

## ***Nietos (Identidad y memoria) / Grandchildren (Identity and Memory)***

Directed by: Benjamín Ávila

Montage: Benjamín Ávila

Produced by: Daniel Cabezas

Date: 2004

Country: Argentina

Language: Spanish (English, French, Portuguese and Italian subtitles)

Running time: 75'

Availability in the UK: Queen Mary, University of London, Library

*Nietos* is a documentary about the children of those who disappeared under State terrorism during the last Argentine dictatorship (1976-83) and the search that their grandmothers have been carrying out since 1977. It also deals with the problems that the grandchildren themselves have to face in their search and struggle for identity: from the initial doubts and searches, through the process of DNA testing, up to the issue of dealing with their new identity once they have been told the truth and re-encountered their biological family.

The introductory images show the face of a young woman and the inner pages of an Argentine Identity Card. The film is introduced by the journey of a grandmother by car and by train to the Association 'Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo' accompanied by the filming crew. There is then a flashback to the day of the last Argentine *coup d'état* (24/03/1976), with black and white footage of General Videla's assumption of the presidency while a voice-over reads out the first *comunicado* [announcement] of the junta to the Argentine people. The film presents 22 testimonies of different people related to the film's topic, mainly grandchildren and grandmothers, but also archaeologists in charge of the forensic investigations of the remains found. There are frequent insertions of television news footage covering military and police searches, chases and interventions in the streets during the last dictatorship as tokens of their everyday repressive methods.

The grandchildren talk about their search and about being torn between the appropriators' families and their biological families. They also express their feelings about their re-encounter with their families of origin, the shock of finding out the truth and their right to identity. Some of them were appropriated by people of good faith and some others were not, but in all cases the appropriation was carried out through illegal methods and fraudulent documents. There is a heartbreakingly moving interview with an 11-year-old girl (Letizia Baibene) from archival material who explains how her parents were kidnapped in front of her when she was only 3. Even being so young, she demands justice, but not revenge, because that would mean using the same methods that the kidnappers employed. The most recent grandchild recovered by the Grandmothers – by the time the film was made – is interviewed: Horacio Pietraglia Corti is the 75<sup>th</sup> one. There are also interviews with archaeologists working on a project that seeks to identify the remains found; their aim is to re-establish the basic relationship between a body and its identity, because the main objective of State terrorism was precisely to dissociate this basic relationship body/identity. Shocking images are presented not only of the skeletons, but also of the many 'apple boxes' where they are kept – with just a number – before identification. Once identification is achieved, the remains are given to the families for cremation and burial.

There are also interviews with several grandmothers who tell their shocking stories. Interviewee Estela de Carloto – the President of the Association ‘Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo’ – says that they had never thought that they would have to work for the rest of their lives; the work of the Grandmothers is a lifetime project. She also says that only because of love could they work under conditions of extreme fear. The film is framed by images of the grandmothers. Returning to the opening sequence, the film ends with interviews with some grandmothers remembering their origins as a Human Rights Association in 1977. There is also a tribute to Azucena Villaflor de Vicenti who was the leader of the original group of 14 mothers who decided to march around Plaza de Mayo on the 30<sup>th</sup> of April 1977; she was kidnapped in late 1977 by Captain Astiz, and disappeared. Her remains were found and identified, and she is now buried at the centre of the Plaza de Mayo.

There is a final message addressed to possible grandchildren yet to be found: ‘If you have doubts about your identity or think you could be the child of missing persons, please contact “Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo”’.

Real characters are presented on location.

#### RELATED INFORMATION

Other films by Benjamín Ávila include:

*Veo - Veo* (2003) [short]

*La gotera* (2002) [short]

*Dando la vuelta al perro* (1997) [short]

*Paco* (1995) [short]

*Fotografía de mi infancia* (1995) [short]

*La triste y penosa historia de Mateo Praxedes Calsado* (1994) [short]

*Ricardo Alventosa, en honor a su obra* (1994) [short]

Publications on Benjamín Ávila include:

García, Santiago. ‘Estrenos, entrevista a Benjamín Ávila: Sensatez y sentimientos.’ *El Amante Cine*, nº 144, 1 April 2004, pp. 12-13. [on *Nietos*]

Vieira, Else R P. *Interview with Benjamín Ávila*

<http://www.modern-languages.qmul.ac.uk/hispstudies/ladocs/argentinadirectors/index.htm>

#### RELATED PUBLICATIONS

Vieira, Else R P. *Interview with Estela de Carloto, President of the Asociación de las Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*

<http://www.modern-languages.qmul.ac.uk/hispstudies/ladocs/argentinadirectors/index.htm>

Vieira, Else R P. *Interview with Alejo Rivera from Organization H.I.J.O.S. (Hijos por la Identidad y la Justicia Contra el Olvido y el Silencio)*

<http://www.modern-languages.qmul.ac.uk/hispstudies/ladocs/argentinadirectors/index.htm>

Annotated by Guillermo Olivera

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AHRC Project [Brazilian and Argentine Documentary Film-Making](#)

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