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**Inside Out,
From the
Bottom Up**

Building sustainable
territorial peace
in Colombia



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A Magazine of Transnational Connections

Special Edition: *The Voices of Peace in Colombia*

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Cover Photo Credit: Daniel Fernández Fuentes. *Pachita*, community leader of the afro-colombian Choco's region displaced people in Cali, and member Institute for Intercultural Studies (Instituto de Estudios Interculturales IEI) at the Javeriana University in Cali, Colombia.

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Introduction

Social communication and advocacy projects in 2004 and 2009 enabled me to travel to Colombia, where I met with many survivors of Colombia's endless civil war. In interviews and conversations with grassroots activists, community leaders and former guerilla fighters, I learned that many Colombians saw a lack of social justice as fueling conflict and believed the country's white elite had traditionally retained its privileges through enforcing a culture of violence. I began to understand why, sixty years ago, some of these people had reached a desperate conclusion: only by taking up arms would their grievances be heard. Most of what I already knew about Colombia, before returning to the country in the summer of 2015, I had learned in the field, through listening to personal stories and walking some of the landscapes wounded by the war and its painful consequences.

In this edition of *The Humanist*, I have assembled different voices from my field research in 2015 to describe the necessary conditions for building sustainable peace in Colombia. I interviewed the representatives of those who have suffered the most from armed conflict without having taken up arms themselves. Scholars in the field of Peace Studies like Galtung, Lederach or Richmond, have academically argued what peasant, indigenous and Afro-Colombian rural community leaders know to be true from their own everyday experience. However they all seem to agree that a positive, sustainable peace will only be possible if it reflects the interests, identities, and needs of all actors involved, state and non-state, and if it creates a new reality in which mutual compromise and social justice accommodate difference. This edition also includes an interview I held with the United Nations High Commissioner

for Human Rights in Colombia. He believes that it is vital for combatants to meet and to listen to their victims, who have already developed survival strategies that could mean major contributions to a new, all-embracing democratic model. Finally, a meeting with the Advisor for Peace Planning and Institutional Architecture for a Post-Conflict Society, from the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace of the Presidency of the Colombian Republic, helped me to understand that the state currently needs help to reach out to those who it treated with contempt since the time of Independence.

At this crucial time in Colombian history, the country needs people and institutions that can bring all parties together. These third party actors may be able to facilitate epistemological and cultural translations, which in turn will enable the different parties to listen, recognize and respect each other's needs and worldviews. This is vital so they may find common ground to plant the seeds for a shared and peaceful future.

This edition also focuses on the role of local non-state actors who may play a critical role in transforming the culture of violence into a culture of peace. It is for this reason that *The Humanist* wishes to present the vision, mission, and methodology of a local third party committed to the development of a sustainable, intercultural peace in Colombia. A Colombian University Institute, the Instituto de Estudios Interculturales IEI of Javeriana University of Cali, offers a blueprint for transforming intercultural conflict in Colombia.

The IEI has widely been acknowledged as a third party mediator, devoted to the creation of an intercultural dialogue between opposing



parties at the regional and national levels. IEI's founding document defines interdisciplinary, applied and participatory research as its preferred methodology to produce relevant and necessary knowledge needed for the facilitation of social transformation. As such, the IEI undertakes daily the challenge of shaping a new way of being an academic institution, through both academic pursuit as well as social engagement: to build knowledge not only from text to context, but from context to text. In a nutshell, it establishes an understanding of itself as an academic entity that aims to build a body of knowledge on the cutting edge.

From the Bottom Up

Havana, Cuba, September 2015. On Wednesday the twenty-third, Colombian and international news agencies published a long-awaited headline: The President of Colombia, Juan Manuel Santos, had traveled to the Cuban capital to shake hands with the leader of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), Rodrigo Londoño, alias “Timochenko.” The Colombian government and the leaders of FARC pledged to sign a final agreement to end the armed conflict within six months. In addition, Santos and Timochenko presented an agreement on transitional justice mechanisms. The agreement involves the creation of a special tribunal for crimes committed during more than half a century of armed conflict. This agreement is expected to end the longest war in Latin America.

Cauca region, Southeast Colombia, September 2015. Indigenous, Afro-Colombian and peasant communities have been following the news of the peace talks in Cuba with interest. Their attention, however, quickly returns to the mountains, valleys and forests that have witnessed the lives of their communities for centuries, a geography badly injured both by the military of the Colombian army and the guerrillas. The people who have suffered the most from war know that what was signed in Havana only means the end of an armed confrontation. The semiotics of peace for them is not reflected in the picture of warriors shaking hands in Havana: the rural communities are those who have absorbed the dead, disappeared and displaced people in this war. For the most part, they see themselves neglected in the Cuban high level negotiations, and they mistrust agreements that have not included them. Yes, the silencing of arms is necessary. But this does not necessarily mean the end of the eternal oblivion of the state, suffered by the

rural Colombian. It is a negligence that has forced them to become masters of their destiny, and to understand that they also will have to defend the true meaning of peace. This peace implies social justice, sustainable development that respects the communities’ life plans, and gaining a voice within the decision-making political centers of the country.

What follows is a master class on the meaning of structural peace and cultural peace. It can be heard in towns and villages that are in most cases only accessible through unpaved roads, rural settlements with different historical roots but that share the same territory and the same longing. Our lecturers are three community leaders: Nilson Liz, head of the National Association of Farmers of Colombia (ANUC); Nelson Lemus, head of the Association of the Indigenous Councils of Northern Cauca (ACIN); and Luis Angulo, representative of the Association of Afro-Colombian Community Councils of Northern Cauca, (ACONC). We receive a message communicated in unison, as if sung by a chorus: yes, their people have suffered death in wartime, and are now ready to bring peace. But only if they are heard. Only if they do not receive silence in response.

Nilson Antonio Liz Marín

He has been a prominent peasant leader since 1989, when he was appointed coordinator of the Committee of the National Association of Farmers of Colombia ANUC in the municipality of Tambo. From 1995 to 1998, he served as president of ANUC Cauca, and later he returned to work for ANUC in Tambo until 2000. That year he was forced to resign from his duties as a peasant leader due to death threats from paramilitary forces. In 2007 he was re-elected president of



Nilson Antonio Liz Marín, president of the Cauca region section of the Committee of the National Association of Farmers of Colombia ANUC.

ANUC Cauca, a position for which he has been re-elected twice and still holds today. Starting in 2008, he joined the National Board of ANUC, where he currently holds the position of Treasurer. Nilson has been present at the talks in Havana representing victims of the Colombian peasantry.

Nelson Lemus

Nelson Lemus has served as leader of the Association of Indigenous Councils of Northern Cauca (ACIN); a member of the team of territorial planning of ACIN; director of the Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca (CRIC), representing the northern part of the department in 2013 and 2014; and the counsellor of ACIN in 2010 and 2011. He was ACIN director for peacebuilding in 2012; Nasa Indigenous Peoples project Coordinator in 2007; and Governor of the San Francisco Nasa Community 2001.

Luis Angulo

Luis Angulo is the representative of the Association of Community Councils of Northern Cauca (ACONC). From that position he works on

the defense of the territory and the life of black communities. ACONC is a territorial ethnic organization that coordinates the strengthening of “bottom up” organizational processes in the Afro-colombian community councils. These processes are inspired by the enforcement of human rights, the protection of the territory, and by strengthening and sustaining the ancestral culture of the afro-colombian communities. He is also a representative of the Afro Cauca’s Bureau of Land Development.

Nilson: For us, what has taken place in Havana is simply putting down weapons, a ceasefire. But if that is not followed by an implementation of clear policies to generate peace in the countryside, other armed groups will appear to continue the violent struggle. Peace for us will not be achieved until a new model of development is implemented. The development model we currently have in Colombia does not generate peace. It generates unmet needs,

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Nelson Lemus, leader of the Association of Indigenous Councils of Northern Cauca, Colombia (ACIN).

an economy of subsistence. Plainly: while that continues, there will not be peace in the country.

Luís: What the government has done in Havana will not end the conflict in the territories. On the contrary, it will increase it, because in territories inhabited by our communities another actor will arrive – the demobilized guerillas – and we don't know what that will entail. That is why we claim to be present in Cuba to tell them how, from our Afro, indigenous and peasant vision, cohabitation can be built, how an inclusive peace can be reached.

