

Armenian Review

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The cover symbols represent the following:

The non-whites sign symbolizes Apartheid in South Africa and segregation in the US, while the chain refers to slavery in the US.

The butterfly is the symbol of hope chosen by the Comfort Women.

The three figures are a reference to an iconic picture of the Armenian Genocide, in which a mother and son stand next to the body of a child.

The hand is a Native American symbol representing humankind's presence, our history, and legacy.

The quilted rainbow is the flag of indigenous South American peoples

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Photo from the Dennis Brutus Collection, courtesy of Worcester State University

FROM THE EDITOR

THIS SPECIAL ISSUE OF THE *ARMENIAN REVIEW* is dedicated to Dennis V. Brutus (1924-2009), a leading international human rights activist and gifted poet whose imprint on the global reparations movement cannot be overstated. In addition to playing a key role in the banning of Apartheid-era South Africa from the Olympics and being repeatedly imprisoned as well as shot by the Afrikaner government for his work against Apartheid, Dennis worked tirelessly on a host of issues around the world throughout his life, including protests against the World Trade Organization's devastating impact on vulnerable populations across the globe. Since the 1980s based at the University of Pittsburgh, Dennis spent two semesters as Poet in Residence at Worcester State University (Spring 2001 and Fall 2003), to which he donated the bulk of his personal documents to form the Dennis Brutus Collection. Worcester State played an important role in Dennis' bid for political asylum in the United States in the early 1980s, which the Reagan administration strongly opposed, by granting him an honorary doctorate on May 29, 1982.

The personal, human side of Dennis so present even in his most political poetry was evident to anyone who interacted with him. He always had time to talk with a student or community member about the issues of concern to that person, and engaged group after activist group with humility and a willingness to work equally right alongside others to make a difference. Committed throughout his life to non-violent struggle in the spirit of Thoreau, Gandhi, and King, that life is a testament to the "stubborn hope" he maintained throughout the most difficult of times. The articles in this special issue include a number by friends and associates of Dennis, not the least of whom is Patrick Sargent, one of Dennis' last students. It is the aspiration of the guest editor that this special issue both memorialize and advance Dennis' human rights spirit and legacy.

For more on Dennis and the Dennis Brutus Collection, including access to a compilation of original poems found in the Collection, go to <http://worchester.edu/DBrutus/default.aspx>.

Henry Theriault
Guest Editor

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Authors will receive two complimentary copies of the issue in which their articles appear as well as 10 offprints of their article.

Armenian Review

Volume 53 · Number 1-4 (Spring–Winter 2012)

CONTENTS

The Global Reparations Movement

Guest Editor: Henry Theriault

ARTICLES

- Introduction: The Global Reparations Movement* 1
Henry C. Theriault
- Reparations and the Politics of Avoidance in America* 11
Jermaine McCalpin
- Reparations to People of African Descent in the United States* 33
Kibibi Tyehimba
- Reparations at the National Level:* 53
Reparations and Comfort Women Victims of the Japanese Army
Haruko Shibasaki
- Argentina's Constituent Genocide: Challenging the
Hegemonic National Narrative and Laying the Foundation
for Reparations to Indigenous Peoples* 63
Diana Lenton, Walter Delrio, Pilar Pérez, Alexis Papazián,
Mariano Nagy, and Marcelo Musante
- The Genocide Against the Armenians 1915-1923
and the Relevance of the 1948 Genocide Convention* 85
Alfred de Zayas
- From Unfair to Shared Burden: The Armenian Genocide's
Outstanding Damage and the Complexities of Repair* 121
Henry Theriault
- The Debt to the Indebted: Reparations, Odious Debt,
and Their Global Implications* 167
M.P. Giyose
- Debt Cancellation as Reparation: An Analysis of Four Cases* 193
Patrick K. Sargent

BOOK REVIEWS 207

- Tom Mooradian, *The Repatriate: Love, Basketball, and the KGB*,
reviewed by Avedis Hadjian
- Nigoghos Sarafian, *The Bois de Vincennes (Trans. Christopher Atamian)*,
reviewed by Jennifer Manoukian
- Aris Janigian, *Riverbig*, reviewed by Sossi Essajanian
- Archbishop Hrant Khatchadourian, *Historiography of Fifth Century Armenia*,
reviewed by Vartan Matiossian

CONTRIBUTORS 220

TRANSLITERATION GUIDE 222

Argentina's Constituent Genocide: Challenging the Hegemonic National Narrative and Laying the Foundation for Reparations to Indigenous Peoples

*Diana Lenton, Walter Delrio, Pilar Pérez,
Alexis Papazián, Mariano Nagy, and Marcelo Musante*

Introduction

For more than a century, there has been little discussion of the Argentinean genocide perpetrated against indigenous peoples. As a result, presently a majority of Argentines perceive their identity and society as the outcome of a “European melting pot” process, not the result of genocide. In this view, sixteenth century European colonization of a territory imagined as a “desert” and the expansion of the nation-state by the late 19th Century are the historical processes that account for this melting pot.

This article deals with the events and effects of the last period of territorial annexation and subjugation of the indigenous peoples perpetrated by the Argentinean national armed forces between 1876 and 1917, focusing on the state's genocidal policies and the support from civil society. Paradoxically, these actions as a whole have been named in the hegemonic national history of Argentina's “Campaigns to the Desert.”¹ This formulation and the national narratives it names minimize or deny completely the existence of indigenous peoples in the areas annexed. The aim of this paper is to examine the construction and effects of the genocide of the indigenous population as an event excluded from the national narrative and literally “unthinkable” by average Argentines.

In the present, different groups – such as indigenous peoples’ organizations, academic researchers, and alternative media – have started to make visible this genocidal process that is constitutive of the Argentinean nation state. The exposure of the facts of history has generated a growing debate on the historical processes. In this context, a series of specific but related processes of violence and conquest can be identified and described. We term these “genocide-prints,” through which we will consider not only the genocide but also the current debates on reparations to indigenous peoples.

