Film Viewing Guide
by the NC Civic Education Consortium
www.civics.org
Overview
In 1976, a military junta assumed control of the Argentine government. Initially seen as a stabilizing force after years of economic hardship, political failures, and revolutionary violence, the regime quickly and ruthlessly waged a war on its own citizens. In 2013, the UNC School of Journalism released a documentary, *Las Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo and the Search for Identity*, which shines a spotlight on one of the most horrific aspects of the Dirty War – the systematic kidnapping of Argentine children – and the heroic, decades-long search for these children by their grandmothers. This guide provides discussion questions and a synthesizing activity to accompany the film.

A more extensive look at the Dirty War, including a PPT of Argentina’s history, and various activities, is available in the CEC’s *Database of K-12 Resources*:

- Accompanying PPT: [http://civics.sites.unc.edu/files/2014/01/ArgentinaDirtyWar_PPT.pdf](http://civics.sites.unc.edu/files/2014/01/ArgentinaDirtyWar_PPT.pdf)

*Special thanks to Angela Hill, a Spanish teacher at Chapel Hill High School, and Charlie Tuggle, a professor at the UNC School of Journalism and Mass Communication and Executive Producer of Las Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo and the Search for Identity, for their assistance in developing this guide.*

Recommended Audience
High school or older

Duration
2 hours (can be divided into multiple sessions if needed)

Materials
- Projector
- Documentary of “Las Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo and the Search for Identity”, available here:
  - Spanish Version: [http://youtu.be/i1joK9js60M](http://youtu.be/i1joK9js60M)
  - Spanish with English Subtitles: [http://youtu.be/34tl6Uvc-i0](http://youtu.be/34tl6Uvc-i0)
- “Mothers of the Disappeared” lyrics handout, attached
• “Mothers of the Disappeared” music video with lyrics, (optional):
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ab2pYI0A4pw
• “Create a Dirty War Museum Exhibit” handout, attached (optional); this activity will require:
  o art supplies: poster board or poster paper, crayons, markers, colored pencils, etc.
  o computers, tablets, or smartphones with internet access
  o “Links for Further Research” handouts, attached
• “Dirty War Museum Response Sheet”

Note: All links contained in this guide were active as of January 2014. For any links that become inactive, facilitators should enter the topic into a search engine to find alternate sites or email CEC Project Director, Paul Bonnici, at bonnici@unc.edu for assistance finding updated or alternate links.

Procedure

Introduction to the Film

1. As a warm up, project or distribute the song “Mothers of the Disappeared” by U2 and ask participants to silently read the lyrics. It is also recommended to play the five minute song. A version is available on YouTube that has the lyrics paired with the video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ab2pYI0A4pw. Do not share the name of the song or share any additional information with participants yet.

2. Discuss the following questions once participants have read and/or listened to the song:
   • How does this song make you feel? What words, images, feelings, etc. come to mind and why?
   • What do you think this song is about? What examples from the lyrics support your conclusions?
   • Do you think this is a hopeful or a sad song? Or, would you characterize it in another way? Explain.
   • Whose point of view do you think this song reflects?
   • If you had to name this song, what would you call it and why?

3. After discussing the questions, inform participants that this is a song called “Mothers of the Disappeared” and it was written by the band, U2. It is a song about the thousands of people who “disappeared” during Argentina’s “Dirty War” in the 1970s & 80s. Discuss:
   • How many of you have heard the term, “Dirty War”? What, if anything, do you already know about Argentina’s Dirty War?

4. Explain that in the 1970s and 80s, Argentina was ruled by a military junta (or dictatorship) that engaged in a campaign of state sponsored violence against its own citizens – commonly referred to as the “The Dirty War” (Guerra Sucia). Tell the participants that they are going to view a documentary titled, “Las Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo and the Search for Identity,” that deals with this history. Provide an overview of the film, such as:
   • This film tells the story of Las Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, an Argentinian human rights organization of grandmothers committed to finding their lost grandchildren. They believe these grandchildren were stolen by their government during the country’s military dictatorship from 1976-1983, a period in Argentina’s history referred to as the Dirty War.
At least 10,000, and some estimate as many as 30,000, dissidents of the military dictatorship were kidnapped, tortured and killed during this time. Those kidnapped became known as Los Desaparecidos or “the disappeared.” An estimated 500 of these were pregnant women or new mothers whose babies were taken from them and given to people sympathetic to the regime. Everything about these babies’ identities was changed.

The grandmothers banded together and began their search in 1977, and they have been searching ever since. Las Abuelas has found more than 100 of the missing grandchildren, many of whom had no idea about their true identities.