Nelson: I think the government is addressing things too quickly, in a hurry to resolve issues. For example, the issue of reparation: the Government

is considering reparation as the mere fact of giving a check to the families affected by the conflict. That is how they consider the harm of a family is already compensated. And for us it is not. What can we say? The government should hear more about what kind of reparation is proposed by the communities. Maybe what is needed is not money: reparation can be of a symbolic and even collective order. ... Imagination and creativity must be put into play that allows us also decide what kind of actions would make us feel compensated, repaired.

In order to build peace from below, we need to listen to communities. It is very important to listen to the victims. How the armed conflict, the killings

and the displacement has affected us, how it has affected the territory. It is also very important to listen to the creativity contained in community initiatives. How we see the territory, how we want to live in it, how we've been thinking and implementing management resources and job creation in our territories.

Nilson: I had the opportunity to be in Cuba, with the fifth delegation, and one of my tasks as a leader, as a peasant and as a victim of the conflict, was to tell the guerrillas and the state that we have been victims of both actors. And therefore, as peasants, we do not feel represented by any of the parties. Nor they are representative of indigenous and afro communities. And we also told them that we do not agree that the issue of land reform should be discussed exclusively by the government and the guerrillas, without hearing from the rural communities, those that

have suffered displacement and death in the countryside.

Unfortunately the sixty people who were in the delegations left with great frustration. So far we have not felt that the Government has taken up the proposals that we brought there, nor do we see a solid commitment from the guerrillas. We have not heard opinions for or against our claims. That silence is interpreted, by those who have travelled there, as if both parties have ignored the proposals we made. We, the members of the different delegations, keep striving to pressure both sides so we are truly heard.

Let the warring actors settle the issues of the armed conflict. But when discussions are about policy-making options, indispensable to building sustainable peace, those who

Luis Angulo, representative of the afro-colombian Association of Community Councils of Northern Cauca (ACONC).



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don't have weapons also have a voice to be reckoned with.

I don't understand why the state wants to solve problems at gunpoint. I don't understand why the guerrillas, who call themselves the People's Army, attack the peasants, the indigenous and the Afro-Colombians. I don't understand it. And I don't know if someday I will understand that, more often than not, it seems that the means justify the ends.

Luís: Rather than wait for things to happen, we want to make things happen. Afros, peasants and indigenous people must believe in the power of mutual dialogue, in a common space, in an autonomous intercultural space with no government presence. A space that will allow us first to tell each other how things really are; second, where each community will be able to raise their worldview on the right to the territory. And third, where the different autonomous rights are respected.

Nilson: But this is not easy. Within every community, of course also in the peasant community, there are different interests, different nuances, different ways of thinking. It will take many more years of struggle to understand that there must be unity, and that we must put aside the interests of racial, ethnic and cultural differences. To understand that there are some common purposes that we have to put together. We have to engage in a discussion that clarifies who in reality the enemy is: if it is ourselves, or the government policies that are insufficient to meet the needs of indigenous, Afro and peasant Colombians.

Nelson: We need to make a major effort internally, between the different communities, to reaffirm our identity. That's important: when one reaffirms

himself, he doesn't feel bigger than the other, but recognizes the other. Because a sense of superiority doesn't allow you to recognize the other. Nor a sense of inferiority. What it takes for you to recognize the other is to say: "I am indigenous, and I am happy to be indigenous. And I live with a peasant, with an Afro, I recognize my neighbor, I share with the other." This recognition is very important in the context of respect. There is peacebuilding when there is respect, recognition of the other. And if there is peacebuilding, dialogue exists, and basic agreements can be reached, like sharing the same territory, and the development of a joint economic project.

Nilson: How to build peace with the indigenous and Afro-descendants? We have to meet, discuss and enshrine the rights of all of us. Our differences are minimal compared to the damage we have had to endure from ill government policies.

Nelson: The purpose is to sit down and talk to address the characterization of the territory in order to build sustainable peace. The issue of territorial peace is very much on the table: I think it is worth discussing the concept, studying it, knowing it thoroughly, to see if that really is what communities have been building throughout the years or not. Territorial peace can be translated to suit a sector whose interests are in line with those of the government, of private enterprise or the multinationals, and does not necessarily capture the sentiments of Afro, indigenous and peasant communities, as well as urban sectors, that have been building peace, consistent with law and rights, long before peace talks began in Havana.

Luís: Learning to move forward together, but respecting the differences that characterize each of us. That meeting is possible. In fact, all three communities used to share a space of encounter.

But it broke down once the government began signing agreements with one of the communities, away from the negotiation table. That issue made distrust grow between us. With this lesson already learned, we want to energize that meeting space again, but without the presence of government. The government divides us, and we end very seriously at odds with one another. We will not play that game anymore.

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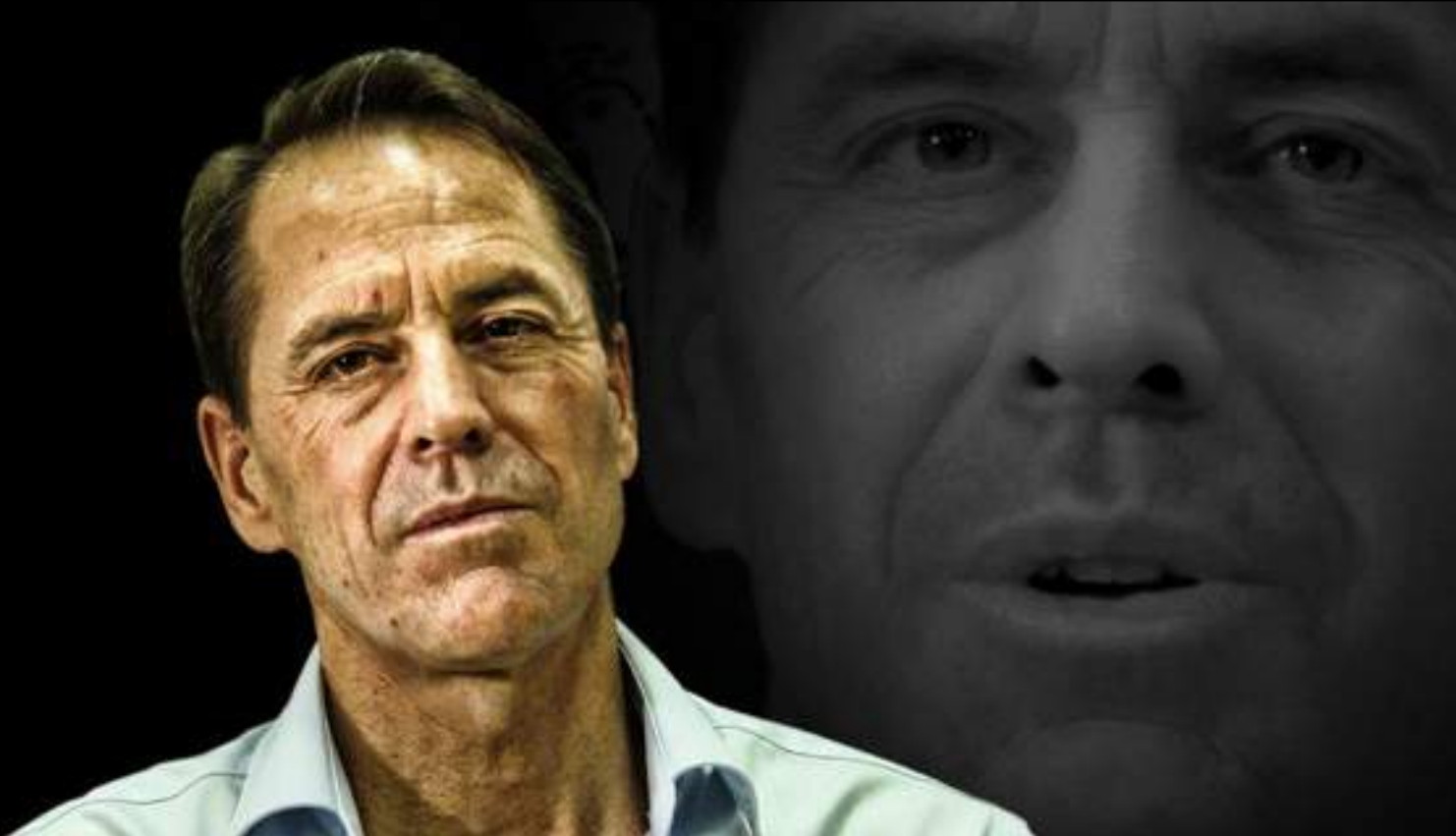
I had the opportunity to interview **Todd Howland** (Representative in Colombia of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) and **Diego Bautista** (the advisor for Post-Conflict Peace Planning and Institutional Architecture for the Colombian Republic) in September 2015. The interviews took place within the framework of the fifth International Seminar on Interculturality held at Javeriana University in Cali, Colombia. In both conversations, I wanted to find out the meaning of peace for two people representing the highest official institutions (Colombian and international) in charge of managing the effects of armed conflict in Colombia.