Genocide-Prints

A paradox has become a structural tension in the construction of social imaginaries over the last years in Argentina. In effect, the metaphor of the “Conquest of the Desert,” which for more than a century has been part of the “invisibilization” *dispositif* that has operated over indigenous peoples, has coexisted for the last few decades (since the return of democracy in 1983) with a growing “visibilization” of the society’s multiculturalism. The strong activism of indigenous organizations and communities has managed to push onto the human rights agenda the situation of the large indigenous sectors of society that have long been outside the field of visibility. Thus, the presence of numerous different indigenous communities, organizations, and families in Argentina has started to become visible.

This paradox becomes a conflict when the excluded topic of indigenous presence begins to be voiced to challenge the historical silence on the issue. What is more, it is not only what is being said, but also who is speaking in opposition to certain long term naturalized historical assertions that claim public attention.

Consequently, the terms genocide,³ ethnocide,⁴ and “excesses”⁵ of the state are part of the debate when the previously “unthinkable”⁶ becomes a possible narrative. The resulting public “debate on history” is a consequence of existing conflicts within Argentinean society that are rooted in the implementation of state policies through its process of consolidation as a modern nation-state territory, a process in which the genocide of indigenous peoples was central. The next section describes the different conflicts involved.

Conflicts Over Territory

In recent years, indigenous communities have made a number of demands for the return of territory as a repair for the previous genocidal policies of the Argentinean state and society. According to some media descriptions, attempts to reclaim land taken through genocide are presented as “occupations of land” by some groups “self-defined as indigenous.” On the one hand, this interpretation acknowledges that the “indigenous survivors of the conquest” (considered an exceptional and minimal group) are the product of a political process that reduced their numbers and that land was central to that process. While their status as historical remnants might be acknowledged, however, this formulation denies their contemporary sociopolitical legitimacy, especially to pursue land claims. What is more, the media tend to attribute dangerousness to the indigenous population through the stereotype of “indio malonero,”⁷ which has been exploited since the 19th Century to depict those Indians who lived in the “desert” before the state’s conquest. As in the 19th Century, this term undercuts the justified presence and demands of indigenous people by misrepresenting them as a threat to private property. Indeed, for the target audience of such language in Argentina, the term makes indigenous people an incarnation of the threat to private property.

Over the last three decades, there have been a number of legislative changes so that national and provincial laws now recognize the pre-existence and rights of indigenous peoples.⁸ These changes were driven by indigenous agency in a context of change regarding the relations between the Argentinean state and civil society as well as changes in international focus on indigenous issues have not only brought the issue into focus but have transformed historical demands for territory into legal demands. This has been and still is read as a “multiplication” of cases. This last point of view asserts that the possibility generated by new legal developments has encouraged an indigenous identity rising with an instrumentalist interest to achieve something that they do not deserve, namely land.

The conflicts over territory encompass a series of problems. To begin with, they reveal the mechanisms of territorialization through which the indigenous population has been subjugated.⁹ In fact, the geographical spaces inhabited nowadays by different indigenous groups do not

coincide with the ones historically inhabited. What they represent is the outcome of consecutive concentrations, deportations, and fragmentations during the military campaigns and in their aftermath. Thus, the current indigenous demands are generally discredited because they cannot prove their ancestral occupation – judged through the Western criteria of lodging – of the lands they inhabit presently. After the massive deportations into the late nineteenth century, the communities that managed to access some land – in general far from their ancestral lands – were nonetheless subject to continuous expropriations throughout the 20th Century at the hands of local, regional, and national power factions. This has been possible and implemented through a complex network of power that has connected landowners, business interests, and the state bureaucracy (the police, judiciary, political authorities) who have alternately and arbitrarily revealed and concealed the indigenous inhabitants of public lands.

There is also a second issue: for more than a century the demands of the communities and indigenous people in general have not reached the legal system. Moreover, in the few cases in which it has intervened, the outcome has favored the expropriation of indigenous lands,¹⁰ Presently, most of the conflicts are mediated by the juridical system. In every case there is documentation of judicial constraint or violence by former authorities or legal procedures. There are forged and coerced signatures, contradictions within the testimony of police agents, and compulsory transferring of rights over lands and goods, all clearly systematic violations of the rights of “indigenous citizens.”

Thirdly, the reaction to the current demands has been to delegitimize the sociopolitical organizations of the indigenous peoples. On the one hand, it is assumed that they have disappeared with the “Conquest of the Desert” and that current demands are motivated by newly and therefore “illegitimate” and “non-traditional” forms of organization. This is often construed as “the presence of dark foreign interests over the land” operating behind the indigenous demands. These conspiracy theories, on the other hand, show that the state has actually developed policies aimed at the disappearance of the indigenous sociopolitical organizations. Some of these policies seek to alter group and family structures through the distribution of children or the division of age

and sex groups, for example. These readings systematically deny the ways in which indigenous agency has constructed their own forms of organization and representation, while at the same time normalizing the state's desired forms of indigenous organization as, for example, when indigenous people are forced to work at sugar factories to fill labor needs. In that context, the state instituted official criteria for "tribe" and the role of the "chiefs" are imposed. The national and provincial states determine whether an indigenous community is legitimate. There are official records of the communities that have legal status as such after undergoing an administrative process designed by the state.

