Making Memory Matter: The Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica and Spain’s Efforts to Reclaim the Past

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Abstract:
The Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) left many Republicans fearful under the dictatorship of Nationalist Francisco Franco (1939-1975). The Franco regime executed over one hundred thousand Republican victims, often without identifying them, and contributed to a one-sided narrative that honored the Nationalist heroism while delegitimizing and invalidating Republican ideologies. Following Franco’s death in 1975, the next generation of Spanish government officials, attempting to quiet concerns of unrest in Spain after almost forty years of extreme conservatism, agreed to forget the past and move forward. Without any opportunity to reckon with the past, families of Republican victims felt a sense of injustice at their inability to find closure amidst a system that overwhelmingly executed those supporting liberal reforms. Living in a persistent state of fear, Republicans and their families affected by this terror struggled under the Spanish government that quickly established the importance of democratization efforts over justice and dignity. In 2000, the grandson of a Republican victim spearheaded an exhumation that recovered his grandfather’s remains, unleashing pent up demand for a genuine reckoning with franquista authoritarianism. This episode launched the Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica (ARMH) to validate Republican victims’ narratives against an official story that did not recognize this past. The ARMH, led by activists looking to reclaim memories of forgotten victims, has spent the past nineteen years archiving and legitimizing the narratives of Republican victims of Franco’s regime to prevent their erasure by the one-sided telling of history.
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Illustration 2: Map of the ARMH exhumations. Map created through GIS software to display geographically all of the exhumations completed by the ARMH from its inception in October 2000 to July 2018.
Introduction

Sitting around the dinner table during my immersive study abroad experience in Madrid in 2018, I had finally gathered the courage to ask a burning question. Over the two months living in this home-stay apartment, I had come accustomed to the high praise of then Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy as my host father, Jesús, exalted this leader’s successful efforts to build a stronger Spain. Jesús had been nothing but compassionate and kind, holding the values of family and love close to him as a proud husband, father of three, and grandfather of two. He served as a surrogate figure for my loved ones back home, and I felt every reason in the world to trust him. I had absorbed all of his political opinions and took them as my own, especially in a culture that values meal times in front of the television screen to watch and converse about the news.

That night, I queried Jesús about the living conditions during the Francisco Franco dictatorship (1939-1975). In a period known to privilege the elite at the expense of demeaning the poorer, liberal communities, visible by the success of the Nationalists while persecuting Republican populations following the war, I expected him to speak out against the repression perpetrated by Franco and his regime. Instead, swallowing his food and giving me a piercing look, he stated “I have never lived better than during Franco’s leadership.” On the one hand, those who sided with Nationalist rhetoric and ideologies thrived during the dictatorship, benefitting from this reclamation of traditional, Catholic values without questioning what this meant for the defeated. Yet, on the other hand, those who identified as Republicans during the dictatorship faced persistent torture and fear. This targeted repression shaped their future attempts to resurrect narratives from the past that demonstrated the injustices perpetrated against them.

Reconciling my understanding that the Franco regime did not promote an improved standard of living for everyone, first really understood through my research of and visit to El
Valle de los Caídos, or Valley of the Fallen, with Jesús’s adamant support for his success during this era, I began to acknowledge the differing narratives that contributed to a selective history of Spain’s past. The inability to recognize the persistent fear and repression after the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) towards victims from the losing side of the war stemmed from the prevalent narrative that had privileged the victors since Franco took control over Spain. Thus, many people, particularly Catholic franquistas, still regard Franco’s leadership as the exemplar of tomorrow’s Spain at the expense of delegitimizing the forgotten narrative of those who did not support the policies of the Nationalists and their ensuing dictatorship.¹

Since the day Franco took power, ending the Spanish Civil War and beginning a thirty-six-year dictatorship, a majority of the elected officials in Spain have actively suppressed all competing narratives. In a national effort to rebuild Spain to its old glory, hinting at the nostalgia traditionalists faced at the introduction of more liberal policies, these leaders have selectively chosen which testimonies belong in the popular Spanish consciousness and which ones should remain silenced from the public sphere. Franco exercised complete control over the media and incited immense fear for those who failed to share his ideologies, prohibiting victims and their families to speak about the pain of their past. Even after Franco’s death, those who sided with the Republicans before the war have been overlooked by the prevalent narrative of Franco’s heroism, largely disseminated by people like Jesús who lived well during the dictatorship. Through laws establishing amnesty and impunity, the Spanish government quickly and quietly pivoted away from the dictatorship and towards a more egalitarian society but neglected the need to attempt to recover the memory of Franco’s Republican victims.

¹ Fundación Nacional Francisco Franco, El Legado de Franco (Madrid: Colección de Estudios Contemporáneos, 1993), 162.
The central government’s commitment to democratize Spain following the dictatorship inhibited the country from understanding why it should reckon with its past. Instead of acknowledging the suffering of victims, appointed officials supported looking toward the future without reconciling the repression perpetrated by Nationalist forces. Those who experienced social persecution and other torture felt unheard and afraid to speak the truth amidst an active attempt to neglect it. The fear associated with pursuing this memory then permeated through the next generation, reducing the significance of the lived and repressed experiences of Republicans and contributing to an exclusive memory throughout this country.

These voices remained muted until the intervention of a grandson, Emilio Silva Barrera, seeking to learn more about the forgotten destiny of his beloved grandfather. Silva Barrera lived in a generation that had not directly experienced the suffering of the past. Thus, the silence regarding his grandfather’s life did not frighten him like it had for people who lived through the dictatorship but rather motivated him to learn the truth. His efforts would transform the sphere of memory and, in 2000, establish the Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica (Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory, hereafter ARMH or the Association). Redirecting the research and activist focus to consider both sides of the bloody civil war through prioritizing exhumations of forgotten victims, ARMH seeks to dignify and bring justice back to the victims and acknowledge the brutality of the Franco regime.

By bringing attention to the past not through abstract reasoning but rather by physical evidence, exhumations force people to confront the previously unacknowledged violations of human rights perpetrated by the right-wing forces. These exhumations represent more than just tangible evidence in the fight to reshape memory. Francisco Ferrándiz, Spanish anthropologist and lead expert in the Spanish exhumation process, argues that these exhumations release the
ghosts of the past to haunt the contemporary political, economic, and social contexts. Even eighty years later, the remnants and injuries still preserved in the decomposed bodies require us to humanize the victims instead of grouping them together as a collective number of those who suffered. Exhumations also emphasize the political struggle facing families whose loved ones never received a marked burial in an era that divided Spain into Republican or Nationalist identities. Reflecting on the process of exhumations in a visitor log that ARMH collects at these sites, Eduardo Ranz, the grandson of a Republican victim executed in Burgos, spoke about how this work “bring[s] back memories, emotions, [and] happiness from approximately 75 years of pain.”

To a certain extent, ARMH’s efforts and legitimacy are rooted in the remains of cadavers whose identities hope to be recovered despite their mutilated state, exhuming a buried history of the Spanish past. These exhumations humanize the victims of the past by trying to discover what happened minutes before their execution.

The ARMH seeks to change the widely accepted pro-Franco narrative by working directly with families to uncover any relevant information relating to a late loved one’s last moments and burial whereabouts. While the Spanish government and Nationalist descendants ignore the importance of bringing justice and returning dignity to over 114,226 Republican victims, the ARMH works diligently to reverse this prevailing notion. This social movement emerged amidst a discourse of human rights and sought to revive a history that challenged the

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narrative linking Franco with unquestioned national greatness. By focusing efforts on locating, exhuming, and identifying bodies of Republican victims buried in mass and unmarked graves, the ARMH has pushed these narratives into contemporary Spanish consciousness and to ensure that these victims are not silenced by the consequences of selective history.

Both the Republican and Nationalist sides suffered many causalities from the Spanish Civil War, but official Spanish history since 1939 has concentrated on the Nationalist losses, eliding the imbalance in causalities on the two sides. Many historians estimate that while 55,000 Nationalists died at the hands of Republican forces during the war, over 100,000 Republicans were executed both during the war and in the subsequent period of Franquismo (Francoism). In an attempt to challenge the selective, official narrative of recent Spanish history, the ARMH inspired a new movement to expand dialogue related to the memory of this conflict. Through collecting, cataloging, and researching testimonies of Republican, this small grassroots organization has become one of Spain’s few spaces to share the hidden truth regarding the lives lost from 1936-1975.

Memory regarding a traumatic past can be rooted and developed in a number of different ways. Memory literature, especially in relation to reckoning with Spain’s past, often delineates between historical memory and collective memory, two concepts that demonstrate how the past carries on from generation to generation. H. Rosi Song delivers a deep historiography that shows the development of these two terms as memory in Spain becomes increasingly important.

To Song, historical memory is a “recollection based on research and documentation,” attributing this type of memory as a witness to the past that must be streamlined before

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presented. Historical memory serves as a reliable version of a narrative and roots itself in primary sources that share testimonies of people directly affected by the past. Historical memory depends on the current generations’ ability to learn from past mistakes and implement changes that reject repressive actions towards a targeted group. If these first-hand accounts are not properly regarded as important memories, past atrocities have the potential to be repeated. In more recent terms, popular culture often deems the memorialization and commemoration of past atrocities in a contemporary perspective to be historical memory.

The ARMH has adopted historical memory as a part of its name, showing its commitment to reclaim the memories of victims of the war and dictatorship through extensive research. Even so, this organization also utilizes characteristics consistent with efforts of collective memory, in which a collective identity forms to pay homage to victims of a human atrocity. Historical memory considers the investigative part of its work to contribute most to an active remembering, whereas collective memory weighs more heavily the role of human relationships in establishing memory culture.

As philosopher Maurice Halbwachs argues, to acknowledge collective memory as a driving force in commemorating the past is to understand the communal nature in the malleable definition of a shared suffering. This type of memory utilizes the social identity of many families, political ideologies, and beliefs to establish a centralized narrative of the Republican past. This strategy incorporates more community members into this growing social group, widening the reach of collective memory within and outside the Spanish borders. This practice

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concentrates on the written or oral evidence of the past to be utilized and analyzed through a contemporary context.

Song thus posits that collective memory exists as a “collection of different memories across generations and social groups.”\textsuperscript{10} This incorporation of civil society, people and organizations outside the sphere of government, contributes greatly to the ability of the past to be passed down to loved ones. Because collective memory has been and will be shaped by the generations who were not directly impacted by Franco’s fear tactics but instead were raised in a family with this trauma, the past will slowly become reconstructed. Politicized current events and the ephemeral recollections of oral testimony will naturally shift memories of the past into different, regenerated versions of the present.

Intervening in this historiography, I find the concepts of historical memory and collective memory to imbricate when considering Spain’s past. The work of the ARMH deals directly with both types of recovery, utilizing primary testimonies of victims impacted by the past and mobilizing those made aware of the past through transgenerational networks to make a difference on the Spanish landscape. In this thesis, the focus will not concentrate on the different types of memory being activated by rather the agency by which memory came to matter in Spain as generations removed from Spanish repression began to speak out.

The testimonies passed down from generation to generation within families established a unique form of recalling personal experiences and memorializing past events, one that supports the overlapping nature of historical memory and collective memory. As Spain struggled to confront its past head-on, strong family relationships sustained stories that would help to reveal the identities of victims who remained buried in unmarked mass graves in towns and cities all around Spain. As the memory field developed in the years following Franco’s death, the efforts

\textsuperscript{10} Song, \textit{Lost in Transition}, 21.
of the future generations to empathize with the past would contribute to the reemergence of a society that showed a greater resolve to rupture the silence. Sharing the narratives of the past entails transferring portions of a victim’s trauma to the family members who served as a support system. Even though this transmission of transgenerational memory brings such testimonies into a contemporary context, it also establishes dissonance between the emotions of this terror and the current generation that did not directly experience the fear. The context and emotional toll explored by the past horrors changes because of the amount of time between the persecution of the late family member and the retelling of this narrative by the third generation of survivors. While the sentiment of what happened remains the same, the contextualization of these situations by the present serves to reshape the meaning of these pasts. Although losing a portion of the emotional connection through the generational gap, these contemporary voices carry memories of pain and suffering to honor the experiences of loved ones who no longer have the opportunity to speak out about the repression.

Sociologists Alejandro Baer and Natan Sznaider consider how memory presents itself within Spain’s current climate of increased interest in Holocaust studies and trauma in Europe. This heightened focus, paired with visceral exhumations spearheaded by leaders concerned with memory like the ARMH, has opened up dialogue regarding how best to recover this history. Attention to partisanship has become increasingly important in memory studies, particularly through various news and media sources. These sociologists remark that following the passage

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11 Natan Kellermann, “Epigenetic Transmission of Holocaust Trauma: Can Nightmares Be Inherited?,” *The Israel Journal of Psychiatry and Related Sciences* 50, no. 1 (2013): 36-37. Recent scientific discoveries discuss the hereditable and environmental factors that shape the transgenerational passing of trauma within family lines. While studied specifically amongst Holocaust survivors and PTSD victims, this case study acknowledges the continued role of trauma in affecting children and grandchildren of different generations.


13 Baer and Sznaider, *Memory and Forgetting*, 77.
of the 2007 Law of Historical Memory, “there [was] not one historical memory but several,” emphasizing that each political party has its own perception of how memory should be pursued going forward.\textsuperscript{14} This also manifests itself in the partisan nature of the Spanish judicial system failing to prosecute various crimes and perpetrators under the Franco regime. The ARMH, however, explicitly situates its efforts as nonpartisan, creating the opportunity to interrogate Baer and Sznaider’s argument regarding the role of partisanship. Working outside of such a rigid political sphere in Spain, this grassroots organization tests the possibility of fully escaping partisan rancor.

Although the ARMH has only been around since the turn of the millennium, it has greatly shaped the debate and exploration of memory through its efforts and diligent work within the Spanish community. This nonpartisan nature of the Association allows anyone affected by Spain’s past to contribute narratives and testimonies to this communal space. Community archives serve to amplify a collective, unacknowledged voice, the contributions of which are crucial for any holistic re-telling of the past. The Association’s position as a community archive, while certainly raising the voices of the silenced Republicans to honor their legacies and lost lives, serves a much more complicated role than what past scholars have posited regarding these types of record centers. Regarding the genesis of her community archive, the archivist Michelle Caswell expresses the intimacy of its work to bring justice to the unheard testimonies and histories.\textsuperscript{15} As Spain’s leading voice to honor the legacies of the Republican narrative, the ARMH plays a formative role in commemorating the silenced narratives and developing policies and practices that encourage a more collective approach to remembering the past. Constructed by

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{14} Baer and Sznaider, \textit{Memory and Forgetting}, 74.
\end{itemize}
the testimonies shared by families who have suffered under the Franco regime, the ARMH validates these voices and narratives that otherwise would go unheard.

This grassroots organization has been shaped both by the national-level political struggles and international work being done to bring transitional justice to societies plagued by human rights abuses. The ARMH serves many suffering families by validating the memory and narratives of forgotten victims, and it also encourages and challenges conversations occurring on the state level in regard to memory. Through the involvement of community members, specifically those who have shared narratives of lost loved ones, the Association has successfully exhumed over 1,400 cadavers, returning a large majority of these to their families. This grassroots movement has introduced legislation that works to hold the state responsible for recovery efforts. It fights for justice for all 114,226 victims who have been forgotten due to the negligence of the Spanish state. Thus, the ARMH exists as a community archive that has developed into a greater, more assertive voice in the incongruent relationship between the Spanish government and empowering civil society to take control of its own history. This thesis offers a study of how the ARMH’s emergence, growth, and challenges offer a way to understand the history of Spain’s ongoing struggles to reckon with the Franco period.

Chapter one provides background regarding the policies of memory and forgetting directly following Franco’s death, showing the tension that exists in Spain due to efforts of organized forgetting by elected officials who intentionally suppressed any discussion of this

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17 Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica, “Exhumaciones realizadas de la ARMH”, last updated August 2018.
Leading up to Franco’s death, much of Spain was uncertain how the post-Franco government would commemorate the past. While Republican sympathizers made a number of attempts to concentrate the government’s efforts on memory preservation, Franco supporters were anxious about what might result from these efforts. This, paired with a persistent fear of acknowledging the past, prevented the testimonies and histories of suffering families from being recognized by neighbors, local governments, and nationally elected officials. Instead, a changing social, political, and cultural context, both within Spain and beyond, created the conditions for reconsidering official policies regarding memory projects related to the Franco period.

Chapter two concentrates on the ARMH’s beginnings and its efforts to be recognized and legitimized by the Spanish government. This chapter considers who made memory matter in Spain and in what context. From 2000 to 2006, the Association had not received any government support, instead depending solely on donations and volunteers to establish themselves as a legitimate grassroots archive. It attempted to distribute its message regarding the need to recognize the whole truth of the past by hosting events and publishing articles and petitions that would reach Spain on a large scale. Emilio Silva Barrera’s story regarding the discovery of his grandfather’s remains became highly popularized as Silva Barrera attempted to gain the government’s attention and bring awareness to a hidden past. The ARMH started off solely focusing on work associated with exhumations to ensure that this group could make a big impact as quickly as possible. It eventually pursued policies and practices to make a difference on a larger scale. This effort brought the ARMH’s work and goals further into the public sphere, forcing the government to recognize the voices that attempted to reconstruct a forgotten history. Through other projects and developments up to 2006, the ARMH concentrated its efforts on

restructuring undeveloped conversations about memory and being acknowledged as an important public voice for justice on a national platform.

Chapter three begins with the shift in national politics that allowed the ARMH to receive a substantial amount of government funding for its efforts related to restoring the past through locating, exhuming, and identifying cadavers. This section demonstrates the shortcomings of this material support despite the committed political will of the time. The confidence gained from acquiring national legitimacy from 2006-2011 permitted the Association to focus more on the victims themselves, working diligently to honor those affected while speaking out on a larger scale. Even so, many of the efforts made possible by state funding failed to adequately alter the laws regarding memory. In 2007, the Spanish government passed the Law of Historical Memory, but ARMH quickly and firmly spoke out against the limited nature of this law. Spanish officials remained hesitant to get actively involved in this type of memory work, so the Association took a strong stance in fighting for equity to memorialize the people impacted by the past.

The last chapter of this thesis takes a critical look at the ARMH from 2011 to 2018, once Mariano Rajoy took charge of the government by pledging that he “would not give even one public euro” to memory efforts. This chapter explores the importance of place and placelessness, demonstrating the work that still needs to be done to prioritize memory in the public consciousness. While the ARMH had once been established nationally, its exclusion from state funding required the organization to transform itself from a more concentrated archive to a digital community focused more on reaching out to the general public and international

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19 Ley 52/2007, de 26 de diciembre, por la que se reconocen y amplían derechos y se establecen medidas en favor de quienes padecieron persecución o violencia durante la guerra civil y la dictadura, BOE No. 310, BOE reference BOE-A-2007-22296.
communities. This, in turn, pushed the ARMH to improve its outreach and accessibility, essentially returning to its original ethos and principles. The Association developed Twitter and Facebook handles to keep domestic and international supporters updated on its daily efforts to reestablish a narrative of memory. The growth of a digital archive platform gave the ARMH the opportunity to become more publicly accessible and user-friendly to anyone who desired to get in touch with them regarding a lost loved one. Because of this shift in audience, the ARMH began to receive international grants and other sources of funding that became vital to its survival.

Spain has been battling with how to deal with the memory of the past as the voices of those affected by the repression begin to speak up. The numerous efforts to leave this past behind, challenged by recent attempts to reintroduce memory to Spanish consciousness, have demonstrated just how much historical context has shaped the ARMH’s progress over the past nineteen years. Spain’s inability to confront its past has given new meaning to the struggles over the community archive that the ARMH has established as well as the its projects that support the localization, exhumation, and identification of Republican victims from the Spanish Civil War and Franco dictatorship. The ARMH has re-signified the meaning of memory in Spain to make it matter, and its continued outreach and dedication will influence the political, cultural, and social landscape of a Spain long in need to reckon with its past.
Chapter One: Defining Memory Tension in post-Franco Spain

Claudio Macías Fernández was in grave “danger” due to his Republican affiliation at the start of the Spanish Civil War.¹ His family protected his identity by hiding him in a wine cellar because they knew what the discovery of his political ideology could mean for his safety. Remaining in the wine cellar for an extended period of time, Macías Fernández became sick, built his own tomb nearby, and died without contact with the outside world. The Nationalist victory of the war and Franco dictatorship to follow left this sad story, amongst many others, hidden and covered up for many years. In October 2014, over seventy years after his death rooted in fear of the Nationalist regime, Macías Fernández was exhumed by ARMH as an effort to break the silence of the past. This history would not be investigated for almost four decades after the demise of Spain’s thirty-six-year dictatorship due to the tension arising from reclaiming its memory, especially amidst the struggles to democratize and stabilize this country during this turbulent time.

Spain’s journey through attempted – rather than fully realized – transitional justice diverges from that of other post-dictatorial societies in a number of ways. Since Franco died of natural causes on November 20, 1975, rather than through an overturning of his dictatorial government, those responsible for repressive actions both during and after the war had not been punished. Instead of enacting consequences for Nationalists who executed Republican sympathizers at an overwhelming rate compared to that of Republican war and post-war efforts, the power of the central government following Franco’s death largely remained in the hands of franquista (Francoist) supporters. In an effort to bring stability and normalcy to a Spain suffering from an almost four-decade-long dictatorship, all major political parties agreed to a pacto del

¹ “Exhumación fosa común Villalibre de la Jurisdicción (León). Octubre 2014,” Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica, October 2014.
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olvido (pact of forgetting), shortly after the dictator’s passing. This unofficial pact would set the stage for a generation of active forgetting and unpursued repercussions amongst a majority of the Spanish population.

In essence, this pacto del olvido prohibited any reference to the repressive past in order to commit Spain to a present and future rooted in stability and democratization. Although this agreement was never formally written, drafted or legitimately enforced, it predated the passing of the 1977 Amnesty Law that legitimized this forgetting. The motivations behind its formation spoke to the efforts of passive reconciliation over active justice directly following Franco’s death. Leaders from all political affiliations feared that an unstable central government would return Spain to its political divisiveness and violent outbreaks of the Second Republic in the early 1930s. Therefore, they all agreed upon a pact that would avoid prosecutions about the past pain in exchange for a society committed to looking ahead.

