rescató el hecho de que éramos chilenos, tan chilenos como los que vivían en Chile. Y luego por supuesto el funeral de Allende. Eso fue como cerrar el círculo de lo que había sido nuestra vida hace 17 años atrás en un instante, y volver a vivir lo que habíamos dejado escondido y guardado durante muchísimo tiempo, porque eso fue, es que, como que lo que vivimos hasta el golpe de estado era una realidad tan increíble y tan brutal, pero a su vez volver a Chile y presenciar y ser parte del

funeral, de poder darle curso al rito, al acto final de la vida. Ver el féretro de Allende era una realidad conmovedora, impresionante, era traerte todos los recuerdos a través de tu vida, era, como decirte esto, como película surrealista, no es un sueño, esto no lo es, no lo estoy imaginando, es real, está aquí, este es Allende, este es su cuerpo, este es su féretro, allí estamos todos, la gente en las ventanas y las calles llenas de gente, gente, mucha gente que quería rendir homenaje a Salvador Allende, y era un día de trabajo, y por lo mismo no sé cómo la gente podía estar allí, porque obviamente allí no éramos todos exiliados los que estábamos, la gente que había era gente de mi edad, gente más mayor que yo incluso, jóvenes también, pero jóvenes que habían aprendido sobre el gobierno de Allende a través de sus padres, de sus abuelos, de sus tíos. Conmovedor por supuesto, yo estaba con unos compañeros y estábamos varios allí, varios exiliados, exiliados que habían vivido en México, exiliados que venían de Europa, de Alemania, gente que había salido, habían sido presos políticos, habían sido expulsados del país, habían vuelto, es decir los que allí estábamos, veinte personas mas o menos, cada uno de nosotros tenía una historia que contar al respecto. Lloramos a moco tendido porque una parte fue recordar todo lo que habíamos vivido, pero otra importante fue el hecho de ver Allende en el rito final de la vida, el hecho de enterrarlo finalmente y enterrar con él los sueños, el sueño que habíamos tenido durante casi cuatro años de crear una sociedad más justa.

Terrible fue el aspecto mismo del entierro porque por alguna extraña razón, por alguna condenada razón, la familia de Salvador Allende decidió hacer lo que a mi juicio fue el funeral más injusto que yo haya visto, porque lo que yo creo que nosotros recibimos, los seguidores y tal vez no de Salvador Allende mismo, no de su figura porque Salvador Allende no era nuestro líder, no éramos allendistas, éramos miembros de distintos partidos políticos que teníamos una ideología en común y pensábamos que Allende era el vehículo, era el líder en el sentido de abrirnos las puertas para algo mejor de lo que Allende nos estaba ofreciendo. La verdad es que junto con él nosotros también pagamos la cuenta, es decir, veamos los números y fijémonos en

los muertos, en los desaparecidos y hago diferencia, porque cuando hablamos de muertos no solamente fueron los que murieron en la tortura o desaparecieron, sino que fueron fusilados, los que murieron en enfrentamientos, porque sí recordamos los compañeros que se atrevieron a enfrentarse al ejército. Los que murieron en allanamientos, la gente que murió ejecutada en la calle, si hablamos de los muertos solamente por el hecho de ser obreros. Si hablamos de todos los que perdieron la vida, también de los exiliados, es decir la cuenta es mayúscula, nosotros junto con él pagamos por lo que creímos y de eso no cabe duda. Sin embargo, la señora Hortensia tiene la desvergüenza de decir que nosotros tenemos una tremenda deuda con Salvador Allende, como que si nosotros hubiésemos obligado a Salvador a ser quien fue, él lo decidió, individuo adulto, consciente de sus actitudes, de sus principios y valores, de su compromiso, tomó la actitud que tomó y tomó el compromiso que él asumió hasta el día en que él decidió morir por lo que creía y junto con muchos otros que lo acompañaron en La Moneda. Por supuesto que me merece todo el respeto del mundo, pero lo que no me merece respeto es el hecho que más encima de todo lo que hemos vivido, esta señora aparezca con semejante declaración. El funeral de Allende, desde el punto de vista de nosotros los seguidores, de sus compañeros de lucha, compañeros, desde el punto de vista de quienes compartimos sus ideas o de quienes fuimos más allá de sus ideas, fue un desastre, que te puedo decir, que yo vi la cara de los obreros. Lamentablemente no tenía en ese instante una cámara fotográfica y ni siquiera se me ocurrió llevarla, es decir si te hubiera podido mostrar esos rostros (con emoción) ¡de desesperación! ¡de desesperación! por tocar el féretro de Allende, allí iba su sueño y no hubo oportunidad de poder decirle aquí estamos contigo, y estaba allí tan cerca, con un poco de respeto por el pueblo de Chile, por lo que había vivido todos esos años, por los jóvenes que allí estaban y estaban porque sus padres, sus abuelos les había enseñado quién fue Salvador Allende. Para quienes estuvo Allende, para los representantes de Europa, para los representantes de Latinoamérica, de algunos otros gobiernos invitados, fantástico; gente que solidarizó con

nosotros, por supuesto que debían estar ahí, se lo merecían, pero a nosotros nos dejaron las migajas, cuando Allende era tan nuestro como lo era de su familia, y eso es lo que yo reclamo, es decir, ya no hay una segunda oportunidad, ahora Allende lo puedes ir a ver a su tumba, no pudimos demostrarle, es decir en las calles de Santiago, en las calles que alguna vez fueron ocupadas por él y por nosotros en las concentraciones multitudinarias a las que tantas veces asistimos a escuchar sus discursos. Claro, quien podría poner en duda que Allende era la figura.

Pagamos tributo acompañándolo en esos segundos, porque el auto, desde que salió desde Viña del Mar hasta que llegó al Cementerio General, te voy a decir que fueron solamente segundos, porque no hubo instante en que ese auto bajara la velocidad para poder ver el féretro de Salvador Allende, un auto que no sé si vendría a 60 o 70 kilómetros por hora, pero era una burla, en mi opinión era una burla. Sin embargo la señora Tencha se apuró en ponerle alfombra roja cuando llegó el féretro de Salvador Allende a la entrada del cementerio para que el señor Aylwin dijera con todas sus palabras que él no se arrepentía de lo que había hecho durante el gobierno de Allende. Pero si él fue su principal opositor, digamos salvó su valentía de haberse atrevido a decir delante de todos nosotros lo que él dijo, pero era un insulto venir a decirle a un individuo que ya está muerto y que pagó con su vida lo que él creyó y enfrente de todos estos dignatarios. El dijo sin ningún problema que él no se arrepiente de haber hecho lo que hizo. El fue también uno de los promotores de la pérdida de la democracia en Chile, él dirigió la asonada derechista, él azuzó al ejército, pero en fin, todos estos sentimientos, todas estas cosas mezcladas, mezcla de hechos que ocurrieron durante estos días en que Pinochet fue detenido...

Con la gente que yo conversaba nadie, ninguno creía que el Pinocho fuera a durar más de una semana detenido en Londres. Yo no lo veía así tan simple, me parecía que los ingleses no podían ser tan malditos en realidad, no podrían deshacerse del paquete tan fácilmente y dejar en libertad a Pinochet y que bueno que no ocurrió, que bueno que en Chile quedó la embarrada y la derecha decía esto, y la izquierda decía lo otro, y la Democracia Cristiana decía no sé cuánto, y

provocó una crisis tremenda y me pareció excelente lo que pasó. Porque yo creo que no hay pueblo que pueda curar sus heridas si no enfrenta sus problemas. A mí me parecería tan sano, independientemente que uno vio actitudes pansas, declaraciones realmente condenables, pero en momentos de crisis uno conoce a la gente. Además de eso provocó que en Chile hubiera un movimiento tal, que de verdad se abrieran las puertas para que Pinochet fuera juzgado en Chile. Todas las declaraciones que se hacían en torno a que Chile era capaz de juzgar al dictador, pero que bueno que estaba ocurriendo, aunque no lo metan preso no me importa, si lo meten preso o no, no era lo mas importante. No me importa si el Pinocho va y por último si se muere en un hospital, en una cómoda cama, no me interesa. Lo que sí me interesa es que este señor escuche lo que su gobierno significó. Nunca él, ni ahora ni mañana, ni la derecha, jamás van a asumir la responsabilidad que les corresponde, pero nosotros sí sabemos que el golpe de estado no solamente significó muertos, desaparecidos y exiliados; significó el cambio de una mentalidad en Chile, significó un cambio de los valores culturales, significó el cambio de las prioridades del individuo común, significó cambios económicos profundos, dejó como lastre una población con problemas sicológicos que perduraran por muchos años y eso es el trauma colectivo, el cambio de su rutina cotidiana, el estrés acumulado en la población, de no saber cómo sobrevivirá, cómo sobrevivirán sus hijos, sus nietos, las implicaciones económicas, sociales, culturales que ha tenido el golpe de estado. Tal vez algún día se haga una evaluación exacta de las implicancias del golpe de estado.

La vida es una Caja de Pandora en realidad; uno nunca sabe lo que va a ocurrir y a veces la vida se encarga de darnos unas lecciones pero tremendas y yo creo que para Pinochet no debe haber habido cosa más terrible que haber caído preso nada menos que en Londres, fíjate tú lo que eso significa. Primero, o sea, tiene doble implicancia porque él ayudó a los ingleses en la Guerra de las Malvinas. Qué cosa más terrible que los mismos ingleses que él poco menos que se sentía que era amigo personal de la reina Isabel poco menos, y resulta que es como el pago de Chile,

tremendamente cruel en el sentido de que él por un lado ayudó a los ingleses y por otro lado los mismos ingleses lo tienen que detener, por la aberración del golpe de estado, sus excesos. A su vez tiene el otro tremendo castigo, una cantidad increíble de exiliados que viven en Europa se coluden, además de eso, para celebrar con el apoyo del pueblo inglés, de los franceses, de los italianos, de los españoles, pueblos que han compartido nuestro exilio, que han sabido de nuestras luchas, de nuestros sufrimientos, del apoyo que dimos a nuestros compañeros a través de las organizaciones políticas y sociales, la denuncia de lo que Pinochet estaba haciendo en nuestro país. Qué cosa más terrible para un hombre que la incertidumbre; él habrá estado en una casa maravillosa y habrá podido ir adonde quisiera, y podía pretender que él burlaba a medio mundo, pero él no podía controlar lo que iba a ocurrir al día siguiente. Exactamente la misma sensación que tuvimos nosotros cuando estuvimos presos, no saber, no tener control de nuestra vida y Pinochet en su casa fabulosa y le ocurrió exactamente lo mismo. El no sabía cuál iba a ser su destino. Yo creo que esa lección no se le va a olvidar. El instinto de conservación, de sobrevivir, es una condición inherente al ser humano y el hombre en algún momento tuvo que haber pensado en cuál sería su futuro, tiene que haber sufrido, tiene que haber sentido esa inseguridad, el temor, el miedo de depender de otros individuos más poderosos que él.

Lo que yo teuento es mi percepción personal de lo que yo viví, cierto, y cuando digo nosotros es porque yo no estaba sola, había tanta gente conmigo compartiendo este sentimiento, estas cosas que yo te he contado no son producto de una conversación con el resto, no estoy recogiendo lo que los demás sintieron o vivieron en ese instante, sino que yo te estoy diciendo lo que yo sentí. Tal vez te puedo decir que muy en lo personal, muy nerviosa, muy ansiosa me puso todo esto. Me recuerdo que en ese momento llegó un amigo, cuando yo estaba escribiendo una carta al Straw pidiéndole que nunca por ningún motivo dejara ir a Pinochet. Entonces cuando le mostré la carta a mi amigo me dijo, óyeme, tus ideas no están para nada claras. Te vas de aquí del timbo al tambo y eso me comprobó a mí que en realidad yo trababa de mantenerme

emocionalmente, es decir apoyarme en algo que me diera alguna estabilidad. Yo estaba nerviosa, nerviosa y ansiosa porque yo creo que quería mantener la esperanza, verdad, la esperanza de que los ingleses no se hicieran cómplices sino que recogieran nuestro pedido, se hicieran partícipes de lo que nosotros soñábamos, aunque nosotros no nos propusimos nunca, o sea yo personalmente jamás pensé que esto iba a ocurrir, nunca creí que Pinochet algún día iba a parar en una corte respondiendo por sus crímenes. Y así fue cuando salió Aylwin presidente y cuanto salió Frei presidente; nunca fue un tema de discusión el asunto de Pinochet. En algún momento algo se dijo por ahí, muy tibiamente; pero realmente nadie en su sano juicio hubiera creído que eso iba a ser realidad, que Aylwin de verdad iba a llevar a Pinochet a algún juicio o algún tipo, digamos, de reprimendas por lo que había ocurrido, alguna crítica, alguna condenación nunca estuvo en discusión, nunca ocurrió y Frei tampoco. Entonces esto viene así como la gran sorpresa, porque fue una tremenda sorpresa; después de todo, si ni siquiera el Pinocho estaba oficialmente en Inglaterra. Así que los ingleses perfectamente hubieran podido haberse hecho a un lado del pedido de los españoles, de Garzón, sin embargo sí lo recogen y eso tiene un valor tremendo para nosotros, un valor tremendo para la humanidad también, porque luego viene el juicio del Malosovich y de toda esta otra gente. Claro, no estamos dispuestos a hacernos cargo de sus crímenes, no estamos dispuestos a hacernos los lesos. Lo curioso es que también en otros tiempos, antes de que ocurriera el golpe de estado, generalmente en los países como que no hacían eco ni solidarizaban con los problemas de éste o el de más allá; cuando más proveían asilo para los perseguidos, pero no había como una intromisión en los asuntos de otros países. Sin embargo, cuando ocurre el golpe de estado en Chile la actitud de Europa fue enseguida condenatoria a lo que había ocurrido y abrieron sus puertas con dificultad y todo porque no todos fuimos a parar a Europa; muchos otros países, afortunadamente para nosotros, nos dieron la oportunidad de poder salir, nos aceptaron. Sin embargo esa lucecita, esa velita de esperanza que se encendía en ese instante era vital, yo creo, para la sobrevivencia de todos

nosotros, para la esperanza de justicia.

El Período entre el Arresto y el Retorno de Pinochet

Siempre hay esperanza siempre que lo mantengan allí, veíamos que políticos viajaban a verlo a Londres, que otros iban a conversar con los lores, que otros hacían declaraciones en Chile, y éste iba a España, y una serie de negociaciones iban y venían, y siempre existía el temor que al Pinocho lo devolvieran a Chile, pero a pesar de todo eso, tuvo buenos resultados en el sentido de que se abrieron las puertas en Chile para hacer un juicio, investigar lo que había ocurrido, investigación que sigue y no sé a dónde va a parar, pero lo que sea que se logre hacer es positivo. Donde sea que se logre llegar y descubrir, que la gente logre recuperar aunque sea un solo cuerpo, siempre será positivo y yo creo que eso fue lo que logró el Juez Garzón. Y qué simbólico resulta todo esto, porque nuevamente España, nuestra Madre Patria, juega un papel importante en el asunto este y no quiero hacer ninguna otra implicación política, porque podemos decir mucho al respecto de lo que España significó en la conquista de nuestro país, en la conquista de Latinoamérica y no quiero entrar en nada, nada más que el simple hecho de que España se haya hecho eco de esto; a mí me parece significativo que ellos hayan estado dispuestos a enfrentar una cosa de este tipo; a mí me parece que tiene un significado especial.

Yo creo que en mi vida claro que me afectó, porque por su puesto que estaba pendiente de qué es lo que estaba ocurriendo en Chile, ocurriendo en Londres, los exiliados, en fin, qué es lo que estaban haciendo en Europa, y tratando de conectarme con la gente en Europa saber qué se podía hacer aquí en Canadá ¿verdad? Claro, todo eso era importante.

El Retorno de Pinochet a Chile

La noticia del retorno de Pinochet fue menos impactante porque era algo que yo

esperaba; de alguna forma tenía que considerar esta posibilidad dentro de las alternativas. Pero desilusión, sí, desilusión. Me dieron ganas de decir qué maricones los ingleses, por qué lo devuelven. Desilusión el hecho que lo devolvieran a Chile, porque yo no hubiera puesto mis manos al fuego que el Juez Juan Guzmán fuera a hacer algo verdaderamente decente, los diarios y la televisión, la radio y todo el mundo le dio bastante apoyo, todo era parte del juego político (absolutamente desconocido), tanto apoyo, pero siempre pensando que este caballero no se va atrever, porque realmente el monto de lo que se le viene encima es monstruoso, en el sentido de las implicancias legales que todo esto tiene, lo que significa, y en lo personal, es decir, por más que digan que la DINA haya desaparecido, el Servicio de Inteligencia Militar sigue existiendo y si el día de mañana deciden pegarle un tiro a Juan Guzmán no tengo la menor duda que lo van a hacer, entonces, obviamente pensé hasta dónde este señor está dispuesto a llegar. Hasta qué punto el gobierno está dispuesto a apoyarlo, hasta qué punto este señor va a contar con el respaldo necesario; entonces pensé por último en el mejor de los casos este caballero va a durar un par de meses, y aquí va a quedar todo, porque después de todo esto es para decirle a los europeos, los ingleses, que sí somos capaces, que somos lo suficientemente civilizados para hacer un juicio más o menos decente en Chile. Y no lo pongo en duda que lo seamos; Chile tiene capacidad para eso, pero que haya disposición, que haya voluntad, que haya un verdadero compromiso con la idea de justicia, eso es otra historia porque los gringos estaban metidos allí, el gobierno norteamericano. Yo no tengo la menor duda que presionaron a los ingleses para que no se hiciera el juicio en España, porque muchísima ropa sucia se iba a ventilar. Además de eso, estoy segura que la Concertación no es una casualidad en Chile, o sea no quiero negar tampoco la importancia de las protestas en Chile, del trabajo constante de la Izquierda y de otros sectores más progresistas, y también de gente que estaba cansada de la dictadura. También de gente que vio su oportunidad de escalar posiciones en política dentro de la Democracia Cristiana, pero en realidad quién aquí ha ganado si, hablamos de la Concertación, son los grupos de derecha en la

Democracia Cristiana y de la izquierda más conservadora, esa es la Concertación, pero independientemente de todo lo anterior, lo ganaron haciendo “lobby” delante de la embajada norteamericana, garantizando al gobierno gringo que eran gente de confianza: nosotros nos comprometemos con ustedes y dentro de los compromisos está obviamente la seguridad y el bienestar de Pinochet. Después de todo, el golpe de estado fue financiado por la CIA y el Pentágono. Yo estoy sorprendida porque los norteamericanos (el gobierno) frente a sus títeres ha sido ‘que bueno que me ayudaste, que bueno que estuviste conmigo’, pero ahora ‘si te conozco no me acuerdo’.

Revisemos el Sha de Irán, veamos con Ferdinand Marcos, o con el mismo Somoza, en fin, con cuántos otros amigos que el gobierno norteamericano ha tenido y que en el momento de los los “quiubos” los ha declarado persona no grata. Noriega, ese es el caso más asqueroso, entre otros, que tampoco dejan de serlo, sin embargo por eso llegó la Concertación, está donde está justamente por eso, porque le proveyeron de pruebas suficientes al Pentágono y a la CIA de que sí iban a respetar los derechos de Pinochet, su integridad moral.

Había que hacer algo decente, significativo, importante, que hubiera espacio suficiente para cumplir con las formalidades del caso y los 16 meses dieron espacio para todo eso; que bueno que hubo esos 16 meses, que al final de cuentas las negociaciones en algún punto tenían que coincidir, de eso no cabía la menor duda. Que la justicia inglesa se había comprometido, pero desilusionante en el sentido que no haya sido juzgado en España, no porque Chile no tenga la capacidad sino simplemente porque en España hubiese sido menos cargado de emociones, hubiese sido tal vez más lógico, más imparcial en el sentido de no taparle a Pinochet nada, porque los españoles no tenían ningún compromiso con Pinochet y tampoco con nosotros, sino saber la verdad, qué pasó no solamente con la gente que murió de origen europeo en Chile, sino de cuál fue el principio en el que se basó tanta destrucción, qué era lo que se vivía también dentro del ejército y de las otras cositas que los yanquis jamás han querido decir, de qué fue lo

que ellos hicieron algo se sabe, pero obviamente no se sabe todo. Y no porque Chile no tuviera capacidad, pero sé que el gobierno chileno va hacer todo lo posible por tapar algunas cosas que la Derecha chilena no quiere que se sepan y hasta dónde la Derecha estuvo involucrada en el golpe de estado, hasta dónde llegaron en sus compromisos y en sus negociaciones, en la planificación y en la cooperación con la CIA respecto del golpe de estado. Entonces no se quiere que se sepa cuál fue el papel de los Ministros de Justicia, del Secretario General de Gobierno, del Ministro del Interior, en lo que ocurrió durante los 17 años de dictadura. La Ministra de Justicia no está interesada en que se sepa lo que ella como Ministro de Justicia hizo durante la dictadura del Pinochet, y no está interesada porque seguro que va a quedar en ridículo.

El único pensamiento que yo tuve al saber de su retorno fue este señor Guzmán es un nombre que le dieron a los europeos para garantizarles que sí, que en Chile se va a llevar a cabo el juicio, pero vamos a ver hasta dónde este señora va a llegar, es decir, para mí es un nuevo show, un nuevo montaje. El tiempo me probó que estaba equivocada, es decir, no ha sido todo lo perfecto que pudo haber sido pero seguramente que ha ido muchísimo más lejos de lo que cualquier hubiera creído, ha sido en realidad una sorpresa, una sorpresa en el sentido de que este caballero se comprometió mucho más, estaba dispuesto hacer mucho más de lo que nosotros hubiéramos podido imaginar.

Durante todo este tiempo, desde el punto de vista de lo que a uno le queda en la cabeza, le queda como implantado, como impreso, yo diría un hecho inicial, verdad, primero si volvemos al sueño, al sueño ese que nosotros teníamos de crear una sociedad distinta, de habernos sentido tan importantes, de habernos sentido que por primera vez podíamos participar de las decisiones del gobierno, pero como colectivo, como estudiantes, trabajadores, dueñas de casa, profesionales, en fin lo que fuéramos y en el lugar donde estábamos y en el momento nos vimos activos, nos vimos participando, nos vimos opinando, nos vimos que éramos los actores, promotores de toda una discusión al respecto de lo que queríamos hacer, de lo que soñamos,

cómo nos proyectamos, cómo veíamos a nuestro país, en una riqueza de expresiones culturales, del teatro, la música, era un pueblo movilizado, participando en organizaciones. Por ejemplo, si recordamos las organizaciones de Junta de Vecinos, de los Cordones Industriales, las JAPS, las organizaciones estudiantiles, profesionales, era un pueblo opinando, un pueblo buscando nuevas formas de organización, un pueblo discrepando, peleando si túquieres, en fin, un pueblo sano, aprendiendo, asumiendo la responsabilidad en el sentido de decir de esto me hago cargo, de esto me hago responsable. Y de repente viene una violencia, una fuerza brutal, desconocida, llena de odio, con unos deseos de destrucción no sólo física, sino de destrucción de nuestros valores, la destrucción de nuestra identidad, es decir que todo lo que es nacional, de todo lo que es nuestro idioma, nuestra música, nuestro canto, de todo lo que se hace en este país, de todo lo que es chileno, entonces nos destruye, como individuos nos destruye porque ahí está nuestra identidad, nuestra creencia, esto es para nosotros importante, y esta fuerza se encarga de destruir todo eso que nosotros hemos logrado rescatar, porque nuestro país, como el resto de Latinoamérica, fue influenciado por esta idea de EUA, que la música en inglés, que había que vestirse como las jovencitas en EUA y las marcas y que sé yo. Esta idea horrible de implantar una cultura universal, un individuo sin historia, sin cultura propia. Todo esto que la Derecha con dinero en el bolsillo, porque la Derecha también hay entre la gente de clase media y también dentro de algunos sectores más pobres que creen que ser de la Derecha es ser gente decente, es decir, la ignorancia abarca mucha gente. Bueno, nosotros habíamos rescatado esa identidad nacional, esos valores que eran propios de nuestra cultura y los habíamos puesto como los verdaderos valores, esto somos nosotros, una mezcla de españoles con nativo, ya sea mapuche, quechua, aimará, lo que sea, pero esta es nuestra identidad y esto somos nosotros, y lo rescatamos, difundimos y nos sentimos orgullosos de esa identidad. Bueno, esta fuerza la destruyó, nos hizo trizas el sueño, y nos dijo más encima que éramos unos delincuentes y éramos unos flojos, borrachos y que las mujeres éramos unas putas, y entonces, después de haber sido una fuerza

importante, pasamos a ser perseguidos, humillados, torturados, ultrajados, y más encima nos tuvimos que ir y dejar nuestros amigos, nuestras familias, y también el suelo a donde pertenecíamos. Todo ese mundo que nosotros entendíamos como nuestro. Nuestra pertenencia a ese pedazo de tierra, nuestra ligazón con nuestro mundo desapareció para irnos a otro país, y comenzar toda la lucha por rescatar nuestra identidad, nuestra identidad en las peores condiciones, digo peores condiciones porque en esos países cualquiera fuera había una mentalidad distinta, una cultura distinta, un idioma distinto, que además de eso no nos conocían, no nos iban a valorar en toda nuestra magnitud. No estaba dispuesta a valorarnos porque nosotros éramos insignificantes en número, porque no nos entendían, nuestra historia no era la historia de ellos, nuestras vivencias no eran las vivencias de ellos, y entonces empieza nuestra lucha por sobrevivir. Y está la necesidad de sobrevivir, no tengo duda al respecto, es decir, imagínate tú lo que significa para todos nosotros, y no importa dónde nosotros estemos, ni el lugar, o si hemos sido exitosos o no afuera. Exitosos en el sentido de sí logramos hacer lo que queríamos hacer, porque tenemos una familia, un trabajo, en fin, todos los éxitos personales. Sin embargo yo puedo ver entre la gente, los exiliados políticos, yo puedo ver que más unos que otros estamos hablando en algún instante de volver, si aquí tenemos lo mismo que a lo mejor hubiéramos tenido en Chile. ¿Por qué queremos volver? Porque es el sentido de la pertenencia, es el sentir que uno pertenece a algún lugar, el sentimiento de pertenecer yo creo que es algo muy importante pero, no solamente porque nació en ese lugar, porque nacer ahí pudo ser un accidente, pero es la pertenencia que uno tiene con ese país, porque nuestras raíces están ahí, porque sigue creyendo en los valores con que fue criado, porque seguimos teniendo esa idea de colectivo, porque fuimos, nos sentimos importantes durante un determinado período de nuestra vida, en un momento de nuestras vidas en un lugar determinado.