Fourthly, the demands for territory provoke once again the stereotype of the "indio malonero," which is exploited to advance the interests of the landowners affected by these demands. This stereotype attributes an innate violence to the indigenous people. During the 19th Century, "Indians" were stereotyped as a threat to private property and to the lives of the creoles, not only for their "ancestral defect" as indigenous persons but also as foreigners invading from elsewhere. Since the 19th Century the idea that the original indigenous peoples of the Pampa had been replaced by those arriving from Chile has been predominant. From then on, the idea that "Indians are planning a raid" has been explicit in the press and official discourse every time that the collective demands of indigenous peoples were violently suppressed by the state, as in Napalpí (Chaco 1924)¹¹ and La Bomba (Formosa 1947).¹² Nowadays, dangerousness is attributed to those who "seize" lands, allegedly related to the Basque ETA and the Colombian FARC, due to the ways in which they think and construct "violent actions" and for their presumed bonds to foreign interests.¹³

Finally, it is important to focus on the mechanisms and voices assumed as legitimate or that legitimize everything that is circumscribed as the "indigenous issue." What the current conflicts bring to light is that the arena is crossed not only by demands for land but also by the way in which the conflict is defined – whether it is occupation, recuperation, restitution, or reparation – and by who is entitled to define it. This represents a power-dispute over the meaning of every "conflict for land" or struggle for "territory." Within this dispute, not only do well-known stereotypes resurface but also voices considered authoritative. In this

way, certain landowners appeal to the “scientific” legitimacy of some hegemonic ethnologies and history that have over the 20th Century supported and reproduced as academic discourse the premises that allege foreignness to certain indigenous peoples (especially the Mapuche People). These premises, in fact, derive from the political discourses of the late 19th Century and are distilled into the stereotype of the “indio malonero.”¹⁴ The national and provincial media appeal to these “expert voices” in order to question the origins, and thus the legitimacy, of the activists and to present them as coming from somewhere else (another country or province). They claim that the organizations are not a product or representative of traditional communities and represent them as a threat to private property, as in the 19th Century.

Conflicts Over the Representation of History

In recent times, it has become public and relatively widespread in certain sectors of Argentina, especially in urban areas and the middle class, to debate the responsibility of former President and General Julio A. Roca (1843-1914) for the genocide and the social and material subjugation of indigenous peoples in Argentina. There is a related debate around commemorative monuments of Roca and the use of his name to label public places around the country.

One of the most important activists is the well known historian, journalist, and writer Osvaldo Bayer, who is author of a regional law analysis written some years ago. Bayer has been leading the effort to “demonumentalize Roca.” This proposal aims to become a political trigger for an ideological change to ethically re-evaluate history and construct a fairer society. In opposition are various social sectors – generally related to conservative intellectual institutions and enterprises – who fear that revision of the nation-state constitution might destabilize not only national institutions but also Argentinean “national identity” and “morality.”

The historiographic debate between those who favor the “demonumentalization of Roca” and those who oppose it has two aspects, one centered on Julio A. Roca as a person and the other on what he symbolizes in the monuments that society has fetishized.¹⁵ In this context, we consider it indispensable to problematize the limits

and potentialities of this debate. Beyond its particular results in the short term, how would it affect the Argentinean understanding of the relationship between the national collective memory and the sanction and prevention of genocide?

Roca's most famous monument is sited in Argentina's capital, Buenos Aires. It consists of a sculpture of three pieces on a huge pedestal built by the Uruguayan sculptor José Zorrilla de San Martín, one of the most important South American artists. The law ordering its construction was passed in 1935. In 1941 the state expropriated a tract of land in the heart of the city for its placement¹⁶ and a commission for the General Roca monument was created. In few years, many other cities in Argentina built monuments based on the same inspiration. The construction of monuments and other means of honoring former President Roca go beyond even biographical exaggerations of his character, to transform him into a hegemonic representation in a particular sociopolitical context. Paying tribute to Roca, the national and provincial governments sought to establish and reproduce – based on the pedagogy of monuments, a highly valued characteristic of conservative tendencies – the recovery of a key figure of the liberalism of the 19th Century. This was a project of the conservative and military nationalism in the first decades of the 20th Century. This nationalist approach turned the “Conquest of the Desert” into an epic event that was isolated from its particular interests and presented as an enterprise of the Argentinean state and society as a whole, which could even be compared to the struggle for national independence.

The dispute over interpretations of the historical past and the selective operations of memory are located at the center of the hegemonic struggle for Argentina today.¹⁷ Though we can analyze the meaning of the monuments in the social context in which they are built,¹⁸ it is important to point out that their presence in Argentinean cities transcends the place and time of their actual context. They create a context and consolidate elements and ideological resources that persist in citizens' imagination, regardless of the different interpretations they elicit. Nonetheless, it should be remarked that under certain circumstances, the tensions among the different senses provoked by the monuments and the current discourses trigger the rise of movements that react against them.

In this particular case, these social movements call themselves counter-hegemonic, and cover a broad spectrum. They range from those groups that limit themselves to proposing the removal of one or several monuments or Roca's name from public spaces or his picture from common objects such as the 100 peso bill,¹⁹ to those who combine these actions with deep critiques of official history. The latter relate the indigenous genocide to the experience of Argentina's last dictatorship and current processes of social exclusion and economic and/or political violence. Generally, these groups have already gone through processes of internal debate and have assumed a definite position about the genocidal nature of contested facts and individuals – the “campaign to the desert” and Roca. Many members of these groups are also involved in other initiatives and social movements that have in common the counter-hegemonic trend. They also join non-governmental organizations, intellectual sectors, professional groups – especially teachers, communications workers, and state workers – and activist organizations linked to indigenous peoples and new “peasant” movements.

These counter-hegemonic movements manifest beyond their explicit targets, in the effect that they produce on much broader sectors of citizenship than those who engage in the “anti-monument” campaign. Initiatives for removal of monuments and the removal from streets, towns, places, schools, bills, etc., of the names of people associated with military campaigns against indigenous peoples are discussed in mass media. The movements provoke passionate discussions among the supporters of the most traditional nationalist iconography and those who propose a transformation to a “new social face” for the national community.