Since those looking to put the past behind them avoided drafting these ideas under official circumstances, the knowledge of this agreement remains limited without much ability to study further how it came to be. Due to the undocumented nature of the pacto del olvido, very little can be said concretely about its creation, development, and influence amongst leading political figures in Spain during such an unsettling time. The nonpartisan support for this pact demonstrates the zeal of the left and right alike to prioritize a stable democratization over the

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2 The PSOE (Partido Socialista Obrero Español, or Spanish Socialists’ Working Party), a socialist party, the UCD (Unión de Centro Democrático, or Union of the Democratic Center), the coalition-winner that represented Christian democrats, and the PCE (Partido Comunista de España, or Communist Party of Spanish), a communist party, were the major political parties that presumably agreed to this unofficial pact.


pursuit of justice. This decision, seemingly advocated by many, emphasizes the need to understand why exactly these leaders believed this strategy represented the best action for all of Spain going forward.5

Whether or not there was a formal meeting to establish the pacto del olvido, the Spanish government overwhelmingly passed the 1977 Amnesty Law that legalized the silence practiced by the political leaders. With the support of 296 out of 317 legislators, the Amnesty Law depicted that there would be no moment of reckoning from the central government.6 By validating this pact through legislative means, the central government authorized disregard for the experiences of the victims. Through its promise to pardon all criminal acts committed before December 15, 1976, including those during the Spanish Civil War and Franquismo era, the Amnesty Law set the stage for a generation committed to looking forward without confronting the horrors of the past.7 El País, the socialist newspaper founded after Franco’s death, published an editorial the day after the Amnesty Law was passed, stating “democratic Spain should, from now on, look ahead, forget its responsibilities and facts of the civil war, and disengage from the forty-year dictatorship.”8 This legislative measure contributed to the lack of centralized action taken in the post-dictatorial period to validate the pain of Republican victims and their families.

As would become apparent in the following years, the combination of an agreement by all political leaders to forget the past and a law that mandated impunity of the perpetrators produced an era of amnesia that extended far past the transition to democracy. This mentality

5 The pacto del olvido represents a fruitful area for future research that could not be accomplished due to the time constraints of this thesis.
would set the stage for the political leaders and general public after Franquismo to actively forget the past in the hopes of establishing a democratic future for Spain and its constituents. These policies, both official and unofficial, would weigh heavily on Spain, as the whole country attempted to move on from almost four decades of a dictatorship that disproportionately kidnapped, imprisoned, tortured, and executed Republican sympathizers.

While a divisive political climate in Spain spans centuries, this modern conflict over memory finds its roots in the 1931 establishment of the Second Republic.\(^9\) As opposed to Spain’s dominant presence of a traditional monarchy, a shifting political culture in the early twentieth-century revolving around the fear of the rise of communism and anarchism called for a referendum vote. The Second Republic won a majority of the popular vote in 1931, doing away with the monarchy and implementing political changes.\(^10\) These included separating the Catholic Church from state politics and reorganizing the land distribution system in Spain, inciting controversy that began to frustrate the traditionalist, right-wing population.\(^11\) While the conservative ideology remained vague and diffuse, it included lineaments of militaristic, ultra-Catholic, fascist, and authoritarian mindsets.

The new policies precipitated resistance from those voices looking to restore Spain to its traditional values. The Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas (Spanish Confederation of Autonomous Rights, hereafter CEDA), the Catholic conservative political party, won the general election of late 1933, reinstalling more right-wing power to Spanish leadership.\(^12\) Left-

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\(^12\) Casanova, *A Short History*, 9.
wing civilians took up arms and revolted against the authoritarian administration instituted by the change in power, increasing tensions on both sides.

The coalition of liberal, progressive, and left-wing parties known as Frente Popular (or Popular Front) grew as an international movement in a stand against fascism. Specifically, in Spain, the Popular Front brought together anarchists, communists, and socialists against the rising power of the fascist party, Falange, and won the February 1936 election. However, by July of the same year, the Nationalist movement executed a coup d’état against this progressive government to assert its traditionalist values over these leftist ideologies. In a heightened moment of political imbalance that contributed to an immense anxiety of conservatives, the Nationalists waged war and set the stage for what would become thirty-nine years of targeted fear, terror, and repression.

The conservative voices in Spain viewed the 1931 victory of the Second Republic over the traditional monarchy as a “revolution.”13 Although the election proved that the shift towards the Second Republic received support from a large majority of Spaniards, those who voted against it felt shocked and frustrated at the loss of their power and collective worth. Their traditional sense of understanding the Spanish hierarchy had been ripped away by such a stark shift in politics, and these conservatives responded by joining together to restore the fragmentation of the Spanish political landscape.

Franco, deemed “caudillo de España por la gracia,” resurrected Spain’s nostalgia for a unified region by representing past religious leaders. The term “caudillo” or “commander” was previously used to describe Pelayo of Asturias, an eighth-century Spanish leader who initiated

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the *Reconquista* (reconquest) of Muslim al-Andalus perpetrated by fervent Catholics.\(^{14}\) By incorporating faith into the discussion of loyalty, Franco leaned on the nostalgia for the Catholic identity during the Spanish Golden Age to gain support. Essentially, Franco combined the identities of devout Catholic and Nationalist supporter through invalidating people’s practice of faith if they chose not to join the party fighting for the reconquest of their religious land. Mobilized by Franco’s language of a crusade, right-wing sympathizers prioritized actions and efforts that directly influenced conservatives to reestablish their dominance over the liberal voices.\(^{15}\)

In addition to the religious obligation of completing a crusade in the name of Christianity, right-wing forces recognized that Spain had essentially divided into two factions, one of which supported the Republicans while the other aligned with the Nationalists.\(^{16}\) The Nationalist cohort resonated with traditional values that kept power in the hands of the Catholic Church and monarchy, while the Republicans sought to reestablish the power dynamics in Spain by bringing liberal reforms to this population. With this strict partition, those on the fence about which side to support felt compelled to choose one political ideology in the fear of being left behind or unacknowledged with the rapidly polarizing Spanish society. This political division represented a microcosm for Europe’s rising tide of fascism, especially as fascist countries prepared for World War II. Appealing directly to the groups that held significant positions of power before the


establishment of the Second Republic, leaders encouraged those who had sided with the right to assert their dominance and their right to control the Spanish landscape.\textsuperscript{17}

Beginning on July 17, 1936, Franco led a coup d’État as a general of the Nationalist forces that would bring decades of devastation to the defeated Republicans. These victors delivered a slow, methodical “total annihilation” against those seeking liberal reforms, reclaiming land with excessive force and executing and imprisoning Republicans by the thousands.\textsuperscript{18} The Spanish Civil War, lasting from this coup d’État to April 1, 1939, quickly became a conflict in which reactionary rebels from all around Spain persecuted and murdered those belonging to diverse and conflicting political ideologies.\textsuperscript{19} The persecuted were rooted together by their desire to live in peace under the legality of the Second Republic. While the Republican side also waged war against the rebel forces comprised of traditional and fascist parties, the right-wing forces inflicted much more violence and damage.

Two leading Nationalist generals commanded demolition of the opposing side during the war, encouraging their armies to “sow the terror” and to defend their own by “killing at least ten [Republican] extremistas for every fallen [Nationalist]… and if [the extremistas] are dead… kill them again.”\textsuperscript{20} This excessive show of force demonstrated the Nationalist leaders’ dedication to eradicating Republican ideologies. Many established sources cite the definite number of Republican war victims at over 100,000 and include that up to 114,226 people are still

\textsuperscript{17} Bernat Muniesa, \textit{Dictadura y transición: la España lampedusiana}, Historia-Perspectiva; (Barcelona: Publicacions i Edicions, Universitat de Barcelona, 2005), 24.
\textsuperscript{19} Casanova, \textit{A Short History}, 187.
considered desaparecidos, or disappeared Republican victims.\textsuperscript{21} This figure almost doubles the approximated overall number of Nationalist deaths during the war.\textsuperscript{22} Often, Nationalist forces participated in arbitrary shootings without motive, leaving the cadavers on the side of the road in ditches.\textsuperscript{23} These practices contributed to mass execution sites that left dead bodies unidentified and families unsure as to where their loved ones could be. Studies have estimated that over 30,000 mass graves still exist without a trace regarding where they might be located, complicating the recovery of these victims and their identities.\textsuperscript{24} While there might be uncertainty on the exact number of Republican victims affected because many testimonies are undiscovered to date, without a doubt there remain too many victims buried and forgotten at the hands of repression.

Within three months of the start of the Spanish Civil War, Franco declared himself “Ruler of the Government of the State” in 1936 and played an influential role in legalizing repressive actions against the Republicans.\textsuperscript{25} His powers would continue to expand as the Nationalist forces crept closer to successfully completing their coup d’état. Franco took full control of Spain and continued practices of targeted terror towards leftist sympathizers during his


\textsuperscript{22} Ferrándiz, “Afterlives: A Social Autopsy,” 24.

\textsuperscript{23} Layla Renshaw, Exhuming Loss: Memory, Materiality and Mass Graves of the Spanish Civil War (Walnut Creek, California: Left Coast Press, 2011), 22. Roberta Ann Quance, Alison Ribeiro de Menezes, and Anne L. Walsh, Guerra y memoria en la España contemporánea = War and Memory in Contemporary Spain (Madrid: Verbum, 2009), 43.

\textsuperscript{24} Marco Antonio González, Interview by Tyler Goldberger, July 13, 2018.

thirty-six-year dictatorship. This authoritarian leadership ordered the execution of over 16,700 Republicans within the first two years after the war ended, demonstrating the continued terror tactics that Franco used against Republican sympathizers.

In total, it is estimated that anywhere from 270,000 to one million Republicans would end up in overcrowded and poorly serviced prisons or concentration camps at some point following the war, emphasizing the strength of the Nationalist ideologies led by Franco. By the end of World War II, over 50,000 Republicans had been murdered by these repressive powers, a figure that highlights the continued persecution of those perceived to be against the totalitarian regime. Unfortunately, many of these narratives perished with the death of the victims, as their whereabouts were often unknown except by those detained in the same camp or prison. Only some of the testimonies would transcend generations and live on in today’s consciousness of memory. Because victims often felt isolated due to their unacknowledged past, they opened up to their dependable community and shared their past experiences in these confided spaces.

As the Nationalist forces finished their complete overthrow of the Republicans, the leaders portrayed how Spain would govern by declaring marginalized and unsupported political opinions illegal under its new totalitarian regime. As the war came to an end, Franco passed a Press Law that restricted the content published by media sources. One of its first articles explicitly states that “the state is in charge of the organization, vigilance, and control of the

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26 Ramón Guillermo Aveledo, El dictador: anatomía de la dictadura (Caracas: Editorial Libros Marcados, 2008), 123.
27 Ramón Salas Larrazábal, Pérdidas de la guerra (Barcelona: Editorial Planeta, 1977), 388.
29 Casanova, A Short History, 187.
national institution of the journalistic press,” emphasizing the authoritarian control that the dictator had established in relation to the dissemination of news.\textsuperscript{31} Wholeheartedly committed to distributing information that glorified the reinstalled traditionalism rooted in Spanish history, the state’s government passed this censorship law that prohibited any populations from reading or publishing texts that opposed Franco’s image of power and control.

Republicans continued to lose freedoms after the Nationalists successfully finished their coup d’état on April 1, 1939. The 1941 Law for State Security condemned to elongated prison sentences or death Spaniards who “went against the life or personal integrity” of Franco, who “threatened the Head of State”, or who published propaganda for the “violent subversion of the… state or for its destruction.”\textsuperscript{32} Such laws validated torture methods that would be inflicted upon those who refused to moderate their ideological beliefs to align more closely with fascism. With laws that permitted and arguably encouraged the punishment of those not subscribing to Nationalist beliefs, Republican sympathizers greatly suffered under the continued dominance of Nationalist ideologies and practices.

Franco also expanded the use of prisons and concentration camps after the war in an effort to strengthen his political control and eliminate opposition to his ideological beliefs. In practice, these sites became death traps through physical, emotional, and sexual torture mechanisms through the “violent exclusion of the defeated.”\textsuperscript{33} While treatment inside of these places slowly improved over Franco’s reign, the prisons still instilled fear amongst captive Republicans and suppressed their activism. For victims like Rosita Estruch, imprisonment

\textsuperscript{31} Jefatura del Estado, “Ley de 22 de Abril de 1938, de Prensa.”
\textsuperscript{33} Roberta Ann Quance, Alison Ribeiro de Menezes, and Anne L. Walsh, \textit{Guerra y memoria en la España contemporánea = War and Memory in Contemporary Spain} (Madrid: Verbum, 2009), 38.
threatened the wellbeing of the detained for longer than their sentences. Estruch was a dedicated member of the Partido Comunista de España (Communist Party of Spain, or hereafter PCE) growing up and served at the mayoress of Vilallonga during the Spanish Civil War. Detained and pleading guilty for supporting communist ideologies, Estruch went to the Provisional Prison for Women and faced daily torture from Nationalist supporters. Eventually, the severe and constant bouts of torture from her prison sentence led to complete paralysis. She lived with this immobility for twenty-two years until passing away in 1978, constantly reminded of and afflicted by the long-term sequels of Nationalist repression against Republican ideologies.

Franco’s victory in the Spanish Civil War did not promote the establishment of one cohesive community but rather further divided the two sides that waged war against the other. Directly following the civil war, mass media, Catholic Church sermons, and school textbooks bolstered the Nationalists’ version of the past. ABC, the newspaper with the largest circulation that enthusiastically supported the Franco dictatorship, published many articles highlighting Republican acts of torture against the Nationalists without fully acknowledging that the Nationalists inflicted pain that contributed to more deaths and a systematic oppression of the other side. As Nationalist forces attempted to reclaim Spanish territory, ABC reported on April 1, 1937 that 2,000 Republicans had died as a result of this insurgency. In the following sentence, however, ABC concentrated on the “brutal” bombing enacted by the Republicans that killed

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36 Humlebæk, "The 'Pacto de Olvido'", 184.
37 Preston, The Spanish Holocaust, 520.
“priests, nuns, and religious people.” As one of the only permitted news source during this time, ABC catered to its Nationalist audience by using inflammatory language in its reports of Republican cruelty while quickly and objectively reporting Nationalist terror.

As early as 1965, ten years before Franco passed away, many Spaniards wondered what would happen after the dictatorship ended. For those who sided with the Nationalists, there was fear of what would transpire next. There had been major changes in Spain’s political landscape since the coup d’état began in 1936, as fascism was essentially discredited, European nationalism was critiqued, and the Catholic Church underwent massive reform. The dictatorship represented control, power, and dominance but also security and stability, a model from which many people grew hesitant to deviate. For those who had suffered since the 1936 coup d’état, there was hope for a freer, more democratic future. Both sides, however, shared a sentiment of uncertainty regarding what a post-Franco society would resemble. As Franco grew older and more infirm in the mid-1970s, community leaders, authors and artists began predicting what the future could hold for a nation firmly established in dissent of the opposition.

Franco died of natural causes on November 20, 1975, a day that still marks an important anniversary for those nostalgic for Spain’s dictatorial rule. It would quickly become apparent that it would be difficult to uproot a culture and politics steeped in the practices of Franco. The next generation of leaders was faced with the opportunity to implement a complete overhaul of

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41 “ABC (Madrid) - 21/11/1975, p. 1 - ABC.es Hemeroteca,” accessed November 5, 2018, http://hemeroteca.abc.es/nav/Navigate.exe/hemeroteca/madrid/abc/1975/11/21/001.html%20ABC%20newspaper%20November%202021. Some sources posit that Franco’s death coinciding with the death anniversary of José Antonio Primo de Rivera was no coincidence at all. It is rumored that Franco remained on life support until this date in order to contribute to the mysticism of November 20.
the current structure and establish a new system of government, politics, and power dynamics. As a civilian who lived through Franquismo and the transition to democracy, Luis Manuel Duyos spoke to the perception of those who had only experienced the dictatorship in their life. He stated, “those of us who were born during the Spanish and World Wars did not know anything else [but Franquismo] in our thirty or forty years of life.”

Instead of empowering silenced voices of the past, the surviving leaders implemented an institutional reform that ultimately allowed power to remain in the same hands. While this came under the guise of a transition to democracy, many scholars like Jo Labanyi contend that this democratization refused to value the experiences of each Spanish citizen equally because “the past was uncomfortable.” Instead of promoting collective spaces of remembrance and memorialization, Spanish leaders actively attempted to erase the memory of the past through the facade of democratic transition. For many years to come, Spanish officials’ inability to foster a more representative and less polarized government would stunt the conversations related to remembering the past for decades to come.

While this administration shocked the public with some commitments to ensure a more democratic future, these leaders did not feel the need to recognize the importance of confronting the past trauma of the Spanish Civil War and Franquismo era that still impacted many Republican families. With so much uncertainty regarding the future of Spanish politics without Franco’s totalitarian figure, the next leaders chose to prioritize stability of the political landscape over reckoning with the past violence. It would have been impossible for a true democracy to

form directly following the dictatorship era because Franco had hand-selected leaders and senior officials for powerful positions and because access to many ranks of administration required a pledge to the regime late into Franquismo. Instead of incorporating more voices into a newfound political process, the so-called transition to democracy reaffirmed the hierarchical society that Franco had constructed.44 Many of these leaders firmly believed in the continuation of ideologies and beliefs rooted in Franquismo, delegitimizing the suffering experienced by the other side of the political spectrum. Adolfo Suárez, the appointed Spanish Prime Minister in 1976 following the dictatorship, represented one of Franco’s political legacies.45 He rose through the ranks during the dictatorship and served as one of Franco’s most trusted servants, known as the Ministry General Secretary of the National Movement, during the last year of Franco’s life.46 Suárez’s vice president, Manuel Gutiérrez Mellado, identified strongly with the Falange early in his career but would prove instrumental in neutralizing the attempted coup in Congress in 1981.47

An important member of Suárez’s cabinet during the early years after the Franco dictatorship, Rodolfo Martín Villa served many roles in the transition to democratize Spain.48 As

a full supporter of the Falange party that rapidly expanded as the 1936 coup d’État drew closer, Martín Villa felt compelled to save the name and maintain the honor of the right-wing forces after Franco’s death. Many Nationalist generals kept organized notes of the terror they inflicted upon Republican sympathizers both during and after the war, providing proof of human rights injustices spanning from penned-up imprisonment sentences to execution in various settings.49

Out of fear of what these records would reveal about the actions perpetrated by the Nationalists, Martín Villa took it upon himself to burn thousands of these archival documents.50 He claimed that the destroyed archives had no value for Spanish history; even if this were the case, their destruction was not authorized and forced Spain to look forward without the ability to confront its past. As Spanish archivist Francisco Espinosa Maestre posits, “to destroy documents not only impedes the knowledge of the past but also destroys the basis of our own existence, the sources of our memory.”51 Survivors remained quiet to keep attention away from memories that Villa Martín and others could erase.

In general, a majority of the archival records regarding the war and dictatorship, including birth certificates, death acknowledgements, and hand-written letters, were not and still are not accessible to the public. The archival material that did survive often remains locked up in personal storage facilities or requires explicit reasons as to why this material is of interest. Individual archivists dictated which documents were available up until the late 1980s, impeding effective research by selectively choosing which archives to catalog.52 Even today, archives do

51 Francisco Espinosa Maestre, Contra el olvido: historia y memoria de la Guerra Civil (Barcelona: Crítica, 2006), 132.
52 Espinosa Maestre, Contra el olvido, 122.
not make documents related to the Franco period publicly accessible, citing that these papers cannot be released until the centennial anniversary of the 1936 coup d’état.\(^{53}\)

As someone who rose to a position of Nationalist prominence during the regime, Adolfo Suárez avoided dialogue of the past once appointed Spanish Prime Minister.\(^{54}\) Following the dictatorship, the new government had no tools to retroactively confront the human rights injustices under Franco. Caught up in questions related to the rights of each individual and autonomous region in the writing of a new Spanish constitution and the economic struggles that plagued Spain following the beginning of the democratic transition, Suárez did not consider the impacts of the past on families living through this transition. Truth commissions were not put in place, power dynamics remained the same, and retroactive arrests and judicial action never transpired.\(^{55}\) Overall, in a commitment to quickly reconstruct Spain’s political landscape, this government prioritized stability over reckoning with the trauma of survivors and loved ones.

In October of 1977, nearly two years after Franco’s death, Spain’s legislative body passed the Amnesty Law following the unofficial pacto del olvido.\(^{56}\) The signing of this law undermined the struggles that many Republican families continued to face due to the loss of loved ones. Living in a state that refused to reconcile the past, Republican victims could not reveal the pain and suffering that they confronted during the dictatorship. Those who committed crimes against assumed Republican sympathizers faced no repercussions for their actions and were granted complete amnesty by Spain’s central government. By failing to acknowledge that repressive actions brought against Republicans should warrant consequences, the perpetrators

\(^{53}\) Espinosa Maestre, *Contra el olvido*, 125. This comes from Espinosa Maestre’s personal experience that he wrote about extensively in this source.
\(^{56}\) “Ley 46/1977, de 15 de octubre, de Amnistía.”
felt no need to discuss anything related to the past. Those who believed that the post-dictatorship era would open up conversations were unprepared for a law that pardoned any perpetrators of past crimes, remaining victimized by government administrations which did not support their side of the narrative.

The dissonance between the Republican community’s hope to confront actively the past and the Spanish government’s inability to create concrete policy that regarded this past encouraged individual citizens to join together in an effort to democratize Spain. Known as civil society, this coalition of actors attempts to bring change outside state-based organizations in situations where governments are unsupportive.\textsuperscript{57} As on-the-ground actors, these voices rarely look to reshape the current political structure but rather seek opportunities to establish reforms. Dealing with issues that the state often cannot solve, civil society encourages conversation and action to speak out against the state-sponsored administration.

Spain’s civil society often joined together directly following Franco’s death to bring a new voice to the forefront of the Spanish consciousness, especially due to its international resurgence during this time. Franco’s regime censored every media outlet, but the end of the dictatorship offered an opportunity for new publications to emerge. A daily newspaper, \textit{El País}, launched in May of 1976, just six months after Franco’s death.\textsuperscript{58} As opposed to the conservative sources spanning from 1939-1975 that lauded the figure and work of Franco such as \textit{ABC}, \textit{La voz de España (The Voice of Spain)}, and \textit{Unidad (Unity)}, \textit{El País} radically shifted the narrative to confront head-on the memory deficit that beset Spain. There were now opportunities for untold stories to be distributed to a wider audience. By providing a space for editorials to be written and

\textsuperscript{57} Jean Cohen and Andrew Arato, \textit{Civil Society and Political Theory}, Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1992), 32.
\textsuperscript{58} Gunther et. al., “The Media and Politics in Spain,” 45.
published from the first major socialist newspaper following Franco’s death, *El País* offered a unique opportunity that other progressive newspapers with a smaller circulation never could.