The conversation with Bautista focused on the need to create new spaces and a new culture of political participation from the territories, including the social movements.

Howland reflected on the roots of the armed conflict, caused by the great inequality in land ownership, and the historical neglect that rural Colombia has suffered from the political urban centers of the country.

Both described how structural violence and cultural violence that led to the war have manifested throughout decades, punishing the Colombian countryside for over half a century. Both know it will be difficult to change the culture of violence into one in which the voice of the majority who have suffered war is also heard and respected. Both know the great challenges these changes will face, changes that are essential for avoiding that weapons and fear continue writing the destiny of the country. But they do not give up: when you begin to walk the talk with responsibility, the last thing you lose is hope. That is what the silences of my interlocutors were communicating, more than their words.





Todd Howland, representative in Colombia of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Todd Howland has been the representative in Colombia for the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights since 30 January 2012. He has 25 years of professional experience in the field of human rights and international humanitarian law. He served as Representative of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Angola. Mr. Howland also had directive positions with the United Nations in Geneva and in New York. He is the author of numerous articles and publications on human rights, and has extensive experience in technical cooperation. He was director of the Robert F. Kennedy Center for Human Rights and has also worked at the European Commission and the Carter Center. He has also been professor of human rights in Hankuk University in Seoul, Korea.

There is a big challenge regarding the sustainability of the peace process in Colombia, which is related to the lack of clarity of land entitlement, and this specifically affects indigenous groups, afro-descendant and peasant communities. There has also been a process of years of forced land disposessions ... This can create conflicts after an agreement to end the armed struggle. Because at that time there will be companies that will not be as afraid to exploit places that are now occupied by the guerrillas: there will be conflicts between settlers and people who have inhabited these places for a long time. The origins of this conflict are related to the land, and we must be aware that after fifty years of war, the situation can worsen even more.

It is important to think about how to solve it collectively, not only following private interests, but for the well-being of the whole

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society. In Colombia there are great difficulties in understanding rural realities, which have long been neglected by the state. Furthermore, institutions are not prepared to resolve such conflicts; neither is there the recognition of indigenous or afro realities, even after the adoption of the Constitution of '91.

“It is important to think about how to solve it collectively, not only following private interests, but for the well-being of the whole society.”

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Colombia works with people of the communities, and I think we have a relationship based on trust with indigenous, Afro-Colombians and peasant people, since we provide them support when they are defending their rights.

Also as an institution, the United Nations has access to the negotiation table in Cuba. One of our demands on the table is that there is need for more interaction with these rural communities, because they are the most disadvantaged people in Colombia. It is very interesting to see the reaction in Havana: first, the Government believes that they are representing the people, and on the other side also the FARC believe that they are their representatives. And the indigenous, afro and peasants do not feel represented by either side. Moreover, the government has traditionally seen these communities as allies of the FARC. It is equally difficult for the government to admit that it has always condemned to oblivion these communities.

And this constant harm for many years of conflict has broadened the distance with those

populations. And it is important to note that many of these Afro-Colombian, peasant and indigenous communities have a political orientation that could be classified as leftist, but it is different to be on the left that to belong to guerrilla groups. Yet it is very difficult, for the Attorney's Office, the state security forces, and parts of the government, to understand such a level of complexity of relationships. In a process like this, when people of social movements are marginalized, what will happen? There are many chances that in those territories the spaces that will occupy the reintegrated guerrillas will be legitimized, and that people that have already been working for long on the creation of democratic spaces will end up delegitimized.

For a peace process to be sustainable, there must be a clear and decisive effort to empower the existing social movements. These are key: they are the ones who understand the democratic spaces, they are the people who understand how reality can be changed. The ceasefire dialogues are nowadays only between the Government and the people of the FARC that will be demobilized. This will not facilitate change, because ex-guerrilla will need time to learn how everything works, whereas the social movements already have that knowledge. It is therefore important to recognize this part of Colombian society, stigmatized for so many years.

Often the relationship we have with the government is complicated: nobody likes to be pointed out and hear that they are not fulfilling their obligations. Colombia is not a dysfunctional country; it is a country that works very well for many people, not for a few but for many people. It is very difficult for them to understand that there is another Colombia, a Colombia that is totally dysfunctional, where the most basic rights of health, education and drinking water are systematically violated.

There is no integration between rhetoric and facts when we talk about human rights: there is a rhetoric of human rights in development plans, but the institutional structures implement totally opposed actions, because the way that budget is allocated is affected by the political system. Thus armed conflict continues for so many years, because people in neglected areas suffer from lack hope, and it is easy to understand that they are seduced by groups whose ideology is to achieve changes through weapons, as theirs is a suffering of generations.

“For a peace process to be sustainable, there must be a clear and decisive effort to empower the existing social movements. These are key: they are the ones who understand the democratic spaces, they are the people who understand how reality can be changed.”

It is not only about building roads or a sports center, but about creating a new relationship with those people who have been alienated for so long. It doesn't get solved by mere assistance. No one is doing anything to change the power relationship between victims and perpetrators. Victims feel victimized by the perpetrators directly, and also by the Government, for not receiving its protection, for not getting answers and for not being included.

Our role is to recall that there is a need to confront problems more seriously, that they need to be addressed differently. And to repeat it over

and over again, trying to be the guarantors of processes, and report when the process does not meet the agreements, when it is used only in an instrumental way to avoid a problem of public order. No: there is a need for deep changes, and the only way is to work with the most disadvantaged communities. Of course, this message sometimes is not welcomed, but it is our job. If we are here and have not yet been expelled from the country, it is because there is sufficient understanding with the Government.

The concept of peace, for the UN, is related to a higher level of respect for human rights. And it is not just about laying down the weapons, but also about creating the conditions so that conflicts do not recur. For me, the UN Charter, which was very well written, mentions three things that are interrelated: peace, development and human rights. You cannot have one without the other. You have to think at the same time of the three pillars to build a house of lasting peace. I must admit that often the United Nations also gives priority to the peace process due to the need to reach a compromise, and afterward gives less attention to the more difficult transformation process necessary to reach real peace in a country. Peace is clearly a process, so are human rights: simultaneously formed by a series of objectives, obligations and tools. Peace is something that is built with changes and transformations in a culture, that implies changes and transformations of its institutions.

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Diego Bautista currently serves as Advisor for Territorial Peace and Post-Conflict Institutional Architecture, at the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace of the Presidency of the Republic of Colombia. Mr. Bautista oversees the area of Territorial Peacebuilding, defining the recommendations for the reform of official institutions to adapt to the post-armed conflict society. He is Expert Consultant in Public Policy and Development. He has been technical coordinator of the consultancy for the Government on the design of mechanisms and instruments for the implementation of public policies at national, regional and local levels.

We have had great difficulty in communicating the results of the negotiations with the FARC in Cuba, and to educate people about what has been agreed in Havana. It will never be enough unless we begin to involve other organizations, unless we do not begin this process including communication and education with other instances about what is being agreed. That is, if we do not monopolize the discourse of peace and what is being agreed in Havana.