So far no monument of Roca has been removed from its place, notwithstanding the existence of several projects submitted to the Legislative Chambers in different provinces. The best-known project is the one signed by Osvaldo Bayer, presented in 2004 to the Buenos Aires Municipal Legislature, which proposes to remove the Boca monument located a few meters from the headquarters of the legislature and replace it with another that represents the “women who populated these lands, . . . Aboriginal women . . . and Immigrant women.”²⁰

From 2004 until today, however, public demonstrations in favor of the removal of dozens of monuments to Roca, have multiplied in different

cities of the country. There have also been spontaneous interventions expressing dissatisfaction with what is considered monumentalization of certain political ideology and subverting the historical narrative that the monuments convey. These interventions sometimes consist of red spots, resembling blood, applied to the monuments as well as graffiti challenging what the monuments convey or presenting libertarian expressions, etc. These sometimes appear at random times, by anonymous hands, or more commonly during the marches on key dates (for example, October 12th). In some cases stickers or paint are used to place alternative names on public signage. Changing Roca Avenue in Buenos Aires, for instance, to the name "Native Peoples Avenue" has achieved a kind of consensus in these interventions. In Buenos Aires these graphic interventions, spontaneous and more or less clandestine, are periodically cleaned away by the local government.

Leaflets and posters through which some of the intervening groups express slogans and provide detailed information on the history debate are often put on the fence surrounding the Buenos Aires Roca monument. These posters are often quickly ruined by exposure to bad weather or are torn, so this is an ephemeral form of intervention. In a similar manner, for a number of years Osvaldo Bayer made statements every other Thursday after the traditional demonstration of the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, some 300 meters from the monument, to explain to citizens the meaning of the *demonumentalization* proposal.

In Bariloche, a town in Patagonia, the target of the protest is the "Monument to Roca" located in the town's main square, close to the coast of Lake Nahuel Huapi and the headquarters of the Patagonian museum "Perito Moreno." This equestrian sculpture, much more austere than the one in Buenos Aires, is also more targeted, partly because of its physical structure, which allows the protesters to climb on it. "*Marichi Wew*" ("Ten times we shall beat," a well-known slogan in *Mapuzugun* language) and "We are still alive" are some of the statements applied to the monument to construct an implicit dialogue with the genocidal general. Unlike interventions in Buenos Aires, which offer an anti-genocidal challenge on a more abstract level, in Bariloche the graffiti recalls the persistence of the victims, who are still alive in spite of all and demonstrate actively and defiantly the truth held in their collective memory. For several years, this

Patagonian city has held a popular demonstration called *kultrunazo*. Once a year, and without notice, urban Mapuche organizations accompanied by supporting groups from across the social spectrum march to the town's main square and cover the sculpture of General Roca with a large hand-crafted panel, which resembles the traditional *kultrun*.²¹

This intervention, like those discussed above, seem also to be ephemeral since this structure is not meant to last. To assemble the *kultrun's* sculpture requires a high level of organization and coordination, as the *kultrun* must be constructed just before the march to avoid being destroyed. This is possible thanks to the leadership of organizations. This leadership role is also evident in the graffiti painting that takes place during the operation, in which there are slogans against Roca and its metonymic extensions – “Conquest of the Desert,” the armed forces, genocide, dictatorship, oligarchy, racism, fascism, Nazism – but there are also other slogans and symbols that are intelligible only to the youth sectors belonging to different trends within the Mapuche urban movement.²² Eventually, the destruction of the scenery must not be interpreted as a failure of the movement, since, thanks to the high integration of the Mapuche in the new information and communication technologies, photographs and videos of the monument covered by the *kultrun* and the mass march, along with the cultural expressions that they give rise to, travel throughout the world in a few hours.

These various kinds of interventions are related to many efforts around the country concentrated on renaming sites of remembrance. Consequently, a large proportion of political mobilization regarding the historical debate aims to eliminate the name of “Roca” from streets, squares, cities, and schools. The symbolism of the act of re-naming is not a minor one, because these names exceed the simple function of memorialization, to canonize, limit, and standardize a common national historical narrative.²³

An early case was in El Hucú, a town in the Province of Neuquen, where in early 2005 the Deliberative Council changed the name of Roca Avenue and renamed it for *Lonko* Mañke Cayucal, a native leader from the area. A recent case is the proposal submitted to the Legislature of Santa Fe Province, which calls for renaming Provincial School Number 869, currently “Julio A. Roca,” for its first headmaster Lionilda Avila.²⁴

Perhaps the most significant of the initiatives is the one that proposes renaming an entire city. The current name of the city in the Patagonian Province of Río Negro is "General Roca." The proposal is to return to the original place name, Fiske Menuko. Little by little since 2001 various social groups in the city have been abandoning the imposed name and incorporating the Mapuche name into daily life, *de facto* renaming the city.

The political growth and re-education that the debate on Bayer's draft has produced faces, however, some difficulties that are important to note. On the one hand, the protest concentrates almost exclusively on Julio A. Roca as an individual,²⁵ thus obscuring the complexity of a historical process that obviously exceeds Roca's activities. Through the involvement of other players in the army and political realm whose complicity was denounced in their own era by Senator Aristobulo del Valle,²⁶ the structural racism that drove genocide does not come into view. In this sense, the success of Bayer's legislative proposal to remove the monument of Roca would not really transform the nature of citizenship in Argentina if this removal were taken to be the ultimate solution to the problem in a way that prevents thorough exposure and public discussion of the general issue of genocide against indigenous Argentines.

Moreover, the proposal to remove monuments bypasses many chances for spontaneous activity, ideologically more congenial to the values of egalitarianism, pluralism, and multiculturalism, promoted by groups who support these processes, than the erection of new monuments in the place of Roca's.