In *El País*’s first publication on May 4, 1976, Juan Luis Cebrián, co-founder of the newspaper who lived under the dictatorship for over thirty years, contributed the first editorial that spoke to “the country we want.” In an impassioned opinion piece, Cebrián criticized the strict censorship policies enacted during Franco’s regime, calling it “irreparable damage for the culture, thought, and politics of our nation.” He demanded that “the attitude and tone of the press must change… to help with the construction of a democracy,” especially because this change could not be made by the country’s leaders following Franco’s death. This call to action incorporates the involvement of the civil society, committing *El País* to serve as an instrument for increased participation to reconstruct Spain’s intellectual and moral life in a more holistic manner. Quickly, this newspaper emphasized the need for increased memory policies and practices to represent more accurately all of Spain’s population. To date, many of the arguments and dialogue discussing memory stem from reporters writing for *El País*.

As socialist voices started to become more pronounced on the Spanish landscape, divisions within families complicated matters following the war, especially given the traditional emphasis on family in Spanish culture. Many families struggled with how to provide the necessary protection against the horror stories during the dictatorship. Family members often remained silent, as they feared that discussing a past unrecognized by Spain’s central government could result in torture. After what transpired during the war and dictatorship, these victims grew concerned that this repression would continue because of their allegiance to the

Republican ideology. The proliferation of prisons and concentration camps following the war constantly reminded Republican sympathizers that they were under the control of Nationalist leaders. Further complicating matters, many siblings and parents fought on opposing sides of the civil war. This division amongst loved ones at times produced more hostile environments for Republican sympathizers, meaning that these victims could not turn to anyone in a time of need.

In this context, the role played in the transition to democracy by the sister and nephews of the best-known martyr of the Spanish Civil War, Federico García Lorca, seems instructive. Even though his assassination in August 1936 received international attention, prompting the outraged inquiries of H.G. Wells on behalf of the British PEN Club, his well-off family has to this day refused to support the exhumation of the mass grave where the poet presumably lies. It is unclear whether they fear discovering that Lorca was not buried where it is believed he was killed or perhaps confronting any other disturbing aspect of this tragedy. In any case, this was a missed opportunity for thousands of less prominent families whose ancestors or relatives will never attract the resources or sympathies bestowed on the acclaimed author.

In attempts to restore dignity and justice to loved ones despite the various tensions that existed revolving the reclamation of memory, community members took matters into their own hands by suggesting and executing exhumations of these unidentified cadavers. As the reality of the Amnesty Law set on all of Spain and loved ones began to understand what transpired in the past forty years, families of victims began to act on the basis of fear. Because perpetrators of human rights injustices were pardoned from all crimes committed during the war and ensuing

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period of Franquismo, loved ones of Franco’s victims worried that the Spanish government would not acknowledge the pain that they still felt. Therefore, starting in the late 1970s, some of those who knew people executed by the Franco regime attempted to recover the physical remains of the assassinated. Although the locations of the bodies were often unmarked, community members who were forced to witness the murders of victims spoke out and shared where the cadavers lay, communicating this information to children of victims.65

Illustration 3: Human remains during an exhumation. An exhumation completed in summer 2018 depicts the remains that can be discovered through this visceral confrontation with the past. Photograph by Tyler Goldberger.

Quickly, the information collected about these victims provided enough resources for loved ones to perform exhumations on potential unmarked burial sites. This action restored

dignity for the victims who were executed for crimes such as opposing the dictatorship or belonging to communist labor unions.\textsuperscript{66} While these exhumations did not receive a large amount of media attention, they did motivate other Spaniards to perform exhumations in towns like La Rioja, Extremadura, and Navarra.\textsuperscript{67} This existed as one of the first memory strategies that attempted to establish conversations of the past in the popular narrative. While this movement gained momentum from the late 1970s into the early 1980s, it was abruptly stopped in February of 1981, when an attempted coup d’état by Lieutenant Colonel Antonio Tejero Molina reinstated the fear of execution related to the reclamation of the past.\textsuperscript{68} Firing gunshots into the high ceiling of the Spanish Congress, Tejero Molina showed his frustration in the failed stabilization attempts of the Spanish central government during the transition to democracy. Suárez was rapidly losing favorability amongst Spanish constituents and tensions rose as Spain’s economy continued to falter. While select exhumations served as an effective method to restore the memory of Franco’s victims, the divisive political climate and forceful demand for conservatism, most noticeably emphasized by 200 Civil Guards storming Congress in this attempted coup, reverted the confrontation of past horrors. These efforts would remain silenced until a new generation of Spaniards opened up dialogue of the past without fearing for their lives or the lives of their loved ones.

After four decades of dictatorship, it was difficult to dismantle practices that had been established as norms for so many years. Between the 1977 Amnesty Law and the fear that permeated the Republican survivors of the repression, memory had not been given the

\textsuperscript{66} Sumario 4560/1939, Alejandro Trujillo Cerezo, ARMH, página 6.
\textsuperscript{68} Gabriel Cardona, \textit{Las torres del honor: Un capitán del ejército en la transición y el golpe de estado del 23-F} (Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 2011), 273-277.
opportunity to develop. Even though small victories had been made by local voices to share information about the silenced past, the momentum could never be maintained to develop a shift in culture. After the chaos resulting from the failed coup d’état, politics took a turn as the Spanish Socialists Workers’ Party (Partido Socialista Obrero Español, or hereafter PSOE) won the general election in 1982, signaling an opportunity for a transformation, as this political party was previously banned and delegitimized as a political ideology under Franquismo.⁶⁹

As a socialist party, the PSOE had the opportunity to explore memory policies and practices to bring this conversation to the forefront of Spanish culture. Leaders had illegally, and thus clandestinely, joined and supported the PSOE during the dictatorship in an act of rebellion.⁷⁰ While many Republicans felt completely silenced by Franquismo, others felt the need to assert collectively their identity as an oppositional force to Franco’s regime. As a political party, the PSOE served as a support system for victims of the past who had no idea how to proceed following the repression. However, after gaining political power, these officials rarely concerned themselves with acknowledging the suffering of the past and legally confronting the torture perpetrated by Nationalist forces beginning in 1936.⁷¹ These leaders looked forward towards Spain’s modern advancement and stability rather than backward towards ways to recover memory.⁷² The PSOE would control Spanish politics for fourteen years until 1996 but never took direct action to amplify dialogue or provide institutionalized support and resources

⁷⁰ Paul Kennedy, The Spanish Socialist Party and the Modernization of Spain (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), 146.
⁷² Richards, After the Civil War, 308.
for families who still suffered.\textsuperscript{73} The PSOE government affirmed in 1986 that “the civil war is not a commemorated event... it is definitively history,” situating the civil war as something not to be celebrated but failing to reckon actively with the horrors of the past.\textsuperscript{74} By the time the PSOE would attempt to implement memory policy, almost one whole generation had passed since the end of the dictatorship.

In the 1996 general election, tarnished by political scandals, the PSOE Prime Minister Felipe González lost to the opposition Partido Popular (or Popular Party, hereafter PP), which consisted primarily of leaders from the Franco era.\textsuperscript{75} Once coming to terms with the consequences of the PP’s victory, the PSOE began to introduce legislation to provide a legitimized space to discuss and consider memory of the past but now had to rely on the political powers that directly opposed any formal recognition of the past.\textsuperscript{76} The PP would ultimately reject all of the major efforts initiated by the PSOE, once again reverting potential momentum of a culture concentrating on memory recognition and preservation.

Since political developments in relation to memory seemed like a difficult threshold to cross, many authors and artists, members of Spain’s civil society, a generation after Franco’s death decided to represent creatively the suffering of families impacted by the repression. Through publishing books about topics rarely discussed in the past, the general public had greater access to testimonies and narratives that many families still repressed from the public sphere. The first novel to break the national silence related to past memory was \textit{O lapis de...}

\textsuperscript{73} Kennedy, \textit{The Spanish Sociality Party}, 153.
\textsuperscript{76} Richards, \textit{After the Civil War}, 337.
*carpinteiro* written in Galician by Manuel Rivas and published in 1998.\(^{77}\) Revolving around a young love story, this novel explores the lasting impact of Franco’s regime on ordinary people during the war. In subsequent years, other novels would be distributed all across Spain that emphasize the pain and destruction of the mid-twentieth century, presenting a narrative that had otherwise been ignored. These books encouraged a greater interest to become educated on the full development of various events in recent Spanish history. Supporting a shift in culture at the turn of the millennium, these resources provided a platform for active distribution of families’ silenced narratives.

Depending on the fictional basis of the stories to serve as an introduction to a past filled with terror, these authors utilized cultural factors in Spain to open up dialogue that time and again had been rejected by both political leaders and the general public. These same books that ignited a popular discussion also became adapted as feature films to raise more awareness about the struggles of Republicans living in regions taken over by Nationalist control. Before these publications, many Spaniards never even recognized the hardships faced by the defeated and the challenges that repression placed on them and their families. Developing in the early 2000s, a majority of the Spanish population could pick up a popular retelling of a suffering narrative or watch the fictional representation of the pain associated with the dictatorial regime.\(^{78}\)

This cultural renaissance in distributing a more holistic version of the past and contributing to an otherwise undeveloped narrative grew the public appetite for these narratives against the government’s continued reluctance to address them. The civil society’s explosion in novels and feature films depicting impacts of the past regime did not motivate the central government to support memory. People were actively confronting the struggles of fictional

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\(^{78}\) Becerra Mayor, *La guerra civil*, 37.
memory, yet elected officials failed to act in establishing policies and practices that demonstrated this increased interest of the past. By providing monetary support for the books and movies related to these subjects, the public vouched for the dramatic narrative and emotional retelling of a few select characters. However, in practice, officials did not organize around greater efforts and funding to be allocated towards memory recovery and rarely contributed to expanding the dialogue past the captivating narrative in these popular cultural forms. Such narratives of repression and forgetting followed by recovery never officially became incorporated into society in a way that encouraged direct action and social justice initiatives. Had the government publicly legitimized these fictional representations of the past or sponsored legislation to bring more of these stories to light, Republican family members might have been able to begin their healing process. Instead, while popular culture became sensitized to narratives of the past, the central government failed to commit to recovering the real identities and physical remains of those impacted by the civil war and Franco regime.

Even though efforts to mobilize investigations into memory of the past waned, hope still remained for community members who knew loved ones buried all over Spain. Journalist Santiago Macías Pérez became interested in these victims because he himself had lost a grandparent without any knowledge of his physical remains. Beginning in 1996, before the shift that brought representations of the Spanish Civil War to mainstream culture, Macías started to investigate locations of potential mass graves near his home in Ponferrada, León in an attempt to humanize the many faceless cadavers. While certainly not the first one to call attention to the failure to reckon with Spain’s recent history, Macías equipped himself with the tools and resources necessary to restore justice and dignity to the victims of Nationalist extermination.

David Beccera Mayor, email message to Tyler Goldberger, November 7, 2018.
Santiago Macías Pérez, interview by Tyler Goldberger, October 29, 2018.
policies. Since the 1981 attempted coup, very few people had sought ways to make a difference in the real problems facing families who lost loved ones to repression. Yet in 1998, Macías arrived at Canedo, León to lead an illegal exhumation that would recover the physical remains of six Republican guerrillas from the civil war. Although this exhumation was not executed in an official or scientific manner, the proof it rendered brought families closer to identifying and properly burying these victims.

Two years later, another journalist, Emilio Silva Barrera, hoped to discover the whereabouts of his lost grandfather. Through a mutual connection in León, Silva Barrera contacted Macías regarding the labor and resources needed to exhume a mass grave. Representing the third generation since the perpetrated crimes and the second degree of separation from the population most affected by the Spanish Civil War and Franco dictatorship, these figures developed a strong curiosity to recover memories of the past. While local communities hosted exhumations directly following Franco’s death and socialist leaders attempted to implement policies in the 1980s to confront the past, these efforts often failed because of the persistent fear in Spain due to the unknown consequences of reckoning with memory. However, Macías and Silva Barrera represented some of the first who had not grown up under the Franco regime. While the first generation since these survivors and victims witnessed the impacts of Franco’s repression on their parents, this second generation felt distanced from the suffering and wondered why their grandparents maintained a conspicuous silence about the past. Motivated by the unknown, these grandchildren would serve as activists in bringing this history to the forefront of contemporary social politics.

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81 Santiago Macías Pérez, interview by Tyler Goldberger, November 2, 2018.
Chapter Two: Making Memory Matter: The Genesis of the ARMH

More than six decades before the founding of the ARMH, Emilio Silva Barrera’s grandfather, Emilio Silva Faba, looked on as two Nationalist trucks drove through Villafranca del Bierzo, León. Just four days after the Spanish coup d’état began on July 17, 1936, Commander Manso rode shotgun in one of these vehicles, armed and eager to defeat the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War. Without as much as a blink, Manso murdered a woman who raised her fist in an act of rebellion against the overthrow of Spain’s Second Republic.¹ Tellingly, while Nationalists’ reverence for those who served and controlled the political record has ensured that Manso’s name has been passed down over the years, the woman’s identity remains unknown. Silva Faba immediately ran home after witnessing this horror, slowly coming to terms with the fact that he also was in danger. This fear remained with him until October 16, 1936, when the Nationalist forces ambushed his home, kidnapped him, and eventually executed him along with twelve other Republican sympathizers. Silva Faba’s family would awaken the next morning to his disappearance, searching for clues about their loved one while fearing that they, too, could be next.

Silva Faba and this unnamed woman represent only two of the estimated 114,226 Republican victims whose lives and identities remain buried. For many families, the unknown whereabouts of loved ones murdered during this repression exacerbated the suffering passed on from generation to generation. For Emilio Silva Barrera, the survival of these details through family lore, including the opaque memories surrounding his grandfather’s death, galvanized him to take action amidst a persistent silence maintained by powerful conservatives wary to discuss the implications of the past. In 2000, Macías and Silva Barrera shocked Spain by directly

¹ Emilio Silva Barrera and Santiago Macías Pérez, Las fosas de Franco: los republicanos que el dictador dejó en las cunetas, 1. ed. (Madrid: Temas de Hoy, 2003), 39.
confronting the consequences of the Nationalist regime. Their initiative to take meaningful action in the form of a public exhumation paired with savvy decision-making skills to prioritize an untold narrative established a movement in Spain to bring justice and dignity to victims who previously remained unrecognized.

After teaming up in a successful attempt to locate the remains of Silva Barrera’s grandfather, Macías and Silva Barrera established a grassroots organization, the Association, dedicated to memory and exhumations relating to the civil war and Franco era. Through its commitment to victims’ narratives, the ARMH would rupture the silence for many struggling families who descended from late Republican fighters and sympathizers. Through dedicated archival research and validations of testimonies otherwise disregarded and delegitimized, the ARMH has emerged as the principal voice in cultivating memory to acknowledge and reconcile the suffering and trauma of many Spanish families. This organization has demanded more recognition from government officials, challenging the state to provide funding and support for efforts related to the reclamation of forgotten cadavers’ identities.

After an investigative process lasting months, including a close reading of archival documents and interviews with local community members who had witnessed Nationalist violence starting in the 1930s, Silva Barrera discovered the area where his late grandfather had been executed and buried in a mass grave. Few people spoke out about the past repression, instead keeping the mourning and suffering within each family due to the fear instilled during and after Franquismo. However, on October 8, 2000, Silva Barrera broke this silence by publishing a short editorial in the local La Crónica de León, affirming that “My grandfather was a disappeared, too.”

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2 Emilio Silva Barrera, “Mi abuelo también fue un desaparecido.” La Crónica de León, October 8, 2000, 15-16A.
local León voice from 1986 to 2013, delivering news in both print and online platforms for families after the Franco dictatorship. While he had taken time off from journalistic writing to investigate the unmarked location of his grandfather, Silva Barrera wrote this piece as a culmination of these efforts. He broke the silence by interrupting the narrative propagated by franquistas, forcing those who have not prioritized the past to confront the truth. As would become evident in the coming years, this opinion piece resonated with many Spanish families who had been too afraid to share their own stories.

Silva Barrera’s use of desaparecido, or “disappeared,” in his title emphasizes the loss and frustration that he felt in relation to the unknown and undeveloped history of the Spanish Civil War and Franquismo. This term originates from the Argentine Dirty War and Chilean Pinochet dictatorship and describes the unknown fate of those targeted during these regimes. By relating the missing Spanish left-wing sympathizers to the popularized desaparecido term, Silva Barrera connected these victims with the global concern about how to bring justice following human rights atrocities. More than that, his wise decision to utilize también, or “too,” in the editorial title invites the larger Spanish community into this developing dialogue. Just from the title, the audience is captivated by the connotation of the term desaparecido from a well-known human rights atrocity and the inclusive nature of encompassing all Spanish families suffering from a silenced loss. Through his personal testimony, Silva Barrera acknowledged a past filled with repression, torture, and ultimately murder and validated thousands of families.

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5 In the context of this thesis, lost loved ones refers to close family members, friends, romantic partners, or other intimate relations who were executed at the hands of the Franco regime.
When publishing his editorial, Silva Barrera decided to include his personal cell phone number at the end. Within days, he received dozens of phone calls from families sharing stories of their lost loved ones whose memory and remains had never been recovered. Just a few years prior, few people had cell phones. However, the economic boom in the late 1990s coupled with the rapid advancement of technology transformed communication in Spain as elsewhere. By publishing his cell phone number, Silva Barrera established a collaborative ethos for this movement.

Mere days after Silva Barrera’s publication in the local La Crónica de León, he received a call from Julio Vida, a volunteer archaeologist willing to exhume the remains of his grandfather. Seeking to recover any physical remnants of past victims, this exhumation marked a turning point in the neglect of cadavers that remained in unmarked graves. Silva Barrera and Macías combined their experience with exhumation work and personal connections and, less than three weeks after Silva Barrera’s article reached the public, Silva Barrera finally unearthed his grandfather’s poorly preserved remains, along with the twelve other victims’ cadavers.

After this first exhumation, commonly known as Trece de Priaranza, the ARMH founders believed that their most important work would concentrate on the exhumations that needed to be conducted throughout Spain. While the Trece de Priaranza exhumation had been completed before the official establishment of this grassroots organization, the Association considers this

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6 Silva Barrera, “Mi abuelo también,” 16A.
8 Silva Barrera and Macías, Las fosas de Franco, 50-51.
monumental event to serve as its genesis.\textsuperscript{10} The decomposed bones and tattered clothing revealed during this dig represented the gruesome physical evidence of the Nationalists’ brutality. For the first two years of its existence, the ARMH dedicated its efforts to providing proof of a past faded into oblivion.\textsuperscript{11}

The intimate exhumation that brought justice to people like Silva Barrera’s grandfather illustrates Silva Barrera and Macías’s greatest inspiration to form a grassroots movement committed to rescuing and prioritizing stories related to memory. These two leaders participated in memory recovery in the past, but the success of uncovering Silva Faba’s mass grave provoked a sense of importance to continue their efforts. Even though small efforts towards exhumation practices were made in the late 1970s, the failed coup d’état in 1981 silenced these groups and perpetuated fear in searching for and locating lost loved ones.\textsuperscript{12} In establishing the legitimacy of a movement, Silva Barrera and Macías acknowledged that the conservative Spanish government needed to be confronted with overwhelming, tangible evidence of the past. The ARMH embraced exhumations as a strategy to prove that Franquismo had lasting impacts on both the political and social landscape.

By December 2000, Silva Barrera and Macías felt so emboldened by those who called to share similar narratives that they established the ARMH to dedicate the time and resources necessary to connect the third generation of Spanish Civil War victims and survivors with their


\textsuperscript{11} Jo Labanyi, “Entrevista con Emilio Silva,” Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies 9, no. 2 (July 1, 2008), 147.

familial connections of the past. Recognized as a legitimate group by the Ministry of the Interior but failing to receive resources from elected officials, the ARMH worked mainly through local networks within Spain’s growing civil society and endeavored to recover unidentified cadavers and validate the narratives of thousands of Spanish families. Joined immediately by approximately fifteen volunteer workers, including Palma Granados and Jorge López who served as leaders in the organization, the ARMH “lent help” to those searching for desaparecidos, something that the central government failed to do. This grassroots movement quickly strengthened its roots to provide support services for families looking to commemorate their late loved ones.

Due to the dedicated efforts of Silva Barrera and Macías, along with other human rights defenders, over sixty-four years after the murder of Silva Faba, the modern movement of Spanish memory was born. The publication of Silva Barrera’s editorial and his subsequent exhumation of an unmarked mass grave with Macías’s guidance sparked a new campaign to confront the past in a way that Spain’s elected officials had been unwilling to do. Rising above the lack of support from the government, the ARMH started a group-based shift in culture to attempt to commemorate and memorialize the over one hundred thousand victims whose deaths had not been recognized by the state.

These efforts established a new space that prioritized Republican supporters who suffered in the past and questioned the continued dominance of the Nationalistic narrative in Spanish society. As Mercedes Yusta Rodrigo, professor in modern Spanish history, contends, before

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13 Isbister, “Summary and Update of Spain”
Silva Barrera’s choice to open up conversations to the public, Spain had not created a space for memory to be commemorated. The government was unwilling to sponsor any dialogue or discussion, forcing local community members to take action if they wanted this type of commemoration.17 Once Silva Barrera published “My grandfather was a disappeared, too,” he created a vehicle to form a collective identity based on past suffering. This shared identity did not promote revenge against franquistas but instead offered a centralized location for reclamation and memorialization.18

Although the ARMH was founded and maintained by volunteers, leaders such as Silva Barrera and Macías did not let this aspect distract their main work as they began to act on the hundreds of phone calls received in the months following the publication of “My grandfather was a disappeared, too.”19 Since the first ARMH exhumation in Priaranza del Bierzo, León, the group looked to utilize its existing volunteers and resources by remaining close to this area. Arriving in Fresnedo, León in September of 2001, Silva Barrera began to hear the testimonies of four families who knew that their loved ones remained buried almost sixty-five years after their assassinations.