Y entonces yo creo que el hecho que Pinochet haya sido detenido nos daba espacio para rescatarnos, nos daba el espacio para sentirnos otra vez valiosos, importantes y porque

finalmente este señor que estaba convencido que iba a ser aplaudido por el mundo entero; según él y sus seguidores, todo el mundo se pondría de pie para aplaudirlo porque se había encargado de acabar con el comunismo, de repente se daba cuenta, tenía la posibilidad obligadamente de aceptar que el golpe de estado no había sido bienvenido en el resto del mundo. Qué bofetada, y fíjate tú, qué doble bofetada más encima cuando nada menos que el próximo candidato a presidente, Ricardo Lagos, un candidato socialista, qué crueldad de la vida, y que además de eso él tiene que volver al país, a su propio país, que ya está siendo gobernado por un socialista, el mismo que él había puesto en la cárcel algunos años atrás.

Pablo's Experience

El Arresto de Pinochet

Estaba en el trabajo cuando supe la noticia: alguien me llamó para decirme que Pinochet estaba bajo arresto en Londres; inmediatamente lo que hice fue tratar de confirmar la noticia. Recuerdo que parece que me metí al Internet y empecé a leer los diarios londinenses, no sé si leí *The Guardian* y también un diario español, me parece que leí *El País*, y también los diarios chilenos, obviamente los que se publican en el Internet y efectivamente así era; fue una gran sorpresa.

Nunca me lo imaginé, sinceramente nunca pasó por mi mente que Pinochet iba a ser arrestado. Y además estaba también como muy escéptico de que realmente fuera a ser cierto, porque tú sabes, se pueden rumorear muchas cosas, y al final uno no sabe nunca. Bueno, ese día, después, cuando llegué a la casa, llamamos a mis tíos allá en Chile, para saber qué es lo que estaba pasando, y no lo podíamos creer, ni ellos ni nosotros. Fue como una alegría y algo había pasado, y bueno, después viene todo lo que se mostró en el plan nacional y todo eso. A mí realmente me costó creerlo porque, por el hecho de que Pinochet y los militares en Chile en general, actuaron siempre con mucha impunidad, entonces de que haya sucedido algo así costaba creerlo, ... costaba creerlo. Yo creo que pasaron unos dos días antes de que uno realmente se diera cuenta de que sí, que era cierto. Ahora, por todo lo que se veía al principio, yo lo veía como algo muy simbólico. Claro, realmente, porque mira, ¿qué es lo que ha pasado?, o sea ¿qué es lo que sucedía siempre? Té me dijiste que habías vivido en la dictadura en Chile, y yo también, y me acuerdo que vivimos tantos años con toque de queda y era como cuando uno estaba en Chile: no se sabía lo que se estaba viviendo. Y lo mismo cuando se empezó a organizar la gente, que fue por ahí entre los años 78 y 79. Yo me acuerdo haber ido a un primero de mayo, ahí al centro de Santiago, éramos un montón de puros cabros jóvenes. Arrancábamos

me acuerdo, y la gente a uno lo miraban con miedo y uno arrancando, yo me acuerdo que arrancamos y vamos con un amigo y le digo “al hoyo del metro no”. Y me acuerdo que mi amigo salta y ahí está el paco, esperando con las manos abiertas; ¡le sacaron la mierda! Y después, salir de Chile y no saber. O sea saber que en el mundo sabían más que nosotros, de lo que estaba pasando en Chile, y nosotros no sabíamos nada. ¿Me entiendes? El silencio forzado, el miedo también, y eso mismo, esa imagen como media omnipotente que uno tiene de los militares. Porque en realidad desgraciadamente actúan con plenos poderes, y además, por lo que había hecho Pinochet en la guerra de las Malvinas por ejemplo, que cooperó con los ingleses. Entonces me parecía que, claro, iba a ser todo no un montaje, pero sí una acusación, pero nunca iba a pasar a más, nunca, nunca me imaginé que iba a estar casi un año, o más de un año, 16 meses, más de un año... Volvió en marzo del 2000, claro que iba a pasar más de un año preso, y estuvo preso, o sea, pero yo te digo, sinceramente que pensaba que en cualquier momento lo devolvían.

Cuando recibí la noticia, más allá de la alegría, bueno, lo primero que se me viene a la mente son las imágenes de toda la gente que sufrió mucho la tortura, los detenidos desaparecidos, toda esa gente... Se me vino todo eso a la mente como en imágenes. Me acordé, incluso me acordé de la señora Sola Sierra, porque yo era vecino de ella, la conocimos, le conocimos sus hijos, entonces me acordé de ella, ella estaba viva en esos años. Y la imagen de él (Pinochet) también, pero yo me quedé con la imagen de Pinochet, del Pinochet joven, o sea más joven, no del viejo decrepito que es el día de hoy, o que era en esos momentos. Yo me lo imaginaba con uniforme, con esos lentes oscuros, esa es la imagen que tenía yo en ese momento,...así como en imágenes...

Sentí no sé cómo, algo reconfortante tal vez, porque como que finalmente se hace justicia después de tantos años; algo le puede pasar, o sea... digamos... no es tan intocable como uno pensaba que era. Además, no se pensaba que realmente el mundo sabía mucho más de lo que

nosotros sabíamos en Chile, y el mundo se daba cuenta mucho más de lo que había pasado en Chile y dimensionaba mucho mejor. Siempre he pensado lo mismo, que el mundo dimensionaba mejor lo que había hecho Pinochet en Chile, porque no sé, tal vez a mí me ha tocado - cada vez que he ido a Chile - enfrentar situaciones de una indiferencia total de mucha gente. Nunca se me va a olvidar una vez que estábamos escuchando en la radio, yo estaba en la feria de los artesanos y una señora salió en la radio diciendo en una noticia que los detenidos desaparecidos en Argentina son 30.000 y entonces yo le digo a la señora "mire, imagínese Ud. que eso es como que desaparezca el pueblo de 30.000 mil habitantes, de que un día Ud. llegue ahí y no hay nadie". Y la señora me dice "¿y a mí qué?" Lo mismo había pasado en Chile entonces, todo eso me volvió a la mente, de la incredulidad que no, a Pinchote no se lo tocaba nadie a los chilenos. Claro, ahí estaba preso. ¡Qué tremendo!

Es como lo que te decía; que tal vez para mí el hecho de que Pinochet haya sido puesto bajo arresto en una clínica y que lo hayan acusado, eso dejaba claro que la comunidad internacional sabía mucho más de lo que nosotros sabíamos, y que realmente era como que se coartó un proceso en Chile por la fuerza y también se valoró la vida. Porque en Chile hasta el día de hoy hay una indiferencia tremenda, y como que hay un miedo a hablar del pasado. Por ejemplo, uno de los hechos que más me llamó la atención es que los primeros días cuando iba este grupo de gente de derecha a apoyar a Pinochet, no sé fue a uno de esos viejos rancios, uno de los opositores de la izquierda chilena o del grupo de derechos humanos, escupió al viejo. Oye pero para mí fue un deleite, esta gente actuó con una gran impunidad, con una prepotencia pero tremenda en Chile, y afuera no son nada. Afuera pierden la dimensión que debieron tener y Pinochete la tuvo.

Para mí fue muy reivindicativo que a Pinochet lo hayan tomado preso. Porque pasó a la historia, bueno como la comunidad internacional lo sabe, en Chile todavía estamos debatiendo eso. Claro hay algunos sectores que tú nunca los vas a poder convencer, que son los golpistas y

la gente que estuvo con él, pero la gran masa de chilenos tiene que saber que Pinochet fue un asesino, y para mí eso era un deleite. Pero escéptico, siempre pensando cuándo lo van a soltar, esto no puede ser, esto no puede ser.

El Período entre el Arresto y el Retorno de Pinochet

Mira, el proceso lo seguía día a día. Porque precisamente estaba trabajando en una oficina de abogados y nosotros por ser esta una ley canadiense está muy ligada a la ley inglesa, entonces nosotros teníamos una conexión directa a la Cámara de los Lores y todo lo que apareció del caso Pinochet yo lo sacaba, lo leía y lo imprimía y se lo daba a la gente. Ahí en la Cooperativa distribuí mucho esa cuestión. Se lo pasé a mucha gente, hicimos algunas traducciones de esas cuestiones, pero de todo el caso.

Pienso que sí tuve expectativas en lo legal, yo pienso que hasta Pinochet llegó a tener miedo de lo que le podía pasar en Inglaterra y porque era muy fuerte el caso que tenían los españoles, de que podía ser extraditado y de hecho fue una, no diría una confabulación, pero fue un acuerdo de gobierno a gobierno, según yo pienso, que se comprometió el gobierno chileno a llevarlo a Chile y a decirle a los ingleses que lo soltaban porque estaba incapacitado y como yo lo seguía, pensaba que a Pinochet sí realmente lo iban a extraditar, llegué a estar casi seguro de que lo extraditaban pero no se pudo, falló el gobierno español pienso yo.

Yo pienso que este período nos afectó a mí y a mi entorno, a mi familia, porque siempre estábamos muy ávidos de saber más y de estar como al día de la noticia, informados de lo que estaba pasando. Yo creo que nos hizo así como volver a creer, ¿me entiendes tú? así como a tener un poco de confianza, en que realmente se podía confiar en la justicia, de alguna manera en la legalidad. Tal vez en la comunidad internacional, en eso sí, en eso yo pienso como que nos alegró el saber que realmente un dictador no puede escapar así impune. Y nos alegró de que estuviera confinado, de que no pudiera salir, de que lo mostraban y que día a día se deterioraba, y

nosotros nos imaginábamos; hasta el día de hoy hablamos de cuánta gente no se llevaron presos... y viejitos. Y la vieja Lucía pidiendo clemencia, compasión. Nosotros felices, felices de que realmente se le devolvía la mano un poco, que ahora lo pudiera experimentar en carne propia.

El Retorno de Pinochet a Chile

Recibimos la noticia desilusionados totales. Con rabia, con rabia, con rabia, con mucha rabia, con mucha rabia, con mucha impotencia, porque volvió y se paró, se jactó, entonces, con mucha rabia con impotencia, con amargura también más que nada. Además, que lo recibieron como si hubiera sido un mártir, un héroe de Chile, le cantaban. Lo único que faltó fue una alfombra roja y parece que le pusieron una alfombra roja. Entonces como que fue demasiado, y me pareció que fue una burla a la comunidad internacional, y yo no sé, el presidente de Chile se debe de haber sentido así de chiquitito por el gran despliegue de fuerzas de los milicos, todos ahí con uniforme. Todo eso con mucha amargura, con mucha amargura y ahí como que dejamos de creer. Sinceramente aquí hubo un acuerdo político, y se echaron todo al bolsillo, y en eso le cabe la responsabilidad al gobierno chileno. Y desilusionado, hay como una desilusión muy grande, en que uno vuelve a acordarse de las víctimas y de la gente que sufrió tortura y de los que tuvieron que salir, de los que perdieron su trabajo, y todas esas cosas.

Uno siempre tiene estas imágenes latentes, que le vuelven a uno y eso sí con amargura; me parece que en marzo volvió; bueno, nosotros nos acordamos de la señora Sola Sierra, porque pensábamos por suerte que murió en el momento álgido en que Pinochet estaba preso, que había una gran movilización en término de los Derechos Humanos, y como que se volvió a revivir todo eso. Y ella falleció sin saber que lo devolvieron y que además iba a quedar impune prácticamente. Pero de su vuelta a Chile no sé, es como que volvimos tan atrás que simplemente

te hace dudar de todo nuevamente, y de hecho, bueno, ha pasado un año y medio y aún no pasa nada.

Mira, hay una imagen bien recurrente con respecto al arresto que es la de Pinochet. Estábamos allá cuando en el 78 se hizo ese plebiscito ¿te acuerdas? del si y el no, que dió un discurso y habló de los enemigos de Chile, de esa onda, y esa imagen siempre vuelve a mí, la de Pinochet, por su voz, por todo lo que había hecho en ese sentido omnipotente, y siempre vuelve esa imagen de él. O sea cada vez que yo me lo imagino, me lo imagino así, en esa imagen, sólo porque quedó marcado esa vez, como que cambió completamente el destino de Chile, esa vez que ganó el plebiscito. Y de ahí de hecho se instaló en el poder, ya pensó a largo plazo de quedarse en el poder. Y la otra, es de la Señora Sola Sierra, por conocerla a ella en persona, y porque también cuando vino para acá, muchas veces yo anduve con ella, anduve traduciendo. La conozco en lo personal y también en su quehacer, lo que fue los derechos humanos, cómo hablaba ella, siempre me vuelve eso. Esas son las imágenes, si tengo que quedarme con algo es ella.

Sola Sierra es el símbolo para mí. Porque su marido fue detenido desaparecido. Ella es de mi barrio y bueno, nosotros éramos sus vecinos y sabíamos que su marido había sido detenido desaparecido en una época en que nadie creía nada, solamente la gente que se manejaba dentro de los círculos de la izquierda. De los opositores al gobierno, nadie sabía, nadie creía que en Chile desaparecía gente o se torturaba. Entonces ella para mí simboliza toda esa lucha, de dar a conocer un hecho a pesar de que me parece que como que son otras las mujeres que comienzan con toda esta cuestión. Pero se integran mucho más tarde, por ahí por el año 77 –78, pero nosotros la conocíamos y sabíamos lo difícil que lo estaban pasando, las dificultades que estaban pasando, íbamos a la escuela con sus hijos, tiene un hijo y dos hijas. Yo los conozco, los conozco bastante. Primero vecinos y además ella es, fue compañera del partido. Y de ahí viene la conexión.

La imagen que tengo cuando lo regresaron es el Pinochet triunfador, ese mismo que el 78 le dijo a los periodistas, sí, hasta se sobó las manos, hizo así, Uds. dirán, todavía me acuerdo de ese gesto, ¿te acuerdas cuando hicieron el conteo? No sé cómo había ganado, pero por una cifra astronómica, bueno nunca se me va a olvidar y sale el viejo y dice, bueno Uds. dirán. Como que tieren todo tipo de preguntas, el pueblo me ha nombrado presidente. Eso es lo que se me vino a la mente. Y la prepotencia, que es lo que más me molesta, de la gente de derecha y de los fascistas chilenos.

También sentí una derrota muy grande. Y además que esa es la realidad. Pero más que nada, lo que más me duele no es tanto que ellos se sientan triunfadores y que tengan un gran número de adeptos y de seguidores, lo que más me duele es que el pueblo chileno no asuma, el que no reconozca, a lo mejor yo soy demasiado pesimista, a lo mejor sí hay una gran mayoría de gente que percibe que sí, que Pinochet fue un dictador, pero no sé,, no hay indicios de eso, no hay indicios de eso porque para mi la UDI, que es el brazo político del militarismo chileno, y tiene casi el 50 % de los votos, o sea cómo se explica uno eso.

Hay algo que me emocionó mucho; fue el 8 de agosto del año pasado; del 2000, cuando desaforaron a Pinochet, por el caso Caravana de la Muerte; estuvimos ahí en la Plaza de la Constitución, a las 12 del día hubo un mitin. Yo estuve ahí, habló la Gladiz Marín, habló Viviana Díaz, habló también me parece Fabiola Letelier o la hija de Salvador Allende. Fue un acto muy bonito, pero poco concurrido, sí, bueno, medio día, día de trabajo en Chile, pero en todo caso deben haber habido unas dos mil, tres mil personas. O sea no tan poca gente, pero el hecho era estar ahí. Lo que me ha sucedido siempre es que esto de la condena, de la condena al gobierno chileno durante los años de dictadura, esto de que Pinochet haya estado preso, esto también del desafuero, todo me parece que son gestos simbólicos, pero que en el fondo no hay nada, es decir, no sacas nada en claro. Como las querellas 200 y tantas, pero es todo muy simbólico.

Ese es el espacio que se nos permite a nosotros, eso es lo que siento yo. Y de que tú puedes porfiar y de que puedes seguir haciendo denuncias y nosotros sabemos quién es el gran responsable, porque él mismo en su discurso lo decía, que él era el mandamás. Y tal vez eso sea y nos haya marcado, y no sé si habrá marcado a mucha más gente de la generación que yo vivo, porque somos como pesimistas. Yo creo que ese es un rasgo psicológico que yo tengo, de ser muy escéptico, muy pesimista, tal vez porque viví parte de la dictadura allá. Porque yo para el golpe tenía como 13 años. Yo pienso que este hecho de que siempre como que hemos sido muy golpeados, de que algo bueno va a pasar y que no resultó más que ser un espejismo, eso te lleva a ti mismo a una forma de ser tal vez no como desconfiada, pero sí muy escéptico.

Yo pienso que todo esto tuvo un impacto en el mundo. De hecho, una de las cosas que, así como una manía que tenemos nosotros es, cada vez que había una noticia, la grabábamos, en todos los canales de habla inglesa, todos los reportajes que se hicieron, y de hecho aquí en Canadá, me parece cuando a él lo arrestaron, aquí hubo todo un reportaje, y después los días antes de ser llevado a la corte, o el caso de él llevado a la corte, dieron en ese programa *Passionate Eye*, bueno todo eso lo grabamos, las mismas noticias, yo leía los diarios, no solamente de acá, por el Internet estaba leyendo los diarios de España, de Francia, Inglaterra, de todos lados entonces, claro que tuvo impacto y por eso te decía que estaba como muy claro para nosotros, la comunidad internacional fuera de Chile y todo el mundo sabe lo que hizo Pinochet. Siento que los ojos del mundo como que están mirando a Chile, de que el día de mañana si Pinochet es absuelto, sobreseída la causa, los ojos de la comunidad internacional van a estar pegados a Chile. Y bueno por ese lado es como que hay un poco de respaldo, de ayuda en el sentido de que está creando un poco de presión. Y no solamente de Guatemala, de Argentina también, yo pienso que aquí, todo responde a intereses superiores. Por ejemplo la Corte Internacional que funciona en la Haya, que es financiada por plata norteamericana, juzgó a todos los criminales de guerra yugoslavos, y a muy pocos croatas. A los servicios fueron a los que más

condenaron, pero te das cuenta ahí, depende del lado en que estén las cosas y pienso que con lo de Chile, así como que el mundo ha sido un poco más neutral. Porque no ha habido, bueno, este hombre a pesar de que el gobierno norteamericano haya dicho que Allende era un Marxista-Leninista y toda esa onda, o sea, nunca se le ha logrado desestimar, ni se le ha logrado dar una mala imagen a lo que fue el gobierno de la Unidad Popular. A lo que fue el Chile de ese entonces, eso es lo que personalmente percibo. Y entonces, ves y, claro, este es un dictador de derecha. Aliado de los norteamericanos y del imperialismo Inglés; también entonces eso me parece que rompe lo convencional. Pero sí ha tenido su repercusión, y más que nada han sido los sectores progresistas del mundo entero los que han estado detrás de esto, y eso yo creo que es un gran paso adelante, el que ha dado la gente progresista del mundo.

Finalmente mira, nada más que esperar que sí, que Pinochet sea juzgado, yo digo, porque creo que hay una parte importante que es como recuperar la historia para mí. Porque para mí cuando Pinochet sea juzgado, va a pasar a la historia por lo que fue, un asesino, pienso que en estos momentos como que existe la gran duda, se le mira como al salvador de Chile. Y pienso que el hecho de que vaya a ser, si es que va a ser juzgado, lo va a desnudar ante la humanidad y ante el pueblo chileno, y eso va a reivindicar lo que fue el gobierno de la Unidad Popular, de cómo llegamos ahí a ese gobierno. Yo pienso que si no hubiera habido un Garzón, no hay juicio, sinceramente, desgraciadamente es así. Si ¿cuántos años estuvo Pinochet en Chile? Impune, y se paseaba como si fuera un viejito benevolente, por que ha sido el abuelo de todos. Entonces de hecho hasta Ricardo Lagos es bueno. No esperábamos mucho, pero creo que ha sido como una gran desilusión, para todos, para toda la gente, los que están afuera sobretodo, la gente de izquierda, eso no ha sido un avance, ha sido un retroceso, así que tiene que caer.

Te quería contar que el día al 8 de agosto, y esto no más porque me emocioné tanto, me emocioné mucho, difícilmente lloro, pero ese día lloré, me salieron las lágrimas. Si me salieron las lágrimas, estábamos ahí, porque hay un monumento a Salvador Allende, ahí mismo fue el

mitin no. Me imaginé todo eso cuando, así fue muy bonito, fue muy bonito todo. Fue una emoción muy grande y después en la noche hubo como un velatorio ahí, y se prendieron velitas en el Estadio Nacional y hubo también un mitin. Muy bueno, muy bueno todo. Si, todo muy simbólico, pero a veces esa simbología como que de repente hace falta, ¿no? O si no, como que uno se ahoga. Yo pienso que desgraciadamente en Vancouver no hay mucha simbología, yo pienso que esto va a servir, tu tesis, como para que nosotros exploremos lo que fue y como para que empecemos a escarbar un poco, lo mismo estar aquí; me empezaron a dar vuelta unas cosas en la cabeza, de acordarme, esto de como revivir emociones, es que uno como que siempre las repliega a un segundo plano, por eso mismo, por el miedo, de que estoy sintiendo una alegría, pero no, esta cuestión no va a durar mucho. Entonces como que siempre poniéndola, poniéndola, relajándolo a un segundo plano. Pero no es algo que uno se debe permitir, de repente como que hace bien, hace bien hablar de estas cosas, hace muy bien. Se saca una pena del alma.

Marcela's Experience

El Arresto de Pinochet

Yo estaba en el dentista, en una ISAPRE, en Chile; estaba esperando que me atendieran pero había una pantalla, había un televisor mientras estaba esperando. Yo sabía, porque acuérdate que no se sabía, pero se esperaba que sí. Entonces cuando llego ahí, al rato dan la noticia de que sí, que Pinochet va a ser arrestado. Y me levanto y pego un grito, pero huau, así no me importó quién estaba al lado, porque además había más gente allí. Entonces unas viejas que dijeron que cómo, pero que me importa, ahí me puse a discutir, no me acuerdo qué le dije a la mujer y salí corriendo a buscar un teléfono para llamar a la casa de mi mamá. Porque mis papás estaban también pendientes, mis hermanas estaban pendientes, entonces estaba ocupado. Y llamé a mi hermana mayor a su trabajo y también estaba ocupado. Total que todos los teléfonos estaban ocupados. Entonces no tenía a nadie al lado y de repente viene una pareja y a esos les comenté y ellos conmigo eran los únicos de acuerdo. Porque la gente que trabajaba ahí no se manifestó, porque no podían. Pero había otras personas que estaban esperando ser atendidas y que estaban en la posición opuesta a la mía. Cuando me tocó el turno entré al dentista y yo huau. El dentista me acuerdo que me siguió la corriente. Yo no sé si el dentista estaba pensando igual que yo o no. Entonces de ahí me fui corriendo a la casa de mi mamá. Quise compartir la alegría con mi familia, pero estaba todo el mundo ocupado, estaban mis hermanas hablando porque se estaban comunicando. Porque estaban esperando todos la noticia. Nos juntamos todas las hermanas en la casa, con mi papá compartimos. Mi papá estaba feliz como todas nosotras. Sí, estábamos esperando eso. Mi hermana me llamó por celular, bueno, y que pasó. No y que has sabido tú, no, que yo ando en la calle ya pero voy al dentista ahora. Y yo llamaba y ocupado, ocupado y todas esperando, nerviosas; antes estábamos todos atacados, porque lo único que queríamos era que al tipo lo arrestaran. Pero nadie tenía la certeza de nada.

Fue horrible, fue feo esperar que dieran la noticia. Pero cuando supe yo estaba eufórica, estaba realmente eufórica y después se me pasó, o sea pero eufórica porque yo esperaba que lo arrestaran, pero en el momento sí yo te digo que yo pégue un grito sin importarme quién estaba al lado. Por poco me agarro con un vieja. A mí no me importaba lo que pasaba, yo me expresé porque fue una cosa que me salió así de adentro. El grito me levantó, si pégue un salto, un brinco.

No sé qué me pasó, sentí, bueno, una alegría inmensa, me sentí tranquila, conforme. Por fin este coño de su madre está pagando lo que hizo. Me pareció que era tan justo, me sentí tranquila, como que descansé. Me pareció sumamente justo. Como toda mi familia, todos, teníamos todos los mismos intereses, entramos a conversar, entonces, claro, no estábamos justificando el arresto si no que estábamos siendo OK, mira el tipo lo que hizo y entonces nos acordábamos. Y había cosas que yo no recordaba, pero que mi otra hermana recordaba. Obviamente que vino a colación un resumen de todo lo que pasó. Pero estábamos tranquilos, estábamos todos felices en mi casa, toda mi familia, era una reivindicación. Era tan merecido, tan merecido. Además que salimos a la calle a celebrar con todo el mundo y entonces compartías la sensación de las otras personas también y las historias de las otras personas. Había gente que estaba muy deprimida después de saber la noticia, porque habían tenido sucesos malos, como más cercanos, entonces se deprimieron mucho. Porque yo en el fondo no perdí ninguna hermana, ni mi papás, ni siquiera un primo. Pero no perdí familiares, amigos sí, muy queridos.

Yo trabajaba con pura gente de derecha, incluso el gerente de mi empresa es, un tipo con mucha plata que es pariente de un senador. Entonces yo en mi oficina igual me manifesté, a mí no me importó nada. No podía, no podía omitir lo que yo estaba sintiendo. Aparte que todo el mundo sabía, me decían la comunista. Ni me interesaba, no tuve ni un problema, no tuve ni un problema.

Me trajo recuerdos, porque acuérdate que yo después del golpe lo pasé pésimo. Primero que mi pareja se tuvo que ir de Chile. Yo perdí un montón de amigos. Yo vivía en una zona industrial en esa época, entonces para mí, para nosotros toda esa semana fue terrible porque yo veía pasar a los obreros en los camiones de los milicos, veía los cadáveres en el suelo, en la calle, en el Zanjón de la Aguada. Y cuántos amigos míos desaparecidos habían. Yo en ese año estaba en la universidad, y gente de filosofía que eran amigos míos, gente de historia, brasileros, venezolanos, gente que yo sabía bajo cuerda que no habían muerto, que habían desaparecido. Entonces de alguna forma se hacía justicia. Obviamente me vino a la memoria todo y yo decía y si estuviera éste aquí y el otro acá. o sea, me acordaba de ellos en forma personal; sí, fue tanta gente amiga la que tu jamás viste.