Conflicts Over the Representation of "Argentine Genotype"

The draft submitted by Osvaldo Bayer to the Legislature of Buenos Aires proposes to remove the Roca monument from its current location and to send it, along with all the other monuments that are eventually removed by similar initiatives across the country, to "Roca's descendants' cattle ranches," and to erect new monuments in the vacated site. The subject of these would be decided by an appeal to the public. In addition, Roca Avenue would be renamed *Pueblos Originarios* Avenue.²⁷ Thus, the draft's author anticipates possible criticism that could arise from the destruction of the Roca monument, such as viewing it as "barbaric" or as damage to the collective artistic heritage, which would reflect negatively

on those pursuing the change. It also avoids the creation of an empty space that could catalyze the nostalgia for the “glorious past” of certain social sectors.

But more importantly, the relative consensus for “demonumentalizing” Roca faces a new challenge related to the very definition of “remonumentalization”: what could physically and symbolically replace the current monument with some degree of effectiveness. As already mentioned, Bayer’s original project aims at the construction of a double monument to indigenous women, who gave birth to “the native Creole” comprising up to 56 percent of Argentina’s current population,²⁸ and to immigrant women, who suffered the endless sacrifices of arrival and adaptation to a new land. Thus, the project aims to work against the myth of origin of modern Argentina, decentering the focus from the militarily-imposed racial blending through genocide and the exclusion of diversity, towards a maternal-based racial hybridism, the metaphor for “good” social integration. This project has surpassed its initial limits and taken on the meaning of the general opposition to the simple-minded glamorization of, and apologia for, violence that is the official national history, to function as the epitome of protest against the violent formation of Argentinean society. That the project has been adopted by a range of supporting groups suggests that it has generated debates leading to further consensus and historical recognition. One additional direction has been an improved understanding of the close relationship between political and military violence and gender violence. This had been part of the nationalist narrative, figuring mainly as captive white women abused by indigenous “savages.” Their redemption from the “savages” was a significant leitmotif celebrated in national literature — Esteban Echeverría, Felix Luna, etc. — and in the visual arts — Angel Della Valle. The challenge to the national narrative that has been occurring includes the start of questioning the fate of indigenous women who were taken prisoner by the Argentinean army. Previous work has raised concerns about certain aspects of the lauding of *mestizaje*²⁹ that underlies the project to replace the monument to General Roca by a monument to indigenous women as the origin of the “Argentine *mestizo*,” as articulated by some of the organizations supporting this project.³⁰ Even when its explicit aim is to refute the

hegemonic ideology that grounds more than a century of privileging of the European element in Argentina, the deification of the 56 percent of Argentines of mixed origins is still problematic because it does not question the conditions under which this crossbreeding occurred. The replacement project thus perpetuates the concealment of violence and gender politics that accompanied the Desert Campaign and gave rise to a significant proportion of these mixed births.

In many cases the same groups that support to Roca's demonumentalization have expressed support for another public enterprise, led by another historian, Hugo Chumbita. This initiative proposes that DNA testing should be made on the remains of José de San Martín, in order to show that the *Padre de la Patria* – and therefore of all Argentines, even those who are “descended from the boats”³¹ – was *mestizo*. Leaflets and brochures produced to support this claim fall into a strong affirmation and exaltation of the *mestizo* origin of certain heroes such as San Martín, Perón, and Yrigoyen who are special objects of popular affection. But these approaches maintain the notion of the alleged “shortage of white women” coming with Europeans that is claimed to have driven the process of miscegenation and thus cover-up and even deny the reality of racial and gender violence that were its actual form and foundation. What is more, notwithstanding the positive aspects of claims about mixed origins such as the case of San Martín, which opposes the racism and the shadiness of the official history, it is crucial to avoid uncritical glorification of miscegenation because it links biological traits with psychological characteristics, political ideology, and ethical inclinations.

The Constituent Genocide and Emerging Approaches to Reparation

Beyond these considerations of the demonumentalization movement and its challenge to the national narrative of Argentina, it is important to consider other ways of engaging the history of genocide that can produce deep social change aimed at dismantling the patriarchal ideology associated with the advocacy of violence³² that lies at the base not only of the “Conquest of the Desert” but also of the gender violence and

militaristic discourse that has left us the monuments in question. Only in that way can the most important objective of the demonumentalizing Roca project – radical transformation of the thought structures that led to institutional violence – begin to be accomplished. Specifically, what each of the conflicts mentioned above exposes is a profound need for change in the structures of meaning. They demonstrate that even the factual grounds of the genocide are unknown to Argentinean society as a whole and show the tremendous difficulty of conceiving other national historical narratives in the face of the performative power possessed by hegemonic stereotypes and narratives.

The “invisibilization” of indigenous Argentines and their history is the result of a long process that began alongside the 19th Century military campaigns of occupation, during which developed a whole machinery of information control. The narratives of invisibilization represented the late 19th Century as a period in which a “generation” of Argentines, led by President General Roca, consolidated and modernized the national state. The relations with the “Indians,” including the “Campaigns to the Desert,” were defined by their official chronicler, Estanislao Zeballos, as a “crusade” for civilization.³³ The metaphor of the desert would paradoxically contribute to an understanding of the events as a cruel and yet civilizing military campaign over a wild and scarcely inhabited territory.³⁴

In this way, the actual events that followed the military campaigns were rendered inconsistent with the hegemonic national narrative and thus literally unthinkable – especially those events at the core of the experience of indigenous peoples, the concentration camps, the massive deportations, and the transformation of the people into an enslaved work force. The deportations included the dismembering of families – the separation of children from parents and the reclusion of the elderly – and the torture and death suffered during the long marches on foot across hundreds of kilometers of steppe. The social memory of Mapuche-Tehuelche communities in Patagonia preserves the recollections of these social experiences inherited from their grandparents’ days. These memories include the places of imprisonment where many were killed or shipped off, never to return.