Through more than forty interviews with members of Las Abuelas, found grandchildren, family members of the missing and many others, this film explores the haunting question: Is the right to know who you are a basic human right?


- Discuss: After hearing this information, what questions do you have about the Dirty War?

**Viewing the Film**

5. There are two ways to view this documentary film – either in its entirety, with breaks for discussion, or by showcasing various clips of the film. For audiences with little or no knowledge of the Dirty War, it is recommended that the facilitator chooses the “Full Documentary” viewing option.

a. **Full Documentary:** This option should take approximately 90 minutes (54 minute documentary + time for discussion breaks). Pause the video at the times outlined below and discuss the questions listed. Facilitators may choose to discuss the questions as an entire group, or have participants discuss in partners or small groups then report back to the whole group.

   - **Stopping Point #1 – 7:30 (“And these babies remained in the hands of military personnel or with families linked to the military forces.”)**
     - Why did Argentine’s initially welcome the military government?
       - The military was viewed as a better alternative to Isabel Perón’s government and as a way to bring stability back to the country. In the past the military had taken control of the government, but turned things over to civilians once things were under control.
     - Why was this time different?
       - The military had an agenda of exterminating the left in Argentina.
     - Why did they want to eliminate the “left” in Argentina?
       - The military viewed them as the source of guerilla movements and terrorist violence.
     - How many people are estimated to have been kidnapped, tortured, and/or murdered?
       - 30,000
     - How many pregnant mothers were captured?
       - 500

   - **Stopping Point #2 – 13:00 (“This institution will be in the hand of the grandchildren.”)**
     - What happened to Juan Cabandi?
- He was born in jail, after his parents were kidnapped by the military, and he was given to the family of a man who worked in the intelligence services. He long suspected that his parents weren’t his biological parents, and he wanted to know for sure, so he took a DNA test. After finding out the truth, he was united with his biological family.

  o Do you agree with Juan that your identity is a “right?” Why or why not?
  o Who are the Grandmothers of May Plaza?
    - They are a group of grandmothers turned citizen activists who protested against the junta’s actions and demanded that the junta returned their kidnapped grandchildren to them.
  o What do you think these women risked by starting the Grandmothers of May Plaza?
    - Torture, imprisonment, death, social ostracization
  o Why do you think they didn’t and haven’t given up their search?

• Stopping Point #3 – 17:50 (“Sometimes they say, ‘that’s good and what can I do to help them?’”
  o How did Tatiana’s experience differ from Juan’s?
    - Tatiana was already born when she was kidnapped. The court declared that she was “abandoned” and she was put up for adoption. Her adoptive mother was very suspicious about her story, so she searched for answers and eventually met the Abuelas.
  o Why do you think people waited so long to contact the Abuelas?
  o How have things changed for the Abuelas since the end of the military dictatorship?
    - The Abuelas can be much more open about their work without fear of reprisal from the government.

• Stopping Point #4 – 27:38 (“and hundreds of missing grandchildren.”)
  o Do you agree with the quote, “you don’t end cannibalism by eating the cannibals, and the whole idea of employing terrorist tactics to put an end to terrorism means that you’ve sunk down to their level.”? Why or why not?
  o What are some alternate ways to stop terrorism?
  o Many of the disappeared were held where?
    - Navy Mechanics School, called “ESMA”
  o Describe the way people were treated at ESMA.
  o Do you believe the supporters of the junta when they say that the children weren’t kidnapped, they were just given to families who could care for them?
  o How did US policy towards Argentina change over time?

• Stopping Point #5 – 39:20 (“Keep going mama. I cannot stop going.”)
  o What are some of the accusations leveled against the Abuelas by supporters of the junta?
    - They’re ignoring the fact that their children were “terrorists” and “communists”
  o According to writer Uki Goñi, what was the military’s goal when it came to kidnapping children?
- It would be a huge victory for them if they could convert the children of "terrorists" into supporters of the regime.

  o How did Alejandro’s experience differ from Juan’s?
    - Until his adoptive father told him the truth, Alejandro never suspected he was adopted. He was also pre-selected by a family before his birth.

  o How would you feel if the people you thought were your real family turned on you?

- Stopping Point #6 – End of the film
  o According to Ana Maria, why was she let out of the concentration camps?
    - As a warning to other Argentinians.

  o If you were one of the kidnapped children, would you want to know the truth? Why or why not?

  o The title of the film is “the Search for Identity”, if you produced the film, what title would you use? Why?

b. Selected Clips: Rather than playing the entire film all the way through, facilitators can elect to play selected clips of the film. The stop and start times are below.