I think the country needs a mobilization for building a sustainable peace. This mobilization will also require that the institutions rise to the challenge of being able to engage in dialogue with the social movements. There has been a tension in the country over a series of issues, long before starting the negotiation rounds: those associated with mining issues, those associated with environment, those associated with approaches to development models, the agroindustrial model against peasant economy ... and precisely what is being proposed is an institutional transformation

that gives a better reading to all the problems of the territory. The territories in Colombia have a great diversity, not only geographically, but culturally, which adds an also enormous complexity and diversity to the conflict, and our institutions have failed to be functional, have failed to understand and generate spaces of dialogue needed to manage conflicts that will remain, long after the ceasefire.

“Today there are scenarios where the fear to participate is overwhelming, and there is also fear to express positions that differ from official positions about how to engage in dialogue and reach agreements.”

Today in the country there is much skepticism about what is being agreed. It is a skepticism that is not gratuitous. There is a huge list of stories of infringement. The implementation of the accords that is being proposed relies on lasting institutional adjustments. These adjustments are mandatory if we want to address institutionally the different social processes of the territories, but also for being able to incorporate civil participation in decisions on budgets and on territorial planning.

It is not by chance that second point of the agreements in Havana deals with political participation. Beyond issues of electoral politics, it considers the rights of the political opposition, that



Diego Bautista, advisor for Post-Conflict Peace Planning and Institutional Architecture for the Colombian Republic.

relate to increasing the chances that alternative political movements, different from traditional parties, can vie in Congress. The second point recognizes that historical conditions have given no guarantee for fair and safe political participation and political renewal. Many political leaders, but also many social leaders, have been assassinated. Today there are scenarios where the fear to participate is overwhelming, and there is also fear to express positions that differ from official positions about how to engage in dialogue and reach agreements. That is why we continue to create conditions to promote dialogue in the territories, concerning how the future of the different regions needs to be.

As we have already stated, whoever is in government will not be able to do this alone. The effort will need the participation of social organizations; it will have to count on the private sector, and it must be able to gather around a

“We need luck to successfully complete what we are initiating in Havana. Luck is a major component, yes, but we have to do the job. We have to walk the talk.”

number of actors who are now generating tensions in the territory. I think that the ceasefire accord will generate the energy to begin this task, as we are already seeing. Beyond the international verification of the agreement, it is important that citizens hold

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the texts of the agreements and really mobilize to enforce them – that they engage in peaceful mobilizations orientated to build on the opportunity that the agreements are offering us all.

“This is a very difficult journey, nobody said it would be easy, nobody said that the day after the signing of the agreements to end the armed conflict we would have a country of fantasy.”

The Havana agreements do not exhaust the conflict in the territory. For the specific case of the issue of mining, it is a point that is not on the agenda of Havana, but it is a point of first order importance. The construction of peace, where there is a conflict over land use for mining exploitation or for environmental conservation, seek balances that do not benefit exclusively the extractive companies, but will also have to determine a benefit to all communities. This should be built from the joint decision of national authorities, local authorities and social organizations.

And here is where information is essential: how much we keep, how much we exploit, how much we use today, and how much we preserve for tomorrow. That is a decision that has to be taken, and whatever the decision is, it will generate benefits, and will generate damages and losses.

But the point is that these decisions are made with rational participation, and with adequate information about the benefits and damages that the agreed decisions will entail.

The government has to do its homework, and that means first to define an institution that rises to the challenges of these discussions. Today we don't have it; the Colombian institutions need some adjustments. Today there is a sectorial approach to the territory, which is the cause of conflict. Those decisions should not be made by bureaucratic functionaries. They have to be discussed through a transparent debate, where compromise is made. These are difficult decisions: we all want to preserve, but also we all know about all the needs that arise in the short term. What do we do? These are decisions that have to be made together, and not as an imposition on others. We will have to find political ways to include social organizations, but within decision paths that are transparent: there is a cost in every decision, and they must be on the table. The institutions today do not facilitate these processes: part of the changes are to achieve a new institutional framework.

“The effort will need the participation of social organizations; it will have to count on the private sector, and it must be able to gather around a number of actors who are now generating tensions in the territory.”

This is a very difficult journey, nobody said it would be easy, nobody said that the day after the signing of the agreements to end the armed conflict we would have a country of fantasy. Our proposal is to head to a phase of transition, in which we can adjust and guide these tensions toward building positive scenarios, where surely there will appear many more of these conflicts we're talking about. As they will make themselves visible with greater force in scenarios where the weapons or threats will have gone. That must be said and addressed clearly, and we must see how we can solve it.

We need luck to successfully complete what we are initiating in Havana. Luck is a major component, yes, but we have to do the job. We have to walk the talk.

Inside Out

From the inside out: building sustainable peace in Colombia. Conversations with members of the Intercultural Studies Institute (Instituto de Estudios Interculturales IEI) of the Javeriana University of Cali, Colombia. <http://www.javerianacali.edu.co/intercultural>.

Even though the government of Colombia has reached a peace agreement with the FARC guerrillas, ending a conflict that has confronted both parties for almost sixty years; even though civil victims were invited to the negotiations table held in La Havana, and their pleas for justice and restitution have been, apparently, heard; even if weapons have been laid down and this top-down negotiation has concluded with a peace agreement ... all these previous and indispensable steps to reach positive, sustainable peace will not, on their own, uproot the culture of violence deeply embedded in the Colombian subconscious. Sustainable peace needs a different culture to prevail, a culture that rejects violence as a means to deal with conflicts, tackling their root causes through dialogue, negotiation and pedagogy among individuals and groups: a culture of peace.

There are local non-state agents which own their agency, and are therefore able to build peace in a local context, attaining results in peacebuilding which reinforce what Richmond calls a civil notion of peace, giving a sense of “peace’s ownership” to the parties formerly in tension. The Intercultural Studies Institute (Instituto de Estudios Interculturales IEI) of the Javeriana University of Cali, has been able to orchestrate regional conflict transformation processes.

The mandate of the IEI mirrors the values, attitudes, traditions and ways of life that define a culture of peace, as they are described in the declaration and program of action on a culture of peace

by UNESCO. The mission of the IEI consists in part of the realization of concrete actions aimed at the creation of a new institutional framework and a culture able to strengthen a coexistence directed to end the war. It aims to make possible solidarity, promoting social justice and the creation of an equitable civil society, responsible and participatory, as conditions for peace and sustainable development in the Colombian Southwestern region.

IEI’s mandate also reinforces the relevance of its mission to protect the rights of indigenous peoples, afro-descendant communities and also peasant communities in the southwest of Colombia. The relationships these groups have traditionally experienced with the state, landowners and private companies manifest the omnipresent weight of the culture of violence. Their collective memories and their present experiences recollect the siege of direct violence (the armed conflict and social reality that puts at risk the physical, ethnic and cultural integrity of rural communities and their survival), of structural violence (inequity in the distribution of land, the situation of poverty, and the lack of effective governmental programs for the promotion of their own productive systems) and of cultural violence (evident in the territorial planning processes and in the definition of development programs led by the government).

The members of the IEI become translators that, through facilitating dialogue, assist in designing the way forward toward the recognition of, and the encounter with, the historically forgotten Other. This recognition happens when there is empathy, which will, in turn, provide the necessary conditions for the conflicting parties to commit to dialogue, a dialogue that in the case of Colombia is intercultural by nature. The hope for lasting peace resides in the rich cultural diversity and identity



of the country. Truly, interculturality has been one of the main casualties of the Spanish colony and of modern Colombia alike. Now it could become one of the most dynamic forces driving a historical change in the country, a space where people with distinct ways of interpreting the world reciprocally negotiate their otherness. The pressing challenge for all the parties is to learn how to meet each other in that space in a non-violent way.

The following pages present a conversation held with five of the members of the IEI, five engaged professionals who are simultaneously scholars and practitioners. This is an intimate dialogue about what it means to be a peacebuilder in the southwestern region of Colombia, where war and violence have marked the life of inhabitants for three generations. This is a conversation about dialogue, empathy, and the role of the university when attempting to build sustainable peace. From inside out.