They told us how they tied them up, how they herded them, they herded the people. The women who gave birth were left behind and they

cut the children's throats, they killed them. They walked bare-footed, with dumb leather shoes, my grandmother used to say. They took them to the place where everyone was killed, people from different places. The ones that escaped came here. May God keep us from seeing anything like that ever again.³⁵

In the new social space that resulted from this process, new experiences awaited. Some indigenous populations were annexed to the armed forces as auxiliary forces. Others, as a collective – considered “tribes” – were used as elements of “territorial demarcation” and therefore were located in key areas as watch-guards or as auxiliary troops.³⁶ Most of the indigenous people were deprived of their goods and deported from their areas in order to be used as domestic servants, police agents, or forced labor for state-supported industries – such as the sugar cane plantations in Tucuman and the wine plantations in Cuyo. Thousands of indigenous prisoners coming from the national territories of Chubut, Río Negro, La Pampa, Neuquén, and the southern area of the province of Mendoza were, during the 1870s and 1880s, forcibly transferred to different areas of Argentina.

Current current research projects have been reconstructing the itineraries and modalities of the concentration, deportation, distribution, and utilization of the indigenous population as an enslaved workforce. Starting with Mases' work on the deportations and distributions of the subjugated population,³⁷ a series of studies have been produced. For instance, Nagy and Papazian have focused on the organization of these activities on Martín Garcia Island.³⁸ This island operated as a prison where indigenous people were compelled to work, but also as a discipline center where people were distributed to the different facilities on the island including a regular prison, a school, a pest-house, quarries, an army post, a marine base, a church, and a hospital. Lenton and Sosa have studied the fate of the people deported to Tucumán and their use as slave labor.³⁹ Similarly, Escolar focuses on those who were sent to work in Mendoza in the wine industry.⁴⁰ In all these studies the division of families, appropriation of children, and identity erasure have been central.

There are other lines of investigation oriented towards the reconstruction of the organization and functioning of the concentration

campes in Pampa and Patagonia, the structures' mobility in the new social space,⁴¹ the role of missionaries,⁴² and the activities of the armed forces during the campaigns and afterwards.

As of the writing of this article, these projects and lines of research are still in progress. Nonetheless, some general points of agreement are clear. To begin with, these studies in general focus on state policies towards the indigenous population and the need to expose processes that have been hidden or obscured by the hegemonic narratives that have constructed the "Campaign to the Desert" as an epitomic event in the process of the state's consolidation.⁴³ Second, with the definition of genocide codified in the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, we agree on the applicability of the term "genocide" to the subjugation and incorporation of the indigenous peoples and the usefulness of this term as a conceptual instrument for research. The utility of this legal term supports new insights into the relation between collective memory and archival records, at the same time as serious engagement of the archival record and collective memory of victim groups strongly supports the application of the term "genocide" to the relevant processes.

Even though the full damage done by these processes, inflicted on indigenous peoples, has yet to be assessed, there are some contemporary attempts at reparation for these harms. First, as a consequence of the promulgation of Law 26160, the Argentinean national government has begun a territorial survey of the lands inhabited by indigenous communities with the aim of returning to their communities all their property. This survey is being carried out by local technical teams with the participation of the indigenous communities and organizations. It represents an attempt to acknowledge indigenous people's current reality and legitimacy in Argentina. But there are serious problems with this initiative and indigenous participation is uneven. One of the main problems is that the law only considers land that indigenous communities presently inhabit. Therefore, ancestral territory that was taken from indigenous peoples and from which they were deported and that are now claimed by indigenous groups are excluded from the survey. Thus, this process of guaranteeing indigenous land rights does not work

as reparations for the genocidal process on ancestral lands, however it might help legitimize the current indigenous presence in Argentina.

Second, there is continual pressure to incorporate “intercultural education” in the education system – a system that varies greatly among the provinces of Argentina. The national Ministry of Education, however, has remained noticeably (and notoriously) absent from this process, providing no guidance on what an “intercultural educational” practice means and how it should relate to the national education system. At present, changes in this area have been limited to creation of after-hours courses on indigenous language and culture, which include a few indigenous teachers, only in those areas that the government recognizes as indigenous.

Third, judicial cases brought by indigenous groups concerning genocidal practices perpetrated by the state have been denied by national tribunals. In particular, the cases of “la Bomba” (1947) and “Napalpi” (1924) in the northern provinces of Formosa and Chaco that involve the massacres against the Pilagá and Toba peoples have been rejected based on the claim that the killings occurred under popular democratic regimes.

Finally, different museums have returned human remains to their original indigenous communities. This has had a significant impact in Argentinean society. In some cases the restitution of remains was followed by the building of a memorial, such as the Inacayal’s mausoleum in the province of Chubut (1994) or the Panghitruz Guor Mausoleum in the province of La Pampa (2001). There are other related cases, such as the recent restitution to the family of Damiana, an Ache girl who was studied and photographed naked by anthropologists while she was still alive and dissected after her death in 1907 at the age of 14. These have sparked an important debate not only about what should be returned or repaired or who is to receive it, but also about the reasons why reparations should be made.

This debate and the reparative measures it can produce are the new stage emerging on the foundation of the challenge of the hegemonic historical narrative that invisibilized the genocide of indigenous peoples in Argentina.⁴⁴