Demonstrating the importance of this work, one victim’s son, Vicente Moreira Picorel, attended the exhumation and recalled lying cradled in his mother’s arms as a young boy. Not long after, he would learn that the right-wing forces had assassinated her, leaving his mother,

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Isabel Picorel, and three other victims in an unmarked ditch in 1936. In just this tiny town alone, Nationalist forces murdered enough victims to establish eight unmarked mass graves at the beginning of the Spanish Civil War. Moreira Picorel called Silva Barrera and Macías upon hearing about the work of the ARMH, insisting that these activists come out and attempt to exhume his mother’s body. Through the ARMH’s experience with its first successful exhumation, these volunteers created a vehicle for people like Moreira Picorel to speak out about the repression of the past that still haunts them every day. In contrast with the lack of support from the central government, the local Cubillos government cooperated with and aided the ARMH in exhuming four bodies, all of which were identified and more peacefully laid to rest.

Because conservative ideologies controlled Spanish politics during the ARMH’s initial establishment, this grassroots organization depended on outside resources to cover their development and normalize practices that recovered memory from the past. This second exhumation expanded the ARMH’s reach far past the confines of the dig itself. Just like the action of Silva Barrera leaving his phone number and strengthening a communal memory, the efforts to reclaim the identities of another set of cadavers launched this grassroots movement into the national spotlight. As the ARMH compiled the testimonies of community members who contacted Silva Barrera and Macías, many national media outlets began to take an interest in the work of archaeologists undergoing an exhumation for a lost cadaver. During the September 2001 exhumation in Fresnedo, major news sources such as El País came out and covered this story.

While some sources eagerly distributed this story, many right-wing news sources, such as ABC,
refused to cover this uprooting of repressed memory, demonstrating conservatives’ continued refusal to reckon with the Franco regime’s abuses.23

The abundance of volunteers and support services that came from this publicity in the ARMH’s first few years represented the seeds for what would become a rapidly growing movement. Those who felt compelled to join this action got in touch with Silva Barrera and Macías to help in any way possible. This assistance ranged from providing home-cooked meals during exhumations to highly specialized DNA analysis. For example, volunteer José Antonio Lorente from Granada donated his services and technological resources to test the DNA of victims found in the ARMH’s first exhumation.24 While the Trece de Priaranza exhumation itself took place in October of 2000, it would take approximately eighteen months to confirm the identity of Silva Barrera’s grandfather as one of the thirteen bodies.25 Through the new development of DNA testing technology to endorse the genetic relationship between the physical remains of a late victim and someone living, the ARMH demonstrated its commitment to discovering the identity of those all but forgotten by society. By mid-2002, Lorente had proven that Emilio Silva Faba had been one of the thirteen victims murdered mere days after the beginning of the civil war, legitimizing the ARMH’s arduous exhumation efforts.

While this positive identification served as a major victory for the ARMH, many exhumed bodies remain unnamed and unclaimed. Due to the difficulty of exhuming cadavers

23 *ABC* represents the most conservative news source that has existed throughout the time period being discussed. This source has two headquarters, one in Madrid and one in Sevilla, that wrote throughout the Spanish Civil War and Franquismo era. During 1931-1936, the years of the Second Republic, *ABC* served as a monarchist newspaper. It eventually transitioned to a falangista publication, supporting the development of fascism in Spain, followed by being unapologetically franquista directly following the war. Because it maintained its connection to right-wing ideologies throughout the twentieth-century, *ABC* can be used to see how this community on a larger scale confronted the genesis and actions of the ARMH.

24 Silva Barrera and Macías, *Las fosas de Franco*, 70.

over eighty years after their deaths coupled with the lack of knowledge regarding where late loved ones were last alive, identifying the victims of the civil war and Francoism era has been challenging. Out of the thirteen bodies recovered in the initial Trece de Priaranza exhumation, only four have been positively named and returned to their families for a proper burial. The rest have been listed in a newly established search engine cataloguing unidentified cadavers that have been removed from unmarked graves. This list highlights the challenges associated with exhuming mass graves without any idea of the size of these unofficial cemeteries. It also gives insight into the consequences of inhumane execution practices of Nationalist forces, as the natural decomposition of these victims has rendered them unidentifiable. As of 2015, anthropologists added over 120 unidentified bodies to this list, hoping one day to connect these cadavers to loved ones. The opportunity to use DNA testing and this developing database demonstrates the importance of volunteer efforts and technological advances that allow the ARMH to bridge the past and the present.

The ARMH’s funding, and therefore viability, remains, even decades after Franco’s death, mired in partisan feuds about how to understand and depict this era in Spanish history. While the Spanish Ministry of the Interior recognized the credibility of this grassroots organization dedicated to increasing dialogue and impact in the field of memory in December 2000, Silva Barrera, Macías, and the other numerous volunteers had not obtained any finances or platforms to share their mission on a more public medium. In fact, because a right-wing political party remained in control during the genesis and early developments of the ARMH, the

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28 Silva Barrera and Macías, *Las fosas de Franco*, 82-83.
government refused to rectify the pro-Franco narrative that persisted since the dictator’s death until the PSOE won the 2004 election.\textsuperscript{29} Spain’s political leaders, often resembling prominent figures during Franco’s regime by failing to acknowledge the need for memory, have consistently supported their own version of the truth in lieu of representing the suffering past of so many families. Until 2006, six years after the ARMH was established, elected officials refused to offer financial contributions to memory organizations. Instead, the ARMH found itself depending solely on donations, membership dues, and hospitality, including acquiring the necessary tools and receiving offers from locals to stay at their homes for free during exhumations.\textsuperscript{30}

Since the Spanish government remained determined not to provide funds for the ARMH’s efforts, a majority of its services depended on the labor of volunteers. Meanwhile, the conservative political party in control during the early 2000s financially supported the Fundación Nacional Francisco Franco archive (hereafter, FNFF).\textsuperscript{31} This archive catalogs and presents thousands upon thousands of documents on the dictator in an apartment centrally located in Madrid.\textsuperscript{32} The staff of the FNFF offers the researcher food or beverage upon entering the archive. All of the archival material filed and preserved relating to Franco can only be accessed by one computer monitor that is housed in the FNFF, even though the Spanish government


\textsuperscript{30} Marco Antonio González, interview by Tyler Goldberger, July 13, 2018.

\textsuperscript{31} “Las actividades de la Fundación Franco seguirán financiándose con dinero público, apoyados por el PP,” Box 24, Folder Justicia Transicional en España (ICTJ) 2004 April (3/5), Human Rights Archive - International Center for Transitional Justice Records. Duke University Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Duke University Libraries.

\textsuperscript{32} Fundación Nacional Francisco Franco, “Normas de acceso al archivo de la FNFF,” last modified 2018. https://fnff.es/paginas/698891370/normas-de-acceso-al-archivo-de-la-fnff.html
consistently funded its operations and upkeep.\textsuperscript{33} As many Spanish scholars have noted, this archive in particular was not accessible to intellectuals and the general public in the 1990s and 2000s.\textsuperscript{34} Even today, after years of state-sponsorship, the FNFF has not declassified all of its material and requires researchers to travel to Madrid to access the more than 27,000 classified documents it holds.\textsuperscript{35}

The government’s financial contributions to the FNFF showcase its commitment to supporting a franquista version of the past. This archive promotes an opaque and lopsided history about the consequences of the war and dictatorship. In contrast to the FNFF’s lack of accessibility, the ARMH seeks to accomplish transparency and objectivity by focusing on the forgotten narrative of this time period. Through accessible contact mechanisms driven by civil society, as well as a digital archive that publishes documentation and information related to the exhumed bodies of mass graves, the ARMH challenges the narrative generated by the FNFF. Although the ARMH did not receive funding from the government until 2006, it has represented a new and more transparent perspective from which to analyze the past.

Acknowledging the position that the ARMH had established so quickly through exhumations while balancing the difficulties of supporting suffering families without the necessary state or financial backing, Silva Barrera, Macías and their team decided to expand past their concentration of exhumations to develop memory dialogue on a larger, more holistic scale. In just a little over a year since its inception, the ARMH had developed as an organization recognized nationally by multiple media sources, motivating this group to solidify its identity for

\textsuperscript{33} Personal Staff Assistant at FNFF, interview by Tyler Goldberger, June 12, 2018.
\textsuperscript{34} Espinosa Maestre, \emph{Contra el olvido}, 124-127.
\textsuperscript{35} Europa Press, “El Gobierno reconoce que la Fundación Francisco Franco tiene en su archive documentos secretos y pide que no se divulguen,” last modified April 9, 2017. https://www.eldiario.es/sociedad/Memoria-Gobierno-Fundacion-Franco-documentos_0_631336932.html
the future. The ARMH made strides to expand its reach to a global community in the hopes of attracting attention and gaining support.

In a move that continues to shape the definition and impact of the ARMH, it published the first version of its website in January 2002. Combining the increased attention to memory through national media coverage and its presence on the Internet, this movement developed its content to become more accessible for anyone interested in reaching out to support or to provide testimony to this group. The decision to go digital with its collection of information allowed the ARMH to provide a centralized location for truth and progress amidst leaders who actively neglected confronting the past. Along with increased accessibility to information that should have originally existed as public knowledge to Spanish citizens, this medium brings greater publicity and visibility to a social movement dependent on external support.

While admittedly underfunded and understaffed, the ARMH pursued incorporating more voices and testimonies through this digital format to expand its reach to the larger community. Although its work first only encompassed large-scale social projects that resulted in rupturing the prevailing silence of the past, it would soon grow into a political catalyst that implemented both small and large changes to the political, economic, and sociocultural landscape in Spain.

Because of the elected officials’ continued hesitancy to establish policies and practices working towards a more representative display of the past, along with their lack of financial support, the ARMH had to tap into civil society domestically and internationally to make progress. After noting that the United Nations Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearance (hereafter, UNWGEID) did not recognize Spain as a country that had undergone a history of countless human disappearances, Silva Barrera contacted the United Nations to fight

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37 Marco Antonio González, interview by Tyler Goldberger, November 7, 2018.
against this omission. Through arranging a meeting with this United Nations branch’s secretary, Silva Barrera presented twice in front of the UNWGEID in New York to stake his claim in incorporating Spain into this list and ensuring international recognition of the Spanish past.

The opportunity to present a case before the United Nations required the ARMH to provide at least twenty-five disappearance cases to validate its claim.\(^{38}\) As the ARMH began to strategize how best to compile testimonies of disappearance, over sixty community members contacted it to present their personal narratives as evidence of why Spain needed to be added to the enforced and involuntary disappearance list.\(^{39}\) The overwhelming number of testimony submissions emphasizes the desire to know the truth and to bring these truths to the forefront of Spanish consciousness. This extensive list of victims and testimonies provided a shared platform for loved ones of victims to feel heard and validated.

When petitioning to the international body, the ARMH made sure to incorporate specific figures to demonstrate the sheer amount of work that needed to get done to bring justice back to these victims.\(^{40}\) In this statement, the group indicated that over 30,000 mass graves remain unmarked in Spain, mobilizing the general and global audience to start locating and exhuming the estimated over one hundred thousand cadavers that still lay unidentified in these spaces. Concentrating its efforts on recovering the lost remains and memories buried deep inside the thousands of unknown graves strengthened the ARMH’s case to add Spain to the UNWGEID list.


\(^{39}\) Silva Barrera and Macías, Las fosas de Franco, 80.

\(^{40}\) Silva Barrera, “Segunda presentación,” 2-4.
As the ARMH’s presentation to the UNWGEID continued, Silva Barrera spoke out to set demands for the Spanish government, hoping to motivate Spanish representatives to do more to broaden the dialogue regarding victims of the past. To better recognize the horrors of the past, the ARMH firmly stated that elected officials have failed in their job to represent all of their constituents, calling for the Spanish state to participate in the research and funding of exhumations, to publicly open the archival material, and to support and implement the use of DNA testing on all bodies exhumed related to the Spanish Civil War and Franquismo.41 By 2003, due to the ARMH’s push to globalize the memory of Spanish desaparecidos, the UNWGEID added Spain’s name onto its list, widening the awareness of a more holistic version of the complicated Spanish past.42

Immediately following efforts to bring awareness to the many disappearances that still remain unresolved today, the ARMH spearheaded a national awareness campaign to force the government to accept culpability for its actions. Just a few years prior, the conservative government neglected any responsibility of actively confronting its past. However, the motivation and leadership of Silva Barrera and Macías brought conversations and actions related to the suffering memory to Spanish media and politics. The petition to the United Nations served as a precursor to the statement that the ARMH demanded from Spain’s law-making body.

While the United Nations recognized Spain’s missing victims on an international level, Spain as a nation still had to shift its memorialization efforts more collectively to remember the past. Every year on November 20, a commemoration ceremony recognizes the death anniversary of both Francisco Franco and José Antonio Primo de Rivera, fascist party leader leading up to

42 La Librería de Cazarabet, “Cazarabet conversa con Emilio Silva”, 2.
the Spanish Civil War. On this day in 2002, however, Spain’s Congress of Deputies, the national legislative body, spoke out to condemn the practices and policies of the civil war and Franquismo era. While this announcement could have been made any day of the year, the ARMH’s pressure to enact this statement on the death anniversary of two prominent right-wing figures emphasizes the importance of this work for families still looking for their lost loved ones. This moment shifted the significance of this anniversary from a moment of honor to a legacy of shame. It simultaneously brought hope to those engaging in the fight for a more inclusive memory, demonstrating that the government could be utilized to expand efforts and bring justice to more victims if influenced by civil society. Because Spain remains so politically partisan in its commemoration of the past, the delivery of this statement from a conservative branch demonstrated the potential for developing dialogue related to memory.

Referencing many of the demands made by the ARMH in its presentation to the United Nations earlier that year, Congress emphasized policies that needed to change to promote a more holistic education. While many affirmations spoke to the changes that should be enacted by the Spanish government going forward, a few of them directly conversed with what the ARMH demanded during the August 2002 UN presentation. Comparing the action items the ARMH called upon the state to enact and the reactionary statement from the government shows the large role that this grassroots movement played in developing policies related to bringing justice to the impacted population. By bringing these concerns directly to the legislative body in Spain, the ARMH incited dialogue to shape the way Congress regarded Franquismo. The state recognized

43 Because José Antonio Primo de Rivera’s father, Miguel Primo de Rivera, served as a prominent Nationalist leader and Prime Minister before the Spanish Civil War, José Antonio Primo de Rivera’s shorthand in Spanish culture is José Antonio.
the importance of providing financial support to research and exhume cadavers in mass graves that existed all throughout Spain.\textsuperscript{45} It also spoke in favor of opening up the archival material previously hidden from the public audience with the hopes of introducing Spain to a more holistic truth of the past.\textsuperscript{46} Sadly, these changes remain aspirational in the civil society’s battle for memory reclamation.

The Association’s growth had greatly concentrated on making an impact on dialogue poorly developed since the end of the dictatorship in 1975. On a large scale, a volunteer-led ARMH team from a local base inspired national progress towards a more collaborative and meaningful approach to dealing with the evaded memory of the past. While its genesis required great attention toward political change and socioeconomic culture surrounding the precedent of memory policy, the ARMH began to creatively incorporate the experiences of victims and their families into its national campaign. Reaching the nation through media-heavy exhumations and legislative demands changed the perspectives of elected political officials, so the ARMH also appealed to the general public to demonstrate the large population affected by the silence of the past.

The ARMH sponsored a musical concert in Madrid entitled \textit{Recuperando Memoria: Homenaje a los Republicanos}, or Reclaiming Memory: Homage to the Republicans, on June 25, 2004 that served as an artistic representation of the pain felt by many families.\textsuperscript{47} Through the dedication of many volunteers from varying backgrounds, the ARMH was able to secure the travel of 741 survivors of Franquismo.\textsuperscript{48} This event served as an opportunity to honor the

\textsuperscript{45} El Grupo Parlamentario, “Sobre el reconocimiento moral,” 20504.

\textsuperscript{46} El Grupo Parlamentario, “Sobre el reconocimiento moral,” 20510.

\textsuperscript{47} Recuperando Memoria: Homenaje a los Republicanos, directed by the ARMH (June 25, 2004, Madrid, España), DVD.

\textsuperscript{48} Recuperando Memoria: Homenaje a los Republicanos.
strength and bravery of those who survived and remained connected to their political ideologies amidst dictatorial powers looking to eliminate those with Republican affiliation in Spain. More than that, it continued to carry the work of the ARMH from an archive primarily focused on exhumation efforts to a national social movement looking to impact the culture surrounding memory. The concert attracted over 20,000 people from all around Spain to reclaim justice and dignity. The organization and success of *Recuperando Memoria* demonstrated the transgenerational efforts to combat the fear in confronting the past through such a public display of hope and celebration.

This concert finally put the spotlight on those who experienced the terror perpetrated by the conservative regime. In the physical layout of the event, the center of the venue was not open to the general public and offered a chair to every single survivor in an effort to honor the sacrifice they made in creating a more inclusive Spain. When entering the venue, each of the survivors who could travel to make the concert received a special “invitado/a” pin decorated in purple, red, and yellow, the colors of the Second Republic flag and current colors of ARMH’s logo. Their presence and selected speakers demonstrated the strength of memory and the importance of pursuing justice for those who were not lucky enough to survive. Often dedicating their speeches to the current and future generations, the survivors sought to bring awareness to an undeveloped past that deserved to be memorialized by those in positions of power. These messages served to shape the ARMH’s mission for the years to come, establishing a future significance to the memory being collected and shared on a larger scale.

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50 Recuperando Memoria: Homenaje a los Republicanos.
51 While this color scheme belies claims of ARMH nonpartisanship, ARMH specifically sought to bring back Republican survivors of the war to honor their sacrifice during these years. Therefore, the colors represented a pride that these victims stood up to fascism rather than an affiliation with the Second Republic.
Recuperando Memoria represents the necessary awareness of the current generation in reestablishing the narratives of those who fell victim to right-wing conservative forces in the twentieth century. As many experts recognize, a large reason for the recent interest in Spanish memory relates to the third generation of victims and survivors who no longer face the fear of the dictatorship. The pain that has been internalized by families and loved ones for so long because these people had been hurt by the Franco dictatorship no longer remained contained within familial structures. This concert brought the experiences of survivors and victims into a public space that transmitted past narratives to the current generation actively working to bring memory back into the forefront of Spanish consciousness.

The laborious efforts to organize a concert that struck a chord for many Spaniards gave the older generation an opportunity to instill testimonies and life lessons that will certainly live on with the younger generation. In a way, this concert served as one of the final opportunities for those who directly experienced the pain and suffering of the right-wing leadership to share stories never acknowledged. The young population that volunteered and attended the concert strove to recover the memory that has almost faded into oblivion due to the lack of effort made by Spain’s national government. The ARMH paired these two generations together to continue the legacies of the past into the future, ensuring that the narratives that still need to be heard and believed in exist past the life of the person who experienced the trauma. One of the final artists of the evening shared “we have not achieved [memory reclamation] yet... but we are on the path.”

This renewed sense of hope, motivated by the ARMH’s initiatives, now falls on the

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53 Recuperando Memoria: Homenaje a los Republicanos.
responsibility of the current generation to keep pushing for policies and practices that honor the victims of the past in a way that will galvanize Spanish politics to enact change.

Through strong leadership and a passion for establishing a memory narrative not initially supported by Spain’s government, the ARMH worked diligently to shift the elected official’s complacency in regard to a horrific past. Even with little state recognition and no state-sponsored funding, Silva Barrera and Macías’s initial efforts expanded to conduct over twenty exhumations by 2006, unburying and identifying over two hundred desaparecidos from the Spanish Civil War and Franquismo era in just its first six years as a recognized group.54 As the ARMH continued to shape the political and sociocultural landscape of Spain, the conservative political party lost power and was replaced by the PSOE in 2004, a party ostensibly committed to putting time and resources into the development of memory work. Elected Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero felt compelled to pursue progressive policies of memory as his late grandfather, Juan Rodriguez Lozano, was a Republican captain murdered by Nationalist forces in 1936.55 As a grandchild seeking to know the truth regarding his grandfather’s fate, Zapatero represented hope in the fight for transitional justice and truth. Even so, the central government’s material contribution to reclaiming memory demonstrated a dissonance between what was done and what needed to be done. The ARMH would continue to shape memory amidst the political shift that brought limited federal funding to its efforts, standing up for policies and practices that ensured that the state be held responsible for identifying and reclaiming cadavers of forgotten victims.

54 Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica, “Exhumaciones realizadas de la ARMH”, last updated August 2018.
Chapter Three: Complicating Memory Tensions through Material Support

On April 1, 1940, the one year-anniversary of the Nationalist declaration of victory in the Spanish Civil War, Franco called upon Spain to support a monument to “carry on the memory of those who fell for our glorious crusade.” On a day already associated with grievance and loss, Franco indicated the need for a structure to “rest the heroes and martyrs of the crusade,” referring only to Nationalist causalities. Thus, El Valle de los Caídos, or the Valley of the Fallen, began to be constructed as a manifestation of the Nationalist overthrow of Republican leadership and ideologies. Over the course of the coming decades, the Valley would serve as a site of contestation constantly re-inscribing the triumph of traditionalism over liberalism. The Spanish state agency, run directly by the Prime Minister, has provided over 1,800,000 euros annually from public funds to ensure that this memorial serves as a reminder of the memory politics that still plague Spain today.

Following the declaration to build a structure “to pay tribute to those who left [for the next generation] a better Spain,” Franco sought labor to complete this site during the beginning of his dictatorship and mandated that Republican political prisoners construct this site. The forced labor began in 1940 as the regime dedicated Cuelgamuros, a small area outside Madrid, to host the site of such a grandiose monument. Because people lived in this region, the State Forest Estate covered the expenses of relocating people in order to construct the Valley, demonstrating

2 Francisco Franco, “Decreto de 1 de abril de 1940.
4 Francisco Franco, “Decreto de 1 de abril de 1940."
the control Franco possessed in reallocating funds to ensure that such a monument could be erected at the hands of Republican political prisoners.\(^5\)

Illustration 4: The Valley of the Fallen. Photograph by Tyler Goldberger.