Para mí el recuerdo más importante fue el 11, pero sí, es que en mi casa mi papá lloraba, todo el mundo lloraba con la noticia que mataron a Allende; mi papá lloraba como un niño. Y nosotras todas ahí. Aparte, yo estaba en la universidad. Me costó mucho para llegar a mi casa. Yo estudiaba en la Facultad de Ciencias, era mi primer año de universidad; entonces me costó mucho llegar y en el trayecto me topé con millones de situaciones terribles. Un cabro que bajó a un viejo para quitarle el auto, pero no le pegó nada. Era gente de izquierda que estaba tratando de buscar movilización. Entonces yo llegué prácticamente a pie a mi casa. No podía movilizarme y mi papá histérico, no sabía que pasaba. Pensó que algo me pasaba, aparte como nosotros ya estábamos vinculados. Entonces dijo quizás donde estarán mis hijas, yo más que nada, porque mi hermana ya se había ido para la casa. Y las otras eran mas chicas, pero mi hermana mayor y yo éramos las que estábamos más vinculadas al tema. Entonces a mi papá lo llegaron a buscar. Mi papá era dirigiente sindical. Entonces una noche llegaron a buscarlo. Pero él tiene en su familia generales y pacos y entonces no pasó nada. Por ahí se salvó. Pero el miedo, imagínate que te golpean la puerta y hay cuatrocientos mil huevones en tu casa golpeando

como a las tres de la mañana, que mi papá bajó la escalera, porque era una casa de dos pisos y prendió la luz, entonces le dicen ‘apague la luz que Ud. es un blanco perfecto’. Mi papá tiritaba.

El Período entre el Arresto y el Retorno de Pinochet

Lo que pasa es que en el primer período, cuando ya el tipo estuvo preso bien, o sea estaba todo el mundo seguro que el tipo iba a quedar preso. Después cuando vino que el no, que el sí, que los fallos, ahí sí que empezamos con una angustia terrible. Porque no teníamos la certeza de que el cuento iba realmente a terminar como debiera ser. Aunque igual estaba la esperanza, pero ya al final todo el mundo tenía claro que el tipo iba a ser devuelto, no estábamos completamente seguros, pero estaba la posibilidad y eso no tomó a nadie de sorpresa en Chile. Porque no entendíamos o sea le echábamos la culpa a todo el mundo. Aparte que la Democracia Cristiana apoyó. Entonces era el gobierno que estaba mandando en este momento, estos desgraciados. Y un rencor y una bronca terrible contra esa gente. Impotencia más bien. Una impotencia muy grande.

El Retorno de Pinochet a Chile

Fue peor que el arresto, porque había una esperanza tan clara después de tanto tiempo; se estaba cumpliendo algo que todo el mundo estaba esperando y que era tan justo. Fue de lo más frustrante que hay, sumamente frustrante. Me dio tanta lata que no quise enterarme de nada. Yo no quise saber nada. Supe que el tipo volvía, incluso yo nunca lo vi que se paró de la silla de ruedas. Ya no quise saber nada, no quise enterarme de nada porque era demasiada la impotencia. Fue una cosa tan injusta, tan injusta ver, ponte tú, a las mujeres de los detenidos desaparecidos, gente maravillosa, preciosa, que todo lo que hizo. Aparte cómo las trataban, unas señoras súper sencillas pero súper inteligentes. Y cómo las trajeron estos otros desgraciados. Ya ahí ya me hastié, ahí ya me hastié. Eso fue el dos de marzo del 2000, ya estaba Lagos, que además fue otra

frustración, porque imagínate lo que pasó después, ni siquiera Lagos que es un presidente de izquierda, él dice que es PPD (Partido por la Democracia), es socialista ese huevón, pero mira lo que pasó. Si Frei lo apoyó y este huevón ni siquiera hizo nada o sea, me pareció el colmo. Yo siempre tuve claro que Lagos no iba a hacer absolutamente nada. Siempre lo tuve claro desde que volvió. Yo dije ‘esto va a quedar impune’. Mucha gente pensó lo mismo que yo. No te creas que la gente estaba esperanzada en que Lagos lo enjuiciara; no, eso no es así.

Yo sabes lo que no entiendo, por qué a este viejo huevón no lo mataron antes. Sí, es lo que yo creo que tendría que haber pasado. Que lo tendrían que haber muerto. Yo he hablado con mucha gente que me dice, porque yo viví en Venezuela y me decían pero cómo, si Uds. son choros, además como tienen la preparación militar, estuvieron en Cuba, cómo no pudieron. Es que yo creo que no tienen bolas porque esa es la única forma, tú no puedes esperar que enjuicien legalmente a Pinochet en Chile, tendrían que haberlo muerto un grupo de gente, organizarse y haberlo matado y ya se acabó, como hicieron con Guzmán. Porque cuando Guzmán murió yo fui la mujer más feliz del mundo. Es que no me pregunes, porque era una cosa alucinante. Yo estaba feliz, porque no había hombre que odie más que Guzmán. Era el demonio mismo ese desgraciado. Mira la muerte de Jaime Guzmán, a mí me pareció sensacional, a ese tipo lo odiaba casi tanto como al Pinochet; me parece que él es el responsable de tantas cosas.

Al Guzmán lo odiaba, lo odiaba y estaba feliz, feliz, sin ningún remordimiento por dentro, feliz de que lo habían muerto. Ya no me interesa que le pase nada a Pinochet. Que le pase a la vieja, a los hijos, no sé algo que le duela a él. Ya está muy viejo para hacerle alguna cosa a él, cachai. Que le pase algo a la vieja, a los hijos. Tiene unos hijos de lo más asquerosos y repugnantes.

Claro todo esto me ayudó y es por la humillación, porque eso se expandió por todo el mundo, o sea, él sabe que es un tipo non grato en mil partes. Pero la humillación que sufrió ese tipo, aparte de la impotencia, porque él es un prepotente. O sea, no poder hacer lo que él quería. Una humillación grande, me bastaba con eso. La humillación y el repudio mundial del hombre,

el repudio mundial que en alguna forma tiene que haberle afectado. A esta edad la gente se pone sensible. Entonces yo creo que de alguna forma le afectó, sí, tiene que haberle afectado. Aunque es un loco estúpido que se cree más o menos Hitler, pero tiene que haberle afectado el repudio mundial y la impotencia de no poder hacer lo que quiere y que a él siendo el superman.

Bueno, para mí no fue suficiente lo que le pasó pero yo creo que sí tuvo un impacto a nivel mundial; yo creo que sí. Mira lo que pasó después con este tipo Milosevic, te fijai; yo creo que el arresto de Pinochet fue de los motivos que impulsaron o motivaron a que a este tipo lo tuvieran detenido. Yo creo que sí sirvió de algo.

Yo creo que esto ayudó a mucha gente. Mucha gente se sintió más tranquila, se sintió más tranquila porque por fin se estaba haciendo justicia, porque esa impunidad es lo que los tenía complicados, que el viejo desgraciado los había hecho sufrir tanto. Entonces, obviamente que sí ayudó a mucha gente, a mucha gente. Yo creo que además hay gente como yo, que después que al viejo lo soltaron ya dijeron ‘bueno, ya por último el viejo huevón ya las pagó’, o sea estaban más tranquilo. Pero hay gente que de un principio porque todo el mundo decía no este viejo ya está cagao aquí, es que todo el mundo pensaba cualquier cosa cuando recién arrestaron a Pinochet, porque se especuló pero cantidad. Pero ya al final fue pasando el tiempo y entonces ya cuando se rumoreó que podía volver, era impotencia. Pero al final ya había una sensación de ya, viejo de mierda, que venga. Pero no importa, viste, te pasó tal cosa. Ya la pagaste, no lo que yo quisiera pero pagaste, que por último era mejor que nada. Yo decía ‘en Chile lo tienen que agarrar’. Y Lagos pensábamos, que en Chile, cuando estábamos trabajando para Lagos para la campaña. Incluso era uno de los discursos cuando íbamos a hacer puerta a puerta en las poblaciones.

Yo no tuve imágenes, lo que pasa es que yo viví una situación tan compleja por la ubicación de mi casa. Yo, ponte tú, me hablan del golpe y de qué me acuerdo. Yo me acuerdo de mi papá llorando y me acuerdo cuando veo los camiones, que esos con todos los tipos

pasando, después cuando nos arrancábamos con mi hermana dos o tres horas de toque de queda. Yo me iba a la embajada de Venezuela a ver al José, mi compañero que estaba preso. Y además me habían pedido que engrupiera a los ratis, porque tenía que pasar algunos datos. Yo estuve dentro de la embajada de Venezuela varias veces, entonces esa imagen ponte tú cuando me iba, que hacíamos dedo porque no había ninguna huevá, hacíamos dedo con mi hermana, íbamos pasando y veíamos los cadáveres. O sea pa' mí ese es el cuento, yo al viejo infeliz no lo recuerdo. Es que la situación de ese cordon industrial, toda esa zona estaba, todos puras fábricas, puras fábricas. Entonces esas son las imágenes que yo tengo después de llegar a mi casa, como a las cuatro de la tarde, como a las cinco. Fue terrible; iba caminando, sentía disparos por todos lados y no sabía sí me podían matar a mí, era una cosa terrible. Ibas caminando y te mataban igual. Pero no tengo imágenes de Pinochet, sí lo recuerdo joven el desgraciado, pero inmediatamente me acuerdo del primer día, sobre todo el 11 mismo, porque después siguió, siguió, se enfrentaron, olvídate cómo se enfrentaron los obreros, sí pusieron muchísima resistencia, estaban organizados. Por suerte si nosotros no podíamos caminar de pie, teníamos miedo que nos llegara un disparo. Fueron tres días, fueron tres días de balaceras. Además yo me tuve que ir de Chile. Primero me tuve que ir yo y después se tuvo que ir mi hermana, bueno, igual tuve varias veces, estuve en el norte, salí varias veces, pero después me tuve que ir. Obviamente me fui a Venezuela porque estaba el José, era mi compañero. Mis papás estaban complicados, mi sobrina se tuvo que quedar en Chile, mi hermana se fue, después se fue ella. Para mí no fue tan malo porque yo me iba a estar con el José, que era un hombre que yo amé toda la vida, pero sí, pero desde ahí hasta cuando yo salí un odio terrible y haciendo cosas por tratar de ayudar.

Además yo vengo de una familia de un señor profesional, no millonario, de una clase media. Cuatro hijas, un señor que le encanta la familia, qué sé yo, muy súper represivo mi papá por sus cuatro hermanas y nos obligaba a estudiar, en mi casa había mucho orden. Y después de

esto, bueno con sus ideas de izquierda que nos transmitió a nosotras, sobre todo a las dos mayores. En mi casa después del golpe, ya éramos más autónomas yo y mi hermana, porque como nos metimos más de frente en el cuento, empezamos a trabajar, entonces ya como que la familia se desintegró un poco. Nos apartamos un poco porque teníamos un cuento secreto que no queríamos compartirlo con mi papá. Porque era tan posesivo que no nos iba a permitir vincularnos. Entonces nos empezamos a independizar. Y de alguna forma yo creo que ya desintegró a la familia, y nos dividió, porque mi hermana mayor y yo teníamos unos intereses y las otras los mismos pero ya en menos escala, entonces nos dividió, nos dividió. Y además la separación física. Y es que nos metimos en otra onda, tanta gente amiga que desapareció. Amigos, gente preciosa, es que lo que era el Pedagógico, la Facultad de Ciencias, había tanta gente bella, preciosa, tipos preciosos, la gente de filosofía y de historia eran espectaculares; yo me acuerdo que era bien joven, y ellos eran más grandes y eran bellos, grandotes así. Es que para mí la época de la Unidad Popular fue una maravilla. Por la onda había integración, no había discriminación, todo el mundo compartía, había un cuento intelectual bello. Había unión, había solidaridad. Y boom, yo supe dos días ante que venía esto. Bueno había rumores, dos o tres días antes porque hay cosas que no recuerdo bien. Yo por ejemplo, hay veces que mis hermanas me recuerdan cosas, porque yo no sé por qué será que ni las recuerdo. Mira, nosotros terminamos ese año mal, mal. Es que mi casa era un velorio. Nosotros no podíamos recuperarnos porque además nos tocó ver un espectáculo tan atroz, tan fuerte, tan fuerte sin necesidad de ir a ninguna parte, ahí dentro de mi casa nosotros veíamos cosas que después fueron llegando y que no fue de dos o tres días, sino que a las dos semanas. Hay gente entonces, el vecino y el de más allá, y vivíamos en una villa muy bonita, entonces más allá había una población y conocíamos gente de ahí, entonces, y mira y por datos y fíjate que desapareció y familias enteras. Millones de muchachos no estaban en su hogar para darles comida, y no, no. Fue terrible, terrible, terrible, terrible.

No, sí es que fue maravilloso lo del arresto. Es que estaba todo el mundo loco, frenético, de lo único que se hablaba. Me acuerdo que fue, yo creo, que como a las doce del día. Yo estaba viendo la televisión. Yo no sé si siempre hubo televisión ahí o era por que no sé. Pero estaba ahí, me acuerdo. Todo el mundo andaba riéndose solo en las calles. Y a los otros yo no los veía, si, no los veía porque no me interesaban. Y tú ibas a comprar y ya y supiste y entonces empezabas a compartir. Te encontrabas con la gente y entonces, claro si ni la conocías pero no sé, algo salía. Estaba todo el mundo feliz y radiante y en la noche también parecía como carnaval, una vana así, salió la gente a las calles, los que querían salir a las calles a manifestarse, a celebrar el arresto del viejo. Yo no estuve para el sí y el no porque yo vivía en Venezuela pero creo que también fue una cosa parecida, fue parecida. Mi hermana me contaba.

Y para terminar, nada, que ya bueno, estoy aquí y cada día sé menos, parece que tampoco nadie sabe nada de él allá. Porque yo llamo a mi hermana y ni hablamos. No va a pasar nada con él. Ya tendría que haberlo hecho Lagos. Es que no lo puede hacer, no puede. No y además que no lo puede hacer porque por el boicot económico que hace la Derecha y él ha tenido problemas en este gobierno. Ha tenido problemas para gobernar porque ha tenido una crisis que se viene arrastrando, dejó un hoyo terrible Frei, le dejó las arcas vacías, porque son todo unos corruptos esos demócratas cristianos. Y además que hay un cuento, una recesión asiática que se viene arrastrando y que ahora entonces no puede, no puede y la gente si no come, no entiende. Y lamentablemente percibo que el siguiente va a ser Lavin, lamentablemente. Bueno, ese fue otro cuento terrible, cuando la primera ronda, eso fue terrible. Porque estábamos todo el mundo con el estómago aquí, pensando que existía la posibilidad que Lavin fuera presidente. No teníamos certeza. ¿Tú sabes lo que fue eso? Ese mes fue terrible, trabajando puerta a puerta con todo el mundo, explicándoles. Cuánta gente amiga quedaba sin trabajo, cuánta gente, y además pensar que la derecha iba a gobernar. Porque eso fue una cosa que se gestó en poco tiempo. Ahora sí, saliera Lavin OK, ya la gente está preparada, pero en ese momento no. Eso fue terrible para

nosotros, para mucha gente. Yo al final no quería trabajar en la campaña, ya estaba cansada. Pero después de la primera vuelta dije no. No si es que el margen era mínimo, mínimo. Fue terrible la tensión, fue realmente estresante. Te juro. De pensar en todas las consecuencias que podía tener un gobierno de este infeliz, ignorante de mierda. Bueno, esperemos que no.

Ernesto's Experience

El Arresto de Pinochet

Yo aquí en Vancouver estaba haciendo carne asada para una fiesta de cumpleaños de una amiga de nosotros. Es una mujer que no tiene nada que ver con política, pero es la esposa de un ex político. Somos un pequeño grupo. El esposo viene de la pradera canadiense y yo también. Estamos en la casa de un compañero que estuvo en la cárcel conmigo. Todos éramos políticos. Para mí era un honor decir algunas palabras, y hacer un brindis para la esposa del compañero. Llega mi esposa, se acercó a mi lado y me dijo: "Las noticias están confirmadas." ¿Qué noticias, le digo yo? ¡Pinochet está arrestado en Inglaterra! Dijo mi compañera. ¿Es cierto? ¡Compañeros dicen que Pinochet está arrestado en Inglaterra! Entonces ponen el televisor, la radio, fue una loquera en la casa. Todo el mundo corría, unos a la radio, otros al televisor. Efectivamente las noticias eran muy claras, a mí me interesaba escuchar la CBC canadiense. Esta confirmaba las noticias. Los otros compañeros se interesaron por los programas en la televisión española y en todos coincidían: Pinochet estaba detenido en Inglaterra, con arresto en su domicilio en la ciudad de Londres.

Entonces hubo un murmullo ahí. La carne está lista, dije yo, estamos listos para comer. Entonces dentaran todos y dicen 'ahí viene la compañera que está de cumpleaños'. Entonces, por cortesía, se para todo el mundo, se apagó la televisión, la radio y entonces todos gritamos ¡Feliz cumpleaños! Mí deber es hacer un brindis por usted compañera. Me va a perdonar, yo voy a dividir este brindis por la mitad, porque no solamente vamos a celebrar su cumpleaños. Vamos a celebrar también el hecho de que Pinochet está detenido. Para mí esto es mucho más importante que un cumpleaños, aunque Ud. se lo merece de todo corazón. Perdóneme, este brindis es por usted, y el otro es por el arresto de Pinochet, tengan las botellas en la mano. Entonces hicimos un salud con vino y después hicimos el segundo brindis.

Siempre tomo vino con la comida; puede que tome un brandy después de terminar de comer; soy hombre de brandy o de coñac. Pero ese día no me doy cuenta del licor que me pasaban y lo tomaba. Un desorden total que nunca hago en mi vida. Después empiezo a cortar la carne y emprendo a repartirla a todos, le sirvo a mi compañera. Recuerdo que ella me mira. Yo soy un hombre con muchos problemas de salud. Hoy no me he recordado en absoluto de mi quebrantada salud. Oye, ¿quieres tomar cerveza? Entonces yo tomaba cerveza. Llega la repetición, sirvo por segunda vez carne. Yo me sirvo de nuevo carne y ahí está mi pescado, hecho. Entonces los compañeros al segundo plato me comienzan a decir, incluso la señora que estaba de cumpleaños dice: “¿Puedo comer un pedacito de pescado?” Claro, como no, le sirvo pescado. Todavía no me doy cuenta que ese pescado es el mío, lo habíamos comprado exclusivamente para mí y mi compañera. Nosotros no comemos carne, somos casi vegetarianos. No he comido carne en casi 18 años. La carne era para los compañeros. Yo sigo haciendo brindis con todos los licores a mi alcance. ¡Estoy eufórico!

Mientras estoy sentado comiendo el segundo plato, comienzo a observar, algo típico mío. Me doy cuenta de un compañero que es comunista. El siempre está hablando que quiere regresar, que estuvo en Chile y su vida era muy buena, en Chile, lo veo triste, casi llorando. Entonces yo voy a su lado y digo ‘compañero, brindemos por el perro Pinochet que está detenido’. Él dice sin animo, salud compañero. ¡Había dolor en el compañero! Después comienzo a observar a otros políticos, en ellos no hay dolor, veo a la esposa del compañero de cumpleaños, estaba normal. Veo al político que estuvo en la cárcel conmigo, a él se le veía con alegría. Uno de ellos me dijo ‘ojalá que le den los mismos años que nosotros estuvimos en la cárcel’. Había toda una alegría entre nosotros, los que habíamos sufrido el encarcelamiento. Nosotros queríamos que él sufriera lo mismo que nosotros sufrimos en la prisión. No como una venganza, pero que sufriera la falta de libertad, la falta de tener su familia al lado. Yo miré adentro de los sentimientos de todos los compañeros, porque ahí eran todos de izquierda y

éramos todos chilenos. Eran dos izquierdas: los compañeros que habían sufrido como nosotros, que estuvimos en la cárcel, que fuimos torturados. Y la otra gente que sigue siendo de izquierda, pero que mostraban tristeza por el Pinochet. Yo digo: ¿Oh, ustedes parecen tristes, es porque este perro está detenido? (levantando la voz) Uno responde. "El Tata Pinochet, que mal hizo, nos puso a todos en regla, ahora gracias a él estamos en Canadá." Respondo airado, 'Pinochet nos asesinó al Presidente Allende'. Silencio...

Ahí me doy cuenta que no he comido carne en casi 18 años. No sé que consecuencias me va a traer, si me va a volver el cáncer o no. Se ha hecho justicia. He vivido para ver esta experiencia, bueno esa es la impresión que me causó ese día. Yo seguí tomando más de la cuenta. ¡Yo estaba eufórico! Cosa extraña, no estaba ebrio, con un desorden total. Comúnmente la gente cuando toma vino y cerveza va a terminar ebria. Cuando uno toma tres o cuatro vasos de vino con la comida y un licor después, lo más probable que no pase nada. Fueron a buscar whisky y fueron a buscar otras cosas, ya todo el mundo quería gastar dinero y en esos días había dinero. Yo no tomo whisky, soy alérgico a este licor, pero lo olvidé y tomé y tomé whisky. Ese día estaba completamente desordenado, para la cantidad de alcohol que había tomado ese día y la cantidad de carne que había comido debería estar ebrio. No llegué a la casa ebrio. Esta es otra cosa que no cuadra con la realidad mía, yo sé con este desorden total terminaría ebrio.

La noticia para mí fue una gran alegría, era como un triunfo, era como revivir a Allende de nuevo. Era como estar viendo una película, un espejismo de imágenes del pasado. Era una cosa como ver a la gente muerta, que estaba viviendo. Parece que cada cual estaba viviendo lo suyo en el pasado o que sé yo. Yo tuve recuerdos por ejemplo, las imágenes duraron por largo tiempo. Yo estaba cortando carne y le estaba dando a la gente y me estaba acordando del pasado, de fiestas hicimos en Chile, en el Partido. De compañeros que no viven y de repente ni siquiera me daba cuenta si estaba en Canadá o estaba en Chile. O sea, estaba en una zona fuera

del mundo, yo me acordaba de Allende, me acordaba de la gente muerta, de los compañeros de la población. En el cumpleaños de nuestra amiga en Canadá había papas con huevos que es típica comida chilena, en cuanto yo metí la cuchara a las papas con huevos, me vino así a la memoria el recuerdo de ese huevo, de esa época y veía a la gente, ellos estaban un poco en sombra. Como ver una película adentro de mi mente. Me viene al espejo de la memoria, una mujer que me llevó a nombre de la de los compañeros y compañeras de la población, un huevo firmado por todos ellos. Se me vino a mi sentimiento y no sé porqué motivo. Cuando me entregaban el huevo firmado; cuando uno está en la cárcel se pasa hambre, hay humillaciones. Obviamente las compañeras afuera de la cárcel tenían la misma hambre, no tenían más que regalarme. Este era el día, de mi cumpleaños, creo yo, se acordaron las compañeras y me llevaron un huevo, que era lo único que tenían y decidieron firmar el huevo. Ahí viene el dilema del huevo, lo guardo o me lo como. ¿Cómo poder sacar la comida y guardar la cascara con las firmas? O ¿cuál es más importante, el hambre o las firmas? Terminé comiéndome el huevo. Pero seguía hablando con la gente, seguía atendiendo a los compañeros. Si me hablaban contestaba. Repentinamente levanto la cara y veo el rostro del compañero Allende. Me dio la impresión de que él estaba hablando, pero eso fue lo que a mí me ocurrió. O sea, ese fue mi fenómeno, y lo más que me extrañó, hasta el día de hoy, es aquellos compañeros que estaban tristes. Por esto estoy convencido que nosotros somos un pueblo rastnero, como dijo el Dr. Allende al paco Mendoza. En esta sala, la mitad de la gente que era socialista, comunista eran todos compañeros de izquierda que conviven con nosotros. Me di cuenta que no es cierto, que estos compañeros que se vinieron a Canadá por mejor vida, y sentían dolor por la muerte de Pinochet. Yo le consulté a mi mujer que es sicóloga y le dije: "No puedo entender por qué esta gente estaba triste y yo creo que estos atornillan para el otro lado." Ella me dijo: "No, aquí hay dos realidades. Una que ellos estén mintiendo. La otra, es muy posible que ellos tengan un problema sociológico, un problema de culpabilidad. Se sienten culpables de algo y esta gente necesita ser tratada". No

hay nada más burro que un chileno. Somos insoportables, somos arrogantes, porque es cierto, mi esposa sufre bastante el racismo de parte de nosotros, como ella es norteamericana.

La realidad es que ella, como sicóloga, ha observado que hay mucho trauma en todos nosotros. Un gran trauma sicológico dentro de los chilenos. Mucho de ellos, pese a que eran comunistas, porque este hombre es comunista, veían a Pinochet como un hombre que dio reglas duras, que eran las reglas que ellos necesitaban, porque como Partido es tan duro orgánicamente, Pinochet es parecido a Stalin, creo. El Dr. Allende era al revés, un hombre del diálogo, de la conversación. Para mí Pinochet es un asesino, es un hombre que destruyó mi vida. Nunca seré lo que fui, y mi vida está muy lejana a lo que pude ser.

He logrado hacer en este país lo mejor que he podido con mi vida, pero nunca seré ministro, podría ser Miembro del Parlamento, pude llegar lejos cuando era un hombre joven. La gente me quería y me quiere. Cuando fui a Chile, los compañeros me pedían que me quedara, querían que fuera regidor. El problema es que no puedo hacer nada por ellos. Sólo iría a sentarme en un sillón negro de las sesiones municipales. El regidor no tiene salario, entonces tendría que quitarle el trabajo a alguien; en el fondo causaría más daño que lo que puedo ayudar en Chile. Cómo he cambiado, tengo otra mentalidad, tengo otras ideas, es muy difícil para mí regresar a Chile y tomar un cargo de regidor por ejemplo.