The IEI has won the 2016 Hero Award as a Best University Act of the One Billion Acts of Peace Project, lead by 13 Nobel Peace Laureates, among them the Dalai Lama, Desmond Tutu and Rigoberta Menchu: <https://www.billionacts.org/act/ag1zfm-JpbGxpb25hY3RzchQLEgdQcm9qZWV-0GICAgJDWz5YJDA>

Inside Out

Tania Rodriguez and **Carlos Duarte** are two of the assistant directors of the Institute for Intercultural Studies (Instituto de Estudios Interculturales IEI) at the Javeriana University in Cali, Colombia. Together with **Marta Elena Montaña**, **Leonardo Salcedo** and **Esnéider Rojas** (all scholars, researchers and facilitators in processes of dialogue and peacebuilding) they are part of an interdisciplinary and intercultural academic community that through research, training and accompanying social processes, is contributing to the creation of spaces for dialogue between different cultures in Southwestern Colombia, the sustainability of the region, and the construction of a nation that values, respects and includes ethno-cultural diversity. <http://www.javerianacali.edu.co/intercultural>.

Marta Elena Montaña

When we speak, we often assume that the other knows what we know. That is why we often misunderstand one another. In cases like this, we need to translate; we need to say: “Look, this is what he said, but in reality what he wants to say, and what you must understand, is this, because of these reasons.” We go back to explain what we have heard. At that moment we are translators. There are also moments when we are facilitators, focusing, steering the conversation so that you reach an agreement, because everything is there, and only needs that little push, to get them to take off the armor, to sit and talk. Mediation also often happens in situations when all actors have valid arguments, when they are all, more or less, right. They all have valid reasons. But you can only agree with one, or you can decide to not agree

Marta Elena Montaña





Carlos Duarte

with anyone, and to build something new. When you recognize that everyone is right, you have to build something new.

Carlos Duarte

There are conflicts that do not need mediation; sometimes what they need is an informed scientific point of view that takes a stand for one or the other position. The notion of a “bridge” does not always solve specific problems. We attempt to bring the rigor of the academy to address problems in time frames that are sometimes wider than those of the academy itself; that’s why it is called participatory action research. We contribute perspectives from the academic disciplines that we specialize in, so that we can account for and manage different situations that may cause conflict or problems: not necessarily transform or solve these problems, but, perhaps, to merely manage them. In the end, we do not make decisions. We present an overview, show new routes, and generate contexts; after that, we leave the rest to each of the participants sitting at the table during our discussion.

Esneider Rojas

I consider myself a facilitator and a manager, since, when facilitating discussion among groups – whether indigenous, peasants, Afro-descendants - listening is an important first step. Facilitating involves listening to and understanding the other.

And management is about managing these spaces, those scenarios where the meeting takes place. Often, the fact of being in one of these social groups, or in one of these communities, makes people reluctant to go a little further, to try to understand the other, or to express what someone thinks of the other, or what they don’t like about the other.

Leonardo Salcedo

Bringing into play empathy, which is attempting to put oneself in somebody else’s shoes, trying to understand the limitations of the other, the historical origins

Inside Out



Esnéider Rojas

of the other, the history of the other, the fears of the other, the interests of the other, the ambitions of the other... and to attempt, when building these bridges, do so with two or more actors simultaneously.

Learning how to control the ego, how to control arrogance, how to control the feeling that I am right all the time is a unique challenge. It is crucial to know when to stop speaking and simply listen to shut up. We need to understand the other, to interpret the other. We need to encourage each actor to speak in the voice of the other, to say what the other is trying to say. And that, sometimes, means that we must begin with humility.

Tania Rodriguez

I think that our main role is usually that of supporters, not passive supporters, but critically engaged ones.

We are not usually the protagonists of the conflict or of its solution; rather, we are supporting actors, which is nevertheless an important role, because we build and sustain trust between the actors. Some people say that we are guarantors of agreements, guarantors of the commitments that will shape the relationship between the actors. We also provide support by structuring information, which is one of the fundamental tasks of the University.

This role is especially important in societies like ours where there are such terrible contradictions and antagonisms, in particular, those antagonisms built on prejudice, on misunderstanding, on ignorance. “These landowners! They all treat workers like slaves!” But are all landowners like that? Do they all think the same way? What’s behind that? “Those indigenous people! They are all guerrilla fighters!” More ignorance. At times like these, the role of structuring information comes to the forefront: “Here, I give you this information: the indigenous are so and so...” Or: “See, the entrepreneurs today are thinking this or that...” In this way, I would say that active and critical support creates opportunities for dialogue.

E.R.

On a personal level, I struggled internally because I already had some preconceived ideas, something that had framed my actions. Trying to

understand and listen to the other creates an internal struggle, an internal negotiation. To understand the other, I have to be flexible, to abandon things that I thought were true and which are not.

I’m not saying that this is an easy process; it doesn’t happen overnight. It takes time, and there setbacks, moments of crises.

T.R.

It is a work of permanent self-reflection, of being able to build bridges without getting lost in what you really think. Remaining aware that we can build with the other, means that we are permanently working on ourselves. In order to do the job and continue to grow, we engage in a permanent existential crisis.

So I think the transformation comes from the conviction that there is always a

Tania Rodriguez



Inside Out

possibility, that it is necessary engage in dialogue with those who are different from you, so that you can build better realities. Now, I feel more able to be in a meeting where I hear terrible things, where I hear things that I do not agree with. Rather than seeking to silence these uncomfortable ideas, I do just the opposite: I realize that they are the voices I need to hear and engage with the most.

M.E.M.

Because I was fortunate to have a genuine encounter with the culture of an “Other”, I’ve always mediated among many processes.

I married an indigenous man – and not just any indigenous person – but someone really consistent with the indigenous movement, with a

clear political vision, and cosmopolitan vision of the world.

In the beginning, I tried to say that he did not know how to live, that “Look, rules are like this, things go this way”... And the day came when I had stand before the mirror and realize that I had adopted a kind of thinking that regarded indigenous people as uncivilized. And that day I sat down, not to discuss, not to try to change him, but to listen, and I realized that the other has much to say. And I begin to realize that I was also wrong, not completely, but that I too make mistakes.

But then, I struggled with my pride: “I can’t drop my pride... how do I say: yes you’re right? It would be like giving my own space!”

Leonardo Salcedo



When I realized I was wrong, I began to understand that the ministers, the State, the different government bodies are in the same situation I was in, that we are not listening. "Come, come, what they are saying to you is this ..."

C.D.

We need to see the needs, which is what usually create conflicts, and to understand them in depth, beyond the ideological discourse. We need to meet groups and their needs in their territory, through very concrete and specific cases.

Although I feel closest to the people in the communities, in practice, you can learn a lot by creating opportunities for discussion with businessmen, or with groups of political decision-makers. I believe that when we better understand certain rationales, certain interpretations, we can, in theory, be in a better position to build bridges between each other's needs. Sometimes the discussions are profoundly ideological, but in practice they are very close to real life.

L.S.

In the dreadful context of Colombia, we are not neutral; we assume a position.

It is a sign of ideology to think that Colombia needs a State that reaches the communities, extending out to the whole territory, a State that - rather than only a military presence - establishes hospitals, schools, roads, irrigation, subsidies for people. This is an ideological perspective of what the State should be, and, in that sense, I think there is also a fear lately, in universities and in the other spaces, of ideology. We must not be sectarian, or dogmatic, or stagnant when it comes to ideology; we must not believe that ideology solves all issues. The day you stop doubting your own ideology, you become dogmatic and there is no possibility of dialogue.

[13]25 IN THE BEGINNING WAS



**IN THE
BEGINNING WAS
THE WORD**

C O L O M B I A

Colombia. The Thirteenth Moon.

Inspired by [Resolution 1325 of the UN Security Council](#), this photo essay gathers together portraits as triptychs of women working actively to attain peace in Colombia.

The testimonies of these 13 Colombian women from different parts of the country strikingly reveal how the country's armed conflict has affected the bodies, spirits and lives of its women and girls. It is an effort to make the conditions these women cope with visible, reflecting their faces,

their words and the places where they currently live, and showing the fear and pain that Colombia's ongoing armed conflict has made them endure. In these pages, 13 indigenous, urban, peasant, artisan and Afro-descendant women weave a tapestry of women's history in times of bitter confrontations.

Here are words echoing what it has meant for these 13 women to become victims of a war that has been not their war, which they so often cannot even begin to understand. Here are 13 trails traced by bare feet, mapping out the emotional paths that forced displacement impels those it ravages to follow. Its victims flee for fear of those waging the war; those who lurk at every corner and turn the country's landscape into a bastion of death, pillage and desolation.