By 1950, the foundation of the Valley of the Fallen had been completed, and the orchestrator of the project mobilized political prisoners to begin working on a cross that would portray the religious sacrifice that had been made by past martyrs to contribute to a unified

Spain. In just a few years, these laborers erected the largest cross in Europe that signifies the successful end of the Nationalist crusade to reestablish conservative values and practices in Spain. Towards the end of this construction project that lasted eighteen years and sacrificed many Republican bodies for the perpetuation of a privileged Nationalist narrative, Franco officially dedicated this holy cross “for those who sacrificed their lives for G-d and for the Homeland and as an example for the generations to come.”

The Valley’s connection to Nationalistic memory became more pronounced once it opened in 1959. It quickly attracted many visitors because of its religious connection and lionization of those who “selflessly surrender[ed]” themselves for a better Spain. The Franco regime published a tourism guide for the Valley in 1970 to demonstrate its glorious construction and significance and to encourage people to visit. The cross quickly became the crown jewel of this monument, as the regime boasted about its size, “beauty… [and] proportionality” to attract visitors. This state-sponsored guide documents the detailed construction and incorporates dozens of images in an effort to show the grandiose nature of a structure dedicated to the heroes of its crusade.

Franco’s regime decided to transfer Spanish fascist party leader José Antonio Primo de Rivera and his remains to this memorial before its inauguration to honor his service to and

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expansion of Spanish fascism. The founder of Falange had previously been buried in November 1939 in the basilica of El Escorial, where the tombs of many powerful kings and emperors are also placed. Franco sought to merge the falangista (Falangist) and Nationalist agendas by dedicating the first prominent gravesite to José Antonio. After Franco’s death on November 20, 1975, the succeeding political leaders decided to bury Franco alongside José Antonio in continuation of commemorating those who committed their lives to Nationalist ideologies. The burial of these two anti-democratic leaders in a centralized location amidst the thousands of Republican victims without recognition of their identities emphasized the true priorities of this site. In essence, the Valley became a memorial that outwardly seemed to support memory but in practice delegitimized the Republican narrative and victims by confounding their memory with the memory of known executioners. This tension persisted as the centralized government continues to fund the Valley’s operations and upkeep every year.

As frustrations grew during the dictatorship, Republicans questioned why such a prominent monument only honored the Nationalist causalities of the war at the expense of their labor. At the Nationalist’s discretion, Republican cadavers began to populate this cemetery. Franco demanded that devout Nationalists transfer already-buried remains of Republican victims to this memorial to appear as though the Valley respected both sides of the war. Asked in 2003 about life during Franquismo, one survivor vividly remembered that, in 1958, “shortly before opening the Valley of the Fallen… an official truck came, dug up the ground, removed some bones and moved them to the Valley.” Disrupting the peaceful burial of identified Republican

12 Eduardo Martín de Pozuelo, “Un final de paz,” La Vanguardia, April 13, 2003, 64.
victims, Franco’s government dehumanized these cadavers by relocating them to a location without a proper, commemorative tombstone or gravesite. While in theory this government-led initiative allotted space in this monument for the two sides divided by the war, the implementation of this effort disregarded the legacies of many of these victims from the losing side.

This inequitable narrative continued under the guise of state-sponsored funding and vocal claims to re-signify the Valley of the Fallen from 2006-2011. While the annual state funding supports a memorial to civil war victims, the intentionality behind this site only honors one narrative of this past. This chapter focuses on the strained relationship between public, national efforts made from 2006-2011 that attempted to put memory into the forefront of Spanish consciousness and the true implications of such actions in which memory remained lopsided and unrepresentative. The conflict between state-sponsored resources and dignified memory appeared most vividly during the state funding apparatus under PSOE Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero. While the government’s financial support seemed to serve as the solution to a majority of memory problems that Spain as a nation and the ARMH as a grassroots organization faced, this monetary contribution failed to confront the deeply rooted issues facing organizations such as the ARMH in their fight for bringing justice and dignity to forgotten victims.

The Valley of the Fallen continued to overshadow the memory landscape in Spain as the 2004 Prime Minister election neared. In what would be the first of two national Spanish elections pinning PSOE candidate José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero against PP representative Mariano Rajoy, Zapatero reclaimed the socialist majority in 2004 and brought forward liberal reforms to shape
Spain’s political, economic, and social landscapes.\(^{13}\) The PSOE gained the public’s confidence and trust following the terrorist attack in Madrid just days prior to the election that left over 2,000 injured or dead.\(^{14}\) In a time of immense fear, the news cycle after the election referred to Zapatero as “the grandson of Captain Lozano,” prioritizing the legacy of the new Prime Minister’s grandfather who was executed at the hands of Nationalist forces during the Spanish Civil War.\(^{15}\) \textit{El País} shaped the conversation of inclusive memory and contributed to the shifting narrative of remembering the past. The ARMH expanded upon this voice, contributing time, resources, and energy into ensuring that the recovery of memory mattered in Spain’s civil society. Now, Zapatero’s personal history encouraged him to seek out ways to expand commemoration efforts of Republican victims lost during Spain’s repressive past, especially with his new platform as Prime Minister.

Zapatero grew up never knowing his grandfather. Once he understood the inevitable truth regarding Juan Rodríguez Lozano, Zapatero engaged in months of research to learn the fate of his socialist grandfather on the eve of his Prime Ministry, uncovering his grandfather’s desire for “an infinite longing for peace” in lieu of the vicious war effort.\(^{16}\) Coming to terms with the fact that his loved one fell victim to Nationalist terror, Zapatero utilized his position of political power to shape conversations and practices related to honoring the legacies of the past.

José Rodríguez Lozano identified as a left-wing socialist throughout Spain’s pre-war period. As a whole, left-leaning voices felt rejected and silenced after the CEDA, the Catholic

conservative political party, won the 1933 Spanish election. Working class, liberal miners in Asturias sought a way to turn their frustration and fear into tangible action by rising up against the election results that replaced socialists with ultra-traditionalists.\(^\text{17}\) Thus, anarchists and communists joined together in the fight against CEDA politics in 1934, bringing in actors from surrounding regions to the Asturias front line to defend liberal political ideologies.\(^\text{18}\) Lozano briefly relocated to Asturias to keep conservatism out and maintain Republican ideology. The stronghold of these liberal revolutionary forces lasted around two weeks, but with overwhelming force and resources coming from the Nationalist side, many of the rebels suffered extreme punishments. As the Asturias revolution deescalated, Nationalist General Lafuente arrested and kidnapped Lozano for his revolutionary involvement and general socialist affiliation.\(^\text{19}\) As a publicly known member of the socialist ideology, Lozano remained a target for right-wing forces after his release. Two years following the Asturias Revolution and a month after the coup d’État to ignite the Spanish Civil War, Lozano was condemned to death by Nationalist perpetrators and executed on August 18, 1936.\(^\text{20}\)

Incorporating his familial history into his political platform, Zapatero dedicated his life to socialist causes that concentrated on memorialization efforts of the leftist victims disregarded in the pacto del olvido and various other failed attempts at reviving memory. Entering the Moncloa Palace, the house of the Prime Minister, in 2004, Zapatero looked to prioritize policies and

practices that would emphasize the work required to commemorate the hundreds of thousands of victims unacknowledged and unidentified dating back to 1936. Gaining momentum from the large strides that the ARMH had made since its foundation in 2000, including the national condemnation of Franquismo and the legitimacy of Spain being recognized by the UNWGEID, Zapatero and the socialist government sought to expand memory work and devote the time and resources to bring the stories like that of Zapatero’s grandfather to the forefront of Spanish consciousness. Even so, the continued prominence of the Valley of the Fallen reminded Zapatero that there were limitations to promoting memory dialogue in Spain. This memorial still weighed heavily on the hearts of fervent franquistas who admired this site featuring the largest cross in Europe. While it took a few years to receive enough government support to pass tangible policy to encourage memory, this socialist-led coalition sought to redefine Spain’s outlook on the past with the knowledge that the past would restrict the progress that could be made.

With the newly elected government seeking to create space for an inclusive memory in the political, economic, and social landscapes, the ARMH had the opportunity to partner with various memory causes and assist in bringing larger projects to fruition. In the past, the ARMH had depended on various supporters, such as liberal news sources like El País and volunteers for exhumations, to gain a reputation amidst the hesitancy from the central government to support efforts related to memory reclamation. Now, these activists served as leaders and mentors in contributing to other memory projects conducted with the common goal of bringing an identity to these forgotten victims. Earning a limited amount of funding from the central government under Zapatero’s leadership, the ARMH contributed to both national and international memory developments.

Yet, the ARMH would learn that this support did not resolve the various problems and struggles that this movement faced before state sponsorship. The complicated nature of a civil
society organization accepting money from the state government contributed to the lack of change that developed in relation to memory reclamation. While the funding established a relationship between these two bodies, their differing motivations created a society that still failed to prioritize the victims of the past. Instead, the elected officials’ haphazard attempts to contribute to memory efforts failed to inform constructively the long-term commemoration of forgotten victims of Spain’s torturous past.

Zapatero’s first term as Prime Minister brought many drastic changes to the field of memory due to both a newfound national movement and a reinvigorated local commitment from civil society which resonated with the Republican past to promote a culture based on memory recovery. 2006 spurred national public attention on memory because the ARMH recognized that this year represented not only the 75th anniversary of the proclamation of the Second Republic but also the 70th anniversary of the July 1936 coup d’état against democratic Republican rule. Because Spanish officials have often forgotten the importance of these dates in recent history, this grassroots organization sought to publicize the significance of 2006 to all of Spain, pushing for a better understanding of the contemporary impacts of past events. The Association had already persuaded Congress to make a public statement prioritizing memory when this political body condemned Franquismo on Franco’s death anniversary in 2002, shifting the significance of this revered day for present-day franquistas.

Prioritizing anniversaries gave the Association the opportunity to confront the truth in the present by connecting it to the repression experienced by Republican victims in the past.

21 Carlos E. Cué, “Las víctimas del franquismo piden que 2006 sea el año de su homenaje,” El País, January 3, 2006, sec. Espana, https://elpais.com/diario/2006/01/03/espana/1136242817_850215.html. As the ARMH became an older organization, it centralized its efforts and released statements from the organization as a whole as opposed to individual agents speaking on behalf of the group. As time would go on, President Emilio Silva Barrera would act as the spokesperson of the ARMH, while the rest of the volunteer staff would simply be referred to as the “ARMH.”
Halfway through 2006, the PSOE-majority Congress once again responded to the ARMH’s work emphasizing the important symbolism of this year by forming a coalition to come together in a vote that officially established this commemorative year as the “Year of Historical Memory.” This declaration created a space in which victims and their families felt encouraged to share testimonies from the civil war and the ensuing dictatorship. While this law could not shape each individual’s perception in regard to memory, it laid the groundwork for reports and general education tools that contributed to a larger awareness of the need for memory dialogue and action.

Initially suggested and motivated by the ARMH, the “Year of Historical Memory” represented a major transformation in the way elected representatives considered and honored the left-wing victims tortured and executed at the hands of Nationalist supporters. This law offered the opportunity for an investigative report conducted by Congress to address the current situation of the victims who suffered during the civil war and subsequent dictatorship. This report, known more formally as the General Report of the Interministerial Commission for the Study of the Situation of the Victims of the Civil War and Franquismo, gave a legitimate basis for the central government to focus on tangible ways to confront the past. Congress consulted select memory organizations, incorporating and emphasizing the ARMH’s voice and expectations into a more deliberate project to honor the forgotten victims. The commission’s published report provided a platform to reimagine how these suffering communities could be better supported.

As Congress opened up dialogue to demonstrate the complexities of recovering repressed memory within Spanish society, it also had to navigate existing legislation that prevented major progression on this front, particularly the 1977 Amnesty Law. By publishing detailed reports highlighting the work that needs to be done, relinquishing total control of the press, and establishing the “Year of Historical Memory,” the Spanish legislative body navigated the difficult terrain of legally confronting memory amidst a strict system. In a detailed conclusion, the ARMH and other memory organizations agreed that productive next steps stemming from research compiled between 2004 and 2006 included establishing ways to support individual victims and various associations attempting to shed light on the impacts of Franquismo in contemporary Spain.  

On top of this dedicated effort to study the actions that should be taken to bring memory into a more normalized sphere in Spanish culture, the central government, led by Zapatero, established a state-sponsored funding apparatus in 2006 to support memory efforts on the ground. In creating a new initiative to claim memory as the central government’s responsibility, Zapatero stated “it is time, now, that the Spanish democracy and living generations who participate in it honor and recover forever those who directly suffered injustices and grievances produced, for some or other political or ideological motives or religious beliefs, in those painful periods of our history.” The ARMH led the initiative to conduct localizations, exhumations, and identifications of disregarded victims from the war and dictatorship without centralized funding. Therefore, the incorporation of these efforts in the state budget demonstrated that elected officials finally recognized the importance of the ARMH’s work.

26 José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, “Preámbulo de la Ley de Memoria Histórica” (October 21, 2007), https://www.libertaddigital.com/nacional/documento-preambulo-escrito-por-zapatero-1276315912/.
The allotment of money from the annual budget to various memory organizations, both local and national, opened up the avenue for more projects and exhumations related to this type of work. In its initial stages, this funding provided memory organizations with up to three annual projects related to recovering the remains and memory of victims, limiting each project to 60,000 euros and committing 2,000,000 euros to all work conducted in 2006.\textsuperscript{27} Along with the recognition of 2006 as a year dedicated to historical memory, the state budget that incorporated exhumation, localization, and identification efforts represented the first time that elected officials prioritized civil society’s voice in developing a memory movement. This allocation of funds served to recognize the injustice of the suffering experienced by the victims and their families after Spanish society as a whole turned a deaf ear to their claims for reparation.

As the years went on during the Zapatero administration, Congress designated more money for work related to recovering the memory and cadavers of victims under Franco. In 2007, the state dedicated an extra 400,000 euros to memory work and aided over 200 projects from 100 organizations.\textsuperscript{28} By Zapatero’s last year as Prime Minister in 2011, his administration worked to sponsor memory efforts valued at 5,861,000 euros.\textsuperscript{29} Beneficiaries of this support included multiple organizations dedicated to memory, and the Association often took advantage of what would become ephemeral funding to provide the tools necessary to conduct exhumations.

\textsuperscript{27}“Presupuestos generales del estado, 2006,” Orden PRE/99/2006, de 27 de enero, por la que se convoca la concesión de subvenciones destinadas a actividades relacionadas con las víctimas de la guerra civil y del franquismo, January 2006.

\textsuperscript{28}“Presupuestos generales del estado, 2007,” Orden PRE/4007/2006, de 29 de diciembre, por la que se convoca la concesión de subvenciones destinadas a actividades relacionadas con las víctimas de la guerra civil y del franquismo para el año 2007, December 29, 2006.

\textsuperscript{29}“Presupuestos generales del estado, 2011,” Orden PRE/809/2011, de 4 de abril, por la que se convoca la concesión de subvenciones destinadas a actividades relacionadas con las víctimas de la guerra civil y del franquismo, correspondientes al año 2011, April 4, 2011.
in various regions all over Spain. Through receiving state support, memory efforts slowly became more normalized in cities and towns all across Spain.

Illustration 5: Map of other memory organizations in Spain. GIS map displaying all memory organizations that have been established since the ARMH’s genesis in 2000. These organizations utilize Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica in their names even though they are unaffiliated with the ARMH.

As shown by the map above, the dissemination of memory dialogue and resources influenced the establishment of many memory organizations all around Spain. Rooted in similar goals to the ARMH, including the localization, exhumation, and identification of Republican victims, these groups adopted names that began with “Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory” followed by their local city or town to create a collective identity of those hoping to commemorate a forgotten history. In reality, they had no connection to the ARMH and instead utilized this name in order to gain recognition for their efforts. Even so, these organizations

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requested and used money from the allocated budget to pursue memory reclamation projects more local to their area.

In the first year of Zapatero’s financial commitment to memory activism, the ARMH utilized the maximum allotment allowed for one organization, completing three exhumation projects in which the state contributed 180,000 euros.³² This grassroots movement would continue taking advantage of the resources provided by the state, thus saving money from their operational budget for its sustainability in the future.

Even so, the ARMH initially hesitated in taking this money, as Silva Barrera acknowledged that the process to receive the money was greatly delayed by those in positions of political power.³³ Because there was no precedent, elected officials struggled to funnel money in a timely manner to each deserving and compliant organization seeking assistance. On top of that, the allocation of money to memory organizations rested on a partisan system that divided liberals and conservatives. This support was limited by the nonexistent framework of past memory efforts and dominant symbols that overshadowed efforts to establish memory in the public sphere. While Zapatero was in power, the central government approved of opportunities to support efforts to identify previously forgotten victims. However, as Silva Barrera foresaw, the PP’s political victory in 2011 immediately reduced and eventually eliminated all state-sponsored funding that contributed to developing investigations and exhumations related to the consequences of the Spanish Civil War and Franquismo. To a certain extent, the state budget promoted legitimizing memory in Spain. However, by resting on the partisan, fluid nature of

Spanish politics, it also curtailed long-term efforts in bringing justice and dignity to victims of Spain’s past repression.

The mobilization to validate local memory organizations through funding resources gave the ARMH the platform to lean further into exhumations and the politics that surround them. The ARMH had engaged in other projects, such as DNA databases and oral histories, that contributed to a developing memory narrative, yet exhumations still remained the emphasis of this organization. The material evidence that presented itself during exhumations, including battered clothing, jewelry, and watches, created a sort of spectacle that emotionally engaged the audience. These exhumations required Spain to confront the past, and because change made on the national level continually failed to bring justice and dignity to the victims, this heavy approach brought the ARMH attention and a growing civil society.

An exhumation requires an active, visceral confrontation of the past horrors perpetrated by Franco’s regime during and after the war. These exhumations produce an open, emotional setting when unburying battered cadavers that surprised many Spaniards who otherwise would not have to face this reality. Confronting the bones that reappear when exhumed serves as the only evidence of a victim’s life and reminds the whole nation that this history still haunts Spain today. Thus, exhumations force people to recognize that the comfortable history taught in schools and in popular culture privileges a conservative telling while belittling other, valid narratives. The pervasive brutality of exhumations creates a space for local, regional, national, and international communities to take note of the consequences of hate and intolerance that have weighed on Spanish families for generations.

Partially funded by Zapatero’s memory commitment, the ARMH conducted arguably the most successful exhumation during the years of state-sponsored funding that unburied over 125 victims in an unmarked mass grave in Valdenoceda, Burgos in 2007. As locals in this region came to terms that their land housed a mass grave from the early years of Franco’s dictatorship, they banded together to form a local memory organization that sought to concentrate on the repercussions of this repression. After recognizing that their beloved town had hosted an extermination prison targeting Republican sympathizers from 1938 to 1943, the newly established Asociación de Familias de Represaliados en Valdenoceda (Association for Repressed Families in Valdenoceda, or hereafter AFRV) sought to recover the identities of Republican community members.\(^{36}\) To assist in these efforts, the AFRV community invited the Association and other memory organizations as experts in exhumation techniques, identification tools, and reburial practices for victims impacted by the war and subsequent dictatorship.

Participation in an exhumation such as Valdenoceda touched the lives hundreds of family members who longed to rescue their forebears from oblivion and who had not previously dared to break their silence.\(^{37}\) Uncovering the remains of any missing cadaver summarily dumped into a mass grave releases survivors’ and descendants’ emotions, galvanizing them to share publicly the truth of a family’s past and write that truth into Spain’s recent history.\(^{38}\) These emotional settings reveal and validate the story of numerous families sworn to secrecy out of deep-seated fear for what could befall them if they tried to go public – from ostracism to shaming to multiple forms of social incomprehension. In the case of Valdenoceda, families of

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\(^{37}\) Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica, “Exhumaciones realizadas de la ARMH”, last updated August 2018.

victims from Spain’s past gained a platform to discuss openly the short- and long-term consequences of their inability to identify a lost grandparent, parent, or sibling, especially in a region so small that it rarely receives such concentrated resources and opportunities.

Many volunteers, including a large portion coming from the ARMH’s dependable archaeologists, anthropologists, and general community members, helped to exhume José Carrasco García, a victim of Franco’s repression murdered in 1941 after being transferred to the Valdenoceda extermination prison. After almost seventy-one years of lying underground without any marked grave or proper burial, Carrasco García’s cadaver was located, identified, and eventually reburied by various living family members.39 One of his daughters spoke during the emotional process of digging up her father, remarking that she “never envied anything but did when [she] heard the word ‘dad.’”40 The Franco regime prevented her from growing up and learning from such a meaningful familial figure, and on top of that, will prevent her future grandchildren from knowing their grandfather. Her remarks highlight the transgenerational impact and pain that has persisted for Republican families since the execution of family members over eighty years ago and supports the need for memory policies and practices that actively and inclusively confront the past understood as a fluid repository of conflicted memories.

Zapatero’s approval of state-sponsored funding supported many families who remained close to Valdenoceda to conduct DNA tests or who knew that a relative lay underground as a desaparecido. Over the course of repeated prospections, exhumations, and identifications in

40 “Testimonios: hijos que recogen los restos.”
Valdenoceda, these volunteers helped to unbury 154 cadavers lying in this mass grave. In conjunction with memory organizations all over Spain, the AFRV sought families who believed that one or more of their loved ones were executed in the Valdenoceda region. Through various technological advances and developed work from organizations like the ARMH, 127 of these victims were properly identified, many of whose cadavers have been reburied in family graves in commemoration of their legacies.

However, government funding proved to be more of a short-term fix than an expression to honor all of the victims of Nationalist violence. While this work often produced successful outcomes for families who had maintained residence in the area where their assassinated kin lived and went missing, some of these victims still cannot be identified due to a lack of DNA from living community members, an uninformed family which does not know about a disappeared family member, or other common circumstances that separate families from their homeland. The Valdenoceda exhumation produced four victims whose names have been discovered but relations to any families or friends have yet to be learned. Increased allocations coming from the central government cannot remedy these unfortunate realities and instead complicate what elected officials should do to support meaningful and inclusive efforts at reclaiming and empowering memory. While retroactively hoping to reclaim identities through DNA tests serves some victims’ families, the state should proactively pursue research that discovers all of the desaparecidos in regions all around Spain to facilitate the identification process. Until then, these unidentified cadavers remain in a storage space, ineligible to re-enter

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the soil until a relation or descendant who could be anywhere in the world today provides the requisite DNA identification.