NOTES

- 1 This is the label used for the set of military actions against “Indians,” especially those conducted between the sanctioning of Law 947 in 1878 and the surrender of Sayhueque in 1885. By extension, the former and latter actions are named in the same way. The campaigns in the north of the country, especially in Chaco, are also included. However, the trope of the “Campaigns to the Desert” that capitalizes this representation as a vernacular orientalism takes as its object all territories previously not annexed to the state and the national economy that were conquered and nationalized in this era. Argentines tend to see these campaigns as the function of General Roca’s individual agency. The metaphor is used in nationalist narratives to refer to the crucial event in the construction not only of the modern Argentinean state but also of a “nation with no Indians” – without questioning the reasons why there would be no Indians. Walter Delrio, *Memorias de Expropiación. Sometimiento e incorporación indígena en la Patagonia (1872-1943)*, (Buenos Aires: Editorial de la Universidad de Quilmes, 2005); Diana Lenton, *De centauros a protegidos: La construcción del sujeto de la política indigenista argentina a través de los debates parlamentarios*, (Doctoral Dissertation, Universidad de Buenos Aires, 2005).
- 2 The omission of genocide from the hegemonic Argentinean national narrative as a non-event that is in fact not even conceivable or thinkable within the discussion of national history.
- 3 The UN’s Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (UNCG) of 1948 states in its eleventh article: “*Genocide* means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: (a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.
- 4 In Raphael Lemkin’s first proposal to define a crime against humanity, the concept of “ethnocide” was included in the general notion of “genocide.” It was only subsequently that political forces separated ethnocide into what is typically termed “cultural genocide,” an issue generally considered not to be covered by the UN Genocide Convention. In our approach to genocidal process against indigenous peoples, we support the original proposal in which a cultural genocide is also genocide.
- 5 In Argentina, the idea of “excesses” is, nowadays, related to those who explain and justify the last military dictatorship as a “dirty war” in which there would have been only excesses and by no means a genocide or state terrorism. This notion is thus readily available in political discourse in Argentina and applied to the genocide of indigenous people as well.
- 6 M.R. Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995).
- 7 This is the label used for Indians that raided for cattle on the borders of the state. Generalized to all indigenous people regardless of whether they engaged in such activity, this expression combines the dangerousness attributed to the indigenous population in Argentina both because of their alleged innate violence and because of their alleged “foreignness” (coming from Chile).

- 8 The National Constitution was reformed in 1994. Article 75 establishes not only the pre-existence of indigenous peoples but also the right to suitable and sufficient lands for their development.
- 9 Claudia Briones and Walter Delrio, "The 'Conquest of the Desert' as trope and enactment of Argentina's Manifest Destiny," in David Maybury-Lewis, Theodore MacDonald, and Biorn Maybury-Lewis (eds.), *Manifest Destinies and Indigenous Peoples*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 51-84.
- 10 Ana Ramos and Walter Delrio, ("Trayectorias de oposición: Los mapuche y tehuelche frente a la hegemonía en Chubut," in C. Briones (ed.), *Cartografías Argentinas: Políticas indigenistas y formaciones provinciales de alteridad*, (Buenos Aires: Editorial Antropofagia, 2005).
- 11 Nicolás Iñigo Carrera, *Campañas militares y clase obrera: Chaco, 1870-1930*, (Buenos Aires: C.E.A.L., Colección Historia Testimonial, 1984).
- 12 Valeria Mapelman and Marcelo Musante, "Campañas militares, reducciones y masacres: Las prácticas estatales sobre los pueblos originarios del Chaco," in Bayer, Osvaldo (coord.), Diana Lenton (ed.), Walter Delrio et al., *Historia de la crueldad argentina, Julio A. Roca y el genocidio de los Pueblos Originarios* (Buenos Aires: Ed. El Tugurio, 2010).
- 13 Walter Delrio, Diana Lenton, and Alexis Papazián, "Agencia y política en tres conflictos sobre territorio Mapuche: Pulmarí/Santa Rosa Leleque/Lonko Purrán," *Sociedades de Paisajes áridos y semi-áridos. Revista Científica del Laboratorio de Arqueología y Etnohistoria de la Facultad de Ciencias Humanas*, Universidad Nacional de Río Cuarto, Río Cuarto, Año II, Volumen II (June 2010), 125-146.
- 14 Axel Lazzari and Diana Lenton, "Araucanization, Nation: A Century Inscripting Indians in the Pampas," in C. Briones and J.L. Lanata (eds.), *Contemporary Perspectives on the Native Peoples of Pampa*, Bergin Garvey Series in Anthropology, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2002).
- 15 Diana Lenton "Próceres genocidas: una indagación en el debate público sobre la figura de Julio A. Roca y la Campaña del Desierto," in Anne Huffschmid (ed.), *Topografías conflictivas, Memorias, Espacios y Ciudades en disputa*, (Berlin: Instituto de Estudios Latinoamericanos, Freie Universität Berlin, 2010).
- 16 Law 12697, passed on September 25, 1941, proclaimed the public need for a tract of land at the intersection of Peru Street, Alsina Street, and Julio A. Roca Avenue. This land faces such things as the Buenos Aires Legislature and reflects the colonial past epitomized in the so-called Manzana de las Luces.
- 17 James Brow, "Notes on Community, Hegemony, and the Uses of the Past," *Anthropological Quarterly*, Vol. 63 (1), (1990), 1-6 at 3.
- 18 Phillip Corrigan and Derek Sayer, *The Great Arch: English State Formation as Cultural Revolution*. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985).
- 19 A draft law submitted to the Chamber of Deputies in June 2008 proposes to replace Roca's picture on the highest denomination banknote by that of Juana Azurduy, a well-known "Warrior of Independence."
- 20 Bayer, *Historia de la crueldad argentina*.
- 21 More than a simple percussion instrument, the kultrun, because of its shape, the materials with which it is built, and its decoration, unifies multiple cosmological, religious, ecological, territorial and political meanings.
- 22 Laura Kropff, "Mapurbe: jóvenes mapuche urbanos," *Revista Kairós* 8 (14) (2004). <http://www.revistakairos.org/k14-archivos/laura%20kropff.pdf> (accessed June 4, 2012).