La noticia para mí fue una alegría. Pero también recordé con mucha tristeza, y se me remueve el alma de dolor, saber que por la culpa de este infeliz de Pinochet toda mi familia estuvo en la cárcel, hasta mi pobre madre, mi hermana que era pequeñita, las tomaron y las llevaron detenidas. A media noche les soltaron a mi madre y a mi hermana. Dijo el oficial, a la primera casa que encuentren golpean, porque estamos en toque de queda. Si se quedan en la noche, mañana yo tengo que hacer reporte y les van a seguir proceso. No entiendo por qué demonios las trajeron a Uds. Porque mi mamá tiene cara de mamá. Mi madre es madre, o sea ella no ha trabajado afuera de la casa, en toda su vida ha estado en la casa, familias, criando a sus

hijos. Ella nunca se metió en la política de mi papá. Mi papá si fue un político de centro bastante influyente en el gobierno de Frei. Todos los hijos salieron de izquierda y cada cual más avanzado, era más de izquierda. Yo soy de un partido de izquierda, mi hermano era de otro, mi otro hermano no quiso meterse en ninguna cosa, mi hermana tampoco. Pero mi hermana era muy pequeña. Mi padre de centro; las reglas de mi madre eran que nadie discutía política en la casa. Nosotros teníamos la tradición de juntarnos los domingos a comer en la casa de mi madre. Estaba casado, pero volvíamos ahí, a comer con mi madre. Entonces me vino esa nostalgia, esa rabia, esa amargura profunda, esa pena, esos deseos de llorar (*la voz cambia, suena con tristeza*). Cuando uno recuerda que la madre le dio la vida. Ahora ella estaba metida en la cárcel con mi pequeña hermana. Salieron del regimiento y golpearon en una casa. Les dejaron pasar la noche ahí, gente de cariño y de corazón. Yo estaba encarcelado, había sido buscado por todas parte, porque yo era un funcionario público, era un consejero de un Ministro. Entonces yo tenía un cargo importante. En ese cargo era Manager de una de las Comuna de Santiago y podía hacer el trabajo como Secretario del Regidor de esa comuna. Podía hacer dos trabajos a la vez, sólo uno era pagado. El único salario que yo recibía era como funcionario público; ser Secretario de Regidor no tiene salario. Entonces esa era la vida mía, trabajaba 12 o 16 horas por días, yo estaba haciendo dos trabajos. Claro que a la vez era muy joven, tenía mucha energía, estaba recién casado y era un profesional, nunca me sentí cansado. La gente lo empuja a uno, lo aplaude y todas esas cosas dan más fuerzas. Parece que los aplausos le dan energía a uno, le dan vida. Trabajé mucho y entonces yo veía todo este trabajo que murió, que fue asesinado, porque la vida de mi familia fue asesinada (*con rabia*). Mi padre fue torturado y encarcelado siendo de un partío de centro; el propio Eduardo Frei en persona lo fue a buscar a uno de los Regimiento. Frei en persona lo trajo en su Mercedes Benz a la casa de mi madre. El hombre fue torturado y él era de centro. Mi hermano, ese se robó una ambulancia, se robó un montón de cosas, tenía armas, y se balearon entre ellos. Con todas esas cosas que le pillaron lo condenaron a tres años y

un día. A mí el Consejo de Guerra no me pilló con nada, solamente un lápiz, esa era mi arma, me dieron 8 años y un día. Cuando mi hermano le pregunta al Coronel, el porqué de mi condena, éste le dijo: “Bueno, a tí con los bomberos es suficiente, los bomberos te tiran agua y ya, tu revolución se acaba. Tú hermano, ese se habría convertido en un Che Guevara, porque ése tenía las ideas, ése hizo el Servicio Militar, ése sabe usar las armas. No era terrorista agrega, si no lo hubiésemos fusilado.” Pero realmente el no fue quien me salva la vida. Me salvó la vida un policía, porque a nosotros nos tiraron para matarnos. Nos iban a matar la Marina; se había destacado en Santiago en el área norte de la capital. Ahí estaba la Marina y yo vi matar compañeros. Ahí mataron a todos los dirigentes agrícolas de esa comuna. Los vi morir. Este hecho de saber que Pinochet estaba en la cárcel a mí me parecía un sueño, porque uno se queda en el aire, no sabe si está vivo o está muerto. No sabía si estaba celebrando o no. Estaba contento pero de repente venía ese espejismo. Esta cosa es así, como una especie de espejismo que ocurre ahí. Uno escucha por ejemplo la noticia (*hace sonidos con los dedos*). Así dice: El General Augusto Pinochet ha sido detenido en Inglaterra, está detenido en su domicilio. La noticia es así (*hace el mismo sonido*) y después cuando termina esa noticia, viene ese momento de alegría, hace un brindis. Yo les doy carne a los compañeros, me acuerdo de los asados que hacíamos en otros lugares, no eran grandes como aquí. Eran mucho más pequeños los asados que se hacían en Chile, pero vuelve lo mismo, pero ya no son las caras que están aquí, son caras de allá. Después alguien dice ‘otro brindis’ y entonces uno vuelve para acá. Después uno va a sacar una ensalada de papas con huevos (*el mismo sonido con los dedos*) y me vuelve a la memoria las compañeras que trajeron el huevo firmado a la cárcel, este hecho es increíble. Por que si se toma en cuenta que esas mujeres no tenían nada que darme, sólo ese huevo, tomando en cuenta que el huevo significa vida. Es la única comida que yo tenía para mí, pero termino compartiendo el huevo. Después uno va a tomar una ensalada de tomates con cebollas, con cilantro y bueno, se recuerda que la madre le daba esto en Chile. Me recuerdo de aquellas

reuniones familiares, mi mamá nos hacía esas ensaladas. Incluso uno está allá y acá y después alguien dice: ‘Tomate esta cerveza’, entonces yo tomo esa cerveza alemana. Yo no tomo cerveza en la comida, en general hubiera tomado vino. (*Riendo*) Pero la tomo porque estoy delirante. Yo soy un hombre ordenado. La noticia me desmoronó completamente, en un desorden. Si se considera que yo no había comido carne en 18 años y termino comiendo carne. ¡Estaba eufórico, delirante, con espejismos!

Yo también esperé que la tortilla se iba a dar vuelta. Yo siempre pensé que iba a haber algún cambio, pero nunca esperaba que el cambio iba a ocurrir en Inglaterra. Yo esperaba que de una u otra manera en Chile iba a haber un cambio fuerte y Pinochet iba a terminar pagando sus crímenes. Pero nunca lo esperaba en otra parte. Porque ahora lo hemos visto; Pinochet de regresó a Chile y ya no está condenado, lo absolvieron, entonces es una cosa que es irónica. Esto que ocurrió el 11 de septiembre, coincide con lo que ocurrió en Chile. Yo cuando hice mi programa radial, dije: “Lamento la muerte de aquellas personas inocentes, pero ellos se lo merecían porque habían causado mucho daño, habían matado a mi presidente y a muchos compañeros de mi pueblo.” Yo reconozco que hay militares de los servicios de inteligencia infiltrados entre nosotros. Sospecho de algunas personas y les digo a ellos: “Mis amigos, los árabes no me hicieron caso de mandar un avión a la casa de Pinochet.” Le veo en sus ojos el dolor, como el dolor que vi en la cara de uno de ellos, con el dolor que ese hombre sentía. Ese hombre estuvo en las filas de un partido de izquierda, estuvo engañándose a sí mismo. Los compañeros que estaban ahí se engañaron ellos mismo. Para mí no, era el mejor día de mi vida. Hay pocos días que yo recuerde con tanta alegría.

El arresto de Pinochet; ésto para mí significa la justicia del pueblo, para mí era la justicia, era la justicia para mi madre que sin tener nada (*con rabia*) que ver con política, ni mi hermana que es inocente, una niñita, era la justicia para ellos. Era la justicia para mi padre que vive en Venezuela, tuvo que dejar el país. Era el justo pago para mi hijo, que recuerda cuando llegaban

con ametralladoras y ametrallaban la población. Era la justicia para esas mujeres que me llevaban un huevo, era la justicia para toda la población donde yo era presidente, era justicia para el Comité Cuatro Alamos, donde llegaron las patrullas a media noche y obligaron a los pobladores a ir a las canchas de fútbol, medios desnudos; les golpearon y todo. Era la justicia para todos los chilenos.

En la población de mi padre son casitas muy grandes, muy bonitas, son una de las más bonitas de la comuna, y es la población más antigua. Ahí había gente muy acomodada. Uno de los vecinos siempre fue un derechista de tomo y lomo. Era un hombre que fue alessandrista, que ayudó al golpe militar, era un pro Pinochet. El eufórico salió a la calle con la bandera chilena gritando ¡Viva la junta militar chilena! Desde un helicóptero de la Fuerza Aérea lo ametrallaron. Era la justicia para este hombre, que creyó que había encontrado la libertad de privilegios individuales. Si, consiguió la libertad en una tumba del cementerio. También para él era la justicia. Era la justicia para este niño Jorguito que estaba en la cárcel, sin aceptar que su padre había sido ametrallado, asesinado por los militares cuando jugaba fútbol. El niño se queda con su mente parada, congelada, esperando a su padre, sin aceptar la triste realidad. El niño Jorguito vino junto a un grupo de futbolistas supervivientes que trajeron a la Penitenciaria de Santiago. Las autoridades no hallaban qué hacer con el niño. Vino el Cardenal de Santiago a tratar de llevarlo. No quería irse, estaba traumatizado y no se daba cuenta que su padre había muerto. No tenía a nadie, su familia había huido o muerto, el niño estaba solo. Fue algo extraño, entre tantos políticos, sólo conmigo le gustaba hablar. Yo fui la persona que lo curó con un poema, le digo así al niño. ¿Jorguito, dónde está su papito? /¡Jugando fútbol está! / No, no, no, su papito / con el pecho destruido está/ Este poema fue la palabra mágica, la llave dentro de su mente para volverlo a la realidad. Muchos años mas tarde copié y corregí este poema aquí en Canadá. Hay muchos hechos que se olvidan con los años. Es que uno trata de olvidarlo todo, quiere comenzar una vida nueva, pero esto está archivado en la mente de las personas.

El Período entre el Arresto y el Retorno de Pinochet

Bueno, para mí era como un juego de ping-pong. Eran días de alegría y días de tristeza. Pude observar y tomar más distancia aún, a muchos compañeros. Puedo darme cuenta de algunas personas que trabajan para el servicio de inteligencia militar aquí. Por su actitud, en su forma de dolor. Ellos tenían un decaimiento total, empecé a ver tristeza, comencé a darme cuenta que no todos bailamos el mismo tango, esta cueca chilena no es de zapateo en quincha de todos nosotros. O sea el Dr. Allende no fue traicionado solamente por Pinochet, sino que por su propia gente. Pero la tristeza de ellos definitivamente no es la misma, porque los que estuvimos en la cárcel, nosotros teníamos una actitud de tranquilidad, una actitud de justicia y el otro resto no. Ellos tenían una actitud de tristeza, de melancolía, fumaban más. Estaban con poco deseos de juntarse, optaron por no ir a las actividades, cuando se celebró en la Cooperativa de Chilenos la detención de Pinochet. Ellos estuvieron un ratito, salían, pasaban más fumando afuera que adentro, definitivamente es la conciencia de ellos que los tortura.

Yo he cuestionado a uno de ellos, es el más grande, de los grandes comunistas. Yo le he dicho: ¿Porqué está llorando? “Por el tata Pinochet está preso.” O sea ¿Ud. no es de izquierda, usted qué es? Claro, obviamente se enojó, pero yo prefiero no tener ese tipo de amigos, para qué quiero tener gente que se engaña a sí mismo. Él dice que está contento con que Pinochet esté en la cárcel, pero obviamente le da tristeza, se acuerda de su pasado. ¿Pero realmente cuál fue su pasado? Hubo chilenos que estuvieron detenidos por tres días, quince días, veinte días, porque en realidad todo Chile casi, estuvo de uno u otra manera detenido. Es muy distinto el ser torturado, condenado por un tribunal militar. Enseguida uno comienza a cumplir una larga condena en la cárcel y después en la Penitenciaria de Santiago. Es muy distinto esto a otra persona que estuvo diez días y después salieron en libertad a la vida normal, y escaparon para Argentina. No estoy diciendo que quince días no es sufrimiento; sí, es sufrimiento más corto, es

distinto. De alguna manera estos políticos tenían más cariño por Pinochet del que yo siento, eso era evidente. ¡Hay compañeros que han llorado por Pinochet!

No le asigno más valor a la persona que estuvo en la cárcel, pero la persona que fue torturada, nunca va a ser lo que fue. La tortura está hecha para destruir mentalmente. Aquí se prueba quién fue torturado y quién no. Porque gente como yo, que fue torturada, nunca se olvida de ese terror, porque eso es un terror, y ese terror que lo lleva por vida. Esa fue mi experiencia, los otros dicen que los torturaron también, pero a lo mejor no fue cierto.

Los compañeros pueden tener mucha entrega, mucho compromiso, eso no tiene nada que ver con la tortura, la tortura algunas veces hace a la gente traidora. La tortura hace que la gente renuncie a si mismo, para eso es la tortura, la tortura es para destruir mentalmente a la gente. Obviamente, una persona que no fue torturada puede ser mucho mejor trabajando que yo. De hecho lo es, porque tiene la cabeza más fría que yo, esta más normal. Con la tortura yo quedé un poco anormal. Entonces esa es la cosa, es la balanza en una sala, en un día de fiesta, y lo que refleja son dos tipos de experiencia entre compañeros. La muerte de Allende es un dolor, uno ve morir los compañeros, sabe que se van a morir tarde o temprano y los ve irse. A mí me dio la impresión que esos compañeros tenían esa cara de dolor por el enemigo. Soy trabajador de la salud mental, entonces yo he leído, estudiado, he tomado cursos. En mi trabajo observo mucho gestos, me preocupo mucho de estas cosas, es como un policía, que termina su turno y después quiere seguir pasando partes, sigue preocupándose de los que cometan infracciones. Bueno cuando uno tiene una profesión la carga todo el tiempo.

El Retorno de Pinochet a Chile

Para mí fue triste, yo sabía que Chile es un país donde no se hace justicia, entonces Pinochet estaría libre. Cuando salió de Inglaterra con este circo de que estaba enfermo, en silla de ruedas, yo sabía que esto era una mentira. Fue otra burla más contra nosotros, yo sabía

automáticamente que en Chile nunca iba a haber justicia, porque nunca la hubo. Chile fue un país que aparentemente es muy ordenado, pero sin justicia para los pobres. Como funcionario público tengo un ejemplo en el año 1972, en mi pueblo, que sólo está a 16 kilómetros de Santiago. Entre el centro de la ciudad y el pueblo está lleno de fundos agrícolas. Se expropia un fundo casi abandonado de un ex Juez. Los peones nos mostraron el sótano, en este existían cepos como en la época de la colonia, ahí azotaba a los trabajadores cuando él quería. La última vez que flagela, fue cuando ganó el compañero Allende, al peón que estaba contento, que cantaba y reía por el triunfo de la Unidad Popular. El Juez azota al peón asta mandarlo al hospital. Después se fue a Estados Unidos. Le seguimos sus pasos como Juez del Juzgado del pueblo. Tenía gente condenada a cadena perpetua por haber robado una gallina. Entonces Chile nunca tuvo realmente ley para todos. Hay una ley blanda para la clase alta y una dura para los trabajadores.

Yo lo veía en el caso de mi padre, su orgullo personal, la lucha por sus privilegios. Yo quiero mucho a mi padre, pero hubo cosas que me enfermaron de él. Por ejemplo íbamos a un restaurante bien caro durante el gobierno de Frei. El mozo decía ‘Señor Gonzalez aquí está su mesa reservada para usted’. Este era un restaurante famoso y muy caro, por eso hay pocos clientes. Cuando me gradúe como electromecánico mi padre hizo la celebración en ese lugar y mandó a sacar una botella de reserva, para felicitarme por mi graduación. Esto es muy caro, porque no se sabe el valor de esta botella de reserva. Fue una velada hermosa, pero eran muy pocas mesas ocupadas. Durante del gobierno del compañero Allende era al revés, el restaurante estaba lleno. Ya no estaba la mesa reservada del Señor Gonzalez. Ahora había gente del pueblo comiendo es este lugar caro. Siempre había una buena mesa para nosotros, donde podíamos comer. Observo a los que están en la mesa que a mi padre le gusta. Es un señor bien fuerte, con una señora un poco gorda, están comiendo pollo a la canasta. El hombre, por sus manos duras y oscuras, estoy seguro que trabajaba en la construcción. El famoso restaurante Torres donde iban

los políticos más famosos, y han pasado casi todos los Presidentes de Chile en los últimos 100 años. Ahora está invadido por el pueblo, que por primera vez podían darse un gusto.

Solo sentí tristeza con el retorno de Pinochet y saber que no se había hecho justicia. Un poco de amargura que viene acompañada de la depresión. ¡No iba haber justicia! Chile es un país de milagros. Ningún médico de Inglaterra pudo hacer caminar a Pinochet, está enfermo, llegó en una silla de ruedas. ¡Todo una farsa! El milagroso aire chileno lo hizo caminar, Chile es un país de milagros.

Lo bueno de todo esto, en los 16 meses de detención de Pinochet en Londres, es que la CBC pudo hacer grandes reportajes acerca de lo que pasó en Chile. En estos 16 meses Estados Unidos se vio obligado a transcribir documentos donde la CIA está envuelta en el asesinato del Dr. Allende. El complot por parte de la Embajada, sus Cónsules y Cancilleres. El dinero que dieron a los camioneros y los periódicos de la derecha chilena para dar el golpe militar. Los americanos confesaron que lo hicieron por el amor a América, el amor al águila. La gente canadiense y nuestros hijos por fin pudieron entender el dolor de muchos de nosotros.

Uno no es el mejor profesor de los propios hijos. Pero ahora ellos lo pudieron entender en la televisión, o sea el viejo de mi papá no está tan loco. A mis padres les pasó, es por eso que no aprenden inglés. Muchos hijos de chilenos dicen: "Yo no tengo respeto por mis padres, llevan 20 años aquí y todavía trabajan haciendo aseo y no hablan inglés." Ahora entendieron que estos padres tienen un problema sicológico, los torturaron con el punzón eléctrico conectado a la música del *rock and roll*. Eso fue lo único bueno. ¡En general a todo el mundo el juicio de Pinochet nos ayudó!

Este período también me afectó, me hace sentirme más solo. Obviamente cuando he descubierto este tipo de gente, que no era tan de izquierda, como yo pensaba. Esto me aleja más de ellos. Entonces mis relaciones se achican y termino más solo con mi soledad. Yo les vi

llorando por Pinochet, entonces ya les perdí el respeto, no son mis amigos. Creo que fue una buena pérdida.

En Chile el Presidente Lagos no hizo absolutamente nada para mantener a Pinochet en proceso o en la cárcel. Todo lo contrario, vino a defenderlo, a mentir que lo iba a enjuiciar. El Presidente Lagos y su esposa ponen una cortina de humo tratando de comprarle una dentadura plástica al pueblo de Chile. Con la propaganda “Sonrisa de Mujer”, vamos a ayudar a comprarle una dentadura a la mujer chilena. En mi poema digo están juntando dinero para tu sonrisa plástica / Quizás compañera / con leche, pan y queso, / en pocas palabras / con tres comidas diarias / sobre la mesa del pueblo / no se te hubieran caído tus dientes / yo estoy viendo tú sonrisa / pura y cristalina que viene / desde el fondo de tu alma. La falta de dientes significa la falta de justicia, significa el dolor del pueblo, de una nación entera. Veamos aquí en Canadá, ahora que hay recesión. ¿Qué es lo que vemos? Vitrinas llenas, gente sin dinero, gente pidiendo en las calles, eso significa una injusticia social.

Analizando creo que Pinochet está encarcelado en su país, en sus propios tristes recuerdos, sin poder salir al extranjero. Pinochet tiene que aceptar que es reconocido mundialmente como el asesino del compañero Allende, de mi pueblo, y de encarcelar a todo Chile con sus toques de queda. Ahora vive con miedo de otro juicio y terminar sus días en la cárcel, como otros Generales. Cada día con menos amigos.

En el fondo ganamos; el compañero Allende está frente a la Moneda y yo miro con tranquilidad y fe el futuro de mi Chile.

Adriana's Experience

The Arrest of Pinochet

I was taking a training at VCC, it was Saturday morning. So during the break around 11:00 o'clock I went out, I was having a cigarette and my friend Gladys came running to me and said my God, my God did you hear the news?, did you hear the news?. She was so excited. And I said, no what news what are you talking about, what's going on what's going on and she was just frantic. Pinochet was arrested in London and I went blank. It was weird because all of the sudden I felt like crying, but I felt, I felt that I should feel something for him, but I thought that's inappropriate. This guy was arrested, it is wonderful!. I was feeling so strange with my feelings. I was really happy and really sad, but I couldn't tell why I was sad. So she is telling me things, all the details, and I was not there. I could not believe it. It was just so, so absolutely unexpected it was nothing I had ever imagined in a million years. The information was just not going through. And I had all sorts of body reactions in my stomach for sure, just this tightness. And at the same time these images started going through my mind and just the sadness and I had memories, and I know that I went back in time. And it's funny one of the images that I remember is the image of the presidential palace in flames, that came into my mind and then just people and people screaming and noises, machines guns and helicopters, like flashbacks like a movie. I saw the trucks full of dead bodies that I had seen days after September 11, 1973, and the final images were of the people, of the disappeared and that is when it hit me about the sadness. They (the disappeared) are going to be able to rest in peace and their families are going to have some kind of resolution or something and this is so big. I was just not there, this feeling of not really being able to focus on what was going on around me. My friend kept talking to me and I could hear her but, I was seeing all these images in my mind. I am really glad that it was someone that I know, that I have known for a long time that brought the news because we got to

talk a little bit about it. The whole day I was somewhere else, I went back to the workshop and I told the people that I heard the news and they were happy, but still it didn't make sense to me. I was in this fog for a long time I would say weeks before I could understand what happened. It just seemed completely unreal, I felt complete disbelief on one hand, like almost a crazy making feeling that oh my God is this for real?, is there someone making this up?. Then because everybody was talking about it, and the news were talking about it so then you realize it is really happening. But it was just talking to my friends hit home just to see them so happy and sad.

We had all sorts of celebrations. I was very aware of what was going on to other people and then again this feeling of being sad and happy, sad and happy. Recognition was a big feeling for me, people are talking about Chile again. And then realizing that what happened there in Chile, in my country, what went on was true, this is, is a big huge, world recognition and that even during the dictatorship, there were people who didn't know what was happening in the country. We didn't know, the extent of the horror around us. But now this was going to change everything, there was going to be justice and people around the world were going to know what really happened in Chile.

The biggest feeling was this huge sense of recognition, that history is gonna change somehow that, that what we went through for many years in Chile was real not only for the Chilean people, but all around the world. It also meant for me a lot of future possibilities for other countries who are going through similar experiences in Latin America or around the world. I went through this complete state of hope, this is changing the world somehow to this sense of this is never gonna happen because, the government, the military, Pinochet, the United States, somehow are going to stop it. I mean they did interfere in the process in Chile before, why wouldn't they now. It just seems so, so impossible that a judge in Spain would have so much power as to extradite Pinochet and take him to court. It was such a mixture of feelings that went on for me, for a long time after I heard the news, particularly the images of the disappeared, of

the bombing of the military, the trucks full of bodies images kept coming back and back and sadness a lot of sadness, just in terms of being completely unreal. So, it went on for quite sometime, is part of all the hope and the happiness that people have around us. I also felt a sense of pride. I felt really good about being Chilean, somehow I don't know, it was very strange.

The Period between Pinochet's Arrest and Release

Well, that was the hard part, because of this constant state of really not knowing what was going to happen. I decided not to watch TV, I knew that my friends were going to phone me if something happened so I avoided the news every time I knew that one of the decisions was going to be made in London. I just went into this state of hyper vigilance and anxiety and nervousness. It was like a roller coaster one was a positive one so we went and celebrated and we were happy for a long time, but I also had this feeling of disbelief is this going to happen? They are going to appeal they have a lot of money. And also just knowing the reactions of what was going on in Chile, of this division that happened in the country, the right wing that mobilized immediately and there were acts of violence like attacking the Spanish and the British embassies. They were also attacking people like Spanish citizens, British citizens on the streets and there were mobs of uncontrolled right wing, Pinochet supporters, who felt disempowered and that was really scary to think that these people have had the power for so long and this was just something that could lead to more violence and I hoped that the rest of the country, the left would not react, because this might turn into a civil war. But it was nice on one hand, also to see that, they got to experience what it was like to feel disempowered and the whole world was watching them.

It was a period of intense frustration, and happiness. I went from believing that he was going to be extradited to eventually thinking no it is impossible. There are just too many political and economical interests at stake in England, in the US. I was surprised that the United

States never made any statements, so I thought well this is just a waste of time and I guess the hope that I had that this was going to change things slowly disappeared. Throughout all the different decisions that were made, I just had this thing in the back of my mind, a little bit of hope like a little light and it went out, it slowly disappeared. My expectations were that he would be extradited to Spain and then taken to trial. I think it would have been wonderful, it would set a precedent. I was extremely disappointed about the way the government in Chile, the coalition, they were obviously not going to allow this, they were basically supporting any legal actions that would mean taking Pinochet back to Chile. They were promising that if something could be done in Chile, they would do it, which of course we did not believe that at the time. That was another big, huge disillusion. I think that every, single decision was in fact a disillusion. It was frightening to see how many were still supporting Pinochet. I guess I have always been surrounded by people who left the country, people who went into exile because of what happened in Chile, so just to know that there were high numbers of Pinochet supporters everywhere in Chile was really disillusioning and it made me think about a different reality, that we live in a different time zone somehow. So what meaning can I make of the legal proceedings?. Well, I think in fact they were fair, they were treated with respect anyway obviously we knew, we all knew that Pinochet's defense was going to do whatever possible, or impossible to try to stop him from going to trial and that he was going to be eventually released.

The Return of Pinochet to Chile

I never believed for a moment, that he was that sick, I think they made that up. I believe that it was all planned by the doctors. So when he was returned home on March 2nd of the year 2000, well I knew that this would happen they were talking about it. I avoided watching TV, or talking to people, I just didn't want to know. I was expecting that a miracle would happen. So on that day I went to work and one of my co-workers said to me by the way, do you know, have

you heard the news. Did you watch the news last night, the newspaper today, you know that Pinochet was flown home and that actually he arrived in Chile and was welcomed as a hero and he actually walked isn't that funny that he was so sick. He walked from the plane. So I got furious. I was really angry and visibly angry. I just didn't wanna talk to anybody, it was rage what came to me, it was unbelievable. Although I knew this was going to happen. I could see it happening, but that it actually happened. It made me disbelief people and justice and the world and different states and it felt like a big, huge machiavelic plan. I just felt so humiliated and betrayed, betrayed by the international community, that somehow they would do something to prevent this from happening. I had to continue working that day but, I was in a bad mood. I was really, really in a bad mood. And when I got home that night, I had talked to some friends, who were equally disappointed and I just didn't want to answer the phone anymore and talk to anybody. I think I cried and it was beyond my understanding that this would happen. I just felt that all of the sudden the whole process since he was arrested until he was sent home made absolutely no sense, it was just meaningless. How happy and exited I felt at one point, it all disappeared. It was just brutal, it was retraumatizing. I just kept thinking about the families of the disappeared and the people in Chile, how much it meant for them. All the work of thousands of people around the world, collecting testimonies and working together and having to reopen their stories, their traumas, their wounds. We were all working towards this goal, towards justice. We had so much invested in this trial that this as just a blow on the face. It was just unbelievable. I cried of just cheer hatred and anger. Going back to work the next day was awful, people were asking me things and wanting to talk about it, asking me to make comments and I was in no mood, absolutely in no mood to make any comments. After that I felt complete hopelessness that nothing is ever going to happen. During that period people were talking about how important this would be for the rest of countries and, other dictators and this could actually help other people. But I just didn't think this even made any sense at all. This time I didn't have

images coming to my mind, but this strong sense of hatred and rage that was just in my stomach. It was a very physical sensation. I remember if I hadn't been at work and had to deal with people perhaps, I would have just smashed something, I felt like breaking something, like screaming, it was like a huuuge sense of betrayal. I guess part of me was expecting justice. I felt profoundly betrayed by the British Prime Minister who was unable to keep up with the international pressure and that was the easiest way out to just allow him to return back to Chile.