Even with the limited government funding, the heightened concentration on memory reclamation shaped pivotal years 2006-2011 in Spain. The government recognized that this cause represented something larger than an exhumation project in which a few thousand families could participate. Many other portions of Spanish culture, including politics and international affairs, remained cultivated by the recent efforts of the Spanish government to prioritize victims and open up the narratives of the war and Franquismo. As the generation removed from the fear and torture associated with the Franco regime began to take more active roles in developing conversations on memory, the socialist-led Congress penned a law that linked the dissonance of memory to Spain’s political landscape for the years to come.

*The law by which rights are recognized and extended and measures are established in favor of those who suffered persecution or violence during the civil war or dictatorship*, more colloquially known as the Law of Historical Memory, was passed in late 2007 as a corollary to the campaign promises of Zapatero, to the “Year of Historical Memory,” and to initial funding efforts from the central government. Explicitly proposing Spain’s role in relation to memory into legislative framework, elected officials sought to amplify the voices of victims often silenced by the lopsided history normalized by the public’s active forgetting. In theory, this law confronted many concerns that victims and their families faced since Franco’s death. Conversations on and around memory transcended the local grassroots framework to confront this national issue on a national level and to memorialize the experiences and suffering of Republican victims. By committing the nation to provide reparations to suffering family

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43 “Ley 52/2007, de 26 de diciembre, por la que se reconocen y amplian derechos y se establecen medidas en favor de quienes padecieron persecución o violencia durante la guerra civil y la dictadura, BOE No. 310, BOE reference BOE-A-2007-22296.”
members, to facilitate investigations, localizations, and identifications of forgotten victims, and to promote a more holistic education of Spain’s history and democratic transition, past inaction should have translated to tangible efforts to be undertaken by elected officials.  

While Zapatero often receives recognition as the champion of memory in the turn of the new millennium, scholars and the public fail to understand that the ARMH publicly upheld these tenets long before the government enacted these ideologies into law. Even by representing a number of the ARMH’s demands for a more comprehensive memory policy, this law fails to produce much tangible action in promoting a holistic commemoration of the past. During the ARMH’s presentation to the UN in August of 2002, led by Silva Barrera, the organization prioritized exhumations to be spearheaded by the state and resources that acknowledge the leftist victims who suffered both during and after the war. Specifically, Silva Barrera demanded that the “state must proceed as soon as possible to order the judicial exhumation of the remains of the disappeared Republicans.”

While the 2007 Law of Historical Memory incorporates exhumations into its published version, its language proves too vague to implement the practice of exhumations in a way that places responsibility on the government. Instead, this law puts exhumations at the will of the “competent authority,” refusing to honor the Association’s request of requiring the state to play a role in exhumations and instead maintaining a distance between the inaccessibility of a long-repressed past and the insufficient present attempts to uncover it.

The vague nature of this law resulted in the ineffective memorialization of the past by elected officials. By failing to standardize various processes of memory reclamation, this poorly established bill hindered the work of activists looking to activate dialogue related to the past. The

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44 “Ley 52/2007, de 26 de diciembre,” art. 1, 3, and 10.
45 Emilio Silva Barrera, “Segunda presentación, 3.
46 Ley 52/2007, de 26 de diciembre,” art. 13.
imperfect outcome of the Law of Historical Memory thus does not represent the political process from which it came but rather the inadequate efforts in declaring a law that did not fully commit the state to commemorating Republican victims.

The Law of Historical Memory also fails to acknowledge the state’s responsibility for the labor and resources necessary to promote memory all throughout Spain. Although the ARMH has committed time and resources to hold the state accountable since its inception, the state refuses to play its expected role as a main sponsor of the institutional prioritization of this memory. The Law of Historical Memory’s vague title makes room for anyone who experienced “persecution or violence during the civil war or dictatorship,” essentially delegitimizing those whose narratives have been silenced out of fear or torture for over 70 years. Both Republican and Nationalist victims confronted varying forms of persecution and violence during the war, making it difficult to recognize that this law should prioritize the defeated. The law thus prevents Spanish elected officials from concentrating on efforts to memorialize the forgotten Republican victims. Its language instead relies heavily on the commitment of independent autonomous regions not only to conduct, but also to fund, projects and exhumations that would contribute to a wider recognition of Republican victimhood. The government often defines its role as “collaborating” with local authorities for various identification and exhumation efforts without detailing exactly what this type of work entails.47 This legislative piece fails to establish a standardized process to recover or otherwise establish the identities of victims neglected by the dominant Nationalist narratives. No article describes the mechanisms to investigate the last moments in the life of the assassinated, thus preventing the public from knowing how exactly to file a claim and work towards effectively reclaiming a long-forgotten cadaver.

47 “Ley 52/2007, de 26 de diciembre,” art. 11.
The vague language of and lack of consequences related to breaching the Law of Historical Memory promoted a culture of short-term achievements in relation to memory as opposed to long-term change. A more permanent change could manifest itself in the state claiming responsibility of locating, exhuming, and identifying cadavers, dedicating a memorial day to honor those who grieve the loss of a loved one, and opening archives from this time period. Even one of these developments would create a space for Republican victims to learn more about the truth of the past. However, the Law of Historical Memory fails to promise any of these changes for Spain going forward.

Article 12 of this law, which committed Spanish resources to producing an online, accessible map to integrate all of the mass grave sites into one collective tool, also did not prioritize long-term shifts in memory reclamation.\(^\text{48}\) Going through an intensive research phase and cultivating content that would disseminate to the public, Spain’s Ministry of Justice released their Mass graves map – historical memory law in 2010. The central government took a huge step by honoring the Law of Historical Memory, especially because this platform shows that the government acknowledges that these graves exist. Each tag on this map represents the actual or expected location of a mass grave perpetrated during the Spanish Civil War and subsequent dictatorship, totaling approximately 2,500 known or suspected graves.\(^\text{49}\) However, compared to the respected estimation from modern Spanish scholars like Francisco Espinosa Maestre of almost 30,000 mass graves that stem from Nationalist repression, this interactive tool represents a small fraction of the overall devastation.\(^\text{50}\) More than that, the Ministry of Justice published this

\(^{48}\) “Ley 52/2007, de 26 de diciembre,” art. 12.


\(^{50}\) Francisco Espinosa Maestre, *Contra el olvido: historia y memoria de la guerra civil* (Barcelona: Crítica, 2006), 172.
map once and has not updated any information since 2010, serving as an inaccurate representation of the number of victims who still remain unacknowledged and unidentified.

In response to the map presented by the Ministry of Justice, the ARMH worked diligently to provide a more complete, interactive map that highlights the productive work being done to exhume these bodies and connect late family members to their living descendants and other survivors. While the state-produced map feature surveyed just a portion of known mass graves, the ARMH published a holistic feature that included the exhumations in which these activists have taken part, updating the information through 2014. This work stemmed from the foundation of the Office of Victims of the Civil War and Dictatorship in December 2008, operating only four years before the right-wing PP took control of the government and removed its funding from this body dedicated specifically to hearing the testimonies of family members suffering from a victim’s unknown history. The ARMH produced a map that humanizes the organization’s work and including brief biographies and exhumation data for victims who volunteers unburied from previously unmarked spaces. By providing a more educational experience for its viewers, the ARMH prioritized the memory of the victims over the state’s requirement to establish a map of mass graves without individualizing any of the cadavers of right-wing repression.

While the Law of Historical Memory confronted issues never before discussed from a political standpoint, the ARMH quickly stood up and emphasized the fragility of this type of law. As Silva Barrera would promote broadly after the PSOE lost its majority in Congress in 2011, these more active practices to recover the memory left inactive or sanitized would fall short

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because of the law’s failure in establishing tangible policies and accountability practices that would ensure long-term commitment.\textsuperscript{53} When directly asked what would change with the passage of the Law of Historical Memory, Silva Barrera answered, “We do not have much hope.”\textsuperscript{54} This leader recognized that a law without strict standardized processes would evaporate with the transfer of power from left-wing leaders to conservative politicians. As would be the case starting in 2011, when Franco supporters regained political power and determined the role that memory would play in a contemporary context.

With continued failures in shifting the national narrative to engage more intimately with memory legislative policies, the ARMH sought to pursue justice through judicial means. Despite the legislative and economic shortcomings that came with state-sponsored memory campaigns, the ARMH took a lead in bringing the crimes of Franquismo to prosecution. The Association had initially attempted to try specific cases demonstrating the crimes against humanity committed against over one hundred thousand left-wing sympathizers, but the organization remained unsuccessful in this realm. Due to the 1977 Amnesty Law prohibiting consequences or repercussions of actions committed during the 1936 coup d’état until after the death of Franco, these crimes could not be analyzed within Spanish borders.\textsuperscript{55} For this expansion in the ARMH’s commitment to memory, Baltasar Garzón represented the claim of crimes against humanity to be upheld and recognized outside the Spanish judicial system.

Born and educated in Spain, Garzón quickly rose to the ranks of the legal world by practicing law and serving as the leader of the \textit{Juzgado central de instrucción n°5 de la}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[54] Tesón, “Entrevista | ‘El Gobierno nos ha usurpado el Año de la Memoria Histórica.’”
\item[55] Jefatura del Estado, “Ley 46/1977, de 15 de Octubre, de Amnistía.”
\end{footnotes}
Audiencia Nacional in Madrid starting in 1988.\textsuperscript{56} While recognized for his diligent work in improving the judicial system in his homeland, he cemented his name as an activist judge – the first one in Spain to investigate and prosecute crimes against humanity - with the arrest of Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet in London in 1998.\textsuperscript{57} Similar to the struggles for memory that continue to affect many Republican families today, Chilean (and Argentine) families face the pain and fear brought by vicious dictators in the 1970s and 1980s. Garzón sought out resources and information about Operation Condor, a Cold War mission that installed right-wing totalitarian regimes in Chile and Argentina, and the victims who suffered at the hands of the ensuing torture and executions.\textsuperscript{58}

Spanish families questioned why Garzón had worked so diligently to identify and bring justice to Chilean and Argentine victims without prioritizing the truth that needed to be recovered for his own compatriots. Garzón certainly conducted extensive research and judged Argentine crimes from the Videla dictatorship that left 30,000 victims disappeared.

The ARMH spearheaded and supported a report to the Audiencia Nacional once receiving centralized funding that spoke to the judicial efforts that should be made to indict perpetrators of Spain’s horrific past.\textsuperscript{59} The similarities linking efforts of memory in Spain and Argentina along with previous cases in Spain that indicted Argentine generals and leaders during the dictatorial overthrow allowed the ARMH’s trials to be carried out in Argentina. Therefore, this grassroots movement sought a figure prepared and eager to more critically assess the

\textsuperscript{58} Baby, “¿Latinoamérica: un desvío necesario?”, 4.
\textsuperscript{59} Juzgado Central de Instrucción N° 005, Audiencia Nacional, Diligencias Previa Proc. Abreviado 399/2006 V.
behavior of past Nationalist leaders. Declaring himself competent, Garzón took the responsibility and dedicated himself to the *Querella Argentina* cause that at long last attempted to bring penal action to thirty-nine years of Spanish history neglected and unresolved.\(^{60}\) Garzón paved the way for Spain to be considered amongst the human rights champions of the world by committing Spain to judicially try its first Franquismo cases.

In Garzón’s statement on October 16, 2008, he made it very clear that the actions of the Nationalist coup d’état and subsequent dictatorship were “illegal and went directly against the government…” to portray the monstrosity of actions taken by these leaders.\(^{61}\) He strongly supported that “impunity has been the rule for events that could be reclassified judicially as crimes against humanity.”\(^{62}\) Garzón capitalized on the ARMH’s petition to show that the root of these actions came as a premeditated and deliberate attack.\(^{63}\) Using language from international human rights law and practices from the 1945-1949 Nuremberg Trials and 1948 Genocide Convention, Garzón demonstrated that the perpetuation of the Spanish Civil War and continued repression and torture until 1975 should constitute judicial action against those who acted out of hate and intolerance.\(^{64}\) He called for nineteen specific investigations to take place in various localities across Spain that most likely serve as mass grave sites, amplifying the Association’s voice in asking for assistance in sponsoring localization, exhumation, and identification practices of illegally interred victims.\(^{65}\)

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\(^{60}\) Ana Messuti, email correspondence with Tyler Goldberger, November 26, 2018.


\(^{64}\) Juzgado Central de Instrucción, Diligencias Previás Proc. Abreviado 399/2006 V, 16.

\(^{65}\) Ana Messuti, email correspondence with Tyler Goldberger, November 26, 2018.
However, just one month later, on November 18, 2008, Garzón released another statement recusing himself to handle the cases of the growing number of Spanish families sharing the narratives of their late family members. In it, he highlighted the work that still awaits to be done by the Spanish central government to dignify the victims of the Spanish Civil War and Franquismo era. He removed himself from the lead in bringing the ARMH’s petition to action, instead assigning the work to the local court systems all across Spain where the mass graves lie. Many people were admittedly disappointed in Garzon’s brief commitment to establish a new narrative in relation to memory that held judicial weight followed by his swift exit from this arena. However, it would quickly become apparent that Garzon’s abrupt departure from this international human rights case might not have been his own doing.

To recapitulate, in the course of 2008, Garzón initially declared himself prepared to advance the recommendations in the ARMH’s report to the effect that perpetrators of Spain’s past crimes against humanity be brought to justice, but subsequently recused himself from the case. The Spanish Supreme Court prosecuted Garzón for taking advantage of his role as judge by ordering an inquiry into the terror committed by Nationalists in Spain from 1936-1975 on the Juzgado central de la instrucción N°5 in the investigation of Franquismo victims. For his

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involvement and leadership in bringing these truths to the judicial system, Garzón was suspended from the courts for eleven years. This sentence, spearheaded by leading Spanish judicial forces, essentially debilitated the first serious attempt to bring cases against Franquismo terror to courts. The international community fighting for human rights viewed Garzón’s indictment as “disgraceful.”

This demonstration represents the uphill battle that the ARMH has continually fought since its inception. As shown from this case, Spanish officials were not ready to confront bringing the past to light in such a public and consequential way. The judicial leaders’ failure to confront Spain’s anti-democratic past and its avatars in the present accounts for the absence of appropriate punishments for the perpetrators.

While this case brought a large international contingency to pick sides in this conflict, the news cycle concentrated heavily on the treatment of Garzón’s testimony and trial results. This directly opposed the work that Garzón emphasized by encouraging justice to be delivered to victims and their families. Eventually, a select number of cases in 2014 would be heard by Judge Maria Servini de Cubría in Buenos Aires, Argentina to indict high level franquista leaders. Six years after Garzón initially viewed himself as competent in delivering punishments to past repressive leaders, the Argentine judicial powers arrested nineteen franquista leaders, including Rodolfo Martín Villa, who admitted to burning archival information after Franco declared himself dictator. Plagued initially by leadership unwilling to judicially challenge the behaviors

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69 Tribunal Supremo, Peláez, Crespo y Correa vs. Garzón, Causa especial N° 20716/2009 (Sala de lo Penal 2012).
and torture of Franco’s regime, Spanish authorities limited the legal repercussions charged to these perpetrators and maintained a sense of fear for those seeking justice by once again rejecting any attempt to actively confront Nationalist torture.

The funding during Zapatero’s time as prime minister, although sensible in theory, failed to act as a practical change to improve memory efforts. Legally, economically, and judicially, changes brought by the increased financial contribution of the state disregarded a permanent solution to confront the horrors of the Spanish Civil War and Franquismo era. Symbolically, the understanding and recognition of the looming Valley of the Fallen as an immoral site still prohibited dignity and justice to be restored to all victims impacted by this unrepresentative monument. To date, over 33,000 victims from both sides of the war lie unmarked and potentially unknown in this mass grave, demonstrating the need for intentional memory practices to change the significance of this site. However, this memorial only centralizes and prioritizes the legacy of two Nationalist victims.

Illustration 6: Fresh flowers on Franco’s grave in the Valley of the Fallen. Photograph by Tyler Goldberger.
The Association has repeatedly spoken out against this burial site that privileges the victorious side of the war.\textsuperscript{72} The Valley of the Fallen strictly prohibits photos from being taken to respect the resting place of two significant fascist leaders, Falange leader José Antonio and dictatorial authority Franco. As the ARMH encouraged more transparency from the central government in relation to memory practices beginning in 2000, it was uncovered that not only are flowers placed on Franco’s gravestone every other day by staff at Valley of the Fallen but also that the money for these fresh flowers comes directly from public funds accumulated by the state. Essentially, families of Republican backgrounds pay taxes that go directly towards financing the homage of the dictator who spearheaded a coup d’
état and subsequent authoritarian regime that tortured and murdered their family members. Further, state finances also supported various renovations and developments of this monument through at least 2016.\textsuperscript{73}

In September 2002, between the presentation to the United Nations and successful fight to have Spanish Congress condemn Franquismo, the ARMH presented a petition to Congress for the Valley of the Fallen to be converted to a monument that commemorated the lives of all of the victims of the dictatorship.\textsuperscript{74} The tangible structure represents the labor of thousands of Republican political prisoners and slaves amidst the repression placed on them by Nationalist forces. Instead of remaining complicit in this monument’s disregard for Republican families, this grassroots movement took a leap of faith in questioning this site and its relevance to a nation that had supposedly transitioned to a democracy. These questions were apt considering the central


\textsuperscript{74} “Las víctimas del franquismo quieren dejar de pagar la tumba de Franco,” La Información, March 1, 2016, https://www.lainformacion.com/arte-cultura-y-espectaculos/historia/las-victimas-del-franquismo-quieren-dejar-de-pagar-la-tumba-de-franco_rzX9TW0D0JSylVDPmnObY2/.
government’s continued funding of an archive dedicated to remembering Franco (FNFF) and various restoration and construction projects of the Valley. Although Zapatero’s election in 2004 brought hope to the ARMH and other memory organizations, nothing had changed about this grandiose monument, and efforts to equalize the memorialization at this site had fallen flat.

Towards the end of Zapatero’s second term, the ARMH remained shocked that Franco’s remains still existed in a monument supposedly commemorating the victims of both sides of the war. As opposed to a site that truly brought honor to victims of the war, the Valley of the Fallen had transformed into a tourist site to see Franco’s resting place. In a monument that still does not explain its history or legacy inside its space, those unaware of its history would only understand the prominence of Franco and José Antonio’s tombstones. Therefore, the ARMH crafted a strong letter to the prime minister in 2010 wondering “until when will the victims of Franquismo have to pay, with their taxes, for the gravesite of a dictator who caused so much pain.” These grassroots voices indicated their frustration at a democracy that so candidly and openly revered Franquismo and the suffering it inflicted onto so many people.

To remedy the current structure and significance of the Valley of the Fallen, the ARMH asserted its demand for the removal of Franco from the site as the first step to transform this site to a monument that

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75 “Las actividades de la Fundación Franco seguirán financiándose con dinero público, apoyados por el PP,” Duke University Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library; Ejerique, “Todos los gastos del Valle de los Caídos, incluidos comida, teléfono y excursiones de los monjes, corren a cuenta del Estado.”
76 Jean-François Macé, “Los conflictos de memoria en la España post-franquista (1976-2010). entre políticas de la memoria y memorias de la política,” 763.
properly commemorates all of the victims of the Spanish Civil War and subsequent dictatorship. Removing Franco’s body from the center of the Valley of the Fallen has remained the most sought-after change to reshape the significance of this monument.

This show of persistent animosity towards such a problematic monument brought a group of experts together to assess more critically the current foundation of the Valley of the Fallen and the progress required to transform its significance. Mirroring many of the ARMH’s requests made previously, both publicly and privately, the Commission of Experts for the Future of the Valley of the Fallen concentrated on the tangible steps that could be completed to re-signify the representation of a monument privileging the Nationalist victims and leaders during Spain’s past. Delivered directly to Zapatero, this document represented one of the most distinguished attempts to not only put the Valley of the Fallen into popular culture but also to reconsider its meaning amidst a new generation of Spaniards eager to recover the memory of all of those impacted by the war and dictatorship. These suggestions ranged from promoting a culture of explanation over destruction to share the history of this site to removing Franco and José Antonio from their central place in the basilica. The commission called the state accountable for relocating the cadavers of both Franco and José Antonio to a less prominent space within the basilica, repurposing the monument away from honoring these two figures in such a centralized location.

The election of PP leader Mariano Rajoy in late 2011, however, prevented any tangible action to be taken following the publication of the Commission that validated the ARMH’s efforts to reshape this monument. Even today, the Valley of the Fallen exists as a contentious

80 “Comisión de Expertos para el futuro del Valle de los Caídos,” 21
space in Spain due to its glorification of both Franco and José Antonio over any of the other victims buried inside this memorial. As Rajoy became prime minister in 2011 and prioritized destroying any efforts that concentrated on memory that included the Republican narrative, progress made through the ARMH’s connections and developments with Zapatero’s PSOE government would cease. State-sponsored funding would quickly become eliminated as Rajoy attempted to shift the progressive narrative of memory away from those who had suffered the most. The ARMH admittedly struggled following the removal of state-sponsored funding but increased its resources and accessibility to continue working to commemorate the victims of Spain’s legacy of anti-democratic intolerance and persecution. While post-Zapatero attempts at reactivating a long-repressed memory admittedly almost brought the ARMH to its demise, the dedication of these activists and collective support from outside communities provided the assistance necessary to keep this movement alive.
Chapter Four: Ascertaining a Place amidst the Placeless Nature of Memory in Spain

2011 marked the end of a harmonious relationship between the ARMH and the Spanish government, as national elections introduced a new leader as Prime Minister.¹ Mariano Rajoy, an ardent conservative who served as PP president, replaced Zapatero and quickly reversed the government’s commitment of policies and practices related to memory. This election reintroduced traditionalist ideologies that essentially disregarded all of the progress that the ARMH, Zapatero, and the PSOE had made in implementing liberal reforms. Inclusive memory efforts essentially lost their place in the central government’s perspective, leaving the ARMH to stimulate the locating, exhuming, and identifying of erased Republican victims without this support.

Leading up to the 2011 pivotal election that became the turning point of memory work done by the state, Rajoy positioned himself as adamantly against all work pertaining to the recovery of this memory. Suffering a close defeat to Zapatero in the 2008 election for Prime Minister, Rajoy prepared for his 2011 run by sharing his platform early and often. Just six months after his loss, Rajoy, mirroring the rhetoric of Franco and of leaders who took control of Spanish politics directly following the dictator’s death, stated that “opening wounds from the past does not lead to anything.”² Shortly after, the PP leader promised that, if victorious in 2011, he “would eliminate all of the articles of the Law of Historical Memory that talks of giving public money to recover the past.”³ With these statements, the divisive issue of memory politics

rested heavily on the results of an election that eventually invalidated the work of activists and leaders since Franco’s death.

