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Sites, Spaces, and Borders: The Politics of Body and Time in Democratic Argentina

Struggles over memory have long been understood as ways in which nations and communities reshape the public sphere, especially important in the aftermath of political violence. In Argentina, following a period of political repression and an estimated 30,000 disappearances, a new democracy emerged, legitimized through elections, a truth commission and a civil society and human rights movement that reinforced new forms of citizenship. Yet, impunity remained – both in the case of the aftermath of the Dirty War and later, in the wake of other forms of political violence, including two bombings in the 1990s—the 1992 attack on the Israeli Embassy and the 1994 attack on the AMIA Jewish community center. While these attacks resonated with past violence experienced by Jews in Europe and Argentina, they also became framed within a broader narrative of impunity in Argentina. In response, the Jewish community transformed the urban landscape with new security practices and commemorative protests that explicitly incorporate Jewish memory and history into the public sphere, in line with the politico-memorial practices of the human rights groups advocating for justice after the Dirty War, who also turned to public spaces in their struggle for justice. This paper examines the role of these sites of memory in response to both the Dirty War and to the 1990s terrorist attacks. Based on ethnographic fieldwork in Buenos Aires, I argue that these sites and the embodied forms of disruption at these sites – commemorative protests that have come to characterize public memory work in Argentina—reveal the centrality of such contestations over the political meaning of past violence as a central form of citizenship in democratic Argentina.

Natasha Zaretsky was the Bildner Center's Aresty Visiting Scholar in Fall 2013. She earned her Ph.D. in anthropology from Princeton University in 2008, and her work examines memory in the aftermath of political violence and trauma in urban diaspora communities in Argentina and the United States. Her publications include "Arriving in Jewish Buenos Aires" in *Violence: Ethnographic Encounters*, edited by Parvis Ghassem-Fachandi (Berg, 2009); and "Child Survivors of the Shoah: Testimony, Citizenship, and Survival in Jewish Buenos Aires" in *The New Jewish Argentina: Facets of Jewish Experience in the Southern Cone*, edited by Raanan Rein and Adriana Brodsky (Brill, 2012). She is currently working on two new research projects - testimony and political activism among undocumented migrant youth, and post-Soviet Jewish memory and belonging in New York. She is also finishing her manuscript, *Disruption: Memory, Violence, and Belonging in Jewish Buenos Aires*.