Now when I look in retrospective to the whole period, I think it opened up a lot of things for me. I just realized how many fears, emotions really strong emotions I had stored in my body that I, wasn't aware of, in terms of profound sadness and happiness and disbelief and, rage. It was a period of intense emotions that I don't know if I had experienced otherwise. I was also very affected by the stories of other people that you hear through the grapevine. I know that a lot of people had breakdowns, they ended up in hospital all that. People that had never talked about what happened to them in Chile for 27 years. They were finally getting to this point that it was so overwhelming for them that they were phoning organizations seeking for counselling and just truly not understanding what was happening to them. I think I was more aware of the extensive damage we all have and to see it in my friends too. Because in general we always talk about the Chilean situation, and not from an emotional place, from the intellect, it's political analysis, but this was really emotional, there was no way to feel different, and not to have strong feelings and emotions about this. So that was one of the first indicators that we all have a lot hidden in there, there is a lot of damage, there is a lot of pain, there is a lot of sadness. At the same time going back to when Pinochet was first arrested, we were so happy and just to see how these stories where coming up and somehow we were back in time, and we were talking about what we were doing September 11. That I guess for me anyway is the most representative day of all the Chilean history, since Pinochet took over. So we were able to talk about it, tell different stories the faces of happiness, that well although this guy did this, there is this possibility that he might

be persecuted, but then when he went back it was like, I don't wanna talk about it I just don't have the emotional interest to, I don't wanna be disillusioned again. Now, today when I look at these events I think it had a huge impact worldwide. I think that it brought a lot of hope for a lot of people. Not only in Chile, but in other countries, hope that similar processes could happen. And the fact there is right now a similar process against Rios Montt in Guatemala, there are people rallying intensely around the world. There are a lot of symbolic tribunals that have taken place as a result of this Pinochet incident. Well what I didn't believe was the fact that there were going to be a number of civil suits against Pinochet in Chile. I have no trust that this will go anywhere, but just the fact that he is still under house arrest, he's been in the news. I am not sure of the number of individual lawsuits against him for his responsibility in disappearances or torture, but I think it opened up a huge gap in Chile. I think this event as dramatic as it was has changed people and it has given people the opportunity to talk about things that they would have never talked about before. It brought up a lot of fear in some people.

I had the chance of going to Chile right after his arrest, when he was actually in London. At the time the country was completely polarized, people weren't talking much about Pinochet. It was good and it was bad, it was sad to see that my family was divided around this issue. I have relative who are really strong Pinochet supporters so that was a reality that I wasn't expecting. I attended some ceremonies and that was meaningful and then again I went back after Pinochet had already been released and he was already in Chile and I could see some differences in the people in terms of perhaps not expecting much, because I don't think you can really expect much from a system that is still controlled by the military behind the scenes.

When I was there this last year, and the judge in charged of the prosecution how awful it must have been for him to go through this process. But there was new evidence all the time and new cases that they were finding, bodies and they were identifying bodies and is a process that I think is not going to stop. There have been a number of other trials against militaries involved

and so far there are about 20 militaries in jail. So now I can see in retrospective that this was just the beginning of something much larger, much bigger, that has been happening. I honestly don't think anything is gonna happen to Pinochet, I think his defense is just waiting for him to get sick, I don't trust the doctors that are helping him or their decisions. This is all political manipulation but as long as he is shamed, I am happy. Just the fact that he had to get finger printed, I think it's wonderful, it's not what I would expect, I would like to see him in jail in an actual real jail and not under house arrest, but I know that is never gonna happen I just don't trust that kind of justice. If it didn't happen in London or in Spain I don't think is gonna happen in Chile. They have too much invested to allow something like that to happen. But you know, he was recently, his extradition was asked for his responsibility in the killings of some high ranking military Chileans in Argentina, so the Argentinean government is asking his extradition. Things are happening, things are moving and I don't think he is gonna go down in history as just the brave soldier that he wanted to be. I think he is going to be remembered for different circumstances. I think he was shamed, profoundly shamed, internationally shamed I think that is wonderful. I think if this man has any feelings he would hopefully reflect about what he did. I would like to see him asking for forgiveness, but that is perhaps too much to ask from him. I hope he realizes the extent of the damage that he has caused to thousands upon thousands of people but it's also their families and friends of all the people who were killed or tortured or disappeared and, the next generations after that. So I think we are just beginning to see how this is unfolding. I think this opened a huge legal process around the world. It's certainly a thing that worked when it comes to impunity a lot of things have happened after that, that they were not supposed to happen and hopefully a lot of people could benefit from that.

Fernando's Experience

El Arresto de Pinochet

La noticia la recibí por los medios de comunicación, en la mañana a primera hora, creo que fue en la prensa o en la televisión, la televisión informó tempranísimo. Yo estaba en una ciudad en el norte de Chile para el arresto, había retornado hacia ya, estamos hablando del 98. En ese momento, yo estaba preparando para irme al trabajo en la mañana y la noticia me cambió el día. En el momento que recibí la noticia estaba solo. No sentí nada físico sólo deseos de moverme, muy feliz, muy feliz, una ansiedad de alegría. Yo recuerdo que estaba en la ducha y no hayaba la hora que pasara la rutina de la mañana para estar fuera para radiar esa alegría con alguien, conversarla. Estaba ansioso de llegar a mi trabajo para traspasar luego la noticia a la gente que me rodeaba en mi trabajo, y traspasarla con alegría y entre comillas con ironía, muy propia de mi personalidad quizás cuando se trata de estas cosas políticas. Alegría con la gente que yo sé que iban a estar tan alegres como yo, compartirla, y con ironía con aquellos que sabíamos que iban a estar un poco preocupados, dolidos, etc. Pero en el plano físico no sentí nada, porque no hay nada que me afecte físicamente a mí de la imagen de él, solamente el coartarme no más la libertad. Coartarme el deseo de ser más, más persona.

Sentimos un sentido de victoria, sentimos que era uno de los tantos momentos en los cuales estabamos ganando algo, algo grande después de haber sufrido todo, todo lo anterior. Fué una victoria que había que comunicarla pero a la vez demostrarla, es cuando uno dice hay que sacarle pica en palabras Chilenas a estos, pero con ironía. Yo me recuerdo que llegué a un ambiente en mi trabajo donde poca gente tenía manifestaciones políticas y yo me hice el inocente como que no estaba tan al tanto de la noticia. Pero muchos que ya me conocían, apenas me vieron fue lo primero que me dijeron Y supiste la noticia ¿de qué? Ah, no te hagas el tonto, ¿no qué? Pinochet que... Ah, que se decidió quedar en Roma, en Roma en Londres etc. etc. ya y ahí

empezamos a bromear, pero ya sabemos que el ejercito de Chile la Marina, ya estaba mandando a todo su regimiento su gente, sus soldados, para invadir Inglaterra, es la ironía de que te hablo. Hubo mucha preocupación de gente porque esta ciudad tiene mucha presencia militar es una zona estratégica que colinda con Bolivia. Y los militares estaban acuartelados, dieron orden de acuartelamiento.

La verdad es que yo cuando recibo esta noticias siento que vamos ganando terreno de un cambio hacia algo mas democrático en nuestro país, la felicidad o el deseo de victoria o de ganas de expresar alguna felicidad es más que nada por la gente que me rodeaba, más que por mí mismo. La gente que me rodeó en mis tiempos que luchamos en Chile por la dictadura, la gente que yo sé que sufrió mucho más que yo. Y en eso hemos sido siempre muy conscientes, digo hemos sido porque habemos muchos que tenemos esta misma visión, de que lo que nos paso a nosotros no es nada comparados con familiares que perdieron sus familias, que perdieron gente importante, que fueron fuertemente torturados así entonces esa rabia yo la tengo traspasada desde ellos hacia mí. Y yo siento estas felicidades las siento por ellos más que por mí. Que alegría para ellos poder reivindicarse en ciertos modo de todos estos grandes sufrimientos que han tenido ellos como personas, hijos de desaparecidos, de gente que sufrió cárceles por tiempo. Yo me considero que no fuí tan afectado, y fundamentalmente se debió a que en el momento del golpe de estado yo tenía 15 años, estaba en secundaria en tercero medio, y eramos un grupo de jóvenes muy idealistas, tenía una militancia fuerte en las juventudes de izquierda, muy idealista, muy, muy pegado a los ideales de izquierda. La formación de mi padre me sirvió para tener una visión más idealista. Empezamos a tener una formación política dentro de las juventudes de izquierda, dentro de lo que es la formación de jóvenes secundarios, pero además el ideal del significado de lo que era la unidad popular para los jóvenes secundarios, fue muy fuerte en mí en mi enseñanza. Yo tuve la gran suerte de tener profesores que nos enseñaron el significado de lo que era este proceso, y participamos mucho en ese proceso. En el momento del golpe nos toco,

sufrir en cierto modo el cambio, pero además no queríamos aceptar desde nuestra visión de jóvenes idealistas, o sea pensabamos que esto no podía ser. No lo creímos, a pesar que veíamos los militares al lado nuestro, los helicópteros que pasaban, nosotros estábamos muy cercanos a un centro de operaciones de la Fuerza Aérea. En Santiago, en un cordón industrial muy complicado. Y estábamos metidos como estudiantes secundarios, teníamos nuestras armas de secundarios, que eran los linchacos y otras cosas. Intentamos hacer resistencia al golpe de estado desde nuestro centro que era el liceo, colegio secundario, y nos quedamos ahí sabiendo que había un toque de queda en una hora más. Era el día 11, entonces nosotros no nos percatabamos de la dimensión que tuvo esto, y llegó un momento que nos dimos cuenta en lo que estábamos. Unas personas un poco más mayores que nosotros nos dijeron que estábamos tonteando, vayanse, tienen que irse a la casa porque están quedando vacías las calles, no hay nadie, no van a tener en que irse a las casas, no hay transporte colectivo. Tuvimos que irnos haciendo dedo, y ahí por televisión y a través de nuestros padres supimos las noticias. Y después él (el padre) tuvo que irse porque se lo llevaron al Estadio Nacional. Y ahí empezamos a percatarnos de la dimensión, y apenas pudimos salir ese día con toque de queda y me contacté con gente, con el grupo político y ahí empezamos a enterarnos que estaban desapareciendo amigos, de los amigos que estaban ya mucho más comprometidos que nosotros. Gente que estaban metidos en grupos de defensa militar, entonces ahí empezamos a recibir órdenes que nos cuidaramos, que tratáramos de andar por fuera de las calles, que no visitáramos más a los amigos porque podíamos afectar a la gente. Ahí empezamos a tomar la dimensión, y seguimos nosotros después en el colegio haciendo nuestra resistencia como jóvenes. Porque yo siempre he dicho si yo hubiese tenido dos años más, hubiese estado en la universidad, creo mi destino hubiese sido muy distinto. Dos años, quizás un año más, con un grado de conciencia un poco mayor, mi destino hubiese sido muy distinto. O sea el hecho de ser joven, de 15 años, era bien inocente, muy ingenuo, me favoreció en ese plano. Después se supo todo lo que se nos venía encima.

Yo viví la dictadura allá claro, yo tuve que vivirla, yo seguí estudiando. A mi padre lo tuvieron en el Estadio Nacional, no estuvo mucho tiemp porque había un familiar que curiosamente, se enlazó con los militares, era hermano de mi padre, era general de carabineros y en ese tiemp ya estaba retirado, pero igual ayudó para que lo sacaran luego a mi papá. Mi papa cayó en una crisis, una depresión muy grande, eso también nos afectó a todos, porque mi padre era político y militante, eso lo marginó de su vida social normal. Entonces en ese terreno también me afectó en cierto modo, mis hermanas que estaban también militando en partidos semejantes al mío, pero nunca tan comprometidas como para ser mas afectadas. Mi hermana también estaba enla universidad, estaba entrando a la universidad, pero lentamento empezamos a enterarnos de familiares, de amigos que estaban desapareciendo, que no sabíamos donde estaban y empezó toda esta cadena.

La verdad es que la imagen para mi cuando recibí la noticia es la de Pinochet, lo empeزé a asociar inmediatamente en la televisión dando esos mandos, hablando con su estilo militar y ordenando no salir a las calles, ordenando, gritando como los marxistas leninistas, y gritando contra todo. Yo en mi imagen de jóven, en ese mismo período, cuando no podía salir de mi casa, y ver esa imagen era peor que satanas, yo no creo en satanas, pero me imagino que esto es peor que satanas, esto era peor, para mí era algo pero ya no podía ser más malo, nunca lo pude aceptar. Entonces verlo en esas condiciones preso, en un país lejano, en un país que él le tenía cierta admiración. Y curiosamente ahí era donde estaba lo irónico para nosotros, que él siempre en Chile habló de que su amistad con la Margaret Thatcher era muy importante, y él donde más disfrutaba sus viajes era a Inglaterra, porque visitaba los museos, que le encantaban esos lugares. Y de aquí viene la imagen de que nosotros somos los Ingleses de América entonces entre las bromas y la ironía que usabamos nosotros les decíamos a muchos, bueno y seguimos siedo los Ingleses de América ahora o no? porque había una rabia, contra los Ingleses el colonialismo Inglés que curiosamente despertó en la derecha facista, que nos llamaba la atención. Entonces

somos los Ingleses de América como?. Como desde que yo soy niño escucho eso, y es un orgullo y porqre ahora estan Uds. tan enojados, no se enojen es una broma y eso para mi era muy importante explotarlo, poque esta imagen del Pinochet que hablaba, con la imagen del pasado del golpe de estado, con sus bandos y sus cosas terribles era un triunfo enorme, un triunfo porque tanto en Chile como acá en Canadá el tiempo que he estado, pensabamos que Pinochet siempre iba a ser intocable. E inclusive cuando recibimos primero la noticia que no podía salir de Inglaterra y las preocupaciones que hubo a nivel de gobierno en Chile, las preocupaciones que habían en todas las esferas de poder en Chile, pensabamos que en poco tiempo iba a estar de vuelta, que el poder político, económico que manejan en Chile iban a lograr traerlo de vuelta pronto.

Pero esto no cambiaba mi sentido de victoria porque bueno en el momento, era el momento de verlo complicado, que la familia ahí apareciera hablando que gente Pinochetista vociferando contra Inglaterra, contra España, eso nos alegraba mucho. Nos alegraba verlos como ellos sentían la impotencia de tener a alguién que no puede entrar, volver a su país y entonces, uno que vivió eso, decía que alegría más grande. Esa es la alegría de ese tiempo y había que aprovecharla, explotarla. Yo, una de las imagenes que recuerdo perfectamente es después de mi trabajo, yo intenté darme un break a la hora al medio día que allá no se usa mucho. Sólo uno sale a la una, pero yo me arranqué antes para irme al centro de mi ciudad a los lugares donde se concentra la gente a hacer vida social. Y esperaba encontrarme con gente en la calle para poder conversarlo y hablarlo en voz alta (su tono de voz sube). Una de las características que yo nunca he sido temeroso al poder soy de personalidad así, me revelo a todo lo que es poder, entonces para mi, mi rol tenía que ser decir la noticia abiertamente y mostrar la cara de alegría abiertamente a la gente que yo la viera temerosa. Y la verdad es que me encontré con la primera persona que no era un Pinochetista pero tampoco era una persona política, entonces estaba temoroso, de lo que estaba sucediendo y empezó a tocar el tema que ya se estaba

explotando en esas horas en los medios de comunicación de la ingerencia de un país extranjero en nuestro país y la soberanía y todo eso. Entonces ahí es donde uno les decía pero que soberanía me habla sí ya era hora de que se hiciera justicia, sí aquí no hemos sido capaces de hacer justicia, porque no al final aceptar que otro país haga justicia por nosotros, ya esta bueno hemos soportado mucho tiempo. Y había gente que pasaba y escuchaba mientras yo hablaba, trataba de hablar con mi voz más alta, sin temor. Y había gente que sonreía y otros miraban medios asustados, pero lógicamente cuando uno dice algo con tanto convencimiento y con tanta fuerza y rabia, parece que no da cabida a respuesta entonces no encontraban la persona que estaba conmigo como no era política tampoco, mucho argumento para rebatirme o apoyarme, miraba no más y observaba y posteriormente me fui encontrando con gente más política, donde se manifestaba más la alegría de un triunfo político.

Pero fundamentalmente la imagen para mí es el hombre del poder absoluto, el hombre intocable verlo convertido en un reo, en un viejo que había que condenarlo ojalá por el resto de sus días. Eso es lo fundamental, o sea como el poder se puede romper.

Ahora en el medio en el cual yo me movía que era fundamentalmente el medio laboral donde funcionaba parte del día. La gran parte de la gente tenía la imagen mía como el exiliado el que había estado en Canadá, el político de izquierda, el hombre anti-dictadura, entonces muchas de las noticias giraban en torno a verme a mí para contarme la noticia. Habían algunos de izquierda también dentro del ambiente pero, curiosamente encontré más gente que me hablaba a mí que a los otros de izquierda, porque yo venía del exilio y además yo soy político. Yo nunca he tenido miedo a las palabras a los términos. Tengo una visión del mundo que me permite decir no hay que temerle a la verdad, en absoluto. La verdad, la verdad objetiva. Entonces yo siempre me he expresado tal cual, lógicamente en un plano caballeroso, no entrando a polemizar con la gente. Alguién me puede decir yo soy Pinochetista y me gusta Pinochet por esto y por lo otro. Y

yo entro en el plano de debatirle de una manera caballerosa decirle por qué no haces tú también esto otro. Y empezar de a poco, bueno cuando uno piensa que estamos cerca de la verdad.

El Período entre el Arresto y el Retorno de Pinochet

Estaba en Chile y con mucha rabia, empezamos a escuchar al gobierno de Chile, especialmente a ciertos voceros del gobierno, que mantenían su preocupación y empezaron a insistir por el regreso de Pinochet. Y la verdad es que donde más rabia nos daba escuchar a socialistas que fueron exiliados. Que pasaron a luchar exageradamente para que devolvieran a Pinochet temiendo a que los militares se enojaran, y nos daba rabia porque hasta cuando van a existir, van a seguir esta gente que mantenían los lazos entre ellos de ayudarse mutuamente para que los militares no estuvieran enojados así ellos iban a poder gobernar tranquilos. Entonces como nosotros éramos oposición a esa postura que tenía el gobierno denunciábamos permanentemente que eran chuecos, traidores es la palabra. Que cómo después de ellos mismos fueron perseguidos, tanta gente de ellos murió por culpa de este dictador, y ahora tapandolo. Protegiéndolo me acuerdo de imágenes en televisión, de personajes.

Yo sabía antes de que la izquierda estaba comprometida. Yo me había dado cuenta ya tiempo antes. Yo regresé a Chile el año 96, pero ya había estado tres años antes en dos o tres oportunidades viajando. Y me encontré con gente que ya estaba en el gobierno, en el gobierno de la región, socialista gente que había luchado junto a nosotros en el tiempo de la dictadura y nos dimos cuenta que habían cambiado. Ya no estaban en una postura tan de reivindicar nuestros derechos de gente de izquierda. Estaban más por mantener sus poderes, sus poderes que habían cambiado, viendo esto nosotros llegamos a concluir que eran todos, el nombre preciso es oportunistas, que habían dejado de lado su pasado. En una oportunidad yo tuve grandes posibilidades de entrar a trabajar a estos frentes del trabajo, pero por esta forma que tengo de decir cosas muy directas, y por mi pasado de izquierda más comprometida, por estas cosas

reivindicativas propias de la izquierda mucho más fuertemente me cerraron las puertas para trabajar en mi profesión. Dentro de la izquierda Chilena hay grandes diferencias. Ahora lo que es la izquierda oficial de gobierno y la izquierda de oposición. Y yo estoy dentro de esa izquierda. Inconcebible para nosotros estar dentro de la izquierda que gobierna. Yo creo que nuestra oposición al gobierno no aumentó, ni decreció, se mantuvo, solamente que salió a luz, más bien las diferencias, como que se transparentó, se mostró más abiertamente quienes eran de izquierda izquierda y quienes eran entre comillas “social-democracia”. Nosotros pudimos decir las cosas más abiertamente, sin temor y planteros porque, para nosotros el Juez Garzón tenía tanta vigencia y veracidad en lo que estaba haciendo para Chile, para las leyes Chilenas, como cualquier juez de Chile, entonces lamentablemente hubo un juego político que sabíamos que estaba ahí.

Esto me afectó porque empezamos un proceso de impotencia nuevamente, la impotencia de donde poder hablar, denunciar, desenmascarar, en ese plano estabamos nosotros, decir en todo momento el por qué y argumentar lógicamente para poder estar al tanto nos preparábamos, leíamos las posturas que habían las diferentes posiciones y especialmente del oficialismo de gobierno, y la posición de la izquierda argumentandolos con el por qué había que seguir manteniendo esta alternativa de Pinochet allá. Ahora desde el tiempo que yo estuve no sé, felizmente no se veía la salida para que el regresara. Había una lucha permanente, había una desesperación de parte del gobierno por traerlo, por este problema estaban divididas las posiciones en Chile, la polarización de la sociedad se acrecentó, lo cual para nosotros era bueno. Nosotros somos unos convencidos que todas estas cosas artificiales de la reconciliación de la paz, son artificios que están creados por encima, pero abajo sigue la división permanente y uno lo veía en la calle, en todo momento con la gente que conversaba los temas.

Los Pinochetistas en mi ciudad lo único que hicieron fueron unas comidas, en lugares de niveles altos, en hoteles lugares así que tuviese resonancia para los medios de comunicación.

Era sacar declaraciones públicas de algunos grupos, grupos pro-Pinochet, grupos de derecha Pinochetista. Pero había un silencio en las posturas de lo que es la concertación, el gobierno, presente en ese tiempo. Había un silencio dentro del gobierno que no se manifestaba mucho frente a esta realidad, como que estaban complicados con el tema preferían no hablar, no hablar demasiado porque podían de repente estar equivocados en sus planteamientos frente a lo que había en la oficialidad del gobierno central. En nuestro país, el centralismo está en todos los planos, el centralismo político está muy alejado de Santiago y todo lo que pasa en Santiago es traspasado a provincia. En mi ciudad no había un movimiento fuerte ni pro ni contra. El pro era declaraciones oficiales y el contra eran grupos muy pequeños estaba yo dentro de algunos de ellos, tratabamos de hacer algún acto que tuviese un significado distinto, pero siempre sacaba a relucir la justicia que se está haciendo en Londres.

Lo que me pasó a mí fue que yo mientras estuve en Chile, felizmente no hubo alternativas, digamos posibilidades de que retornara. Y yo me vine a Canadá, más bien estando él en Londres y pensando que tenía para mucho más tiempo. Yo llegué en diciembre del 99 devuelta a Canadá, él todavía estaba en Londres. Me tocó estar allá, para el 25 de noviembre. El 25 de noviembre se celebra su cumpleaños, yo estaba en Santiago en ese momento y ahí me tocó ver algo de la vuelta que hubo de las gentes Pinochetistas. Dentro del ambiente de Santiago yo fui al centro y habían campañas políticas. Campañas para presidente, las elecciones y había un ambiente donde se ponían antecedentes políticos en las calles en el centro de Santiago, y después vi todo lo que estaba pasando con Pinochet, la gente de izquierda, de más izquierda, lo cual nos regocijaba mucho, ver ahí abiertamente las declaraciones públicas de gente que estaba manifestando su felicidad entonces en ese plano nosotros estábamos bien, pero después yo me vine para acá. Y llegué acá y seguí la noticia desde lo que pasaba en Chile y lo que pasaba en Londres, pero desde el ángulo Canadiense. Desde un tercer país.

El Retorno de Pinochet a Chile

Y lamentablemente, un paralelo la noticia de su retorno la tuve en un canal Canadiense, en inglés muy temprano en la mañana, o sea que fue un ambiente totalmente anglo-canadiense. Estaba sólo en mi casa con mis hijas. Mis hijas durmiendo y yo viendo las noticias por televisión, el retorno de Pinochet, que fué todo muy rápido. Mucha rabia, rabia impotencia ahí fue lo opuesto al día del arresto. Fué lo opuesto porque estaba sólo acá en un país lejano de nuevo. Necesitaba ir a juntarme con amigos Chilenos para enterarme más de la noticia y ver más sobre este regreso que lamentablemente a muchos nos volvió a entristecer, partimos al punto cero.

Sentí una rabia enorme, rabia con el gobierno mal, más rabia y más deseos de ser oposición. Rabia con el gobierno de Frei, de la concertación. Mucha rabia como se manejó el Ministro del Interio que es un Ministro socialista. Con el gobierno Chileno, con la gente de la concertación en Chile. En ningun momento pensé en contra ni de España ni de Inglaterra, no, no todo lo contrario, yo pensaba que ellos habían hecho todo lo posible. Y que sí el gobierno Chileno estaba con este deseo imperioso de tenerlo en Chile que más quedaba entonces. Esa es la rabia más grande que tenía. Sentí el deseo de encontrarme con la gente Chilena pronto, para manifestarle esta rabia, contra ese gobierno y plantearse lo más abiertamente y nuevamente denunciar a esta gente denunciar lo que significa estos manejos que hace la social democracia entre comillas. De los poderes que aún mantiene el militarismo en Chile, o sea como el militarismo una vez más gana. En esa oportunidad yo tenía que volver a mi colegio. Bueno incluso después al medio día me encontré con mi gente. Lógicamente aquí encontré gente que estaba en la misma postura que yo. Gente que estaba más cerca a esa rabia al mismo sentimiento de rabia, de impotencia.

Inmediatamente esa rabia la traspasaba a los otros. Y más que traspasarla solamente yo sentía, se me acrecentaba mi rabia porque yo pensaba que lo de ellos ya no era sólo rabia era esa

impotencia que se ha sentido por tantos años. Y después habían imágenes en la televisión Chilena pude ver la llegada de Pinochet, la gente recibiendo y la tristeza de la gente de la agrupación de familiares de detenidos desaparecidos y otras agrupaciones políticas de Chile, muchos de ellos llorando, tristes, amargados, silenciados. Huu eso me afectó enormemente, enormemente, nuevamente sentí que estos poderes del militarismo aferrados también dentro de la social democracia en Chile había que seguir combatiéndola, no descansar jamás.