Each woman chose the place in which she wanted to be photographed, as a symbol of her connection to her surroundings, in the midst of a landscape violated by the horror that legal and illegal actors alike generate. The very existence of our Project bears witness to the fact that the Colombian State has failed to protect women from the gender violence common in conflict areas. These 13 women have had to regain and rebuild their vital space on their own.

The following testimonies also show us how courageous these 13 women have been, in their struggle to hold onto life itself. They know all about suffering and are haunted by the experiences they have had to endure, but they are also capable of being hopeful once more. Little by little, they

THE WORD

gather together with others, seeking ways to repair the ravages inflicted on the population; seeking ways to make their voices heard and obtain justice.

This project was carried out by the Dutch NGO Cordaid and directed in Colombia by the Synergia Foundation, within the framework of its “Women and Violences Programme”. In Colombia, the project’s aim has been to raise awareness and empower Colombian women’s organizations with respect to Resolution 1325, as well as creating new materials (a book, the photographs and texts reproduced on very large posters to be placed on the street). Two additional aims were to raise awareness about the Resolution among the public in general, and for Cordaid to lobby before both the Dutch and the European Parliaments regarding the human rights situation in Colombia, the violence affecting it and the outrages caused to civil society.

Carrying out this project generated the activation of a Cordaid emergency relief fund, to be used in the event any of the 13 women involved in it suffered violence or threats, given the fact that many had previously been threatened by military, paramilitary or guerrilla forces.

This project is endorsed, among others, by Ms. Luisa Morgantini, Ms. Lizette Vila, Mr. Federico Mayor Zaragoza, and the International Catalan Institute for Peace – ICIP.

UNSCR Resolution 1325

UN Resolution 1325 urges its Member States to adopt measures supporting women’s peace initiatives, and guaranteeing protection and respect for women and girls. The Resolution also calls for focusing on the special needs of women and girls during peace, post-conflict, reconstruction and resettlement processes.

The Resolution’s main approaches may be grouped as follows:

Participation of women in peace processes; it calls for an increase in women’s representation in institutions and processes dedicated to conflict prevention, management and resolution involving national, regional and international bodies.

Promotion of women’s human rights; it advocates the promotion of women’s human rights, by making sure that international human rights standards are reflected at national levels, creating control mechanisms within the law and making a determined effort to end impunity.

Protection of women and girls during war; it highlights the responsibility to specifically protect women and girls, who are very vulnerable to rape and other sex-related violence during armed conflicts.

Prevention of armed conflicts and war; it emphasizes the need to implement a gender perspective during national and international peace negotiations, other related activities and the drafting and implementing of national and international security policy.



AUTONOMY

DELIS PALACIO

Representative

Asociación de Desplazados Dos de Mayo (Second-of-May Association of Displaced Persons)

I chose to be photographed next to this brook on the outskirts of the City of Quibdó. I was born in a community located on a river bank, and being in contact with water is of the utmost importance to me. It signifies a way of life that has been lost. Besides representing my culture and my very life, the river symbolizes the autonomy and independence that we black women and men have managed to achieve: the river, just like the territory, has always given us everything.

I survived the massacre that took place in the Town of Bojayá on May 2 2002. I can hardly bear to talk about it, but the truth is that what happened to this particular woman then, is what continues to happen to many, many people in this country. The most painful thing to witness is that our rights are violated by the very same people who are meant to guarantee them. I feel rage against the Government, because it was supposed to protect us and it didn't do so, in spite of the many warning signals issued before the massacre actually took place.

Armed conflict, violence and pillage, provoked by those who have vested interests in our territory, megaprojects like the one stimulating palm-tree production, have killed a lot of people. Many more of us have been forcibly displaced, losing our autonomy and traditional ways of life. The Government thinks the solution is to hand out subsidies: crumbs. The only things black people and peasants have left right now are the ruin of our land, the destruction of our social fabric and the absence of our dead.

I, Delis, am a leader... and I am also a mother. Only at times I think I am more of a leader than a mother. One has to give one's all, everything, in order to find strategic support to promote productive activities, which are what help people to generate their incomes and create the conditions needed to solve their difficulties. Let them not give us fish: we need to learn how to do the fishing.



DIGNITY

AIDA QUILCUÉ

Former Counsellor

Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca CRIC (Cauca's Indigenous Regional Council) and Candidate for the Senate of the Republic

I am a native Nasa from Tierradentro. For 15 years now I have been involved in grassroots leadership, enduring the State's strategy of exterminating indigenous peoples and our leaders. On December 16 2008, they murdered my husband, José Edwin Legarda, who had always been enthusiastically at my side during my Minga leadership. From that day on, I am forced to move around in blinded cars. I can't walk freely on the streets any longer, yet I haven't lost my sense of being an indigenous person, or my dignity. If anything, I have become stronger.

For the indigenous people, Minga means working, walking, thinking and seeking alternatives, together in our diversity. It has also been worth it, for us, to join forces with the Afro-Colombian population; with peasants, students, city dwellers, women, youngsters: the whole spectrum of peoples existing in Colombia. This was how the Minga de Resistencia Social y Comunitaria (Minga for Social and Community Resistance) came into being. Important struggles have taken place in Colombia, but they have mostly been isolated efforts. With our Minga we intend to direct these social struggles towards the common good: defending the lives and dignity of our people and communities, and defending the territory. It is very vulnerable because of militarization and multinationals hankering after our natural resources.

I chose to be photographed in the Páramo de Moras, because it is a sacred territory for us. For the Nasa and the other indigenous people, if we don't have land there is no life, no health, no hope, and no dignity. Dignity makes it our duty to continue defending this territory and its natural resources. We have a duty to ourselves and to the generations that will follow us.



LOVE

DERLY YINET CHÁVARRO

Community Mother

I come from the town of Sagrado, in Huila. I used to be a Community Mother there, but I was robbed, and when I filed a complaint about it I started getting threats. I sold my plot for whatever they would give me for it and we moved to Bellavista, in Cartagena. It was very hard for us...my children got sick and at times we didn't even have money for food. My husband couldn't find work and we began to quarrel. So I went to live on my own, in a cambucha (hut). But he took to coming home out of the blue and mistreating me. I was desperate, so I got some money together and go back to where my mother lived. But they threatened me there once more and I said to myself, "Well, I better go back to Cartagena then". I went back to my husband, but he didn't improve. He was terribly jealous when I started taking my training courses. But thanks to those courses I got the chance to work as a Community Mother once again: right now, we are standing at the door of my Community Home in *La Mar Linda*.

I used to get invited to gender workshops, in which we would talk about what violence is. One day we sat down with my husband to talk. He said, "I didn't know that to have sex with you women when you don't want to is called rape; I used to see that my father forced my mother to have sex". I answered, "You don't need a servant; you need a woman. We need each other, to love one another. You know we are not from here and if we fight, every opportunity will escape us". He said, "All right mom, let's try it. I love you and we've been together for a long time, you have a lot of qualities that I fancy". Then he began to get odd jobs as a bricklayer, and our relationship started to change. Now I'm pregnant again. But this baby is the fruit of love, not of abuse or violence.

I choose the word love because, first of all, my Home is like a shower of love. The word love has always characterized me, because what I give people, children, is love. Love has helped me to accept this road that my life has turned into.



SON-OF-A-BITCH

JUDITH BOTERO

Member

Red Colombiana de Mujeres por los Derechos Sexuales y Reproductivos (Colombian Network for Women's Sexual and Reproductive Rights)

My mother always used to say, "Don't get married, I had to drop everything to raise my 10 children". But I met someone who really liked me, we fell in love and we got married. He was finishing Medicine and he had to do his rural year after that. We went to Puerto Berrío and I dropped out of my own career. He began to protest against human rights violations. They began to persecute us and he had to disappear for three years. I stayed back alone with the children. By then, he had gotten involved with another woman, who was also a political connection. They had two daughters. Then my husband stopped being a politician and he started to be threatened again, something that he took advantage of, by going off to Nicaragua with a new girlfriend. Again I was left back alone, now with four children.

