

21. Olivia Barraza

The campaign was really beautiful. I think it left a mark on all of us because we watched it every day, and it was always something new. It gave you hope because it was so joyful, so, you know, happiness was coming. We used to laugh because there was a part where a good-looking man was walking, and we would say, "There comes the joy." We all said, "Let the joy come soon", because it was a very good-looking guy walking, and we laughed about that.

But it was really beautiful. I think one of the things that also made an impact was when Caszely appeared. When his mom was speaking, and nobody knew. His mom told her story, how she had been tortured and detained. And suddenly, Caszely appears and says, "Yes, because everything she went through, she is my mom," and we were all like, "Hey, Caszely!" because she was his mom. She had also gone through the same things.

What I remember from that day is that we had prepared ourselves like before. They taught us how to vote because we had never voted before. Personally, I had never had this thing of voting, as I had spent my entire childhood and youth under dictatorship. So no. I had not had the pleasant honor of going to vote, of choosing. So, that day we woke up early, yes, we were ready to go and vote. We got dressed and everything. I remember going with my sister, Kela. We went, and there were many people, not like now when you vote and there's nobody. Back then, it was crowded. We went to a school relatively nearby. It was on Lo Ovalle Street, the school, and we went. Well, a few days before, we would be careful not to lose our ID card because it was our vote. If you lost your ID card, you lost a vote. So, we were careful, and on that day, we went to vote, and the school was filled with women. There was a huge line, and it was very hot. I remember everyone making jokes there. We, in fact, said, "Hey, if the 'No' wins, today we bet that we'll go out naked on the street if we win." Like, "Oh well, let's see." And well, we voted, happily, and we came back, and it was just waiting for the count that day. Waiting for it to start, and the count began around 6 pm. I don't remember exactly, but in the evening, they started counting the votes, and it was all "Yes. Yes, Yes, Yes". How strange! And it was strange because, well, we live here. Maybe we voted "No," but the campaign was saying something else because wherever we went, the campaign for "No" had many people.

And on that day, they started, the minister was there, I can't remember his name at the moment. And they started announcing the results by region, and almost everywhere "Yes" was winning. Until a moment comes, I don't know, around 8 pm, and everyone is disheartened, sad, like, "They screwed us over again!" Because there had been a plebiscite in 1980, and there was also deception. The "Yes" won for the Constitution. So, we said, "Damn, they screwed us over again, we lost." And we thought, "with so many people coming from outside, foreigners, did they screw us over too? Did we lose?" I remember my neighbor from next door came crying - Mrs. Laura - and hugged my mom. She said, "They screwed us over, we lost again. This damn old man screwed us over." And she started crying. My mom as well. I saw one, like me, still hopeful, but not as much. Juan, at that time, was in Argentina, they had to go there. Well, all the hope was that they would win and they could come back. There were several people there, my brother was there too, several of them were in Argentina. And I remember my mom went to bed. Yes, of course. They turned off the TV and went to bed, and we didn't know.

And later, later at night, it was already dark. Someone came, I don't remember who, they started shouting, "Hey, the 'NO' won. They're recognizing that the 'NO' won." And there we started going out into the street, everyone. A march was formed, and we went out. I remember meeting all my friends - well, my female friends because my male friends were all outside - and we went out to celebrate. That day was exciting, and we cried and celebrated. It was really beautiful.

Then, the next day, a regular workday, I worked in downtown, at a store. I worked as a cashier, and we arrived, everyone was happy. You could tell who had voted "NO". Everyone was happy. And an improvised march formed along the Alameda. So, the stores ended up closing. I left early. I mean, I didn't leave because I went to the march. And it was so thrilling because the Alameda was open. Yeah, it was an improvised march, and the Alameda was free, like, the police didn't come out to hit us, the tear gas truck didn't come, it was like freedom. And it felt like it came from one day to the next. So, it was really magical, beautiful. That's what I remember of that day.