

'Someday I will go home'

Chilean reflects on self-imposed exile

By Jim Moore
Of the Emerald

Like many American women, Gabriela Videla has a career, and during the course of a work day she is likely to reflect on her family and wonder what they might be doing — just as anyone might do at work.

But unlike American women, when Videla ends her workday and goes home she remains thousands of miles from home.

Videla is a Chilean who works in Cuernavaca, Mexico, producing a monthly newsletter emphasizing the value of women to community development.

Her separation from her native land is by choice, a self-imposed exile that allows her to do her work and possibly keeps her from danger.

Videla was out of the country in 1973 when Gen. Augusto Pinochet unseated the elected government of Salvador Allende in a military coup.

As a member of Allende's government, in 1972 she was the director of a Chilean government program providing counsel and assistance to popular organizations.

After the takeover, her house was ransacked. But what happened to her was mild compared to other acts committed by the new government. Thousands of Chileans have disappeared during the Pinochet regime and thousands more are homeless.

Videla says she could return to Chile — if she remained passive regarding Pinochet's reign — but there would be no work if she did.

When Videla speaks of going home she shifts forward on the couch, her normally gyrating hands fall still and rest in her lap, and her sparkling, dark eyes narrow.

"I have a lot of work to do in Mexico, but someday I will go home," she says.

And that return could be expedited by a change in the United States government's relations with Chile, she says.

When the Reagan administration lauds the economic improvement and move toward democracy under Pinochet and offers financial support, it is incorrect, according to Videla.

Statistics support her. Since Pinochet's takeover the unemployment and foreign debt



Gabriela Videla

percentages have increased, while average income and production have declined. And while Allende was elected, there have been no elections under Pinochet and several violations of the constitution.

But there is something the United States can do, she says.

"I think the United States should get out, no intervention; covert or overt," Videla says.

Videla was at the University Tuesday as part of the Women's Symposium, speaking about "Women and Alternative Media in Mexico" and as part of a panel discussion.

The Symposium will continue through Saturday.

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