With many difficulties I went back to school, and also found a job at the *Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar ICBF* (Colombian Institute of Family Welfare), where we used to take care of children who mostly only had a mother. If a woman lived with a man, he would beat her up, not give her any money and force her to have sex with him: more and more children arriving and all of them off to the ICBF children's home...

I work for the defence of women's sexual and reproductive rights, with great emphasis on the right to have an abortion. If you are pregnant, you don't even exist, only your womb exists. Even when women are raped this is the case: if a woman voices her anguish over this, right away they tell her, "Madame, be careful, don't even think about doing anything!"

My home is a meeting point. There are always a plate of soup and a bed for whoever arrives. Today Alba Lucía came, a peasant woman we defended: her daughter was born dead and the doctor accused her of homicide. She was convicted to 42 years in prison. She spent six years in jail before we were able to get her released: son-of-a-bitch system, son-of-a-bitch State, son-of-a-bitch Church, son-of-a-bitch father of my children, who trashed me when I wasn't worth a cent to him anymore; for him I'm the ugliest, the poorest woman, now that he is specializing in Medicine he wants a much better family than us. He told me so himself.



HOPE

YOLANDA BISBICÚS

Native Awá Member

She lost her son in the August 26 2009 massacre She is under the protection of the Guardia Indígena (Indigenous Guard) for being a surviving witness.

PRESS RELEASE TO PUBLIC NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL OPINION

With indignation and sadness, the Organización Unidad Indígena del pueblo Awá UNIPA (Indigenous Unity Organization of the Awá People) informs the national and international communities that a MASSACRE has taken place today, August 26, 2009, in which 12 Awá members of the Rosario community were killed, belonging to the Gran Rosario Native Awá Reservation, Municipality of Tumaco Jurisdiction, Department of Nariño.

Today we mourn the death of four defenceless children, who together with their brothers, parents and other relatives, were massacred at five o'clock this morning in their humble dwelling, it being of serious concern that among the people massacred was to be found Mrs. Tulia García, the only surviving witness of what took place on May 23, 2009, when her husband Gonzalo Rodríguez was assassinated, a murder for which the National Army is being held responsible. (...)

In spite of the complaints that have been duly filed, and the criminal investigations that the State maintains that it undertakes, the race to wipe out the Awá people has not stopped, and the impunity following the perpetration of these events has not stopped either.

I was born in a place called Barbacoa, my mother was from there. Now I have a house in Cuibí. I want to go back there. I want to make my house bigger. I have to return; my children are going to be put into studying there. I feel like I have hope, I feel like I have the energy to bring my children up, to build my house on the farm.



SOVEREIGNTY

BLANCA ISABEL GARCIA

Artist and expert masseur

Self-supporting woman and free-thinking feminist

My work with women stems from the body itself: my body is my territory and it belongs to me. Through art, rituals and healing, and through ideas and actions, I help women to start discovering their own territory, so that they have more self-confidence when the time comes to express their ideas and actions in public.

We are steeped in a moralist, religious culture, which tells women that their bodies are no good, that they provoke lust. At the same time, women have very little self-esteem from early childhood: “You’re getting fat; you’re ugly; you’re a good-for-nothing...” Women are subjected to violence. They are made to feel like objects, used physically and sexually by their husbands or parents; and by the warring ones, by war itself. What is the point of having a body, if one’s body is just going to be used in a violent way?

That’s why I choose the word sovereignty: I am the sovereign of my ideas and my deeds, I rule over my own territory-body, I am the sovereign of my being, of my feelings. We must help women recover their self-esteem and believe in themselves. Then they will have the chance to become sovereigns of their own beings.

I use different artistic techniques because that is what has helped me to express what we sometimes fear to say out in the open. A woman who has had to suffer a war gradually becomes so full of scars, that she can no longer express herself. There is so much fear and so much pain that she is rendered speechless.

There are young people flourishing in the Cauca province, in Bogotá, and here in Medellín, who come from political activism, and who gradually explore ways to express themselves in order to work towards peace, not only through discourse but also through symbolic language. We need to give more colours and more joy to peace initiatives.



PEASANT'S DIGNITY

ALEIDA TORRES

Peasant

We got kicked out of our land, displaced by the Urrá reservoir. We moved to Tierra Alta, Córdoba, and they made some re-settlements for us. Then we had to go work at other people's farms, because we were in a place that was almost like this one we're in now, no work available, and there was also a shortage of water. That was the land in which the paracos (paramilitary) had settled, where they had set up their central command.

Everything that was meant to happen happened there, because we couldn't lead good lives there. My brother went out to work and that's where they killed him. Then the threats arrived again. They threatened my husband, because he was the one who really knew the river. We made a huge, huge raft and we even took our dogs and sailed off, running away from it all.

Then INCODER gave us this land, the Cari-Cari holding, in the Guajira region; gave it to peasant families who had been forcibly displaced. I knew that this land was nothing special, but what happens? What happens is that sometimes one just hankers after things. It's like children who get a piece of candy: they run to grab it, no matter what it may be. You say to yourself, "If I wait, I will end up empty-handed, so I better grab this piece of candy". That's the way we are.

If you don't use fertilizers and if you don't water this land constantly, it doesn't thrive. Look, the water is not good water, it is salty, many families keep being sick from it, I've just been lucky. After all we had been through, we didn't deserve this. Being on this land is like being in the war over there, but different, because here we are just dying more slowly. As human beings we deserve something better.

My granddaughter has special needs and it's that little girl who has given me the strength not to give up and let everything just go to pieces. Because I could just go on my way and leave, but my daughter... where is she going to go with that handicapped daughter of hers...?



MY SON JOSÉ

MARIA TERESA ANDRADE

Community Leader and Artisan

Federación de Mujeres Campesinas de Nariño (Nariño Peasant Women Federation)

One night I dreamt that I was slaughtering a pig and it turned into a sheep, and while I was butchering it and cutting it into pieces, half the sheep vanished. And there was blood dripping down my hands, plain blood, running down my hands. The next morning I woke up and went to see Clarita. She said it meant there would be a death in the family, that's what she said. "What do you mean, Clarita?" I asked. "Yes, someone from your house is going to die".

I tell you, that was on a Wednesday and the Monday after that, the paramilitaries killed my son. They meant to kill another young man, someone who had been a guerrilla fighter, but they mixed them up. Because they both had moustaches, my son was handsome and so was the other man, they were both dark-skinned, they just looked the same.... they covered him with an army cloak and a ski mask, making some holes where the bullet had gone through, that's what they did. And a little bit further on they left a small rifle; in other words, to insinuate that he had been carrying it and he had never even liked to have anything to do with guns.

Ay no, no, no, my God, I was simply going nuts. And one night he came to me on a motorcycle, bringing me some plantains and corn ears: that was the last time I dreamt about him. He came to me laughing and he said to me "Take it easy, I'm thinking about you", he said. "Why don't you just keep working? You're going to be just fine; I'm going to help you."

The next day I got up and said to myself: "Oh, that's right, he told me to borrow some money". I went and asked for a loan and I went down there to work making plaits. I kept on sewing little hats and I've never been short of money since. And now I walk along and meet up with others just like me, people who have lost their husbands, parents, and children. We talk; we cry... that's how we heal.

Here is where we will have my picture taken, where my son planted these plantain trees, they're so beautiful. I don't know how to write, so I don't know about that word you want me to choose. Better you have his portrait, as a souvenir, as a tribute to José Gregorio Andrade, 21 years old, assassinated on January 12, 1998; as a tribute to all the innocent victims of the war.



LAND

MARIBEL DE LA ROSA LARA

President

Asociación de Mujeres Campesinas del Guáimaro “Echadas p’alante” (Guáimaro Peasant Women Association “Echadas p’alante”)

He used to be a farmer, used to sow an enormous harvest. One day violence came and took him away. That was on February 16, 1998. There were a lot of people in the shop, because we could hear their voices laughing and they were just fooling around there and enjoying themselves. They took him at ten. After a year and a half, it was my brother's turn. Since he was a town counsellor, they came looking for him, and a bunch of them said they needed him for something or other, and they sailed them right out and killed them over there...he and one of his workers. To those who did it, thanks be to God that I have already forgiven them, the only one who can justify them is God, nobody else...

I say that this has helped give me the strength to continue. My partner used to love fighting for this village, just like my brother did. I also have to fight for my people; I'm going to do it in memory of the two of them.