Rajoy clearly emphasized that memory deserved no place in his governance. Instead, he continuously pledged that “when [he] arrives to government, this historical memory is over.”

This election quickly became a highly contested battle that risked pushing memory out of public consciousness. Rajoy’s statements did not simply prioritize the future of Spain over its past human rights atrocity; they rejected the notion that the victims and families who still felt the transgenerational impact of the torture and fear deserved a space to mourn and to dignify their loved ones. Thus, when Spain elected Rajoy Prime Minister in 2011, this victory signaled the end of concentrated efforts towards restoring justice and served as a crucial turning point in transforming the ARMH’s identity.

As would be a tenet of Rajoy’s platform once elected, the central government removed any opportunity for memory to take a prominent place in Spanish culture. This decision emphasized a stark dichotomy of memory between place, providing a physical location and materiality to promote a civil society cognizant of the commemoration that needs to occur, and placelessness, delegitimizing any centralized efforts to recover these testimonies and causing civil society to continue mobilizing on their own to ensure that these histories are not erased.

These conflicting identities greatly dislodged the ARMH, as the eradication of state-sponsored funding required it to determine how best to continue its work to promote dignity for the fallen victims. The shifting place and placelessness of inclusive memory during Rajoy’s time in power challenged the ARMH to consider a new role in Spain following the elimination of government support.

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Immediately after Rajoy’s victory in the 2011 national election, state-sponsored funding for memory projects and exhumations that had been provided from 2006-2011 had been halved for 2012. By redirecting finances that worked towards the localization and identification of victims, elected officials no longer considered the confrontation of Spain’s past important. By the beginning of 2013, just a little over one year after Rajoy assumed his Prime Minister position, he would commit “zero euros” to any effort or collaboration that resurfaced information or memory of the past. The labor, persistence, and dedication of the ARMH as a grassroots movement, organizing exhumations that brought back victims to living family members and establishing inclusive memory on a national platform, were deemed inconsequential and unworthy by Rajoy and the PP.

This rapid transformation of Spanish politics from increased state-sponsored funding to a leader so adamantly against any practice that encouraged bringing the past into public discourse changed the place memory occupied in contemporary Spain. While the development of legislative and judicial action during Zapatero’s administration represented short-term yet tangible efforts for confronting the past, the removal of this support forced the ARMH to reevaluate how it would continue progressing forward. Relocating from Madrid to Ponferrada, the small-town region of the Trece de Priaranza exhumation that inspired this movement to form, the ARMH struggled with how best to develop dialogue and implement tangible change far away from a major city in Spain. This decision nuanced the ARMH’s work from an important place to an identity grappling with placelessness.

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Admittedly, the ARMH struggled with continuing exhumations that served as an entry way to bring the truth to the Spanish public after Rajoy’s victory. As discussed earlier, exhumations emphasized the visceral reality with which many families continued struggling because of the unknown identity of their loved ones. From 2013 to 2014, the first two years of Rajoy’s “zero euro” policy, the ARMH only conducted five exhumations for a total of nine cadavers recovered. The Association had not seen such low numbers for both the number of exhumations and victims exhumed in consecutive years since its inception in 2000, highlighting the difficulty and the tragedy of the state’s uncooperative nature towards these grassroots efforts.

The ARMH knew that recent changes, internally and externally, could not define this organization and the justice for which it fights every day. Therefore, these activists acknowledged that losing much-needed state sponsored funding could not bring about demise of this organization, much to Rajoy’s distaste. The ARMH reconsidered how best to approach these major challenges while reviving its self-sufficient and resilient nature from its earlier days that allowed such a movement to survive. Thus, in Rajoy’s time in power, the ARMH concentrated on re-prioritizing its efforts to establish itself as an international, digital community that would continue to shape the way memory was confronted and commemorated in Spain. In essence, by expanding the ARMH’s reach far past its national contingency, this organization established a new, open setting for commemorating victims of the past.

Moving to Ponferrada to reduce its operating cost and reconnect with Silva Barrera’s history with the Trece de Priaranza exhumation, the ARMH now found its office six hours from its previous headquarters in Madrid. As this grassroots organization established a name and identity for itself, it had to leave the comfort of its original home. The ARMH’s identity had

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7 Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica, “Exhumaciones realizadas de la ARMH”, last updated August 2018.
been tied to a place, intimately working both with and against the central government’s policies and priorities to insert inclusive memory into public consciousness. Now, out of place but unwilling to surrender its fight, the ARMH’s activists had to once again craft an identity that would contribute to a deepening dialogue to honor the legacy of those who passed away at the hands of Nationalists.

The ARMH recognized that its inaccessible location made it more difficult to disseminate information easily and to the general public. Thus, it decided to expand its reach to the digital world, specifically social media platforms, to build an interconnected community that did not lean on the support of the partisan Spanish state. The ARMH labored over digitizing archival materials and publishing exhumation images on these digital platforms to serve the greater suffering community which still longed for restored dignity and justice. This facilitated distribution of important information gave a sense of the ARMH’s work to a worldwide audience without necessarily having to personally confront and witness the arduous effort to promote memory.

While losing centrality in relation to making change at the national level, the ARMH’s relocation to Ponferrada provided cheaper rent and less scrutiny from the PP leadership. The Association moved into a free laboratory space in 2015 in Ponferrada that belongs to the Universidad de León – Ponferrada campus. In this partnership, the university hopes to stimulate memory reclamation from its students by working with those who dedicate their lives to bringing justice and dignity to victims of Franco’s regime. This also allows the ARMH to educate the younger generations on the holistic truth of the past and provide resources to learn how to better confront Spain’s history in the future. Settling into Ponferrada and connecting with a new community, the ARMH extended its reach to continue its important work.

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This tangible space for the ARMH has allowed it to develop a physical archive that contains information related to every single case for which they have conducted research without the threat of state officials delegitimizing their efforts from Madrid. Initially, families who believe that a loved one might be disappeared fill out an inquiry form to share with the ARMH all relevant information that might aid in locating the cadaver. From there, the Association communicates with various archives around Spain that specialize in military, regional, or civilian material in the hopes that one of these sources provides clues on the suspected whereabouts of this family member. All of these reports are printed out and placed in binders to ensure that every victim takes up a known physical place. Collectively, these binders, while taking up a large amount of space within the ARMH’s Ponferrada laboratory, represent just a fraction of the human remains which deserve to be located, exhumed, and identified.

The ARMH’s physical archive rapidly filled up as more families trusted it with their testimonies. Binders upon binders line the walls of its office containing over 2,100 cases with all relevant information from surviving family members and archival materials of unidentified
victims. As names and narratives began to pile up and the ARMH’s location presented a challenge in maintaining space in popular consciousness, the ARMH wanted to ensure that these testimonies would remain preserved for the generations to come. These voices also sought to expand dialogue by incorporating more communities. Thus, this movement started transitioning to a digital platform in order to reach larger populations regardless of the archive’s physical location, continuing to nuance dialogue and practices related to inclusive memory in Spain.

Digital preservation of archival material presents an opportunity to shift power dynamics and establish a new identity. In a more formalized archive, one that limits the information to a physical location that, in the case of the ARMH, lies in a decentralized town, access often inhibits the general public from learning more and engaging with this type of documentation. While the process of digitization certainly presents barriers in both time and funding, expanding access of privileged information to a larger audience allows more people to engage with these materials. This information simultaneously gains a home on the accessible web and exists in multiple locations, complicating the role of these documents and their reach to the general community.

Eric Ketelaar, an esteemed archival expert, argues that the use of a digital archive encourages the development of more than one truth in relation to an event or perspective. By opening dialogue to a larger audience, more people have the opportunity to react and analyze what has been published and offer their own interpretations that had not been privileged enough initially to exist in the archive. The increased access therefore complicates the assumed truth from preserved material by engaging more voices. In a traditional archival setting, the limited

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9 Núria Giménez Maqueda, Interview by Tyler Goldberger, July 12, 2018.
interaction with these sources encourages researchers to soak up every word from these primary sources. However, utilizing the ARMH’s digital archive allows any voice to speak out against claims delegitimizing the Republican narrative. Because this digital archive is no longer restricted to the boundaries of a physical space, its online presence incorporates more voices and available avenues for community members to reach this history.

By a movement like the ARMH transforming its archival material to this digital database, posits Ketelaar, the truth becomes versatile and far more representative. Any voice that has experience with a lost family member at the hands of Nationalist torture has a space to share their testimonies and speak out the names of those who suffered. Instead of these victims’ ephemeral legacies quickly being erased as each generation distances itself from this history, an online interface allows victims’ identities to remain alive. Although past traditional leaders have denied the repression that plagued Republican sympathizers for many years, this type of archive validates the names and testimonies otherwise erased from history. The ARMH provides space for anyone mourning or suffering to share their story and join a community with the goal of locating lost ones and restoring their dignity.

The Association has established its online digital archive in the form of a website that updates daily to keep the international community informed with the organization’s efforts and national fight to implement more tangible commemorative practices. Most recently redone in 2015, providing users with interactive learning opportunities and access to various archival materials, the ARMH’s website and digital archive humanizes the testimonies to recover the

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12 This webpage can be accessed at memoriahistorica.org.es.
victims’ remains. In the uphill battle that the ARMH has faced in bringing memory to light, this website allows these activists to insert their voices into the narrative without the risk of being silenced. The ARMH has decided to take this narrative into its own hands and reestablish the way these stories are shared without relying on the partisan nature of the central government, disseminating this information to a large crowd in a short amount of time. The voices crafting this digital, flexible archive reach an audience now able to learn more accurately and intimately from and study the work being done to restore memory in Spain’s consciousness.

This virtual space has given the ARMH unique tools to demonstrate the work it has completed and the work for which it consistently fights to better commemoration practices and policies. Instead of allowing Rajoy and the other PP representatives to control decisions and finances, the ARMH redistributes this power to give more of a voice to the ordinary person affected by the regime’s harsh repression. Rather than depending on a centralized location, the autonomy of possessing this information seems to be everywhere at once. The ARMH publishes and keeps records of local and national news discussing the ARMH’s work, facilitating a space for anyone to learn more about the fight for Spanish memory from a grassroots perspective as opposed to from removed reporters. While the information still filters through the ARMH’s leadership, these activists cultivate a space that broadcasts the painful truth to remind the community that many people still suffer from the ramifications of Franco’s dictatorship. Bringing power to the defeated narrative raises the voices of those who have been all but silenced, complicating the selective history that was rarely questioned following Franco’s death.

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14 María Teresa Rivas, Interview by Tyler Goldberger, July 1, 2018.
In continuing to present the ARMH as widely as possible, the leadership of the ARMH decided to join social networking platforms. Opening its Twitter account in August 2012 and joining Facebook shortly thereafter in October 2014, the ARMH shifted its identity to rely heavily on its digital presence and community obtained from online communication. As Rajoy took to eradicating state-sponsored funding for memory projects starting in late 2011, these voices figured that they needed a way to remain accessible amidst the loss of centralized support. In these digital settings, people all around the world have easy access to the groundbreaking stories and facts related to memory recovery in Spain. These sites have become a productive space where the ARMH shares and continues its work so that the larger community invested in memory sees the significance of these efforts and the long-term differences they make.

Along with the increased communication that the ARMH has with influential community members, establishing and maintaining these social media platforms gives anyone with Twitter or Facebook profiles the opportunity to connect with this resource. Families who moved away from Spain following the persecution might never have known that the ARMH existed, but this organization’s increased presence online creates a more accessible manner to learn about memory work. This resource exists on everyone’s devices through its digital platform but cannot be centralized to one location, demonstrating the complex nature of inclusive memory in a contemporary context. This increased access to the ARMH’s services allows each Twitter or Facebook user the opportunity to insert their own personal narrative into this broader network,

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facilitating the process of memory reclamation amidst the vague 2007 Law of Historical Memory.\(^\text{16}\)

On Twitter (@ARMH_memoria), the Association presents an inclusive image in its content, posting photographs and evidence of unidentified cadavers to see if anyone in this digital community could help connect family members to their forgotten relatives.\(^\text{17}\) The ARMH often asks rhetorical questions that show the absurdity of the government’s inability to take down franquista monuments or to act like a true democracy instead of its continued support for its dictatorial past. These tweets also connect with members of their community, thanking donors and sympathizing with those who share their vulnerable stories to show that this movement will not rest until it meets its mission of identifying and dignifying the 114,226 victims who have yet to reappear.\(^\text{18}\)

On Facebook, the group shares exhumations and homages that it leads and articles showing developments in memory work around Spain. Pained and potentially ashamed to share their story to friends who would not understand, survivors and their descendants can respond to the ARMH’s postings that acknowledge this organization’s success in an exhumation or a reburial of a victim finally brought home. Silva Barrera, the co-founder and president of the ARMH, finds that the relationship between the ARMH and followers on Facebook remains


“more human” because people react to the news and express how they feel in that moment.\textsuperscript{19} The ARMH facilitates sharing news related to inclusive memory work done all around Spain, as its Facebook page posts daily on developments from political leaders and tangible steps that the organization has made to continue identifying forgotten victims. This outlet for grieving community members creates a more personal connection that heightens the role of the ARMH in reclaiming justice for victims of the past.

As the ARMH transitioned to a digital platform to extend its reach amidst the faltering governmental support, the UN engaged with how Spanish policies and practices had developed since the ARMH first petitioned to this international body in 2002. Silva Barrera’s initial resilience earned Spain a spot on the UNWGEID list, validating the past suffering for many and opening up opportunities for Spain as a whole to improve its treatment of left-wing victims.\textsuperscript{20} The UN officials sought to evaluate the development of memory to understand what problems still existed in Spain. Therefore, over a decade after Spain was added to the UNWGEID list, the country once again received a visit from the UN to analyze the progress being made.

The UN nuances the idea of place and placelessness in its attempts to develop memory after Spain stopped providing material support. This body, to a certain extent, represents an omnipresent voice, leading and serving the international community through maintaining order and stability. This important position affords these leaders an inherent sense of power to ensure that each country follows both national and international policies. When countries are not in accordance with certain standards, the UN has the ability and resources to interject and correct the misbehavior.

\textsuperscript{19} Romano Serrano, “Memoria y justiciar en las redes,” 228.
\textsuperscript{20} La Librería de Cazarabet, “Cazarabet conversa con Emilio Silva”, 2.
Even so, the UN poorly utilized this power to support Republican descendants when visiting Spain for a week in September 2013.\textsuperscript{21} Two years into Rajoy’s political rule, the central government had officially committed zero euros to any efforts contributing to an inclusive memory actively seeking to reclaim testimonies from the past. By going to Spain under the PP leadership, the UN blatantly disregarded the current political climate in this country. Willfully neglecting the lack of resources and commitment put forth by the state to implement policies and practices to commemorate the victims of the past, the UN entered Spain without any real opportunity to make lasting change and shift memory politics.

The UN’s report summarizing its visit, published in 2014 as the ARMH struggled to receive enough funding to continue, served as an accurate representation of Spain’s inability to actively pursue justice on behalf of the fallen victims. While the report spoke of the many gaps that still existed as select communities in Spain began to fight for the memory of their loved ones, including the lack of concrete budget dedicated to legitimizing promises of the Law of Historical Memory, the absence of an established body to search for disappeared persons, and the failure to have a standardized exhumation process, the authors of the report suggested large scale changes that were impossible under the current PP administration.\textsuperscript{22} While voicing changes that would benefit the ARMH and other organizations dedicated to memory, such as the opening of archives to the general public and facilitating a national DNA bank to help with identifying desaparecidos, the UN failed to consider the feasibility of these changes under Rajoy’s administration. These authors “invite[d]” the Spanish government to submit a timeline explaining when these suggestions would become tangible action, but the Spanish government’s


unwillingness to participate and the UN’s failure to consider the current Spanish state caused inclusive memory efforts to remain untouched.\textsuperscript{23}

Notably, a majority of the recommendations offered by the UN stemmed from prior requests and demands that the ARMH made to various government officials, international communities, and judicial systems. This published document sought DNA identification for all cadavers found and implementation of various suggestions from the Commission of Experts for the Future of the Valley, both topics that the ARMH has spoken about extensively since its formation in 2000.\textsuperscript{24} The UN report harnesses its energy in discussing the many failed portions of the Law of Historical Memory, a truth which Silva Barrera spoke repeatedly about once it was passed in 2007.\textsuperscript{25} In 2012, he questioned the purpose of a law that still “placed the burden and responsibility” of locating a family’s loved ones on the family itself, disregarding their perpetual fear that existed during and following Franco’s death.\textsuperscript{26} The ARMH found itself more isolated in this battle for recovered history, as even the UN’s suggestions of various policies and practices could not be enforced by elected officials to bring justice to those executed at the hands of Franco’s regime.

The inability of bodies of leadership to sympathize with and prioritize the humanization and recognition of Republican victims’ forgotten narratives created challenges. While the national government had revoked all monetary support, thus potentially impacting the future longevity of the ARMH, local governments still found ways to advocate for memory. In Spain,

\textsuperscript{24} Emilio Silva Barrera, “Segunda presentación,” 2; Silva, “A la atención de José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, Presidente del Gobierno de España.”
regionalism often defines a person’s identity over a unified Spanish nationalism. These regions, some persistent in their fight for autonomy and others reliant on centralized government support for livelihood, establish an intimate community that might directly oppose elected officials’ platforms. While some regions remain controlled by descendants of Nationalist ideologies, others have transformed to left-wing strongholds that stand up for policies and leadership to honor all of the late victims of the Franco regime. Thus, even though Rajoy’s PP control of Spanish politics eliminated all state-sponsored work to prioritize the memorialization of unidentified cadavers, local voices of the civil society still had an opportunity to be heard through actions taken by more local governments in regions all throughout Spain.

One of the most prominent shifts made on a local level included removing various monuments and symbols that represented Nationalist force and repression in different autonomous communities, especially those that maintained a large contingency of Franco supporters. Highlighted in the 2007 Law of Historical Memory, the PSOE-influenced Spanish government committed itself to removing any physical representations that exalt the perpetrators of the war and dictatorship. This practice would symbolically portray the declining support of figures of the repression and open the community to more inclusive measures. It would also serve to stop glorifying manifestations of intolerance, hate, and violence, instead attempting to shift the conversation to focus more concretely on the memory of those whose tragic testimonies and unjust executions deserve to be remembered.

The work it would take to remove large-scale monuments and memorials that honor the Nationalist legacy— including the Valley of the Fallen— would require national, political, and economic support that Spain has still not been able to commit. The prominent location of this

27 “Ley 52/2007, de 26 de diciembre, art. 15-16.
monument serves as a heavy reminder of the dictatorship and its lasting effects. Understanding that these collective efforts to deconstruct national monuments proved difficult, memory organizations all throughout Spain worked to score victories on a more local level to contribute to the restoration of neglected memory. These voices, including the Association, analyzed the various symbols that still existed and thought critically about how to bring memory to the general population to incite dialogue and demand change. While shifting the cultural mindset and general education of Spanish generations through monumental changes to Spain’s physical landscape would be challenging, shaping the language of local street signs that still glorified the work of various fascist generals would demonstrate a change in mentality in relation to memory. These streets, occupied by the descendants of Nationalists and Republicans alike, would stand for the symbolic transition to incorporate the memory of those denied a place in history.

For the town of Ponferrada, the newly established home of the ARMH and of the centralized fight for bringing active memory to the forefront of Spain’s public consciousness, the local government attempted to prioritize the work of the ARMH by renaming the street of their newly leased office “Street of Historical Memory” in late 2012.²⁹ By recognizing the ARMH’s space dedicated to establishing dialogue on a more holistic representation of the past, many in the town felt that this shift brought productive change to the conversation. This adjusted name highlighted Ponferrada as a town making one step in the right direction in relation to achieving justice for victims of the war and dictatorship.

This renaming served as a way to dedicate a space in the public sphere to confront forgotten memory. A street sign is incorporated into the everyday lives of residents, bringing

constant awareness to the need for nuanced dialogue related to the past. Thus, the town
government provided a platform for the ARMH and validated the work of many volunteers
concentrating on ways to honor more equitably the legacies of silenced narratives. Even so, the
broad street renaming to “historical memory” depicted that there was still work to be done, as the
ARMH specifically focuses on humanizing the victims of the past repression and reconnecting
these testimonies and identities with their families to ensure that these narratives are not erased
from history. By prioritizing the large concept at hand instead of honoring specific names of
victims or naming street signs near mass graves to bring this history to Spanish consciousness,
Ponferrada officials had introduced productive commemoration tools that the ARMH would
improve as this organization acclimated to existing without state-sponsored funding.

As Ponferrada’s first attempt to highlight its commitment to memory preservation started
the conversation of how best to bring these histories to the surface, the continual work of the
Association in opening up avenues to contribute to the legacy of forgotten victims helped to
dedicate a street in Ponferrada to Juan García Arias. Disregarded in the early telling of
Ponferrada civil war history, García Arias represented one of the approximately 4,000 left-wing
sympathizers tortured and executed by Nationalist forces in this area. García Arias was a
known socialist who proudly served as mayor as a PSOE representative before the Spanish Civil
War began. During the coup d’état that began on July 17, 1936, fascistas (fascists) marched into
Ponferrada and detained many known socialists, condemning García Arias to twelve days in
various prisons as a precursor to his impending execution.

30 V. Silván, “Ponferrada estrena calle para García Arias, El último alcalde republicano,” Info
31 José Luis Garcías Herrero, “Juan García Arias: Memoria histórica del último alcalde
republicano de Ponferrada” (n.d.), Madrid, Salón general, Biblioteca nacional de España,
accessed May 18, 2018, 17.
On July 30, 1936, the day of García Arias’s death had arrived. However, before his service to his constituents and his family would cease, he scribed a letter to his loved ones that read:

My dearest Mercedes and my dear children, I have no more to say but goodbye with all my soul. For you, Mercedes, one last hug from the man who loves you very much and who fought for you. For our dear children, many kisses from your father. Dedicate yourself to becoming men, to keep good memories of your father, and to always follow advice… Goodbye Mercedes, be good forever.32

This letter demonstrates the painful reality for many families who suffered the loss of a loved one during these repressive times. Mercedes and her children were some of the lucky family members who heard the last words of their loved one and understood his fate, as so many victims remain unidentified and unaccounted for to this day. In becoming a town that more intentionally prioritized memory, Ponferrada renamed one of its streets Calle Juan García Arias in 2014.33 García Arias’s life, which once existed as a placeless memory, now earned a dedicated space in Ponferrada’s public sphere to contribute to an increased awareness of the past.

