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July 21, 2009 (Web Review)

Our Disappeared / Nuestros Desaparecidos ★★★

(2008) 99 min. In English & Spanish w/English subtitles. DVD: \$24.95: individuals; \$95: public libraries; \$250: colleges & universities.

Geovision (tel: 617-926-5454; web: www.ourdisappeared.com). P

Argentine-born filmmaker Juan Mandelbaum's casual Google search for an old girlfriend was the unlikely genesis for this disturbing documentary on the thousands who were arrested, tortured, and killed in Argentina's so-called "dirty war" from 1976-1983. Mandelbaum found the name of his former love, Patricia Dixon, on a website that publishes the names of those who disappeared during this period, a time when the military dictatorship made vast sweeps, rounding p anyone who was suspected of left-wing political sympathies. Returning to Argentina after an absence of three decades, Mandelbaum connects with Dixon's younger sister to piece together the story of what happened to the vanished woman, a personal odyssey that plays out against a wider examination of what the filmmaker describes as a civil war, albeit one of extraordinarily lopsided proportions (an attempted left wing coup was a dismal failure that only intensified the government's campaign). Incorporating interviews with survivors together with rarely-seen archival footage (including a startling TV clip of U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger praising the Argentine dictators), *Our Disappeared*—which aired on the PBS series *Independent Lens*—offers a somber human perspective on a tragic chapter in Latin American history. Recommended. Aud: C, P. (P. Hall)

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