It was on April 15 this year that we settled in these lands: Tierra Prometida (The Promised Land), in Guáimaro, Magdalena. Now there is more hope than fear, yes, people have become braver, we're trying to get rid of all that weight we carry inside. The land gives us the energy to keep on going, because progress is going to come to these lands: hope will come.

We're going to do such a lot of things! ¡Ay! There are so many, many things I want to do...First of all I want to get out of all this ignorance in which society keeps us, and, well, plant and plant and plant so many things, because it's not just crops, we have to plant dreams, love, and peace, before anything else. Our hearts have to be disarmed because they are so armed with hate, resentment and pain. Also, we have to slash impunity open, because we can't take all this resentment down with us to our graves.

Yes, we are going to manage to keep going forward.



SECURITY

MARÍA EUGENIA PANESIO

Survivor of the Bojayá massacre

I chose to be photographed in front of the door of the Bojayá Church, in order to get rid of some of the things I carry inside me, seeing that this is where the terrorist attack of 2002 took place, and I was inside the Church with my children and that's where I was wounded. Each time one of us comes to this place, we get rid of some of the things we carry bottled up inside. You never, ever forget what happened, but you learn to step aside from it, little by little. You start to understand things in a different way, feeling more serene.

When the massacre took place, it was three days before they could get us out of here, it was terrible. After that we went to Quibdó, where we had to start from scratch, from zero, plus feeling the disdain of the people around us. This was because we were displaced people, and the people in Quibdó think those of us who are displaced come to invade their space. They really hate us, institutions, and schools, everywhere. If there's a thief, they say he is a displaced person; if a prostitute appears, she is also a displaced person. We have to be the ones who do the cleaning, sweep the streets, throw out the garbage; they want displaced women to do all their dirty work for them and they pay us very badly. Everything is about money here in Quibdó. Some days you get up and have breakfast, but you can't eat lunch or dinner. The people from Bojayá have really had a hard time, because at first they wouldn't even admit we'd been displaced.

I don't live here in the village I was born in anymore because I am always very scared, there may be a lot of police forces here but there's no security. Then how can anyone who has lived through that tragedy stay here, you're always fretting about what can happen.

You get tired of all these international institutions and all these NGOs who come and extract their information and then forget about you. I know that participating in this project is tricky...tomorrow this can mean trouble for me and my children. But I like to look on the bright side. I may be taking a risk, but on the other hand, I can also benefit from this, so that I can be able to bring up my children properly and, in general, support my family.



FEAR

AURA DERLY CHECA

Member

Mesa de Organización de las Mujeres de Soacha (Soacha Women's Organization Table)

I was born in Cumbita, Nariño, my grandmother left me a farm there. It was all so beautiful, so peaceful, until, ay! they began to introduce coca. Before then there was no violence in Cumbita, till that little plant arrived. One of my brothers planted a plot, and then I launched right in and planted some coca too. My eldest brother, who was killed later, used to say that those little plants were going to be our damnation. "Let's pull them out", he used to say to me. In less than two months, cars started driving into the village, we got electricity and there was lots of money going around. Then some people got killed and other people took over their lands, and from then on it was kill, kill, kill, the paracos, the guerrillas, the Black Eagles, they all killed...

The paramilitaries came and told me I had to work in partnership with them. I refused, but ay! That's when they had me kidnapped. They forced my husband to sell everything we had, everything, and when he sent them the ransom I ran away. Then they went and killed the person who had been kidnapped with me, a male cousin of mine. Rumour has it that they mean to stamp out my entire family. Two of my brothers and six of my male cousins have already been murdered. See here, sometimes their wives call me and say, "It's your fault our husbands are dead". I have to live with that burden.

In a rush I got a hundred thousand pesos and with that I came to Soacha on my own. I went from having everything, to not even being able to buy myself sugar water. One day I was sitting in the park, crying, and Clara Stella came up to me and said, "Do you want to talk to me, look, I belong to the Table". I think my little God put her in my path, and the doors opened for me, I woke up. Now I am a leader here, in the Altos de Casucá.

What I fear the most is that they displace us again. Fear is always there, ay! Uribe says that there are no more paracos since 2005, no more "false positives", men killed and then disguised as guerrillas shot in combat, but the whole thing is a lie. I am writing him a letter, asking for an audience with him, so that he can explain to me personally how it is that, if there are no more paracos, they killed my brother just one month ago. And I have proof.



RESISTANCE

MARIA EUGENIA GONZALEZ

Coordinator

Colectivo de Mujeres Desplazadas en Cali COLMUDESCALI (Group of Displaced Women in Cali)

I went to live in Tolima from Cali, when I was 28. We really took to the countryside. It was as if we had been always been there. It's a very grateful land, only it got heavy later: the place where we lived was called the hallway or corridor. We are treated badly because we happened to be living there: when the Army comes, for them we are in cahoots with the guerrilla, and when the guerrilla comes, for them we are in cahoots with the paramilitaries.

To become displaced means to arrive at a city without any prospects for the man, the children or the woman... The family disintegrates, because each person has to go out and make some sort of living on his or her own. The pain of having had to abandon your land turns into illnesses. My mother and father are both sick since they were forced to flee. I don't want to go on living here. There are better opportunities in the countryside, like harvesting without needing to buy anything. But so many crops cannot be planted any longer...

We, the women, are leading the resistance process, and it's not only about having had to abandon our lands, but also about the way in which reparation and protection are allegedly taking place: they claim that the war is over here, and that we are going through a postconflict stage, but the Army continues to harass and murder the people. I am in active resistance against more and more deaths taking place, against our children disappearing, against so-called false positives and against our children being forcibly recruited, or maybe going to swell the ranks of delinquency. In order to hold onto my dignity and the dignity of my family I resist, and I won't shut up. I don't mean to say I am not scared, but I would just be betraying myself if I didn't defend the family and our human rights.

Here, at Km.18 in Cali, sometimes it gets cloudy, also, like back home in Tolima...I really want my bad foot to show in this photograph. Yes, let them see that we women won't stop struggling in spite of our illnesses and our handicaps.



PEACE

GLORIA STELLA OVALLE

Member

Liga Internacional de Mujeres por la Paz y la Libertad LIMPAL (International Women's League for Peace and Liberty)

I am from Vista Hermosa, Meta. Four years ago, I was displaced and ended up here. There you had coca leaves, the Army, the paramilitaries, the guerrilla and the police, all fighting over who was going to take control of the coca crops. Due to the threats we received, we had to get out of there fast, and we virtually lost everything we owned. So we decided to come to Porfía, in Villavicencio. Here we came up against the lack of work and being discriminated by the local people and the civil servants; discriminated because we were displaced and because we were black.

I chose my own home to be photographed, because I want all of you to see how we live. The thing is to try to adjust. I have canvas material and little bits and pieces like that, because sometimes it rains and then everything gets flooded. I am also speaking for all the other women around me. Everybody has needs and everybody wants to get ahead and be successful.

At LIMPAL, I've taken part in an empowerment process, in which we have learned about our rights as women. We have discovered something beautiful: what we are like on the inside. I was in a lot of pain when I came here, only I didn't know how to express it. They taught us meditation and then everything inside began flowing, we began to get rid of all of that stuff we had repressed. I grew a lot, spiritually. I also began to sing, so I want to learn to express myself, I want to create: I want to learn more so I can become a good singer.

Why did I choose the word peace? Look. Corporal peace: that means if you are abused, if they hit you, you will never know peace inside your body, and your body is the most beautiful thing you can have; spiritual peace, because if you are at peace with yourself, you are at peace with your surroundings; peace at the level of the community, trying to understand our common problems and calm them down; peace at the level of the country, starting by communicating with each other at home and beginning to carry peace inside ourselves, all of us.



This work is dedicated to the 13 women who formed part of this Project. Several of them risked their personal integrity and safety in order to reveal the abuses that have gripped, not just their lives, but the lives of so many other women in Colombia. So much courage and beauty!

WOMAN WITH BROOM AND CHILD

You sweep from the inside out

Chase leeches

And dark thoughts away

A little boy climbs up and down your arms

While you strive

To sweep pain and oblivion

From the sidewalks of the Fatherland.

-PIEDAD MORALES



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