- 23 Elizabeth Jelin and Victoria Langland, "Introducción. Las marcas territoriales como nexo entre pasado y presente," in Elizabeth Jelin and Victoria Langland (comps.), *Monumentos, memoriales y marcas territoriales*, Vol. 5, (Madrid: Siglo XXI Editores, Colección Memorias de la Represión, 2003).
- 24 Draft prepared by Deputies Marcelo Brignoni, Alicia Gutierrez, Antonio Riestra, and José María Tessa for the Legislative Chamber of Santa Fe, October 15, 2010.
- 25 With the exception of the campaign initiated by Bayer himself to change the name of the town of Rauch—named after a Conquest of the Desert Warrior—and the much broader move towards the clarification and mass dissemination of information about the massacres held at Napalpí in 1924 and La Bomba in 1947. Both the latter were events that took place in Chaco and Formosa, in the north of the country. Red de Investigadores en Genocidio y Política Indígena, "Rincón Bomba y Napalpí: debates sobre los límites de la justicia," *Publicación audiovisual en formato CD/DVD*, 2008; Walter Delrio, Diana Lenton, Marcelo Musante, Mariano Nagy, Alexis Papazian, and Pilar Pérez, "Del silencio al ruido en la Historia: Prácticas genocidas y Pueblos Originarios en Argentina," III Seminario Internacional Políticas de la Memoria "Recordando a Walter Benjamin: Justicia, Historia y Verdad. Escrituras de la Memoria," (Buenos Aires: Centro Cultural de la Memoria Haroldo Conti, October 28-30, 2010).
- 26 On August 19, 1884, in the National Congress, Senator Del Valle stated, "We have reproduced the barbaric scenes – they do not have another name – to which the world has been stage while the civil trade of slaves has existed. We have taken out families from the wild Indians, we have brought them to this civilization center, where all their rights should be guaranteed, and we have not observed for these families any of the rights that belong not only to the civilized man, but to the human being. We have enslaved the men, we have prostituted the women, we have pulled children out of the wombs of their mothers, we have sent the old men to be used as slaves . . . In a word, we have disowned and violated all the laws that govern man's moral actions . . . Each new campaign makes of women and children the spoils of war . . ." Lenton, Diana. *De centauros a protegidos. La construcción del sujeto de la política indigenista argentina a través de los debates parlamentarios*. Ph.D. Dissertation. Universidad de Buenos Aires, 2005.
- 27 Bayer, *Historia de la crueldad argentina*; Osvaldo Bayer (coord.), Alberto Salas et al., *Historia de la crueldad argentina*, Vol. 1, (Buenos Aires: Centro Cultural de la Cooperación, 2007).
- 28 Reference is made to a sample research on Argentinean citizens' mitochondrial DNA, which received relatively significant attention in mass media. Daniel Corach, Andrea Sala, and Miguel Marino, "Contribución amerindia a la población actual de Argentina," *Revista Argentina de Antropología Biológica*, Vol. 7 (1), (2005) AABRA.
- 29 "Mixed blood," epitomized in Argentina by the union between a Spanish man and Indian woman.
- 30 Lenton Diana, "Próceres genocidas: una indagación en el debate público sobre la figura de Julio A. Roca y la Campaña del Desierto," in Anne Huffs Schmid (ed.), *Topografías conflictivas. Memorias, Espacios y Ciudades en disputa* (Berlin: Institute for Latin American Studies, Free University of Berlin, 2010).
- 31 A well-known aphorism states that, while Peruvians descend from the Incas and Mexicans descend from the Aztecs, Argentines descend from the boats, alluding to the official narrative that claims a purely European origin for this South American group.

- 32 See Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers. Colonialism, Nativism and the Genocide in Rwanda*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001) on a similar structure in Rwanda's mixed marriages and their relationship with the narrative of genocide.
- 33 Estanislao Zeballos, *La conquista de quince mil leguas*, (Buenos Aires, Hyspamérica, [1878] 1986).
- 34 For example, a memoir published by Eduardo Ramayon, who was a military commander in this process, is entitled, *Warrior Army, to Settle and Civilize*.
- 35 Statement in 2005 by Catalina Antilef of Futahuao, Chubut Province, Argentina.
- 36 As, for example, the Curruhuinca tribe at Lake Lacar.
- 37 Enrique Mases, *Estado y cuestión indígena. El destino final de los indios sometidos en el sur del territorio (1878-1910)*, (Buenos Aires: Prometeo libros/Entrepasados, 2002).
- 38 Mariano Nagy and Alexis Papazián, "De la Isla como Campo: Prácticas de disciplinamiento indígena en la Isla Martín García hacia fines s. XIX," Paper presented at the XII Jornadas Interescuelas-Departamentos de Historia, Universidad Nacional del Comahue, Facultad de Humanidades, Centro Regional Universitario Bariloche, October 28-31, 2009.
- 39 Diana Lenton, and Jorge Sosa, "La expatriación de los pampas y su incorporación forzada en la sociedad tucumana de finales del siglo XIX," Paper presented at the Ieras Jornadas de Estudios Indígenas y Coloniales – C.E.I.C. Jujuy, 2009.
- 40 Diego Escolar *Los Dones Étnicos de la Nación. Identidades huarpe y modos de producción de soberanía en Argentina*, (Buenos Aires, Prometeo, 2007); Diego Escolar, "El repartimiento de prisioneros indígenas en Mendoza durante y después de la Campaña del Desierto," paper presented at III Jornadas de Historia de la Patagonia. Universidad Nacional del Comahue, San Carlos de Bariloche, November 6-8, 2008.
- 41 Pilar Pérez, "Las policías fronterizas: mecanismos de control y espacialización en los territorios nacionales del sur a principios del siglo XX," Paper presented at the XII Jornadas Interescuelas-Departamentos de Historia, Universidad Nacional del Comahue, Facultad de Humanidades, Centro Regional Universitario Bariloche, October 28-31, 2009; Claudia Salomón Tarquini, "Construir y conservar un territorio: la familia Cabral-Carripilón en los reclamos de tierras de la Comunidad Epumer, Emilio Mitre (LP)," Paper presented at the XII Jornadas Interescuelas-Departamentos de Historia, Universidad Nacional del Comahue, Facultad de Humanidades, Centro Regional Universitario Bariloche, October 28-31, 2009.
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