- Clip #1: Juan Cabandie (7:32 – 10:30):
  o What happened to Juan’s parents?
    - They were “disappeared” with no trace left behind.

  o Who did Juan’s “fake father” work for?
    - The Argentine intelligence services.

  o How old was Juan when he discovered his identity?
    - 26 years old

  o How did Juan discover that he was not the biological son of his parents?
    - He long suspected that his parents weren’t his biological parents. He took a DNA test to confirm his identity

  o Was Juan happy about learning the truth?
  o Do you agree with Juan that your identity is a “right?” Why or why not?

- Clip #2: Tatiana Sfiligoy (13:10 – 17:00)
  o How old was Tatiana when she discovered her identity?
    - 6

  o Why do you think Tatiana was declared “abandoned” by the state?

  o How did Tatiana’s story differ from Juan’s?
    - She was old enough to remember her kidnapping; she discovered her identity at age 6; her adoptive parents did not believe that she and her sister were abandoned, so they tried to find the truth.

- Clip #3: Pedro Nadal (27:40 – 30:45)
  o How old was Pedro when he discovered his true identity?
    - 29

  o How did Pedro feel about learning his true identity?
    - He was sad and angry, but he preferred learning the truth.

  o What happened to Pedro’s father?
- Spent 5 years in jail, 4 years in exile, and then spent the rest of the time looking for Pedro.

- How did much of this information about the junta’s actions become public?
  - The Argentine National Commission on the Disappeared released a report called “Nunca Más” that detailed the junta’s actions.
- Why do you think that the junta gave these children away to families that supported the junta?
  - Possible answers include: gave children to their supporters for their support of the junta; to “turn” the children of critics of the junta into supporters of the junta.
- What do supporters of the junta say about the Abuelas? Do you agree with the supporters of the junta? Why or why not?
  - Their children were terrorists and guerilla fighters.

**Clip #5: Alejandro Sandoval (34:58 – 39:20)**
- How did Alejandro find out the truth about his identity?
  - His adoptive father told him the truth.
- How was Alejandro’s experience as an adoptive child different than Juan’s?
  - He never had the same doubts about his origins.
- How did his adoptive family react to Alejandro after the trial?
  - They blamed him for causing them trouble and they cut off contact with him.
- How did Alejandro’s adoption differ from the other stories you’ve heard?
  - His adoptive family chose him based on his mother’s features, 6 months before he was born. The other children were given away or chosen after birth.
- Even though Alejandro’s grandmother found her grandson, why did she keep working with the Abuelas?
  - She feels that she’s honoring the memory of her daughter by continuing to work with the Abuelas.

**Clip #6: Ana Maria Careaga (39:20 – 44:00)**
- Why does Ana believe she was released from the junta’s concentration camps?
  - She believes that she was released as a warning to other Argentinians.
- What are death flights?
  - Some opponents of the junta were thrown alive from airplanes into the Atlantic Ocean.
- Why is it important to remember the past?

**Clip #7: end of film)**
- What happened to some of the former members of the junta?
  - Some were convicted of crimes, while some remain untried today.
- What is La ESMA? What is La ESMA now?
  - The Navy Mechanic School that served as a jail and a location to torture enemies of the junta. Today it is a museum that honors the victims of the junta.
- What happened to Jorge Vidalia? Do you think this was a fair sentence? Why or why not?
6. General Discussion Questions at the conclusion of the film:
   • How are people in Argentina dealing with the legacy of the Dirty War?
   • Why is it important for us to learn about the Dirty War?
   • Can you relate the Dirty War to any periods of American History? Explain.
   • How do Americans deal with the dark side of our own past (e.g. slavery, Jim Crow, lynchings, relocation of Native Americans, internment of Japanese-Americans, etc.)
   • After viewing this film, do you still have any questions about the Dirty War?

Optional Synthesizing Activity

7. For facilitators seeking a closing activity that allows participants to synthesize what they have learned from the documentary, use the attached “Create a Dirty War Museum Exhibit.” Inform the participants that they will be creating an exhibit for Argentina’s new Dirty War museum. The museum will be located in the former Navy Mechanics School (Escuela Superior de Mecánica de la Armada – ESMA), which used to be a concentration camp and torture center during the Dirty War. The purpose of the museum is to educate future generations about the Dirty War. Provide each participant with a copy of the attached “Create a Dirty War Museum Exhibit” handout, review the instructions, and answer any questions.