Me renovó esas ganas de seguir luchando, ese hilo, hay un hilo conductor que me está llevando siempre allá y cualquier evento donde se sienta la injusticia directa. Me gatilla para continuar, no hay que, no hay que parar en esta lucha. Y lo importante es preocuparse del hombre de las cosas familiares, de las cosas que más lo ligan a uno, a la familia, pero no, no acaba jamás esta lucha que despertó y sigue y no sé por qué tan viva. Estando en cualquier parte del mundo va a seguir tan viva. Creo que eso me gatillo más y me renueva siempre. No parar, no parar en el trabajo político, y ese hilo conductor se mantiene, por eso yo no dejo, en ese sentido no cambio, ahí, el tema este de volver al pasado es como hace poco conversaba con un amigo de Chile, e hizo un paralelo con todos nuestros amigos que están muertos o están vivos en situaciones muy complicadas. Me decía en una palabra qué hicimos mal que nuestros sueños se derrumbaron. Y mi respuesta no sé por qué siempre ha sido más optimista y yo jamás he tenido un sentimiento de culpabilidad, o sea yo nunca he sentido que he hecho algo malo o equivocado en este plano, todo lo contrario hemos hecho todo lo que hemos podido o lo que ha estado a nuestro alcance. Lo que pasa es que el camino era más largo de lo que nosotros pensábamos. Y como a nuestra edad éramos más ingenuos aún, éramos más jóvenes, entonces el camino es más largo y al final del camino está muy lejos todavía, pero no, no es que no exista, existe. Y francamente, yo no termino acá, sigo, sigo igual, entonces no tengo este problema de que para muchos ha! que hicimos mal y que tenemos que cambiar. La imagen de este hombre que este vivo, viejo ahí ahora en un lugar en Chile, viviendo muy bien etc. que todavía no se puede hacer

justicia, responde a veces a que nosotros aún tenemos que seguir trabajando más, para que las cosas sean más justas de lo que se piensa que se ha logrado.

Pero no, no pensé que lo fueran a devolver. En un momento dado, cuando veía tanto afán del gobierno dije va a volver, pero en esos días, no pensé que iba a ser tan rápido. En parte me tomó de sorpresa, pero igual estabamos preparados para eso en cualquier momento. Había un afán muy fuerte, pero yo pensaba que Inglaterra o España podía presionar más. Ademas que Bélgica y Francia también había una presión fuerte pensábamos que eso iba a servir para tenerlo más detenido allá. Pero a la vez nos dábamos cuenta que en esto de la economía globalizada, el problema de los negocios, se estaba creando otro ambiente que no era bueno, ni para los Ingleses, ni para los Españoles y lógicamente para el gobierno Chileno, en el mundo de los negocios transnacionales. Que eso también ayudó a que lo mandaran de vuelta. Pero me pilló en parte de sorpresa. Cuando lo devolvieron tampoco sentí nada físico, solamente, todo es en el plano emotivo, en el plano sentimental, que frustraciones, impotencia, angustia, pena, traspasada para el resto de los demás.

Sí he podido encontrarle sentido a esto, de hecho yo tuve entre comillas, la fortuna de vivir la dictadura en mí país, porque pude estar en mi patria en mi país, pude hacer cosas desde adentro de mi país para avanzar hacia la justicia, libertad, justicia y eso también me permitió estudiar y empezar a comprender más que es lo que vivían nuestros países y especialmente Chile, que significaba toda la política en Chile. Posteriormente la salida de mi país, que fué en tiempos de dictadura, pero en un tiempo donde ya había cierta apertura ya donde teníamos más derecho a expresar nuestras cosas al llegar a Canadá yo tuve la fortuna también de aprender más sobre mi país de conocer más sobre esta realidad, ver el bosque desde fuera una vez más y entender qué hilos mueven la política de mi país, y entender que en el fondo los grandes poderes en Chile desde el tiempo de la colonia se han traspasado. Nuestro país a pesar de que ha avanzado hacia un progresismo interesante, pero hay una visión del conservadurismo político que esta muy

enraizada, y esas raíces las tiene el poder que es la iglesia, el poder que es las fuerzas armadas, y el poder de clases social, las clases oligárquicas, las clases que tienen el poder económico. Estas siguen manteniendo en Chile el poder en todo, los medios de comunicación, el poder en el plano de valores, el militarismo con la iglesia estan de la mano actualmente se desenmascaró más eso, en el tiempo de la independencia, en el tiempo de la dictadura jugo un rol muy importante en lo de los derechos humanos.

Un sector de la iglesia estaba dirigida por un cardenal que fue muy luchador, pero dentro del plano de valores, la iglesia esta más ligada, más cercana a la oligarquía. Entonces todo esto lo maneja muy bien la oligarquía, y eso permite que en Chile se mantengan muchas cosas que son irracionales para la gente de afuera, y uno estando afuera comprende mejor aun todo eso y lamentablemente hasta el día de hoy eso se sigue manteniendo, o sea, uno estando acá si lo conversa con una persona común y cualquiera de un país desarrollado, un país europeo, un país norteamericano donde hay una vision de libertad mucho más amplia, no entienden como un dictador sanguinario como Pinochet puede aún estar viviendo en su casa, que en el fondo se las robo. Este es un lugar donde también se lanzaron al mar, donde ellos mismos declararon hace poco que lanzaron al mar cuerpos, entonces uno dice aquí hay un poco de las novelas de García Márquez. El Coronel no tiene quién le escriba, esa novelas de García Márquez dan muy bien, muy bien, la imagen de nuestros países y yo creo entender esto de Pinochet que aún no pueda ser juzgado como debe ser. Tampoco hubo toma de huellas digitales, la suspendió hace poquitos días. Bueno todo eso como parte de los poderes y para no complicar la economía, para no complicar entonces como es todo un juego muy bien hecho por la oligarquía en Chile y que es parte del gobierno que por mucho que se diga es un progresista social democracia, izquierda no es cierto que es socialista. Socialista, entonces no da posibilidades de justicia real. Más aún que hay que decir también la verdad, o sea, aquí la constitución política que rige el estado Chileno, fue impuesta el año 81 por la misma dictadura y se ha mantenido casi inalterable en el plano de

la justicia, en el plano de juzgar a los criminales hay muchas cosas que estan muy bien amarradas que no permiten trabajar, pero el parlamento en estos momentos puede hacer cambios y se ha prolongado demasiado, o sea, el gobierno después de terminar la dictadura, la concertación ha tenido 10 años para hacer cambios y la verdad es que sí no hubiese sido por la salida del viaje que hizo Pinochet y el arresto, quizas estaríamos igual a como estuvimos antes, o sea, el cambio que hubo ahora en Chile se debe fundamentalmente a esto del arresto. Hay que decirlo con letras grandes, gracias al arresto en Londres de Pinochet, gracias al juez Guzmán en Chile se avanzó mucho en el plano de la justicia, pero aún queda bastante.

Todo esto ha afectado al mundo, o sea, yo creo que es un precedente muy importante para el mundo. Las posibilidades que los dictadores pueden ser juzgados fuera de sus patrias, que su país no lo permite que en un mundo en que se piensa crear una corte internacional de justicia, eso ha sido muy importante precisamente para nosotros los que estamos afuera creo que es un orgullo en el sentido que por último este dictador fué antecedente que este dictador sea el que se castigó. Y ojalá hubiese sido para siempre eso sí yo siento que ha sido importante para mundo sobre todo donde los valores de justicia, libertad, igualdad son más importantes, esto ayuda mucho, para nuestro país o sea, ayuda bastante. Y la verdad es que en Chile ayudó también a cambiar una serie de divisiones y de mitos de entre lo que era la justicia internacional. Y que Chile era un ejemplo en muchas cosas para mundo, terminó esos grandes mitos y en Chile ya estan cambiando una serie de valores, de divisiones que estaban muy elevados. La sociedad en general en Chile ha permitido un avance de justicia, pero insisto los grandes problemas del país no es solamente la constitución que no se cambia, no es solamente que no se quiera juzgar o que los poderes de un partido u otro, sí no que son los grandes poderes que dejan muy bien a todos los militares o sea las fuerzas armadas son políticas en Chile, las Fuerzas Armadas no deliberantes aún en Chile. Esta comprobadísimo ahora más que nunca que las fuerzas armadas estan aferradas a los intereses de la oligarquía de los grandes intereses económicos, estan para

eso, para defender esos derechos, no para defender al pueblo. Y eso es una realidad que permanentemente esta presente en distintos eventos políticos que se van dando en Chile. Entonces toda esta situación con Pinochet también viene a reforzar esto con los otros Pinochetista que generalmente estan ligados a los grandes grupos empresariales de los poderes económicos que hay en Chile. Si eso lo vemos y lamentablemente habemos muchos que lo percibimos que lo captamos muy bién y lo decimos y lo planteamos pero de repente sentimos como que nos ven fuera de orbita, como que no estamos en el mundo de ellos, que somos seres extraños. Entonces hablamos un lenguage que quizás no es el más adecuado y no nos logran entender. A mi me pasó mucho cuando yo retorné, que me di cuenta que estabamos a veces hablando cosas que no debíamos hablar.

En el exilio hay un desfaze, nosostros nos adelantamos, bueno, nuestras visiones progresistas nos favorecen también a la larga, porque estan un poco más avanzadas en lo que es la visión de libertad, justicia, igualdad de no discriminación etc, lo que son los derechos para todos, nos permiten avanzar, más entonces cuando uno llega a hablar allá, de que por qué el derecho de la discriminación en la salud, por qué tienen que haber ciudadanos de primera, de segunda, de tercera categoría en el derecho, en el acceso a la salud, eso no puede ser. Pero es que esa persona esta pagando por la salud, o sea hay todo un argumento muy bién manipulado, que nosotros cuando lo decimos por qué tiene que estar pagando alguién para poder tener un buen derecho a la salud, una salud bién atendida, como corresponde por qué hacer tantas diferencias y yo creo que ahora en Chile también, bueno el problema de los animales que allá en Chile también estamos muy llenos de casas, de lugares, de clínicas veterinarias y lugares para ropa para animales, pero mientras tanto hay muchos niños que no tienen alimento y no tienen ropa, entonces yo les hacía esos paralelos. Que cambiamos sus visiones normales de desarrollo y que estamos felices de ser ahora como los países desarrollados, por qué tu nos vienes a cambiar

esto. Vienes a burlarte de nuestra manera de ser ahora así entonces para que te viniste quedate allá.

Yo lo único que manifiesto cuando me preguntan a mi sobre el significado de la dictadura, insisto para mí la dictadura fue una tragedia algo tremendo. La imagen primera de la dictadura es Pinochet. La imagen segunda es todo los otros hombres siniestros que tuvo Pinochet a su alrededor, pero siempre Pinochet primero. Yo siempre he querido dejar en claro que nunca he sido una persona que fui aplastada, que para mi fué una tragedia personal que me dejó anulado, no, en mi despertó más ganas de luchar y de hacer la resistencia posible donde fuera. Curiosamente en los tiempos de dictadura yo trabajaba bastante cercano a los presos políticos, gente que estaba sufriendo más directamente. Ibamos a las cárceles hacia cosas que eran en esos momentos subversivas, pero lo hice porque era desafiante. Yo decía el poder no nos puede ganar y el momento que nosotros preparamos actividades, teníamos felizmente el alero o la custodia de la iglesia, a pesar que yo hago unas críticas al poder, pero no al sector de la iglesia que estaba en ese tiempo bastante cercano a nosotros. Nos apoyo mucho para defendernos y quizás por mi estilo, mi forma de plantearme muchas veces me dió una imagen de ser un hombre mucho más pegado a la religión que a la política, y yo estaba cercano a mucha gente en la religión católica, cristianos de izquierda. Entonces yo use mucho esos argumentos del cristianismo más pensado hacia el terreno social, la doctrina social de la iglesia que es un punto muy importante. Cuando yo entré a la universidad, entre a una universidad manejada por militares, que eran en ese tiempo un general de la FACH. Esta Universidad que después fué católica, pero también teníamos un intendente que era un hombre, pero un perro, un perro que los militares le decían el embajador de la muerte, pero tremendo y no daba posibilidades ni de respiro, y nosotros fuimos creando los espacios. Y un primer espacio que nos habrímos fue solicitando un profesor que había en otra Universidad, muy de avanzada y su hermano que fue director de una revista en Chile después, le sollicitamos que nos diera un curso, que no

correspondía a nosotros por nuestra formación pero que eran cursos opcionales que se llamaba la doctrina social de la iglesia. Sobre las encíclicas papales y como sabíamos que el era un hombre muy de avanzada nos dijo perfecto y curiosamente llegamos puros alumnos de izquierda y estudiando las encíclicas esta redus novaros ese fue el primer espacio que yo tuve para poder empezar a hablar y nos dimos cuenta que el profesor transmitía lo mismo que nosotros y de ahí creamos otra serie de investigaciones. De ahí salimos trabajando en una serie de organizaciones dentro de la universidad para empezar a abrir los espacios y terminamos con una organización importantísima que nos llevó a trabajar a reivindicar nuestros derechos como estudiantes. Y en ese momento yo llegué el año 75 a la Universidad estabamos muy, muy asustados la gente temía a hablar, y los profesores, muchos habían hablado un poquito y muchos se habían ido, los habían sacado por decir ciertas cosas, entonces en el momento que nos dieron esas posibilidades ya de empezar a denunciar a decir las cosas, nosotros empezamos a soltarlo y al final yo terminé trabajando con estos grupos apegados a esta imagen de la cosa cristiana. Las parábolas nos sirvieron mucho y me sirvió para confrontar en las protestas, en las marchas cuando hacíamos pequeños actos en las calles, para conversar con los policías que nos enfrentaban les conversabamos, les hablabamos del por qué Uds nos hacen esto, si nosotros lo único que estamos haciendo es pidiendo saber de los desaparecidos que pasó con esta gente que murió, que el papá la mamá de este compañero fue fusilado y quiero saber y los poníamos en jaque. En mi caso, casi nunca me pegaban los carabineros y yo les decía pero porque me va a pegar si yo no quiero hacer violencia use la no violencia bien inconscientemente, muy bien con la policía, me sirvió mucho.

Me tomaron tres veces preso, una noche estuve todo una noche ahí. Estuve hasta las 11:00, pero nunca me torturaron, nunca me trataron mal, me gritaron me trataban en forma brusca, pero nunca me trataron mal. Y me sirvió esa imagen de hombre cristiano, no sé, de hombre apegado más a la iglesia y muchos pensaban que yo podía ser hasta un cura y exploté esa

imagen y digo exploté porque yo trabajaba políticamente y me sirvió mucho. Y en ese plano es desafiante, es desafiante todas las formas en que uno podía confrontar al dictador, donde uno asegurara sus ideas era importante. Eso es algo que yo creo que es bueno decirlo, porque yo viví el tiempo de dictadura y esa imagen de poder la compartimos hasta el final.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter will examine the most common themes found in the individual narratives of the participants. It also describes the cultural group narrative and how the individual stories of the participants constructed a group memory of the traumatic experiences shared by the participants. The interpretation of the individual stories are summarized at the beginning of the group experience. The cultural group narrative was written by the author and verified by five participants. In addition, a member of the Chilean community read this chapter and offered comments on my interpretation and analysis, which have been incorporated. As a participant and researcher, I attempted to make this process the most participatory and inclusive as possible, in light of the challenges of interpreting my own experiences as a participant in this study.

As it was previously discussed in chapter one, I have defined the participants as a “community of memory,” a group of people who share a sense of bonding and who attempt to find meaning of a particular event or experience. In order to understand the social, political and cultural context of the interpretation and analysis of the individual and group experience, it is important to understand the political affiliation of the participants. In our group, there was a variety of political experiences, from those with no formal party membership to others with long-term experience as militants in left-wing political parties.

Generational differences were also considerable. Five of the seven participants were teenagers or young adults during the government of Salvador Allende while the sixth was an adult actively committed to the socio-political movement of the time. These experiences seemed to influence participants’ recollection of events, as well as our personal and collective meaning of the overall experience.

Another important factor was the participants' life experiences following the 1973 coup d'état. Ernesto found himself in jail and was later sent into exile to Canada. Marcela and Leila fled into exile soon after the coup. The experiences of Adriana, Pablo and Fernando are more connected to the dictatorship since they left the country at least a decade afterwards.

My research question explores the link between the personal meaning of Pinochet's arrest and eventual release in England and the construction of group memories of traumatic life experiences triggered by these events. My interest in investigating this topic was to understand how our own traumatic memories are bound to the rest of the collective experience. By exploring this, I wanted to understand the mechanism of collective trauma and in particular the individual and collective numbing and political silencing that followed the coup d'état.

The analysis of the individual narratives is divided into five sections. First, I look at the general themes that emerged for people when they heard the news of the arrest of Pinochet, the period that followed and his release from London. Second, I look at the overall meaning of these events. Third, I explore the individual and collective meaning attached to these events. Fourth, I analyze the struggle between forgetting and remembering. Finally, I look at the traumatic memories in the stories.

The Arrest of Pinochet

In trying to classify the multiplicity of issues and reactions experienced as a result of hearing the news of the arrest of Pinochet, I have identified images; feelings and sensations; events; and justice as recurrent themes in all the narratives.

Images. For many of us, the news of the arrest was followed by a sequence of unexpected images that flooded our minds at the time of the news and in the days, weeks and

months that followed. Some of these images were of particular events or of lived experiences.

And the images were of the disappeared, their families, the cemeteries. And I realized why I was feeling this sadness. I thought they (the disappeared) are going to finally be able to rest in peace, and their families are going to have some kind of resolution.

(Adriana)

It was like watching a movie, a mirage of images from the past. It was like seeing the dead people as alive... The images lasted for a long time. I would be carving meat and passing it to people, and I would remember the parties we had in Chile, in the political party headquarters. I remember people who are no longer alive, and suddenly I didn't even know whether I was in Canada or in Chile. I mean I was in a zone out of this world. I remembered Allende. I remembered the people who died, the compañeros in my neighbourhood. (Ernesto)

When I received the news, more than the happiness, the first thing that came to my mind was the images of all the people who suffered a lot, torture, the arrested and disappeared. All those people came to my mind in images. I remembered -- I even remembered Sola Sierra... And the image of Pinochet, but I stayed with the image of Pinochet, the young Pinochet ... I remember him in uniform with those dark sunglasses. (Pablo)

I remember Allende's funeral. Allende's funeral was like closing in an instant the 17 years of dictatorship and reliving what we had buried for a long time. What we lived through before the coup was a reality so important and incredible, but at the same time to see Allende's coffin was a moving and impressive moment. It brought back all the memories. It was realizing that this was not a dream. I am not imagining this, it is real. This is Allende, this is his body, this his coffin, we are all here... It meant remembering what we all had lived through, but also to see Allende in the final rite of his life, to bury him finally and to bury with him the dreams, the dream we had for almost four years, the dream to create a different society. I remember the faces of the workers, those faces full of despair, despair because they wanted to touch Allende's coffin. There lies their dream in that coffin. (Leila)

Feelings and sensations. In addition to the images that were experienced by some participants upon hearing the news, strong feelings and sensations were also present in this initial process.

And I jumped off my seat and screamed, Wow!! I didn't care who was next to me because there were more people there... And I ran outside to look for a telephone to call my mom... I wanted to share my happiness with my family, but everybody was busy. My sisters were talking to each other; they were communicating with each other. (Marcela)

I felt like crying... I was feeling so strange with myself. I was really happy and really sad, but I couldn't tell why I was sad... And I had all sorts of body reactions, my stomach for sure, this kind of tightness. (Adriana)

The news for me gave me great happiness. It was like a triumph. It was like bringing Allende back to life... For me, it was the best day of my life. There are few days that I remember with so much happiness. (Ernesto)

Events. For all of us, September 11, 1973, the day of the *coup d'etat*, was the most important event we re-experienced upon hearing the news of Pinochet's arrest. Some of us relived the memories and images we experienced that day. For others, the news brought back their own experiences of jail and torture or the death of close friends during the dictatorship that followed.

For me, the most important memory was September 11 because in my house my dad cried. Everybody cried with the news that they had killed Allende. My dad cried like a child. Because, if you remember I had a really bad time after the coup d'etat. First, my partner had to leave Chile. I lost a lot of friends. I lived in an industrial area at the time... So for us it was a terrible week because I saw the workers taken in military trucks and the dead bodies on the ground, on the street... and so many of my friends were disappeared. (Marcela)

And at the same time, images starting going through my mind and just the sadness, and I had memories, and I know that I went back in time. And it's funny, one of the images

that I remembered is the image of the presidential palace in flames... and then just people, and people screaming, and things like flashbacks, like a movie, and then the final image or not even the image but a strong feeling of sadness for the dissappeared.
(Adriana)

I saw the people. They were a bit in the shadows, like watching a movie inside my mind. In my mind's eye appeared a woman who brought an egg to me in jail which was signed by all the *compañeros* and *compañeras* of my neighbourhood. When you are in jail, you starve. There are humiliations. Obviously, the *compañeras* outside were experiencing the same hunger; they didn't have anything else to give me. (Ernesto)

I remembered all my dead *compañeros* who died on the streets, while in detention, or in torture sessions, *compañeros* who died in street confrontations with the secret police and others who were arrested in their homes and other places and later died... I would say that at that time I had flashbacks of events, things that happened a few days after or the following day, in those days after the *coup d'etat*. (Leila)

Justice. Justice as vindication, recognition, hope or victory was another important common theme after the arrest.

Finally, he is paying for what he did. I thought it was so fair. I felt in peace; I rested. I thought it was extremely fair. (Marcela)

The arrest of Pinochet for me means justice for the people. It was justice for my mother and my little sister who, despite having nothing to do with politics, were taken to jail. It was justice for my father who lives in Venezuela and had to leave his country. It was justice for my son who remembers when they came with machine guns and shot up our neighbourhood... It was justice for the people in one of the political committees who were taken out to the soccer field half naked at midnight by troops and beaten up. It was justice for the Chilean people. (Ernesto)

I felt something comforting maybe because it's like, finally justice is being done after so many years. Something can happen. I mean, he is not so untouchable as we thought he was. (Pablo)

So it was, like, I don't know, gaining trust again, in that there was, like, divine justice, that new doors were opening for everybody, for us Chileans especially. But also hope in the sense that crimes of this magnitude committed by the military, the world, the rest of the international community were not willing to look the other way. (Leila)

Recognition was a big feeling for me, that people were talking about Chile again. And then realizing that what happened in Chile, in my country, what went on, was true, that this was a big, huge world recognition because even during the dictatorship there were people in Chile who didn't know or pretended not to know what was happening in the country. We didn't know the extent of the horror around us. (Adriana)

We felt a sense of victory. We felt that it was one of those moments where we were gaining something, something big, after suffering everything that we had suffered before. (Fernando)

The Period between the Arrest and the Return of Pinochet. The general experience of this period for most of us was marked by a multitude of contrasting feelings, ranging from hope and happiness to sadness, impotence and despair. It was like being constantly put to a test every time new decisions in the legal procedures were made in London. This period was also a time to reflect about the meaning of the dictatorship, the legal implications of the arrest worldwide. As time went by, most of us knew that Pinochet was eventually going to be released and sent back home for medical reasons. The following are some examples of the emotions experienced:

I felt a lot of anger when we started hearing that the government of Chile, especially spokespeople of the government, that they were worried, and they began to insist on the return of Pinochet. But truly what angered us the most was to hear Socialists, who were exiled, that were fighting for the return of Pinochet. (Fernando)

I think I did have expectations of the legal aspect. I think that even Pinochet became afraid of what could happen to him in London because the Spaniards had a pretty strong case. (Pablo)

For me it was like a game of ping-pong. There were days of happiness and days of sadness. (Ernesto)

I just went into this state of hyper-vigilance and anxiety and nervousness. It was like a roller coaster every time they were going to make a decision in London. If it was a positive one, we would go out and celebrate, and we were happy for a long time. But I also had this feeling of disbelief -- is this going to happen? (Adriana)

There was always hope, always, that they would keep him there. Wherever we ended up -- and if people manage to recover even one body, it is always positive. I can also say that at the personal level I was nervous, nervous and anxious, because I believe that I wanted to keep hoping, that hope that the British were not going to turn into his accomplices, but rather would be part of what we were dreaming. (Leila)

The Release of Pinochet. The news of the return of Pinochet was perhaps less unexpected because all of us had been following the news. By the end, it was clear that he would be released. However, the intensity of the emotions can easily be compared to the happiness that the arrest first generated. These are some of the participants' experiences:

It was worse than the arrest because there was such clear hope after such a long time, something that everybody was waiting for, was happening and something that was so fair. It was so frustrating, extremely frustrating. I was so upset that I didn't want to know anything about it. (Marcela)

For me it was sad. I knew that there is no justice in Chile. Pinochet was going to be free. When he left England with this whole circus that he was sick, in a wheelchair, I knew that that was a lie. It was another mockery against us. I knew automatically that in Chile there would never be justice because there never was before. (Ernesto)

I felt this huge anger, anger against the government (of Chile), a strong anger, the strong desire to be in opposition to it. Anger against the government of Frei. A lot of anger against the Minister of Interior who is a socialist. (Fernando)

It was just brutal; it was retraumatizing. I just kept thinking about the families of the disappeared and the people in Chile and what this meant for them. All the work of thousands of people around the world, collecting testimonies and working together and having to reopen their stories, their traumas, their wounds. We were all working towards this goal, towards justice... I cried out of just sheer hatred and anger.

(Adriana)

We received the news in complete despair. With anger, anger, anger, with a lot of anger, with a lot of anger, with a lot of impotence because he came back and got up. He boasted about it. So just a lot of anger and impotence and sadness also... It was just too much. It was a mockery for the international community. (Pablo)

Participants also reflected on the positive impact of the arrest at the international level, particularly in view of similar legal proceedings initiated elsewhere and the ongoing process of civil suits brought in Chile after Pinochet's return.

Well for me it wasn't enough what happened, but I do believe that it had an impact at the international level. Look what happened after with this guy Milosevic. I think that the arrest of Pinochet and the reasons behind it motivated the arrest of this other guy.

(Marcela)

I think that it brought a lot of hope for a lot of people, not only in Chile but in other countries, hope that similar processes could occur. There is right now a similar process against dictator Rios Montt from Guatemala. There are also a lot of symbolic tribunals that have taken place as a result of this Pinochet incident. (Adriana)

The Meaning of the Experience: In reviewing the narratives of all the participants, the political meaning assigned to the period appears as the most relevant narrative link. This political meaning seems to be constructed on three pillars: the validation of Salvador Allende's government; the impact of Pinochet's dictatorship on people's lives and therefore the need for justice; and the current political situation in Chile. Most of the participants also reflected on issues such as the United States intervention; the inability of the Chilean government to clearly articulate its position due to internal and external pressures; and the role of the international community in guaranteeing the legal process.

Validation of Salvador Allende's Government. For many of the participants, the arrest of Pinochet had a profound international significance because it validated the experience of the Popular Unity government, it restored the image of Salvador Allende and confirmed the brutality of the military coup d'etat that destroyed the collective dream. Leila explains the Popular Unity period in the following segment:

If we go back to that dream, that dream that we had to create a different society, of having felt so important, of having felt that for the first time we could participate in the decisions of the government, but as a collective, as students, workers housewives, professionals... and at that time we saw ourselves active. We found ourselves participating, giving our opinion; we were the actors, promoters of this whole

discussion of what we wanted, of what we dreamed, of how we could imagine ourselves, how we saw our country through the variety of cultural expressions: theater, music, organizational work... and all of a sudden, this violence comes, this brutal force, unknown to us, full of hatred, full of destruction, not only physical, but the destruction of our values. (Leila)

The Impact of the Dictatorship. The brutality of this period is reflected in the following segments.

