Human Rights in Latin America: Spotlight on Argentina
Unit 6 Memory is a Verb

IA "Time to Move On…"

Essential Questions

- *How can the repressors and the repressed live in the same land, share the same table? ~Ariel Dorfman*
- *Can we keep the past alive without becoming its prisoners? ~Ariel Dorfman*
- *Can we forget that past without risking its future replication? ~Ariel Dorfman*
- *How does repression change our values? ~Ariel Dorfman*
- *Can memory be a verb?*
- *When is it time to move on? Is it ever time to move on?*

A. Read and discuss the following quote by Quinnipiac University Professor Luis Arata who encountered a former Dirty War repressor in 2000. Consider two options this type of situation presents- moving on by forgiving and forgetting or moving on by tenaciously demanding that justice be served.

I was with a group of friends at a hotel's restaurant in a small town up in the northern mountains in Argentina. My friends noticed someone at a nearby table and kept looking in that direction. It was a man about 10 years older than we were, and a woman. The two seemed affected by the attention, got up, and left the restaurant without a word. My friends told me that the man was Aldo Rico, a "carapintada," the leader of a military group that revolted against the democratic government that was trying to bring to justice those involved in crimes during the Dirty War.

The next morning we came for breakfast at the restaurant. Rico and the woman were already there. He promptly got up and left. She approached our table alone. She said we had to forget the past. It was time to move on. And she left. ~ Luis Arata, University of Quinnipiac

B. Participate in a role-play activity of the above scene at the hotel in mountains of northern Argentina. *Imagine an encounter between a group of friends, all of whom have friends or relatives who disappeared during El Proceso, and a former repressor of that period, Aldo Rico, and his wife. The encounter has sparked emotions for all the players.* In small groups, you will research Aldo Rico, the Falkands War, the *carapintadas.* Then, create conversations between the following people:

- the group of friends
- Sr. and Sra. Aldo Rico
- Sra. Rico and the group of friends
- Sr. Rico and the group of friends

Write research results and conversation notes in the spaces below.

C. After participating in the role-play, reflect on the experience. Did your part align with your personal convictions? Or, did you enact a position contrary to your beliefs? How does a person like Sr. Aldo Rico defend his past actions? Where does the wife of a repressor fit into this history? Do you think it is possible to be married to someone who is guilty of committing atrocities yet not be aware of his actions?

IB Memory is a Verb	
Read the following quotes from a 2012 interview with Krzysztof Wodiczko and Julian Bonder for *Architecture Boston,* "Memory is a Verb". Write your reflections in the space below and be prepared to share your ideas with the class. Think about the current debate over the confederate flag and what that flag represents. In addition to creating memorials, can we remove reminders of dark periods in our history as well? If flags are removed should names of towns and streets be changed also? Should Calhoun College of Yale University, named after John C. Calhoun, be renamed per the request of students? The former Yalie was the seventh vice president of the United States but a staunch supporter of slavery.	
1.	**AB**: *Built memorials are a way that we institutionalize or concretize memory. And yet, you two see memorials not as static, still places, but as places that are alive to the possibilities of activism. Could you describe what you think is the purpose of memorials, and how can they provide this possibility of action?* **KW**: *Why we commemorate and remember in general, there has to be some good outcome out of this. Something positive. So, in other words, purpose of the memorial is to provide conditions for a better future.* **JB**: *What we think is that the process of remembering is in the present, that it is an action. It's not an object. The purpose is not to physically manifest memory as an object, but actually to invite people to think, which is an action.*
2.	**Krzysztof Wodiczko**: *There is a danger that a memorial is a premature closure. That too quickly, we actually seal our -- we resolve our pain. We don't have to really discuss it, and have to go through the process of working through the trauma. It's just too quick. Perhaps even the September 11 memorial in New York, may have been much more inspiring had there been more discussion open to the public, why and what it is, how we should commemorate it, and so forth.*

3.	**Julian Bonder**: *And I think that part of the challenge, is how you respond to constituencies that may be asking for certain kinds of approaches, and how one also responds to that intangible and almost impossible aspect, which is the suffering of others. How do you not only try to translate suffering, which is probably difficult or even impossible, to something that as Krzysztof said before becomes somehow kind of a hopeful moment, without trying to redeem historical trauma? Which is a complex part of this, how do we position ourselves, both communities and ourselves as artists and architects, without trying to represent the suffering of others, yet providing conditions for people to think about the memory and the remembering of the suffering of others?*
4.	**ArchitectureBoston**: *Right. What about your own memories, your own backgrounds and experiences? How have they shaped the way you approach this kind of work?* ***Krzysztof Wodiczko**: There is a saying, somewhere between memorials there is Poland. Similar to Argentina. Not to the same degree. From my personal upbringing, I was fed up by memorials. It was a kind of disease, a kind of poison of our national culture, this obsession with commemorating tragic losses, heroic sacrifice, without preparing us for much more complex and difficult conditions and work to do for the future, how to make the world better. Everyday experience is all about the past. So I think that Polish experience could explain my kind of drive toward different kind of memorials, because we should actually end this kind of somber, very serious, passive repetition of almost like reconstructing the event for the pleasure of suffering. It's kind of masochistic.*

5.	***Julian Bonder**: To add to that, I come from a family that escaped, part of the family escaped the Holocaust, but I come from a family who didn't speak about it. So it was basically kind of a silent, even my grandmother, who was one of the most expressive people I remember in my life, never wanted to talk about the bad parts of Berlin.* ***Krzysztof Wodiczko**: I had the same. Mother never spoke, even though her entire family was murdered in the first week of my life. She didn't want to speak about it, but her position was not the result of a traumatic kind of shattering of memory. More it was this irritation with this indulgent, with other Jews who were indulging themselves in tragic recollection.* ***Julian Bonder**: Right. And I think because I grew up studying under dictatorships where we couldn't speak, we knew that some people at the university were actually disguised Secret Service and we couldn't speak about democracy. And some people who I knew from the university disappeared. But still, I always ask myself, none of these biographical notes, and this is to me, I think, we share deeply, none of these biographical notes legitimize anything we do. Because it's not about self-indulgent, autobiographical notes that we project into the public. It's about how we think, perhaps from our experiences, how can we somehow extrapolate some of that to silence ourselves and to invite the voices of others?*