

Human Rights: Laura Rodríguez and the Villa Grimaldi Peace Park

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<https://youtu.be/2be-alu5MTM>

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Dario Ergas in Villa Grimaldi 10 December 2023 (Image by Daniela Cuadros)

We publish here the words of the humanist Dario Ergas on the occasion of the installation of a plaque in homage to Deputy Laura Rodríguez in the Villa Grimaldi Peace Park, which she helped to found in the years immediately following the recovery of democracy in Chile.

This recognition took place on International Human Rights Day.

“Dear friends, comrades, dear family.

Coming to Villa Grimaldi, to the Villa Grimaldi Peace Park, is not easy.

It requires an intention, to want to immerse oneself in the memory of pain; of what should never have happened, but we force ourselves, to have in mind what we must not repeat.

Reading the names, one by one, the long list of names of those tortured, murdered, disappeared, is a painful immersion in something pending, something we have not resolved as human beings and as humanity. These names show us what has no name, the human actions that we inflict against the human, against humanity.

This Peace Park exists to remind us of how far contradiction, hatred and revenge can take us.

What does Peace mean to Laura Rodríguez?

“Peace is not synonymous with immobility, amnesia or revenge.

Peace is synonymous with permanent change, it is synonymous with transformation towards fairer conditions. Peace is synonymous with truth, with a vision of the future.

Peace is the freedom to go through the past with reconciliation.

Peace is having the courage to recognise the facts in which human rights have been violated and to acknowledge the victims”.

These words were spoken in support of the creation of the Rettig Commission on Truth and Reconciliation.

Laura Rodríguez tried to represent a vision of the human being and of society. She tried to translate that vision into her legislative action and her dealings with people. Any of her bills, the divorce law, the repeal of illegitimate children, the rights of domestic workers, political accountability laws, health and reproductive rights, the rights of indigenous peoples, of the disabled, of those living with HIV; each of them expressed in different ways, that the human being is not a thing, not something useful or disposable; in every human being, something very great lives, which cries out for dignity and freedom. To discriminate, terrorise, manipulate, exploit, torture or kill a human being is an attack against history, against the future, against the sacred.

Lala’s mission for the Humanist Movement and for the Humanist Party was to create consciousness of the sacred value of every human being, of nonviolence

as the only path of transformation and of the effort for personal and social reconciliation to face the future.

Some 32 years ago she came to this place, together with the human rights organisations, those who lit a beacon of hope since the military coup, those who did not tire in dictatorship, did not tire in democracy and hopefully will never tire, came to this place, to take possession, to open, perhaps to break the padlock of the gate and let in the light, the light of the people, the light of memory to this place of darkness.

Life goes on, we are still far away from a society of human rights. This is not only our battle, it is a struggle to resist the violence within each one of us, at the same time as we try to change the violent social conditions. But it is also a commitment, to wage this struggle with respect for the human rights of others, even if they infringe them. Until we reach a truly human universal nation. Thank you very much."