Hernán Larraín Matte

Well, it was an incredible day and I am aware that for millions of Chileans it was ... it was an unexpected day because of the results. However, I lived in a house that voted for the YES and I was thirteen or fourteen and I had known only one side of the story, so I didn't have much awareness of how profound the meaning of the plebiscite was and the consequences it was going to have. So I feel, that in contrast to many other Chileans, my experience was rather eh ... little it's uninteresting or little Eh or less powerful in relation to what many Chileans lived. I had enough political awareness to know that there was an important thing in play ... and I was constantly watching the television and aware that the result would be important, but my intuition and what was said and what I heard was that the YES would win and that Pinochet would stay in power for another eight years ... and I was born in '74, I mean, when I was born, Pinochet was already in power, and I grew up in a world where Pinochet would always be the President. That he continued eight more years was "something natural" as weird as that sounds. It's the least natural thing there is but that was how things were. My environment, was a protected environment in the YES culture. I was in a school where the majority were for the YES, a school of the elite and right wing. Most of the school was in favor of YES, but I remember with complete clarity that there was a debate... because there were very few who were in favor of the NO ... but there were ... people who were in favor of the NO. And I remember very well that, that in two grades above me, Juan Diego Santa Cruz, was defending the NO. He held a debate in front of many students with someone who defended the YES position. And I was very impressed. The way he defended the NO was very powerful. Not only because he denounced the violation of human rights, but because he made a distinction between a dictatorship and a democracy and spoke of the value of democracy itself. He defended democracy more than he attacked Pinochet. That is, he said, "I don't come here only to attack Pinochet or a group of people who think that Pinochet was good." So, he was intelligent, astute, and said: "There is something much more interesting than Pinochet to talk about and that's democracy. It's liberty, it's public debate, critical thought and the diversity of opinions, and competition, and political parties, and it's elections, with the people deciding, and the parties competing, and the beast ideas winning." And that was what marked me, the words of Juan Diego Santa Cruz. I ran into him years later and had a conversation in which I reminded him of that moment, and he also remembered with emotion what his role had been in that debate, which wasn't easy because he was a minority. A minority in an environment very, very to the right. In an environment in which Pinochet's government was considered a good government, eh ... where everyone thought it was reasonable and natural. And I think that the television campaign several times had content that were very shocking. For example, the denunciation of human rights violations. And that generated many debates as to whether what the NO campaign said was not true or not. Since I received only one side of the story, it wasn't as impactful. But it was part of what it meant to live inside the bubble of a YES environment. And of course ... well, therefore it was an intense day watching the news, following the media, and then, the tension of seeing on television that the results were put off, and what was supposed to occur at certain times was

not occurring and the Moneda started to avoid giving public statements. And military and political personnel began arriving at the Moneda and this could all be seen on television. Until later, much later, with a lot of tension, there was a General, General Matthei, who was interviewed by a reporter going into the Moneda and he said that the YES vote had lost. The Chileans officially heard from the government...And then on television - because this was the way in which I saw this – there were parties in the streets, celebration, and a citzenry that went out to occupy all the spaces in Plaza Italia. And well ... I saw images that are well remembered such as people hugging police officers ... it was the reunion of two worlds that were divided and which, because of the dictatorship, were broken, but that day began to quote "heal a wound." I have friends that I've made in life who remember that day as a milestone that changed them personally, friends who went out to party for many days, who drank, who made love in the street. Others who cried because their relatives had been disappeared. Over time, I see this day and see my experience and I feel the importance in cultural and political terms, what that moment meant for the country. And perhaps the interesting thing is that I've become aware over time of how transformative it was. And how a country, with a pencil, was able to remove a dictator, which in historical terms is a very exceptional situation. And that is very powerful. In my house there was impact, surprise, confusion, and a little ... I think, like many in the country, they began to ask "well, how is this going to be done?" and I think the important thing was the role played by the media, and the role that what we know today as "the agreement" played. The group of political parties of the opposition were open to dialogue, they were very democratic, the language was very peaceful. Instead of showing the triumph, which was done, of course, naturally a conversation was generated about how we could reach a peaceful tension to have elections again and how we give Pinochet and his people an out ... then, it was like ... from the impact then to a fairly "reasonable" conversation. Imagine the tension and pressure that there was. I mean, it was really high, there was a lot of fear To gradually be giving signs that the transition was possible and that it could be done peacefully ... and that is very powerful. And in a more anecdotal dimension, it's particularly interesting that my brothers produced a film that was somehow - being, of course, fiction – an account of what happened in Chile on that date, and that ended up turning out to be a story that was told to the world, somehow obviously (from a fictional point of view and with a particular thesis) of what happened in Chile on October 5, 1988.