➢ Facilitator note: Facilitators should use their discretion regarding how much time to devote to the museum activity. The process can be drawn out and turned into a project, in which participants take several days to research their assigned topic, prepare their exhibit. Or, it can be done after viewing the film as a culminating activity as described below.

8. Next, divide participants into groups of 2 – 5, assign each group one of the following suggested topics, and provide each group with the appropriate “Links for Further Research” handout:
   • Las Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo
   • General Jorge Rafael Videla
   • US Foreign Policy & Argentina
   • The Disappeared (Los Desaparecidos)
   • The Children of the Disappeared (Ninos de Los Desparecdios)
   • Falklands War
   • The Presidency of Isabel Peron
   • The Navy Mechanics School (ESMA - Escuela Superior de Mecánica de la Armada)
   • National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons
   • Guerilla Movements in Argentina

9. Allow participants to prepare their museum exhibit (time will vary based on group composition and facilitator’s pacing). On the day that the final projects are due, provide each participant with the attached “Dirty War Museum Response Sheet”. Ask half of the class partners to take their place around the room with their exhibit posters to act as “curators” and instruct the other half of the group to act as “visitors” and to complete a “gallery walk” around the room. Participants who are “visitors” should view and take notes on each exhibit. They should feel free to ask each exhibit curator about their design choices and any clarifying questions about their exhibits.
10. Once all exhibits have been viewed, the class should swap places, with all participants who were “visitors” now becoming “curators”, and the participants who were “curators” now becoming “visitors”.

11. After all participants have presented, debrief the museum by discussing:
   • Which exhibit did you find most interesting and why?
   • Can you think of any other sites where atrocities took place that were later turned into museums, similar to ESMA? Why do you think these sites were chosen for museums?
   • How was the Dirty War similar to other historical events you’ve learned about? How was it different?
   • No matter how terrible it can be sometimes, why is it important to study events like the Dirty War?
   • As humans, we honor our ancestors by learning about and caring about the history they endured. What are other ways we can honor them? What are our responsibilities as citizens today to ensure that something like the Dirty War can’t happen again?

Additional Activities
   • The producer of Las Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo and the Search for Identity, Dr. Charles Tuggle, is available to participate in a Q&A session via Skype. To contact Dr. Tuggle, you can email him at catuggle@unc.edu, with the subject line: “Las Abuelas Q&A”.
     o His Skype username is catuggle.
     o Before completing the Q&A, the class should brainstorm a list of questions for Dr. Tuggle.
   • Webquest from Boston College: https://www2.bc.edu/~rusch/ho.html

Resources
   • A full lesson plan, aligned to the NC Essential Standards, that includes more background information, a PowerPoint presentation, handouts, and additional activities are available in the NC Civic Education Consortium’s Database of K-12 Resources at:
     o Lesson Plan: http://civics.sites.unc.edu/files/2014/01/ArgentinaDirtyWarLessonFinal9.pdf
     o Accompanying PPT: http://civics.sites.unc.edu/files/2014/01/ArgentinaDirtyWar_PPT.pdf
   • Website for Las Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo and the Search for Identity documentary. Includes the latest news relating to the Las Abuelas, the Dirty War, etc.:
     o http://www.searchforidentitydocumentary.com/lang/en
   • If you are seeking additional ways to teach about the Dirty War or related material, contact the Consortium (www.civics.org) at bonnici@unc.edu.
Midnight, our sons and daughters
Were cut down and taken from us.
   Hear their heartbeat
   We hear their heartbeat.

In the wind we hear their laughter
In the rain we see their tears.
Hear their heartbeat, we hear their heartbeat.

Night hangs like a prisoner
Stretched over black and blue.
   Hear their heartbeats
   We hear their heartbeats.

In the trees our sons stand naked
Through the walls our daughter cry
   See their tears in the rainfall.
Create a Dirty War Museum Exhibit

Group Members: ______________________________________________________

Exhibit Topic: ______________________________________________________

1. Using the resources provided by the facilitator, complete additional research on your assigned topic.
   • Groups may complete research together or divide up the assigned resources and summarize for the group what they learned.

2. Discuss the following questions before planning your exhibit:
   • After researching, how do you feel about your assigned topic? (e.g. horrified, hopeful, sad, happy, etc.)
   • Why should people care about your topic?
   • What role, if any, did your topic play in the Dirty War?
   • Who/What are the important people, places, ideas, events, etc., associated with your topic?
   • What three things do you want people to know about your topic?
   • What creative means can you use in your exhibit to best convey the information to museum visitors (a statue, painting, abstract exhibit, poem, short video, etc.)?