This more concentrated effort to bring meaningful memory to the forefront of Spain’s public consciousness demonstrated the ARMH’s intention in recovering memory that would extend past the life of one person. From experience, these activists worked on smaller-scale projects that they believed would eventually lead to drastic change in Spain. Since the Association had lost state resources that validated these important attempts to resituate memory in Spanish history, it admittedly struggled with how best to continue its mission without the extra financial support.34 By late 2014, having completed over 100 exhumations and resurrected the

identities of over 1,300 victims of Franquismo, the ARMH risked closing its laboratory due to its inability to fund its memory projects. While work still needed to be done, the ARMH’s recent efforts had not produced enough traction and monetary support to continue allowing for exhumations, identifications, and localizations of cadavers and general research related to victims’ potential whereabouts. 

Being in the right place at the right time, the ARMH leaders, including Silva Barrera, physically bumped into leaders of a Norwegian trade union known as Elogit in Madrid. After exchanging pleasantries, the ARMH learned that Elogit arrived in Spain to meet with the labor union Unión General de Trabajadores (General Union of Works, hereafter UGT). The UGT identified strongly with liberal values during the Spanish Civil War, targeted by Franco and his regime during the thirty-six-year dictatorship. Thus, both the ARMH and Elogit had personal connections to persecution at the hands of Nationalist forces due to political affiliation. The ARMH quickly explained its mission that centered on working daily to recover memory lost or intentionally forgotten from the civil war and dictatorship era. Impressed, Elogit leaders, including union President Jan Olan Andersen, decided to meet with the ARMH representatives that night to learn more about the organization, and thus, a strong bond commenced. Reflecting back on the evening, Andersen remembered how connected he felt to the ARMH’s mission because of Norway’s international brigades during the Spanish Civil War and of this country’s noticeably weaker education system that no longer prioritizes teaching about the consequences of

35 Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica, “Exhumaciones realizadas de la ARMH”, last updated August 2018.
36 Jan Olav Andersen, President of Elogit Forbundet Trade Union, interview by Tyler Goldberger, September 21, 2018.
fascism in Europe in the 1930s and 1940s. The trade union specializes in promoting democracy, and the ARMH’s goals attempted to reunify the fragmented pieces of what Spain considered to be a democracy.

Hearing that the ARMH had lost its financial support from the Spanish government, Elogit decided to make a one-time contribution in 2012 to support the identification of Republican victims erased from popular memory. While this support proved valuable, the ARMH quickly required more as its finances towards supporting various memory projects shrunk significantly. Elogit respected the ARMH’s perseverance amidst various national and international bodies rejecting its efforts and actively refusing to support memory recuperation. In 2015, Elogit elected its new leadership to a four-year term and dedicated an annual allotment to donate to the ARMH’s efforts. Through this continual donation, this small radical union in Norway has gifted 30,000 to 40,000 euros to the ARMH that have directly funded necessary exhumations in Canseco, Léon and Alcalá del Valle, Cádiz. In a time that failed to provide memory a place in Spain, especially due to Rajoy’s active stance against pursuing memory recovery and the UN’s unwillingness to push Spain to look back on its past, these annual donations helped to keep the Association afloat.

On the heels of forcibly having to shut down its operation for good, the ARMH had also been announced the winner of the 2015 Abraham Lincoln Brigades Archives/Puffin Award for Human Rights Activism (hereafter ALBA/Puffin Award). This US funding source reaffirmed

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37 Jan Olav Andersen, Interview by Tyler Goldberger, September 21, 2018.
38 Jan Olav Andersen, Interview by Tyler Goldberger, September 21, 2018.
the ARMH’s right and duty to stand as a voice for human rights and justice amidst the attempts to leave the unidentified cadavers lying in unmarked ditches forever. This competitive award permits both self-nominations and peer-led nominations of organizations and movements dedicated to restoring human rights in regard to the horrific treatment of both Republicans and Nationalists.41 From there, a board consisting of Spanish history scholars and human rights activists investigate the primary goals of nominated organizations and look to see which has done the best work to conduct groundbreaking research in relation to the Spanish Civil War.

In the ALBA/Puffin Award press release announcing the winner of the 2015 reward, the committee spoke of the Spanish state’s cultivated ability to “ignore the rights of those who were disappeared or killed by Spanish fascism,” and commended the ARMH’s work in “recover[ing] the remains of… roughly 8% of Spain’s disappeared.”42 Silva Barrera, moved by the recognition that his principled beginnings had inspired, spoke of the mass graves being exhumed as “open mouths” to allow a more holistic representation of the past to be displayed to the general public. Criticizing the way Spanish leaders handled the transition to democracy and emphasizing that Nationalist victims became revered as heroes during Franquismo, Silva Barrera passionately made the case of why the Association proved vital in a time when memory was being swept under the rug in Spain.43 Along with the recognition from one of the most well-developed Spanish history archives in the world, the 2015 ALBA/Puffin Award granted the ARMH

41 Sebastiaan Faber, Interim Co-Chair of Abraham Lincoln Brigades Archive, Interview by Tyler Goldberger, September 25, 2018.
$100,000 to continue doing exactly what it sought out to do: open up conversations of the past through the localization, exhumation, and identification of Republican victims executed at the hands of the Franco regime.\textsuperscript{44}

Both Elogit’s donations and the ALBA/Puffin Award’s grant restored the ARMH at a crucial point in its history. Low on funds and unprepared for what the future might hold, the ARMH’s efforts were legitimized by these funding sources even without a dedicated place in institutionalized support nationally and internationally. Once given the money, the ARMH had the ability to choose how best to make an impact on grieving families who relied heavily on these voices to speak up for their forgotten family members. Both of these funding sources agreed that the money supporting the ARMH did not need to be tracked or managed, as they fully trusted these leaders to do what needed to be done for the families who still suffered from Spain’s past.\textsuperscript{45} This confidence fueled the ARMH to continue making large ripples in a Spanish state that refused to acknowledge the work that had to be done to incorporate the lives and legacies of victims of the civil war and dictatorship into popular memory.

Without a physical space in Spain’s mainstream civil society, the ARMH still managed to craft narratives that demonstrated the importance of commemorating the past. The support came from organizations without a direct connection to Spanish memory efforts amidst the Spanish central government’s active disinterest. The ARMH’s struggles encouraged these sources to step forward to ensure memory was still prioritized in Spain’s public sphere. With the increased international support and validation that the ARMH remained necessary to spearhead and contribute resources for the fight of Spanish memory, the ARMH continued its projects dedicated to locating and exhuming the estimated 114,226 victims of Franquismo whose

\textsuperscript{44} Sebastiaan Faber, Interview by Tyler Goldberger, September 25, 2018.
\textsuperscript{45} Sebastiaan Faber, Interview by Tyler Goldberger, September 25, 2018. Jan Olav Andersen, Interview by Tyler Goldberger, September 21, 2018.
identities had yet to be investigated. Thus, exhumations started to occur more frequently, and more victims’ identities were investigated with the legitimization of the ARMH’s efforts.\textsuperscript{46}

The political landscape in Spain rapidly began to change in 2018 as PSOE leader Pedro Sánchez led the movement to remove PP President and Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy from Moncloa. Full of corruption charges related to a judicial case carried out by the PP in 2009, the party suffered when the Spanish Congress voted to eject Rajoy from his seat and transition socialist Sánchez to this position.\textsuperscript{47} Certain liberals celebrated as their voices and ideologies felt recognized after seven years of conservative leadership, but the ARMH expressed skepticism at the announcement that would simply put “another man hungry for power” in the most powerful seat in Spain.\textsuperscript{48} Sánchez, while not running an official campaign during this period of political turmoil, promised a renewed commitment to memory while serving as the PSOE General Secretary that would support many of the policies and practices that the Association had introduced.\textsuperscript{49}

After Sánchez replaced Rajoy as the new Spanish Prime Minister by the end of May 2018, he spoke loudly about his desire to remove Franco from the Valley of the Fallen and reestablish the space as a national cemetery that equally valued the lives lost on both sides of the war.\textsuperscript{50} Following the ARMH’s leadership in rejecting the current tribute that the Valley of the

\textsuperscript{46} Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica, “Exhumaciones realizadas de la ARMH”, last updated August 2018.


\textsuperscript{48} Marco Antonio González, interview by Tyler Goldberger, July 13, 2018.


\textsuperscript{50} EFE, “Pedro Sánchez quiere sacar los restos de Franco del Valle de los Caidos antes de agosto,” \textit{La Vanguardia}, June 27, 2018,
Fallen only offers to Nationalist victims, especially since the structure itself was made by Republican slaves during Franco’s dictatorial regime, Sánchez sought to renew conversations of rededicating the space to honor more respectfully the cadavers lying in this space. Even after promising to remove Franco’s remains from the monument by August 2018, Sánchez had not made any progress until September 2018, when Congress voted, by a mere eight votes, to transfer these remains to a less centralized yet undecided location. Until Franco’s cadaver is transferred from one of the most sanctified memorials in the capital of Spain, memory will not be able to find a true place in Spanish consciousness.

The ARMH President Silva Barrera remained doubtful that any significant change would be made because of his acknowledgement that this new administration failed to bring “good intentions” to reclaim the legacies and names of victims impacted by Nationalist rage and repression. While the Valley of the Fallen is estimated to hold over 33,000 victims from the Spanish Civil War, only around 1,600 names have been published to the public even though the government claims to have record of approximately 20,000 victims. Therefore, instead of solely concentrating on the remains of the dictator, Sánchez’s government should also dedicate resources and research to the over 12,000 cadavers who remain buried in the Valley of the Fallen without any name, identity, or known burial site. A tangible first step would encourage the state

53 “Listado víctimas enterradas en el Valle de los Caídos” (August 2018), Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica.
54 Torrús, "Emilio Silva.”
government to open up the archive related to the construction, development, and maintenance of this cemetery, as this archive is currently closed off to all community members and researchers.  

Sánchez also spoke to the various reforms that need to be made to the Law of Historical Memory to “guarantee effective compliance” of inclusive memory preservation. Specifically focusing on adding articles to the existing law to increase the active role of elected officials in contributing to memorialization practices, he demonstrated his readiness to take on the role of Prime Minister by highlighting the tangible steps that should be made in order to shape this narrative. These suggestions covered major areas of change to which the ARMH had dedicated much time and effort, including the immediate removal of Franquismo symbols all throughout Spain, a national census of victims of Franquismo, and the removal of Franco from the Valley of the Fallen.

The PSOE recently committed to removing Franco’s cadaver from the Valley and placing it next to the resting place of his wife in Madrid. However, until his body is exhumed, an empty promise that has lasted eight months now, this site still looms over all of Spain as a reminder of the inability to reckon with the past. Even so, the ARMH has continually written letters and spoken up that the potential for the government to transition the Valley of the Fallen away from a dictatorial shrine would be “symbolically really powerful” in disseminating a new message.


57 “El PSOE pide reformar la Ley de Memoria Histórica para garantizar su eficacia.”
throughout Spain. The ARMH’s laboratory in Ponferrada, León takes in new cases every day, serving as a lead voice in reaching out to various state-sponsored archives in the attempts to locate information and whereabouts related to these victims who remain unknown. This organization has prioritized victim and family testimonies of the past to reestablish these narratives as stories that deserve to be preserved with the passing of time. These efforts have sparked a change on the political, economic, and social landscape of Spain, developing a meaningful place for memory to occupy in the hopes that these truths are not permanently erased from the past.

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60 Marco Antonio González, interview by Tyler Goldberger, July 13, 2018.
Epilogue: Remembering Today

After fear of what the July 17, 1936 Franco-led Nationalist coup d’état could mean for left-wing supporters, Jesús Casas González O Inverno fled into a neighboring town and took refuge in Covadellas.¹ Shortly thereafter, on the morning of August 6, 1936, a number of falangistas came to Covadellas to arrest him officially. Less than twenty-four hours later, these right-wing forces tortured, murdered, and disposed of Casas González. Almost 82 years later in July of 2018, the ARMH spent two days unsuccessfully attempting to exhume the body of this person “killed by gunshot fire.”² His potential gravesite had been turned into a new cemetery since his execution, which suggested that his cadaver most likely lay beneath other bodies. I served as one of the volunteers looking to reclaim the identity of this victim, and after twenty hours of digging under various sites all around the new cemetery, it seemed nearly impossible to locate his body. Jesús Casas González O Inverno’s cadaver and memory remain to this day buried at Saa in A Pobra de Brollón, Lugo, Spain.

Illustration 8: Physical labor of an exhumation. Exhumation of Jesús Casas González O Inverno, including the arduous labor of digging more than two meters below the ground with picks and shovels. I am pictured on the far left in the green shirt assisting with the exhumation process. Photograph by Oscár Rodríguez.

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¹ Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica, Proyecto de intervención para la búsqueda y exhumación de una fosa común en el cementerio de Saa (A Pobra de Brollón, Lugo), July 2018.
² Asociación, Proyecto de intervención. Original statement read “muerto a consecuencia de disparos de arma de fuego.”
Hundreds of miles away and nearly simultaneously, fervent franquistas arranged a rally in the heart of Madrid to protest the recent efforts to remove Franco from the Valley of the Fallen. One of Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez’s first proclamations asserted the exhumation and relocation of the dictator’s cadaver from this memorial site. The first groups to speak out against Sánchez’s plan were in alignment with former Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy’s commitment to stop looking in the past and instead focus on the present state of Spain. At the top of their lungs, these activists shouted, “do not touch the Valley,” demanding respect and dignity for Franco’s cadaver amidst the recent shift in government. These voices continue to influence the reception of memory reclamation on a national scale. Now more than ever, Spain seems divided on memory politics and how to reckon with the pain and suffering from the civil war and ensuing dictatorship.

The ARMH serves as just one necessary voice in an international battle to call attention to the violations and abuses of human rights committed by fascist and dictatorial regimes over the past few generations. This organization has separated itself from the political realm to investigate the memory that still haunts this nation today. Its efforts have concentrated on locating, exhuming, and identifying corpses whose fates had been ironically and simultaneously overlooked with the democratizing of state institutions. These activists highlight the sense of injustice experienced by the victims and their families without closure of the repressive past. The ARMH works to humanize a past all too often reduced to a reference to a successful transition that serves as an example to be imitated around the world. Humanizing the past by remembering names like Jesús Casas González O’Inverno forces us to confront the legacy of authoritarian regimes. The individualized and humanized stories of persecution unearthed by organizations

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like the ARMH disrupt the sanitized narrative of the transition as a triumph that brought freedom and justice to all.

The ARMH also has advanced memory conservations in a significant way. Monuments and memorials speak to the public representation of the past by suggesting to the community who deserves to be remembered. Concentrating on the individual names and stories memorialized in monuments and other forms of public recognition allows anyone to feel connected to this history. Each name that is newly added to the historical and institutional record activates memories not only for families directly affected by the long-repressed past but also for people all over the world who recognize that a human life was lost at the hands of intolerance and hate.

Popular Party (PP) leaders in Spain and right-wing supporters in Europe and worldwide are unprepared for what this fresh wave of memory concentration could mean for their roles of power. Specifically, in Spain, the recent resurgence of memory reclamation threatens the power and prestige of families and identities whose influence is linked to Franco’s dictatorial institutions although they present themselves as Christian democrats or center-right conservatives. Those who seem most resistant to any pluralistic or progressive retelling of the master narrative of the Spanish Civil War often dominate the political, economic, and social landscapes of Spain, confounding efforts to hold people accountable for their actions.

In short, Franquismo is not dead. Franquistas still speak out and fight for values vacuumed in a fantasy which they believe will restore Spain to its glory days. These traditionalists view left-leaning policies as an attack on their identity, viewing these challengers as upending the natural order of thing. They are not just the ones shouting that Spain must reject the liberal tendencies of its current leaders and revert back to its old ways. These believers—people such as my host father Jesús, who gather at the Valley of the Fallen to honor Franco’s
legacy while ignoring the over 33,000 cadavers who deserve to be mourned and who fail to recognize that the prosperity and security they enjoyed during the dictatorship came at the expense of Republican victims – also refuse to disavow or even mildly criticize the late dictator. This conservative population plays an increasingly important role as the responsibility of ensuring that the memory of the past remains relevant today rests on the generation that did not personally experience the torture to share the fear associated with living under Franco’s regime.

Other forms of nationalism are not dead, either. The last decade or so has brought a resurgence of right-wing ideologies in Europe’s political sphere. Recently, faltering economies and social frustrations have resulted in people placing blaming the “other,” which inherently penalizes marginalized groups. Platforms focusing on the rejection of human rights for specific groups that do not prescribe to the nation’s identity, including immigrants attempting to enter Europe, prove that many people have still not learned from the consequences of past intolerance.

This targeting perpetuates beliefs that these actions against those different are normalized and acceptable. By failing to protect marginalized groups, these governments risk continued human rights atrocities against minorities – a social narrative that has been played out many times before. People refusing to come to terms with the repercussions of subordinating others based on ideological, spiritual, or physical differences continues to undermine any opportunity for coexistence amongst different people. Without regarding the past as a tactic to learn for the future, nationalism remains a threat not only to memory but also to vulnerable populations today.

Spain is just one of many nations divided by memory, especially the transgenerational impact that past suffering has had on the current generation. The Spanish government’s failed efforts to pluralize memory serve as a microcosm of the global challenges to commemorate victims of targeted identities. The Holocaust, the most well-recognized genocide in an international context, still struggles with state governments’ refusal to acknowledge the victims
of the past. While Germany has come to terms with its past and worked actively to honor the victims of the Holocaust, Polish elected officials have passed legislation that discounts Poland from any culpability for the Holocaust.\textsuperscript{4} Disregarding the abundant Polish concentration camps, this nation has been unable to confront its crimes against minority communities. Instead, the Polish Institute of National Remembrance views its country and constituents as the true victims of the Holocaust, neglecting to contribute time and resources to dignify those who fell at the hands of Nazism. By shifting the narrative away from the victims of this atrocity, Polish leaders reject the space and legacy that these targeted minorities deserve.

In the Americas, many nations still face the trauma of making known the stories of victims whose pasts have been invalidated by the government in power, even after a transition to formal democracy has taken place. In Argentina and Chile, Operation Condor sought to remove any leftist supporters or people who believed in ideologies different from the respective dictators. Soon-to-be mothers were forced to give birth in captivity, and then their newborn children were stolen from them and gifted to supporters of the authoritarian regime.\textsuperscript{5} Due to a lack of record-keeping, many of these children have discovered their heritage after reaching adulthood but are unable to reconnect with their biological families. Currently, no official, state-sponsored avenue works to bridge this gap, demonstrating the official neglect to prioritize the memory of those who still feel the repercussions from actions over forty years ago.

Minority voices hoping to bring justice and dignity to the victims whose memory has become devalued by right-wing enthusiasts are also being silenced by current administrations. Spanish elected officials have repeatedly failed to recognize the ARMH as a legitimate


organization looking to recover forgotten memory before the oldest generation connected to this pain and suffering passes away. In Argentina, the grassroots Madres de la Plaza de Mayo has constantly been challenged by deniers of the Dirty War, an atrocity that contributed to the forced disappearances of over 30,000 victims. These women march every week, determined to learn the truth regarding the location of their children and grandchildren, yet the current president, Mauricio Macri, remains unsupportive in providing these activists the space to amplify their voices. When asked how about the victims of the Dirty War, Macri responded that he had no “idea” whether the number of desaparecidos was “9,000 or 30,000.” Many have claimed that Macri actively seeks to erase the history of the Dirty War and victims’ lives taken as a result of these actions. Struggling with a similar power structure in Spain, these activists fear that political leaders will prohibit the future generations from acknowledging that a tragic past took the lives of many loved ones.

The coverage of these atrocities has significantly increased with the rapid expansion of media and technology. Those originally unconnected to the pain and suffering of victims halfway across the world suddenly find themselves able to be intimately involved with these histories. The dissemination of information allows for a larger audience to feel personally committed to reclaiming the identities and names of those affected by the oppressive perpetuation of leaders in different regimes. While nostalgic regimes show an increased resistance to developing memory policies and practices, empathy amongst the worldwide audience has increased due to a greater chance of coming into contact with this visceral reality and having the resources to learn about

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these histories. With the news cycle and ability to be inundated with so much information, centralized governments no longer control narratives of commemoration, as civil society has asserted its own authority to distribute these truths.

By poorly confronting the histories of the past, the current generation sets a precedent that negatively affects the populations growing up in these regions. Communities that still suffer from the persecution experienced by their families and that remain unsupported by government institutions see their voices devalued and ostracized from the public sphere. The reality remains that the first-hand voices and experiences of those who endured and survived the dictatorship are simultaneously becoming more valuable and vulnerable than ever. Especially related to Franquismo, those afflicted by the pain of the past have started to reach old age, predisposing these survivors to faltering or completely erased memories. Those who can recount the past are passing away, heightening the burden of current generations to ensure that these names and testimonies remain in the public’s consciousness. Retrieving and recording these histories have become a priority for those afraid that their loved ones’ experiences will mean nothing if no one recognizes them.

It will take collective efforts like the ARMH to come together and truly make a difference on the landscape of memory. Many of the perpetrators of recent human rights atrocities still maintain power in these affected regions, meaning that memory reclamation rests on the work of civil society. People in positions of political power do not represent the only avenue to pursue memory politics, as those who can deeply resonate with the need for memory in the present possess the power to normalize and facilitate this dialogue. These developments will hopefully translate to nationwide and international efforts to right the wrongs of the generation before and reinstate memory as a priority of nations attempting to confront their pasts.
In writing this senior honors thesis, I have endeavored to weave together threads of archival research, community service, history writing, and the sociology of politics into an exploration of Spain’s past that is also a journey of self-discovery. The present thesis is not the end of that journey, but rather the beginning of a sustained engagement with the emotional and largely immaterial legacy of Spain’s repressed memory. The physical remains I have partially unearthed inform my perspective on the vestiges of a past that slowly begins to take shape before our eyes. I write so that others may continue writing and digging, and further commemorating those who suffered persecution after they committed publicly – without fear of hesitation – to the making and preservation of a pluralistic civil society in Spain.
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