

29. Millaray Jopia

This is the memory I have of the plebiscite in 1988. We were in Concepción. After 17 years without a free election, we were all expectant. On the 4th, it was like, "Hey, what are you going to do? How is it going to turn out?" And we were all excited after so many years of dictatorship. We eagerly awaited that day. Well, we waited for it. And it came. October 5 arrived. We went out to vote. I, I, I live in Concepción, in San Pedro, and my house is close to a polling station, a school. It was around... we went to vote early. Then we came back, had lunch, everyone was nervous. Calm-nervous, because we knew we had attended countless assemblies or meetings to see how we were doing on the Yes and the No. It was evident that the No was winning, but no one knew what future awaited us. With the military in power, we thought they could commit fraud. October 5 came, we went to vote, and later in the afternoon, we all looked out the window, and what was happening? And people were truly happy, in my front yard, after voting, they lay down because it was a really beautiful and warm day, they served ice cream. People were really, as if they were taking a day off. So it was clear that people were happy, but not just superficially happy, but happy because something could happen and change Chile's course of destiny.

And suddenly, around 11:30 p.m., close to midnight, they gathered, it was already imminent that the Yes had won, but Fernández and, I remember, the Minister of Interior, were there with all the members of the Junta and Cardemil. There were several, several prominent dark figures from that time. Then they said, "Well, actually, here we cannot..." I don't know. One might think they said that, but I don't know. They wanted to deceive us, but they couldn't achieve it. So, around 12:20 a.m., the members of the Junta acknowledged that the No had won. I can't even begin to describe how much joy we felt. Finally, an era so dark under the Junta was coming to an end. Our lives had stagnated. We began to live again. The next day, everyone was celebrating. Everyone was calling each other. At that time, there were no cell phones, so the phones were overwhelmed with calls, congratulating each other at last, at last. Many people were crying. We all cried, I believe, out of emotion, knowing that finally the Junta was going to leave.