Torture is meant to destroy people mentally. Because people like me who were tortured never forget that terror, and you carry that terror with you for the rest of your life. Obviously, a person who was not tortured can be a much better worker than I. In fact, he or she is because they are much more level-headed; they are more normal. After the torture, I am a bit abnormal. (Ernesto)

After being an important force, we were nothing. Persecuted, humiliated, tortured, and to top it all we had to leave and leave behind our families and friends, all this world that we conceived as ours, our belonging to that piece of land. The bond with our land disappeared. In addition, we had to go to another country, to start again the struggle to rescue our identity, in the worse conditions because in those countries there was a different culture and mentality, a different language. Besides, they didn't understand us; our history was not their history. So then we started our struggle to survive. (Leila)

Sola Sierra is a symbol for me because her husband was detained and disappeared. She is from my neighbourhood, and we were her neighbors, and we knew that her husband had disappeared at a time when nobody believed anything, only the people who were in the circles of the left, of the opponents to the dictatorship. Nobody knew; nobody believed that in Chile people disappeared or were tortured. Therefore, she symbolizes that struggle to denounce this situation. (Pablo)

The Need for Justice. The need for justice was identified by all the participants. The following is one example.

The fact that Pinochet was put under house arrest in a clinic and charged made it clear that the international community knew more than we did about what happened in Chile. This was about how this political process was stopped by force, so in a way now life is valued. When Pinochet is put on trial, he will go down in history for what he was, a murderer. I think that at this point there is still a lot of doubt. He is seen as Chile's savior. The fact that he is going to stand trial is going to denounce him before the rest of the world and before the Chilean people, and that is going to vindicate what the government of the Popular Unity (Unidad Popular) was, how we got to power. (Pablo)

The Current Political Situation in Chile. Part of the individual process that went on for all of us was follow the news about the case and especially to monitor the reactions of people and the response of the government in Chile.

I felt a lot of anger when we started hearing from the government of Chile, especially spokespeople of the government, that they were worried and began to insist on the return of Pinochet. But what really angered us the most was to hear Socialists who had been exiled fighting for the return of Pinochet. They were afraid that the military would get angry. Then we realized that they maintained the link between themselves and the military to help each other so that if the military didn't get angry, they were going to rule in peace. After they themselves were persecuted, so many of their own people died because of this dictator, now they were covering him up, protecting him. (Fernando)

What hurts me the most is that the Chilean people don't face reality, that they don't realize -- maybe I am too pessimistic. Maybe there is a great majority of people that see that indeed Pinochet was a dictator. But I don't know; there is no evidence of that. Because for me the Democratic Independent Unity (Unión Democrática Independiente) which is the Chilean political arm of the military has almost 50% of the votes. I mean, how can one explain that? (Pablo)

Personal Meaning vs. Collective Meaning. The personal meaning of these events is hard to grasp from the narratives because most of the meaning is circumscribed to the political arena. However, the recollection of traumatic experiences provides a window into the personal meaning. This is particularly clear in the case of the participant who experienced jail and torture.

For me Pinochet is a murderer. He is the man who destroyed my life. I will never be what I was, and my life is far from being what it could have been. (Ernesto)

The following segment reflects his experience and feelings as part of a group of political prisoners in jail. The individual meaning in this case seems to be bound to the collective jail experience. It also reflects an identification with Pinochet's experience which might reflect an individual sense of vindication and justice.

All of us who suffered jail were happy. Not out of vengeance, but that he (Pinochet) would suffer the loss of freedom, the loss of having one's family near. (Ernesto)

Pinochet now cannot go to England, something that he liked to do so much. Like me -- I love my country so much, and I could not return to it for so many years... The man is suffering a lot just like I did or you did. (Ernesto)

The collective meaning, however, is found in most narratives, and it is linked to the vindication of the suffering of others. The belonging to a political collective binds our suffering to the sufferings of others. Here, individual traumatic meaning seems almost absent.

I was also affected by the stories of other people that you would hear through the grapevine. I know that a lot of people had breakdowns; they ended up in hospital and all that, people who had never talked about what happened to them in Chile for 27 years. I think I was more aware of the extensive damage we all have, and I saw it in my friends too. (Adriana)

We also went out on the street to celebrate with everybody, so there you shared the feelings of the other people too, and the stories of other people. Some people were very depressed after hearing the news because they had had bad experiences. So they were very depressed. Because in fact I didn't lose any sister or my parents, not even a cousin. I didn't lose relatives, but dear friends. (Marcela)

As a researcher, participant and member of this community of memory, it is hard for me to distinguish the boundaries between the individual and the collective and how meaning is constructed. Part of this dilemma stems from the use of language. All of us speak in third-person plural when we refer to our experiences, whether this experience is individual or collective. This makes it difficult to clearly define the boundaries between individual and collective meaning. The following segment by Leila exemplifies this emotional terrain where feelings are collectively felt:

I remember the humiliation we suffered, the feeling of not being accepted, of feeling persecuted, of feeling that we weren't worthy -- all those feelings that were implanted in our minds by a long-lasting media campaign and the general ambience we lived in to make us feel insignificant. So then, the fact that all of a sudden Pinochet was detained in London was like a huge vindication. It was a liberating feeling, the fact that he was there, as if now we could make him feel a bit of the uncertainty we went through and also demand explanations. (Leila)

The ambivalence I perceive in how we identify and express our feelings is illustrated by these two fragments by Fernando.

The happiness I felt when I heard the news is more than anything for the people around me, the people with whom we fought against the dictatorship in Chile during that time, the people who I know suffered more than me. What happened to us is nothing compared to people who lost their relatives, who lost important people or who were brutally tortured. So that rage has been transferred from them to me. And I feel this happiness more for them than for me. (Fernando)

I lived through the dictatorship there, of course. I had to live through it; I continued studying. My father was taken away; they kept him in the National Stadium... My father sank into a big crisis, a big depression that also affected us because my father was a political person, a party militant. That (being in the national Stadium) cut him off from his normal life. (Fernando)

What puzzles me in these two segments is what I perceive as the degree of suffering the speakers endure before they can recognize it publicly. I assume that, in the context of the horror we lived through, to have “suffered more” meant the actual death, torture or disappearance of someone close to us. Indeed, I encounter the same contradictions in my own narrative; my suffering, my pain is closely linked to the pain of others, even though they are unknown to me, they are people who shared similar world views. In the context of traumatic memories, I perceive that we “choose” to remember certain memories that are more collective in nature, than the ones that affect us personally in an attempt to shelter ourselves from pain.

The answer seems to lie in the collective nature of our social interactions, our collective outlook on life and therefore how we take refugee in the collective to understand and shelter ourselves. It may well be that taking refugee in the collective minimizes our individual conflicts since at that level we relinquish individual participation, yet remain tied by the identity and the belonging offered by the group. After I presented this chapter to the participants, Fernando commented on the fact that he truly does not feel he has been traumatized by his father's experience in the National Stadium or the dictatorship in general.

The War between Good and Evil. The political polarization of this period in Chilean history, including the Popular Unity government of 1970-1973 and the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet 1973-1990, is reflected in the participants' near-idealization of the Allende government and their perception of the dictatorship as the opposite.

For me, the period of the Popular Unity was wonderful because there was integration. There was no discrimination. Everybody shared everything. There was a beautiful intellectual scene. There was unity; there was solidarity. (Marcela)

My father and I during the previous government used to go to this very famous and exclusive restaurant. That's why it was almost empty. During the government of *compañero Allende*, it was the other way around -- this restaurant was full. Now there were common people eating at this expensive place. It was invaded by people who could now, for the first time, treat themselves. (Ernesto)

The experience of the dictatorship is also perceived in almost exclusive terms.

I hope he (Pinochet) realizes the extent of the damage that he has caused to thousands upon thousands of people. But it's also the families and friends of all the people who were killed or tortured or disappeared, and the next generations after that. (Adriana)

The only thing I can say when I am asked about the meaning of the dictatorship: I insist the dictatorship was a tragedy, something terrible. The first image of the dictatorship is Pinochet. The second image is all those sinister men Pinochet had around him.

(Fernando)

This polarization of is also reflected experiences and appreciation of the two main protagonists: Salvador Allende and Augusto Pinochet. For the participants interviewed, the former is the martyred president assassinated by the evil forces of Augusto Pinochet who is depicted as Satan himself.

When I received the news about Pinochet, I started to associate him with the TV, him giving those proclamations, talking in his military style and ordering people not to go on the streets, shouting about the Marxist-Leninists and everything else. For me, in my image as a young man at that same time, when I couldn't go out on the streets, to see that image was worse than Satan. I don't believe in Satan, but I imagine that this was worse than Satan. (Fernando)

Pinochet is like Stalin I believe. Dr. Allende, on the other hand, was a man of dialogue, of conversation. (Ernesto)

If I could show you their faces (the workers), the desperation! The desperation of people to touch Allende's coffin -- there was their dream, and they had no opportunity to tell him, Here we are with you. And he was there so close... The young people who were there -- and they were there because their parents and grandparents had taught them who Salvador Allende was. (Leila)

The profound political polarization experienced by the participants is also reflected in the fear that new violence could erupt as a result of the arrest.

The division that took place in the country, the right wing people that mobilized immediately -- and there were acts of violence like attacking the Spanish and British embassies... There were mobs of uncontrolled right-wingers, Pinochet supporters, who felt disempowered, and that was really scary, to think that these people who had the power for so long could do things to lead to more violence, because this might turn into a civil war. (Adriana)

Memory: the Struggle Between Forgetting and Remembering. The issue of memory is another connecting element throughout the narratives. The news of the arrest of Pinochet forced us to remember situations, events or feelings that we either had attempted to forget, just did not want to remember, or did not realize were there. However, the possibility of justice brought about by the arrest of Pinochet seems to have made this internal struggle more manageable. Comments about not wanting to remember, forgetting, or the impossibility of remembering are seen in the following stories:

A lot of facts you forget with time. Because one tries to forget everything painful; one wants to start a new life and forget, but the minds of people are filed with memories.
(Ernesto)

With my family, because we all had the same interests, we began to talk about it (the arrest), so we remembered. And there were things that I didn't remember, but that my other sister remembered. Obviously we talked about everything that happened.

(Marcela)

I think this event, as dramatic as it was, has changed people. It has given people a chance to talk about things that they would have never talked about otherwise. It brought up a lot of fear in some people, too. (Adriana)

Furthermore, a couple of participants mentioned the need to discuss these issues so we can remember the whole context of what took place as a beginning of a healing process.

In general, we always talk about the Chilean situation but not from an emotional place, but from the intellect. It's a political analysis, but this was really emotional. There was no way to feel differently and not to have strong feelings and emotions about this. So that was one of the first indicators that we all have a lot hidden in there, that there is a lot of damage, a lot of pain, a lot of sadness. (Adriana)

I think this is going to help, your thesis, for us to explore what it was and in order to start digging a little bit. Even being here (the interview), a couple of things start

turning in my head. I start remembering; it's like reliving emotions. It's that one always retreats emotions to a second place for the same reason, out of fear of what I am feeling, I feel happiness about the possibility of justice. But I know it is not going to last long. But this is something that one has to allow to happen sometimes. It kind of helps you; it's good to talk about these things. You get it off your chest. (Pablo)

I don't think people can heal its wounds if it does not confront its problems. I thought it was so healthy, in spite of the fact that we saw reproachable attitudes. But it is in moments of crisis that you know people. We do know that the *coup d'etat* meant not only dead people, disappeared and exiles, but also the transformation of a mentality in Chile. It meant a change in the cultural values; it meant profound economic changes. It burdened a population with psychological problems that still persist, and that is the collective trauma, the change in their daily routine, the cumulative stress of the population of not knowing how they are going to survive, how their children and grandchildren are going to survive, the economic, social and cultural implications of the *coup d'etat*. (Leila)

Traumatic Experiences. The recollection of traumatic experiences is present throughout the narratives and is central to the struggle between remembering and forgetting as seen in the previous section. Some of these experiences were lived as victims and others as witnesses. The process of re-experiencing traumatic memories was not confined to the time when we heard the news but was part of the entire process that continued throughout the 16 months of Pinochet's arrest. Finally, it was relieved with the news of his release.

I remember one time -- I think it was Saturday afternoon, and all of the sudden in the middle of the day, the small planes and after that a helicopter shooting at the people... But in any case, I have those images until today, and every time I hear the noise of a plane engine, I can't avoid those memories. (Leila)

It was such a mixture of feelings for me for a long time after I heard the news, particularly the images of the disappeared, of the bombings, of the military, the trucks full of dead bodies, the killings of people I saw. These images kept coming back and the sadness, lots of sadness, because it felt completely unreal. (Adriana)

Many children of Chileans say, 'I don't have much respect for my parents. They have been here for 20 years, and they are still working in cleaning, and they don't speak English.' Now, they understood that these parents have a psychological problem. They were tortured with an electric prod connected to rock and roll music in English. (Ernesto)

The fear and silence we experienced as an important part of the *coup d'etat*, particularly for those who lived through the dictatorship, is seen in the following segments:

I entered university in 1975, and at that time we were all very, very scared. People were afraid to talk, and the professors -- many had spoken a little, and many had left. They had been removed for speaking up. (Fernando)

And then to leave Chile and not to know -- I mean, to realize that outside the country they knew more than we did about what was happening in Chile, and we didn't know

anything. And also the forced silence and that image, sort of omnipotent, that one has of the military because in fact they had so much power. (Pablo)

The Cultural Group Narrative

In the cultural group, participants shared their own experience of the 16-month period beginning with the arrest of Pinochet and ending with his release. In this section I have included only those comments that contribute new elements for understanding the individual interviews.

When I designed the methodology for this study, I wanted to investigate what I had experienced in the communities of memories to which I belonged after we heard the news. I was interested to see how the stories of other people were being encoded in my overall experience of the event, particularly those which were profoundly moving and emotional. Even the stories we heard second-hand now form a part of my collective experience. In the analysis of this group experience, I have included my personal experience as a participant and as researcher as the group meeting was unfolding. These comments are in italics, and the comments by the other participants in bold.

When I started to transcribe the group session, I was fascinated to see how the original individual narratives were moving, transforming and building on what was previously said by the other participants. The following is an attempt to portray some of the richness of this process:

The group session started with informal introductions, and soon everybody was talking about Pinochet and how they had been affected by this experience. The opinions were divided, but most people agreed that the international humiliation he suffered must have affected his ego.

Marcela, who was in Chile at the time of the arrest, was the first one to share her story. She brought the group her experience of receiving the news in Santiago. She was very enthusiastic when relating her story, particularly her experience as part of a larger group who

celebrated the event in a big street carnival. She also described some people she saw being visibly affected by the news because they had been personally affected by the dictatorship. These elements of her story linked our experiences in Vancouver to a larger group of people in Chile. *As a participant, I realized that not being in Chile with my family and friends had also affected my appreciation of this event. By listening to Marcela's story, I could feel myself more included in the process that was taking place in my country; therefore, it added a missing link to my experience.*

Fernando was also in Chile at the time of the arrest but in a smaller city in the northern part of the country. His story reminded us of the fear we all felt at the time of the coup and during the dictatorship and still feel, particularly when we go to Chile: "**I wanted to discuss the news in public to prove to myself that the fear was gone.**" (**Fernando**). He also describes the initial fear of many people to talk openly about the arrest, but that eventually their contentment emerged in their reactions and conversations. *Fernando's comments reminded me that part of my experience when receiving the news was also fear. I had almost forgotten it. I relived that indescribable fear I had felt for so long in Chile, the fear of the unknown, of the constant possibility of harm and death.*

Leila brought us a step closer to our own trauma and the healing process that comes with looking at the past and talking about it. She described how this experience had allowed people to denounce him and persecute him (Pinochet). But it has also meant forcing people to open up, to bring out many of the experiences we had: "**-- to live their drama again, to face the coup d'etat, to confront their own pain again.**" (**Leila**) She also reflects on the personal experience "beyond what it means at the political or legal level, but the spiritual aspect, what is ours, what one lived as an individual." (**Leila**) *As a researcher, I was pleased that she brought up these points. I felt the conversation was moving to a deeper level, to the emotional aspect of the experience. As a participant, her comments gave me permission to look at my own feelings. I*

found myself detaching from the role of researcher and getting ready to tell what had happened to me.

Ernesto started his presentation by bringing us into his own personal trauma, the extent of his losses, and the many layers of trauma he has experienced. He also touched on one of our most hidden fears, the informant: “**I believe that in every meeting, including this one, there is someone who is cooperating with the military and informing them.”** (Ernesto)

He individualizes Pinochet as the perpetrator of his personal and family destruction: “**Pinochet is the one who destroyed my whole family; he destroyed my whole life.”** (Ernesto) He also compares his fate and suffering to Pinochet’s: “**I was happy; I confess I was happy at that moment because the man was beginning to suffer the way I did. He had the same doubts; he was feeling the same sadness that I felt. Will I spend the rest of my life in jail? Will I die in England? What is going to happen to me?”** Ernesto’s participation took us to the core issues. By naming the possibility of one of us being an informant, he brought our own fears into the room. The very fear created by the dictatorship was now with us, the mistrust that was so deeply installed in our minds. In addition, he opened himself up in terms of his own pain and the damage caused by Pinochet and the dictatorship. Finally, by comparing his suffering to Pinochet’s, he forced us to confront Pinochet as a suffering human being.

I was the next participant in relating my story. I was surprised of the passion and details I provided. I did not realize until I transcribed my statements that I had introduced another element to the group story. I talked about the symptoms associated with traumatic experiences. “I started having flashbacks. I felt strange in my body. I felt that I was dissociating. I saw the presidential palace in flames. I saw the military trucks full of dead bodies. I heard noises. I heard the machine guns, and I wondered if I was going crazy.” Later in my story, I mentioned things I did not talk about in the English version of the pilot project. I talked in detail about having being in denial about what happened in Chile: “I never believed this was going to

happen to him, but more than the justice, finally they are going to believe in the rest of the world what happened in Chile.” Besides naming certain specific symptoms, I also talked about my feelings during that time, how much I cried translating the stories of the people who had been tortured and I realized the extent of the damage among my friends and acquaintances. I believe Ernesto’s story allowed me to open up to talking about my feelings in a group context. This was the first time I had ever told a group of people what hurts me and why. I think that rather than feeling vulnerable, I felt much empowered by being witnessed by others.

After all the participants spoke the next topic of conversation was to identify whether this experience had helped people in any way. From this point on, the conversation centers on the changes in the political scene brought about by the arrest.

Fernando, who was in Chile at the time of the arrest, describes the changes he saw in what he identifies as the “collective psychology.” In this context, what he perceived was how the topic of Pinochet was handled with the humour people developed to deal with the issue. Humour helped people to loosen up, to overcome the fear and talk about the arrest. The news media were also essential in this process, particularly in demystifying the image of Pinochet as omnipotent. This was reflected in articles written at the time and in the statements made by important people that fostered a climate of public discussion. Fernando also comments on his perception that civilian/military relations have begun to loosen up. Leila adds that the new generations of military officials do not want to be associated with Pinochet and that in fact the only ones supporting him are the top-ranking officials. Fernando says that during the last presidential elections the right-wing UDI did not want to be associated with Pinochet to avoid losing votes.

I was not surprised to see how quickly people turn to the more intellectual political analysis of the situation in Chile until Ernesto brought the subject to the personal level. He suggests we write everything we have lived through as a way to remember, particularly the painful memories. Once they are on paper, they can be burned and sent to heaven. He learned

this technique in the seminary. He also discloses personal information about the effects of torture and how he has dealt with them over the years. *As a participant and researcher, I feel the discomfort his disclosure produces in me. I am faced with a testimony of the damage caused on a human being. I feel trapped in a situation where I want to support him, to make his pain go away. I am also very aware of his anger, and that fuels mine. There is no political analysis that can take away what we are listening to. However, I finally understand why the intellectual analysis acts as buffer against the real trauma and becomes almost a form of collective denial of what we do not want to hear.*

Leila builds on Ernesto's testimony by adding that in addition to the happiness and the celebrations, the fact that we are faced with looking at our past is healing, particularly given the possibility of justice. Furthermore, to see Pinochet under a judicial power that he does not know or control, to see his family and supporters losing control, to see him finally vulnerable and coming back to Chile under a Socialist president, is a form of punishment. I realize that throughout the meeting we always go back to trying to understand what Pinochet is feeling or has felt or what is our preferred way of punishing him. This attempt to humanize him is extremely important when we look at the many losses and the brutality of the dictatorship. In doing this, I imagine we are trying to find the meaning of this historical period, to humanize the experience in order to understand and process it.

The final part of the group discussion centered on the analysis of what led to the *coup d'etat*. People commented on the mistakes that were made by the Popular Unity government and how the *coup* could have been prevented, as well as how idealistic and naïve people were at the time. We also discussed the irresponsibility of some members of the Popular Unity in their handling of the whole process. Someone mentioned that some young people used powdered milk to mark the soccer fields, showing the relaxed attitude of some people at the time.

This final discussion of the group confirms to me the need to find explanations and meaning in the political realm. Besides assigning full responsibility to Pinochet as the main perpetrator of the destruction suffered, people seem to want to find an answer to the question, Why us? What did we do wrong? We didn't deserve this. I believe that only once people are able to find an answer to these questions, together with a real possibility of justice, can the real process of healing begin.

Feedback on the Research Process

Discussion on the process and how participants were impacted by their involvement in this project are discussed below. This information was collected mostly through individual conversations and through e-mail messages. I have paraphrased the telephone conversations as close to the original conversation. In other cases, I have used direct quotes from written e-mails.

Most people were initially surprised that I would ask their opinions or comments about how I was analyzing and interpreting the information. They responded to my question sometimes with a bit of hesitation, perhaps because they were afraid that I was going to feel offended or I was going to disagree. I explained that as a Chilean immerse in the process, it was difficult for me to interpret everything on my own and that this was a collective experience. Eventually participants opened up and gave me their honest opinions. I realized that there is probably a lot they did not say and I understand that that level of trust comes with time and respect. Likewise, the member of the Chilean community that read the manuscript provided me with useful information and corroborated my interpretations.

In general, people agreed that this kind of projects is worthwhile because people need to have a venue to talk about these issues. At the personal level, all people agreed that the individual interviews were useful because they allow them to talk. As one participant explains “**it is a good therapy, it's like taking a heavy load off your shoulders, one feels lighter**”. For

another participant, the research process helped her identify some characteristics in her personality, such as mistrust or the general feelings of isolation she experiences in this society. She believes that perhaps this self-imposed isolation is related to the difference in language, culture, and the geographical distance from Chile. She also identifies the racism she has experienced, "**the belief that we immigrants are stupid**". In her opinion, all these reasons helped create mistrust and therefore have made it even more difficult for people to deal with their trauma.

In relation to the group experience, the opinions were diverse. Some participants were happy with the results and felt it was interesting while others found it "cold and unfriendly". One participant found that the meeting needed more warmth, that people were lacking the desire to know one another particularly considering that we have all been fighting in the same trenches. He suggested for future research that the participants meet in advance in order to get to know each other and try to get into each other's shoes before the formal interview takes place. For another participant, the group meeting was just the beginning of a political discussion that should take a long time until we all listen to each other's positions and agree on the commonalities we have. Overall, participants agreed that this is a topic that would take a long time, first because people feel they need to know and trust each other; and second because the analysis of the political situation takes time. It was also suggested to look into the personalities of the people participating in the group process in an attempt to ensure better results. My personal interpretation of the group session is that I sensed that there were a number of personal dynamics happening at the time, but I was not sure what exactly. I agree with the fact that trust is a big issue in group dynamics, particularly in the context of small communities where people know each other, or know of each other. Knowing the information I have now about some of the issues that were going on at the time of the group session, I am not sure if it would have been a good idea to have a second group interview. However, this information opens the door to the

whole area of how to deal with profound mistrust issues that come from personal interactions, but that are also the result of previous traumatic experiences.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

My personal motivation in conducting this research was to look for answers to the questions that were raised for me when the arrest took place. Being a counsellor in training and working with survivors of torture and political violence, I thought I knew a lot about individual and collective trauma; about how and when people re-experience traumatic episodes and about how they make meaning of them. However, the emotional impact I experienced when I heard the news made me question my own theoretical and personal knowledge. Suddenly I too was experiencing traumatic symptoms such as dissociation, numbness and hyperarousal, as well as confusing feelings such as happiness, sadness and fear. I observed the same symptoms among my friends especially when we discussed the meaning of these events.

I wanted to explore how the personal traumatic experiences upon hearing the news and the meaning we assign to them are linked to the creation of a larger group traumatic story. The arrest of Pinochet provided an unexpected possibility to face my own trauma, the trauma in my community and the possibility of healing.

For the therapeutic community working with refugees and immigrants, the present study highlights the need to understand complex issues such as exile; the historical, social and political background; and the traumatic experience people bring with them in order to grasp how these traumatic memories can be triggered by unexpected events. This understanding could be useful in the development and implementation of therapeutic approaches and prevention strategies to deal with individual and collective trauma among immigrant and refugee communities as well as their children and grandchildren.

The stories shared by the six participants support theory and research about the effects of individual and collective trauma, the nature of socio-political trauma, the retrieval of traumatic

memories, and the recollection of traumatic events. They also add to our understanding of how people link individual meaning to the construction of group memories of traumatic life experiences. A narrative method was used to bring out the individual and collective experiences of people and to illuminate the complexities and the possibilities of lived experience. These narratives indeed provide useful information in answering the research question.

As discussed in Chapter two, the research into the formation of collective memories of traumatic events shows how these memories are formed and maintained. It also shows individual and collective contradictions about remembering and forgetting them. From a healing perspective, the literature stresses the benefits of talking about traumatic experience in an attempt to integrate the fragmented pieces of the story. Nevertheless, there seems to be a gap in the understanding of how individuals make meaning out of uncontrolled events like the arrest and release of Augusto Pinochet and how this meaning relates to collective past traumatic experiences. Moreover, there seems to be a need for a greater understanding for the lived experiences of people who have been forced into exile but who remain emotionally, socially and culturally connected to their country of origin.

Relevance to Existing Literature

I will begin the discussion of the findings in relation to existing literature by focusing on the following areas: memory research, the meaning of the arrest and release of Pinochet, traumatic memories, the meaning of the traumatic experience, and the processing of the traumatic experience.