3. You may use any creative medium you choose to design your monument. The monument can be literal or abstract, simple or complex. Examples may include (but are NOT limited to):
   • art work
   • mural(s)
   • statues
   • plaques, written descriptions, quotes from residents, or other text displayed in some way
   • structures or buildings
   • symbolic or abstract shapes
   • inclusion of music or voice over’s (i.e. you push a button and narration plays)
   • performance art that takes place live at the monument on a particular schedule,
   • a television screen that plays a particular performance clip or narration
   • PICTURE YOUR OWN CREATIVE IDEAS HERE!

4. Once you have thought through your idea, you will create a detailed sketch of your monument/marker that shows what it will look like when finished and installed in its final location. Your sketch can contain labels, in which you point to certain aspects of the drawing and use text to describe additional details that may not be clear in the visual.

5. You must also turn in a paragraph in which you provide an overview of your exhibit, describe what it represents, as well as explain why it is important to memorialize the Dirty War. You will share your work on the due date.

Exhibit Due Date: ______________________________________________________________________

Visit our Database of K-12 Resources at http://database.civics.unc.edu/
**Las Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo: Links for Further Research**

- Disappeared Children in Argentina: Rita Arditti’s Interviews with the Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo: [http://openarchives.umb.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/p15774coll10](http://openarchives.umb.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/p15774coll10) (scroll down for English version of text)

**General Jorge Rafael Videla: Links for Further Research**


**US Foreign Policy & Argentina: Links for Further Research**

- National Security Archive: [http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB104/](http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB104/)
- Cold War Argentina: the Dirty War: [http://www.coldwarstudies.com/2013/03/15/cold-war-argentina-the-dirty-war/](http://www.coldwarstudies.com/2013/03/15/cold-war-argentina-the-dirty-war/)
- Carter’s Foreign Policy: [http://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/short-history/carter](http://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/short-history/carter)

**The Disappeared (Los Desaparecidos): Links for Further Research**

- Wall of Memory: [http://www.desaparecidos.org/arg/victimas/muro2.html](http://www.desaparecidos.org/arg/victimas/muro2.html)
- Argentina ex-dictator admits dirty war "disappeared": [http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/04/14/us-argentina-dictator-idUSBRE83D0CK20120414](http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/04/14/us-argentina-dictator-idUSBRE83D0CK20120414)
- The Dirty War & the Disappeared: [http://www.argentinacafe.com/Background/history/argentina-history-dirty-war.htm](http://www.argentinacafe.com/Background/history/argentina-history-dirty-war.htm)
The Children of the Disappeared (Niños de Los Desparecidos): Links for Further Research
- Orphaned in Argentina’s dirty war, man is torn between two families: http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/02/10/AR2010021003662.html
- Las Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo and the Search for Identity: http://www.searchforidentitydocumentary.com/

Falklands War: Links for Further Research
- Falklands War: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Falklands_War
- The Falklands War: An Overview: http://militaryhistory.about.com/od/battleswars1900s/p/falklands.htm
- 30 Years Since the Falklands War: http://www.theatlantic.com/infocus/2012/03/30-years-since-the-falklands-war/100272/

The Presidency of Isabel Peron: Links for Further Research
- Isabel Perón: http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/452372/Isabel-Peron
- The History of Peronism (Part II): http://www.argentinaindependent.com/tag/isabel-peron/
- Argentine Anticommunist Alliance: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Argentine_Anticommunist_Alliance
- Argentina’s ‘Triple A’ death squads: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/6216431.stm

The Navy School of Mechanics (ESMA - Escuela Superior de Mecánica de la Armada): Links for Further Research
- Argentina’s dirty war: the museum of horrors: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/3673470/Argentinas-dirty-war-the-museum-of-horrors.html
- Torture Center to Bear Witness: http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/10/14/AR2007101401248.html
- Argentina hands on Dirty War site: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/7026833.stm

National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons: Links for Further Research
- Nunca Mas (Never Again): http://www.desaparecidos.org/nuncamas/web/english/library/nevagain/nevagain_000.htm
Guerilla Movements in Argentina: Links for Further Research

- Argentina’s Revolutionary Movements: [http://wikis.lib.ncsu.edu/index.php/Argentina%27s_Revolutionary_Movements](http://wikis.lib.ncsu.edu/index.php/Argentina%27s_Revolutionary_Movements)
- Cold War Argentina: The Dirty War: [http://www.coldwarstudies.com/2013/03/15/cold-war-argentina-the-dirty-war/](http://www.coldwarstudies.com/2013/03/15/cold-war-argentina-the-dirty-war/)
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