

ARGENTINA – DNA, TRUTH AND PRIVACY

David O'Shea

This speech will examine the determined efforts of a legendary group of grandmothers searching for answers about the systematic theft of the babies of their murdered children during the 1970's "dirty war." I will outline how this dark chapter in Argentina's history still resonates and haunts the nation today.

At the core of the story is a search for identity, with the grandmothers spearheading a unique process of voluntary and forced DNA testing and cross-referencing with samples held at a government run databank. I will take conference delegates on a behind the scenes journey through this process and the production of my investigative documentary "Returning the Stolen." I will convey the raw emotion of victim's stories and shed light on the mechanics of the search for truth by outlining forensic detail, which was not included in the film. I will also cut to the heart of the controversial ethical debate on truth versus privacy and the national fallout over a high profile case of the forced DNA testing of the heirs to a media empire.

The speech will begin and end with the human cost of this terrible history. Since my visit, another 18 people have discovered their true identities, including, sensationally, the lead Grandmother's grandson. Each reunion brings a flood of emotions as well as a renewed determination to continue the search.

With the US government and CIA currently considering declassification of documents relating to its role during this period, I will explain what other pieces of the puzzle may soon be revealed.