Memory Research

As discussed in chapter two, existing research on the topic of memory (Brown & Kulic, 1977; Finkenauer, Gisle & Luminet, 1997; Gaskell & Wright, 1997) identifies flashbulb memories (FB) as a particular type of memory created as a result of an unexpected event and maintained through a process of social telling and re-telling of the event. The perceptual clarity with which the participants were able to remember the circumstances when hearing the news and the overt and covert rehearsal experienced during and after the event clearly suggest that we created a flashbulb memory of the news of the arrest and of his release. However, the literature in this area does not indicate how the creation of these flashbulb memories is linked to the recollection of traumatic images.

In our experience the personal significance of the arrest was related to a number of issues. First, we all linked the news to September 11th 1973, the day of the coup d'etat. Second, the news was also associated with the image of Pinochet as the main perpetrator of human rights violations; therefore, his arrest meant the possibility of justice. Furthermore, the recollection of September 11th unleashed a sequence of memories of other traumatic events, including killings, Allende's funeral, memories of torture and jail, memories of human and material losses. In addition, the flashbulb memory experience stimulated strong body reactions, intense feelings and emotions, and traumatic symptoms. This suggests that the military coup stands out as the initial, individual and collective traumatic event for the participants.

Researchers in this area have investigated political events such as Olof Palme's assassination in Sweden (Christianson, 1989), the assassination attempt on Ronald Reagan (Pillemer, 1984), the assassinations of John F. Kennedy, Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, (Brown & Kulic, 1977), the death of Belgian King Baudouin (Finkenauer, Gisle & Luminet, 1993), and the resignation of Margaret Thatcher (Gaskell & Wright, 1993). My understanding and interpretation of the difference between my study and the existing body of research is the

nature of the events investigated. My study suggests that Pinochet himself as the individual most responsible for the coup d'etat and the 17 years of dictatorship that followed are the basis for the construction of FB memories and the recollection of traumatic memories among Chilean immigrants in exile.

In addition, the unexpected possibility of a concrete legal prosecution for genocide and crimes against humanity and therefore the vindication and validation of their traumatic experiences allowed Chileans to engage in a process of recollection of the past and its meaning. The present study is an attempt to begin to elaborate on this topic. Further research to illuminate this area might include a similar study with a larger sample incorporating both, people who supported the military coup and Pinochet, and people who were victimized by them, alternatively, a study with only Pinochet supporters.

The Meaning of the Arrest and Release of Pinochet

The results of this research suggest that the individual meaning-making process is almost exclusively related to the political context. In this regard, the arrest of Pinochet signified the unexpected possibility of justice; the validation of the atrocities, of the suffering, also confirming that they really occurred during Pinochet's dictatorship; the impact of this period on people's lives; and the vindication of the political experience of the government of Salvador Allende. This is not surprising given that all of the participants are committed political activists and concerned with social justice. They were active participants in political movements at the time of the coup and during the dictatorship and have continued to play an important political role in exile.

The participants' analysis of the political meaning of Pinochet's arrest both in Chile and internationally, together with the analysis of the social, political and economic factors that led to the coup d'etat, shows a high degree of intellectual elaboration of political processes. A possible

interpretation might be linked to what Vamik Volkan has termed “chosen traumas,” referring to the mental representation of an event that caused a large group of people to feel victimized by another and to suffer losses, especially of self-esteem. While a group does not choose to be victimized, it does “choose,” consciously as well as unconsciously, to psychologize and mythologize what has occurred and define its identity by referring to the even (Volkan and Itzkowitz, 2000).

Closely linked to the political meaning assigned to the experience is the concept of “*community of memory*.” As described in Chapters one and two, the members of a community of memory share a sense of bonding through their common political experience, a memory of victimization and a sense of trauma and suffering (Irwin-Zarecka, 1994). According to this definition, the participants of this study clearly constituted a community of memory.

As identified in the literature related to socio-political trauma (Martín-Baró, 1994; Gerardi, 1998; Lira, 1998; Jelin, 1998; Pantoja, 2000a) the healing of socio-political trauma needs to come precisely from an understanding and acknowledgement of the social and political roots that created the trauma in the first place -- that is, how and why it happened. Consistent with this view, the political and historical meaning constructed by the participants in their individual and collective narratives aims at putting back together the fragmented aspects of our political history that were destroyed at the time of the military coup. This fracture in the individual and collective life experience fragmented our political understanding and therefore the meaning of the events triggered by the arrest and release of Pinochet.

In all our narratives there is a clear polarization of our life experiences. First, life is divided between before and after the military coup, which leads to a further process of polarizations. First, Allende’s government was good; Pinochet’s and the present government are bad; therefore life before was good, and after was bad. Second, life in Chile was good; life in exile is not as good.

What was absent in many of the narratives was a desire to look for an explanation for our experience outside the political realm. Nor were we interested in discussing the fact that for many people in Chile the coup d'etat had a completely different meaning, and in fact was supported by many people. Alternatively, the fact that the arrest of Pinochet could have been a traumatic experience for his supporters was also ignored. The explanation for this compartmentalization of life experiences seems to lie in the effects of trauma itself.

Traumatic Memories

The recollection of traumatic memories by the participants is a clear indication of a certain level of trauma among us. At the individual level, trauma literature identifies the following effects: dissociation, flashbacks, distortion of reality, numbing or intrusive thoughts or images (Herman, 1992; Lira, 1998; van der Veer, 1998). These characteristics were present in all the narratives. For example, **“All of the sudden I didn’t know whether I was in Canada or in Chile.” (Ernesto).** **‘I remember the people who suffered a lot. . .all those people came to my mind in images.” (Fernando).** **“I started having flashbacks, and I felt strange. I felt I was like in a flashback. I mean, I was dissociating. . .and I thought I was going crazy.” (Adriana)**

Furthermore, the narratives of the participants also show how the characteristics that the literature has identified as individual trauma are reproduced at the collective level. The following segments attempt to explain this idea: **“I think I was in a state of denial during all these years about the magnitude of what happened in Chile... But now finally they were going to believe us in the rest of the world.” (Adriana)** **“I remember the humiliation we suffered, the feeling of isolation, to feel persecuted, to feel that we are worthless -- all those feelings that were implanted in our minds by a long-lasting media campaign and the general ambiance we lived in designed to make us feel insignificant.” (Leila)**

The first statement shows individual denial but in relation to the possibility of the collective experience of being believed by the rest of the world. The second example reflects feelings that are commonly associated with individuals who have been victimized. However, in this context they reflect the experience of a larger group. Likewise, the compartmentalization of the political history of the participants described above is also an indication of the fragmentation of the traumatic experience that is common to trauma survivors. Finally, the personal perception of Pinochet as the perpetrator and the associated feelings of fear, hatred, submission and mistrust are found in literature related to trauma victims.

The above attempt to exemplify feelings or characteristics of individual trauma as part of a much larger experience represents only a personal interpretation of the trauma narratives collected in this study and needs further elaboration.

The Meaning of the Traumatic Experience

As I mentioned in Chapter five, an interesting aspect of this study for me was to try to define the boundaries between individual and collective experiences of trauma. As Ignacio Martin-Baró (1994) explains, “Social traumas affect individuals precisely in their social character; by looking at experiences that affect the whole population, not only as individuals but as a social beings in a social context, as a totality, as a system, we understand the individual experience.” (p.124).

This view and understanding of trauma is congruent with the experiences of people in the present study. The political meaning assigned to the arrest of Pinochet seems to come from the participants’ realization of the profound damage and destruction caused by the military coup to a large segment of the population during a long period of time. This destruction affected both the individuals and the collective. I perceive this in the way we speak about these events. Most of us in speaking of our traumatic experiences were relating them to the experiences of

others, making them part of a collective experience. Furthermore, the acknowledgement of the damage, suffering and pain was framed in most cases in relation to the pain and suffering of others. From this experience, I can conclude that it is often easier to speak about painful feelings when our own pain is bound to the collective experience. Personally, I feel much more comfortable dealing with this painful reality when my individuality remains partially hidden. This interpretation is just a starting point in my understanding of how individuals position themselves in relation to the collective and vice versa in situations of trauma.

Another aspect of socio-political collective trauma identified in the literature is its chronic nature (Martín-Baró, 1994; Pantoja, 2000a; Rojas, 1998). Trauma becomes chronic when the factors that caused the trauma remain intact. In this context, the participants identified the impunity that Pinochet and the military enjoyed for such a long time as one of the most important themes. Clinical psychologists in Chile working with survivors of political violence have identified impunity – the absence of formal justice -- as one of the mechanisms through which a feeling of insecurity and defenselessness is created in the individual and at the same time denies the individual of a possibility of future (Neumann and Monasterio, 1991, cited in Pantoja, 2000a). Therefore, healing for victims is almost impossible without a legal mechanism that sanctions the perpetrators.

Furthermore, in the cases of relatives of the disappeared, a sort of emotional freezing occurs for many victims -- that is, the expression of their emotions is almost exclusively in terms of their losses. Their social life and topics of conversations are concentrated on their struggle against impunity, and they tend to construct their lives almost exclusively around finding their relatives without the possibility of mourning or processing their loss until some sense of justice is achieved. A more extreme case of “chronic trauma” has been identified by Di Paolantonio, (2000); Robben, (2000) among a sector of Mothers of Plaza de Mayo in Argentina. These women whose sons and daughters were disappeared by the military decided to keep their

emotional wounds open in order to resist the societal process of forgetting. They demanded that first the assassins had to be identified before any more exhumations were going to be carried out. Frustrated by the incapacity to achieve justice they turned into activism to cope with their grief. They began to regard themselves as the embodiment of their children's ideal and struggles and decided to socialize their maternity and embrace the suffering and struggles of all victims of political violence in the world (Robben, 2000). As one of the leaders explains: "When we understood that our children were not going to appear, we socialized motherhood and felt that we are the mothers of everybody, that all are our children." (Hebe de Bonafini, cited in Robben, 2000).

The experiences described above represent a more severe level of unresolved grief and opposition to impunity and injustice. The individual and group narratives in this study do not show the same level of emotional freezing or unresolved grief from what I can conclude, however some similarities are present. In the case of the participants, the fight for social justice, the struggle against oppression, the solidarity campaigns with Chile and other countries, and the fight against impunity have always been present in their lives. The "freezing" in the case of the mothers of the disappeared is related to the impossibility to find their children, to understand why they were disappeared or to access justice. Unlike the Mother of Plaza de Mayo, the participants seem to be unable or not ready to talk about the magnitud of their personal losses or emotional damage, instead they focus on the losses experienced as part of a generation that lost a dream or a generation that grew up surrounded by violence. Consequently, some of the participants have frozen a particular "political experience," they have over-idealized Allende's government or the experience of the dictatorship and they are also searching for explanations and demanding justice. In my view, this political freezing may be also related to the geographical and emotional distance imposed by exile itself. As one participant explains, "**Our political participation during the government of Salvador Allende represented a life project. In**

exile, we have never been able to experience that level of participation and belonging; furthermore, the current state of the world does not allow us to look for solutions to social problems. There is a lack of hope in life." (Leila) From this statement we can conclude that the personal meaning assigned to belonging to a political collective belief system was profoundly shattered, thus causing a level of hopelessness. In my case, I was too young during the government of Salvador Allende, therefore I do not have the same political experience as other participants. Nevertheless, I find myself sharing a similar level of mistrust and hopelessness in life at times. I believe this comes from witnessing the killings of people, the violence and the brutality of the military and from experiencing the fear, the silence and an internalized sense of injustice and impunity. My experience is shared by Pablo who was also my age at the time of the coup d'etat, "**maybe that's what it is and we have been marked, maybe it has marked many people from my generation, because we are pessimistic. I think it is one of my psychological traits that I am very skeptical and pessimistic, maybe because I lived part of the dictatorship there. Because I was only 13 at the time of the coup. I think that this fact it's like we have always been damaged...and that leads you to be kind of distrustful, and very skeptical.**

The experiences presented above are consistent with the literature related to collective trauma, which suggests that large-scale violence disintegrates trust in the social structures that make human life possible. Therefore, on the socio-cultural level, the work of healing also involves 'basic trust,' this means reconstructing trust in social institutions as well as in cultural practices that structure experience and give meaning to human lives again (Suárez-Orozco & Robben 2000). These cultural practices can include the construction of monuments or memorials, the creation of rituals or ceremonies or the organization of ceremonies. Finally, institutional acknowledgement in the form of "truth" commissions can begin partially to restore the symbolic order that was destroyed by the trauma (Suárez-Orozco & Gobben, 2000).

The Processing of Traumatic Experiences

The literature related to the healing of traumatic experiences identifies the telling and retelling of the trauma story as key to integrating the past into the present and the future. This proposition also suggests an open discussion about what Elizabeth Jelin (1998) has denominated the “hard facts” of the past -- that is, the physical violence, the losses and the atrocities experienced. In the context of this research, the readiness to talk about the hard facts of the past seems to be related to the individual’s elaboration of trauma. In the individual interviews the participants were perhaps more open to describe their traumatic images and emotions or their sense of loss triggered by the news.

However, during the group interview people were in general more hesitant to engage in emotional disclosures. Only three people mentioned the importance of opening up and talking about the past. Two of them talked openly about their feelings and emotions at the time of hearing the news, and only one person explained the level of damage he has experienced as a result of being imprisoned and tortured. This would suggest people make choices in what they decide to remember and to talk about. My personal interpretation is that people with a more political identity feel less vulnerable when they engage in plitical discussions that when they are confronted with feelings. This interpretation needs to be further elaborated taking into account political committmment, gender, social and generational issues.

As Maurice Halbwachs explains: “It is individuals as group members who remember. While these remembrances are mutually supportive of each other and common to all, individual members still vary in the intensity with which they experience them.” (cited in Robben and Suárez-Orozco, 2000). During the group session, I observed that it was much easier to see how the political analysis of the situation seems to shield emotional pain. This observation is corroborated with the comment of one participant: **“I ended up with a strange feeling after the group meeting. It was sad to see how sick we are, we are lost, we lack political identity. I**

have confusing feelings. I think it's much easier for me to unburden myself through the political discussion.” (Leila)

Conclusions

The results of this research indicate the creation of flashbulb memories at the time of hearing the news of the arrest of Pinochet and at the time of his release. In addition, the experience of hearing the news triggered the recollection of the coup d'etat as the main traumatic political event in the lives of the participants. This recollection triggered other personally meaningful, traumatic events, as well as feelings and images. At the same time, most participants experienced traumatic symptoms such as flashbacks, dissociation or numbing. The personal meaning associated with these events was almost exclusively political, linked to the possibility of justice, the vindication of the government of Salvador Allende, and the effect of the dictatorship on their personal lives and on the collective, thus showing that people's belief system was shattered by the trauma. The construction of group memories seemed to be circumscribed to the collective traumatic experiences like the coup d'etat, the image of the disappeared, torture, jail, exile and personal losses.

Contrary to what I expected at the beginning of this research, participants in the group session were somewhat reluctant to share personal traumatic experiences. Instead, there was a high level of political analysis of Pinochet's arrest and subsequent release. The implications that I can see are that people need to continue having a truthful analysis of the political situation at the time of the coup d'etat and during the dictatorship. People's acknowledgement that they have been damaged might come from this dialogue. The final step would be to be able to face and speak publicly about their own trauma. Nevertheless, as the literature and the experiences of the participants show political analysis and activism have been a healing mechanism during this

long period of time. I believe this study is the first step towards a further understanding of collective forms of community healing.

Implications for Psychology

It has been suggested that counselling psychologists differ from many other professionals in that they combine their clinical work with a contribution to research (Pugh, 1998). Although the purpose of this research was not to explore the benefits of constructing collective narratives as a therapeutical approach, it has coincided with the experience of some of the participants who commented on the healing benefits of talking about their individual and group experiences.

I hope that the findings from this research will increase the knowledge and understanding of the social, historical, political and cultural issues related to traumatic experiences both in individuals and groups, as well as of those events and situations that trigger the re-appearance of traumatic memories.

On a personal level, I hope that this research will shed some light into what, for me, is an important part of the role of therapists: the dialectic process of transforming both our own world and the client's world through dialogue. This implies the willingness to learn together as opposed to imposing approaches and techniques that do not meet people's cultural, social and political needs. Moreover, I believe that the role of a counsellor is to be an active agent for social change. In this way, by attempting to heal one individual life, we can hope to promote change for the rest of the society.

In addition, this study might help those therapists working in the field of cross-cultural counselling to develop new approaches to the therapeutic treatment of traumatic memories. This information might be used to develop trauma prevention workshops or material for recently arrived refugees.

The findings of this study will contribute to the understanding of similar traumatic processes in other ethnic communities and communities of memory. Furthermore, it will illuminate researchers and therapists in identifying how similar political processes can have an impact on people not only from those communities, but also from groups that share similar political and traumatic experiences. As I write this final chapter I have learned of a recent coup d'etat in Venezuela. When I talked to my friends and some of the participants about it they told me how affected they were by this event because it reminded them of the military coup in Chile. I also felt a great degree of anxiety and fear when I first heard the news.

Finally, the study will also contribute to documenting the collective processes of the Chilean community in Vancouver. It might also help researchers and therapists in Chile understand these issues from the perspective of exiles.

Implications for Future Research

This research represents only the beginning of a long journey of exploration of socio-political individual and collective trauma, particularly for populations in exile. Although the results of this research are not generalizable to other communities, the method and general thematic area investigated might inspire similar research in other traumatized communities. At the same time, the topic of this research leaves the door open for similar research with a much larger and representative sample, possibly including supporters of Pinochet.

The broad context of this research suggests the need to conduct studies incorporating other disciplines such as anthropology, history, sociology, and political science. Furthermore, the collective nature of the phenomena investigated allows for further research using a more participatory collective method, thus involving a larger “community of memory” to be part of the research process.

As for the Chilean community, the present study highlights the need to investigate the generational effects of trauma – that is, the process of transmission of trauma to the children and grandchildren, particularly in the context of exile.

The findings of this research also suggest the exploration of individual and collective memories in groups of people with similar life experiences, for example, political prisoners, people who experienced the dictatorship, people who belong to the same political party or relatives of the disappeared. These more specialized studies can help to identify different levels of traumatic experiences.

Impunity and justice in the context of exile communities seems to be a relevant starting point for understanding healing processes associated with their trauma. It would also be interesting to further explore the image and the impact of Pinochet as a perpetrator of human rights abuses. Although torture was not the main subject of this research, the connection between methods of torture and language-learning skills seems extremely relevant in order to understand social adaptation processes of exile communities.

In addition, I believe this study brings out the need to continue to explore individual lived experiences in a collaborative way that allow us to further enhance our understanding of possible commonalities, diversities and the complexities of people who have experienced traumatic life events. Finally, this study highlights the need to investigate the role of people's cultural, political and social beliefs in surviving the effects of trauma particularly in exile.

At the personal level, the development and completion of this study has been a highly rewarding and emotionally healing experience. The constant moving back and forth between my roles as researcher and participant gave me an even greater understanding of the process I was part of. The participatory process of analyzing and interpreting the experience with the participants made me feel that I was not alone in facing this huge task of understanding my own

trauma and the trauma of other members of my community. Finally, this research is just a small contribution to the always expanding field of trauma study.

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Appendix A

Invitation Poster

Attention Chileans!!

A Study about the Meaning of Pinochet's Arrest

- Are you interested in participating in a study about the individual and collective meaning of Pinochet's arrest, his release, and the period in between?
- If you are 30 years or older and you would like to discuss this topic individually and in a small group, perhaps this study may interest you.
- Participants will be asked to talk about their personal experiences when they heard the news and share these experiences individually and in a group session.
- Your time commitment will be about 6-7 hours.

For more information, please call Adriana Espinoza at 254-3432. All calls will be kept strictly confidential.

Adriana Espinoza is a Chilean graduate student in the Department of Counselling Psychology of the University of British Columbia. Adriana has been working with the Latin American community in Vancouver for 15 years. This research study is for her Master's thesis. The project will be supervised by Dr. Marla Arvay from the department of Counselling Psychology at UBC.

Appendix A**Invitation Poster**

(Spanish Translation)

Atención Chilenos y Chilenas !**Un Estudio sobre el Significado del Arresto de Pinochet**

- ¿Estás interesado/a en participar en una investigación acerca del significado individual y colectivo del arresto de Pinochet, su liberación y el período entre estos 2 eventos?
- Si tienes 30 años o más y te gustaría conversar acerca de este tema en forma individual y en grupo, tal vez este estudio te interese.
- Los participantes tendrán la oportunidad de hablar de sus experiencias individuales cuando escucharon estas noticias y luego compartir sus experiencias en forma grupal.
- Tu participación en este proyecto se estima tomará de 6-7 horas.

Para mayor información, llamar a Adriana Espinoza al 254-3432. Todas las llamadas son estrictamente confidenciales.

Adriana Espinoza es Chilena y estudia Consejería Psicológica en la Universidad de British Columbia. Adriana trabaja con la comunidad Latino Americana en Vancouver desde hace 15 años. Este estudio es para su tesis de Maestría. El proyecto será supervisado por la Doctora Marla Arvay del Departamento de Consejería Psicológica de la UBC.

Procedures

The study consists of three individual interviews and two group sessions. The introductory interview is a brief meeting between the researcher and the participant to establish rapport, to discuss the purpose of the research and to review the expectations of both parties. In the second interview, the participant will be able to share his/her experience with the researcher. After that, the researcher will write a summary of the interview. There will be third interview to check the validity of the researcher's findings. The first and third interview will last approximately half and hour while the second interview is estimated to take approximately one hour.

There will be two group meetings. In the first, one person will share his/her individual experiences in a group setting. The second group meeting is designed for participants to check the researcher's interpretation of the group experience. Each group session will take approximately two hours. The estimated total time commitment is 6-7 hours. Both the individual and group sessions will be conducted in Spanish.

Potential benefits or risks

No direct risks are associated with this study. However, through sharing painful emotional experiences participants may experience recall of traumatic memories. The interviews will be conducted at the Vancouver Association for Survivors of Torture where there will be counsellors available to assist people. In addition, there will be resources and referrals available. On the other hand, the process of sharing these emotional experiences may increase people's self awareness, self-reflection and may have a healing effect. This potential consequence may be considered a benefit.

I have received a copy of this consent form for my own records.

I freely consent to participate in this study.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Witness

Date

Thank you for your interest in participating in this study.

la gente construye memorias cuando se comparten eventos traumáticos como resultado del arresto de Pinochet, su liberación y el período entre estos eventos.

Procedimientos

El estudio consiste en tres entrevistas individuales y dos entrevistas grupales. La entrevista inicial es una reunión corta entre la investigadora y el/la participante para establecer contacto, discutir el propósito de la investigación y para revisar las expectativas de ambas partes. En la segunda entrevista el/la participante podrá compartir su experiencia con la investigadora. Después de esto, la investigadora escribirá un resumen de la entrevista. Habrá una tercera entrevista para chequear la validez de los resultados de la investigadora. La primera y la tercera entrevista durarán aproximadamente media hora, mientras que la segunda entrevista se estima que dure una hora.

Habrá dos reuniones grupales. En la primera los participantes compartirán sus experiencias individuales con el grupo. La segunda reunión esta diseñada para que los participantes puedan chequear la interpretación que la investigadora ha hecho de la experiencia grupal. Cada reunión grupal durará aproximadamente dos horas. Se estima que el tiempo de participación total sea de 6-7 horas. Tanto las reuniones individuales como grupales serán en Español.

Beneficios o riesgos potenciales.

No se anticipan riesgos ni beneficios directamente relacionados con esta investigación. Sin embargo, se puede dar el caso que algunos individuos a través del compartir experiencias emocionales dolorosas, revivan experiencias traumáticas. Las entrevistas se llevarán a cabo en las oficinas del Centro de la Asociación e Sobrevivientes de Tortura de Vancouver, donde habrán consejeros disponibles para ayudar a los participantes en caso sea necesario. También habrá

Entiendo además, que habrán servicios de consejería disponibles para cualquier tipo de aflicción psicológica que pueda resultar de esta investigación.

He recibido una copia de este contrato de participación para mis archivos personales.

Deseo participar en este estudio, y lo hago de forma libre y sin coacción alguna.

Firma del/de la Participante

Fecha

Firma del/de la Testigo

Fecha

Gracias por su interés en participar en este estudio.

Appendix C

Interview Questions

If you could please go back in time to October 16, 1998 and tell me:

Where were you when you heard the news of the arrest of Pinochet in London?

How did you hear the news?

What was your first reaction?

What did you think of his arrest?

What did you feel?

What images/memories came to your mind?

What sensations did you experience?

Were you expecting this arrest to happen?

What did it mean to you?

How were the days and weeks after the arrest of Pinochet for you?

How did you react throughout the legal process that followed?

How did it affect you personally? At work? At home?

What were your expectations?

What meaning did you make of the legal proceedings

On March 2, 2000 Augusto Pinochet was released and sent home.

Where were you when you heard the news of his return?

How did you hear the news?

What was your first reaction?

What did you think of his release?

What did you feel?

What images/memories came to your mind?

What sensations did you experience?

Were you expecting this to happen?

What did it mean to you?

How were the days and weeks after Pinochet was released for you?

How did it affect you personally? At work? At home?

What were your expectations once he went back to Chile?

What does the period from Pinochet's arrest to his release mean to you today?

How do you make sense of it?

Appendix C**Interview Questions**

(Spanish Translation)

Preguntas para la Entrevista

Si pudieras de alguna forma regresar en el tiempo al día 16 de octubre de 1998

¿Dónde estabas cuando escuchaste la noticia del arresto de Pinochet?

¿Cómo supiste de la noticia?

¿Cuál fue tu primera reacción?

¿Qué pensaste del arresto?

¿Qué sentiste?

¿Qué imágenes o recuerdos vinieron a tu memoria?

¿Qué sensaciones experimentaste?

¿Esperabas que el arresto ocurriera?

¿Qué significó para tí?

¿Cómo fueron los días y semanas posteriores al arresto para tí?

¿Cuál fué tu reacción a través de los procedimientos legales que se dieron en Londres?

¿Cómo te afectó personalmente? ¿en el trabajo ¿y en el hogar?

¿Cuáles eran tus expectativas?

¿Qué significado le atribuyes a los procedimientos legales que se dieron?

El 2 de marzo del 2000 Pinochet fue dejado en libertad y enviado a Chile.

¿Dónde estabas cuando escuchaste la noticia de su retorno?

¿Cómo supiste de la noticia?

¿Cuál fue tu primera reacción?

¿Qué pensaste de su retorno?

¿Qué sentiste?

¿Qué imágenes o recuerdos vinieron a tu memoria?

¿Qué sensaciones experimentaste?

¿Esperabas que esto ocurriera?

¿Qué significó para tí?

¿Cómo fueron los días y semanas posteriores al retorno de Pinochet para tí?

¿Cómo te afectó personalmente? ¿en el trabajo ¿y en el hogar?

¿Cuáles eran tus expectativas una vez que regreso?

¿Qué significa este período desde el arresto hasta el retorno de Pinochet para tí hoy día?

¿Cómo has logrado darle sentido?