Afro-Colombianas, Feminism and Youth Development in Colombia: 
The work of the 2017 Robert Hildreth Latin America Travel Internship Fellows

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The Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy:
The Gastón Institute informs policy makers about issues vital to the state’s growing Latino community and to provide this community with the information and analysis necessary for effective participation in public policy development.

Latino Leadership Opportunity Program (LLOP):
Is an academic enrichment and leadership development program that offers undergraduate training in applied research and public policy analysis.

Robert Hildreth Latin America Internship Fellows Award:
In its 4th year, sponsored by the Gastón Institute, the Hildreth Award provides funding for travel and research in Latin American or Caribbean countries.
Presentation Overview

- Background and Goal
- Colombia
  - Brief History
- Non-Profit Organization: Projects
- Buenaventura
  - History
  - Today
  - Culture
- Mariposa de Alas
  - Gender Based Violence Prevention
- Strong Women Strong Girls
  - Difficulty
- Research Objectives
- Research Design
- Research Findings
- Why is this important?
- Further Research
- Personal and Educational Impacts
- Acknowledgements
Researcher’s Background

- Anthropology
- Latino Studies & Spanish minors
- Salvadoran-American
- Research Assistant
- CLA First! Senior Peer Mentor
- Casa Latinx Executive Board
- Beacon Voyages for Service Participant
Researcher’s Background

- Women's and Gender Studies
- English minor
- Afro-Boricua
- Research Assistant
- Beacon Voyagers for Service Participant
- Casa Latinx Member
- Strong Women Strong Girls Mentor/Executive Board
Goals

• Cultural differences
• Educational disparities
• Perception of language
Goals

• Afro-Colombian identity
• Empowerment
• Gender & Racial equity
• Human Rights
• Activism
Colombia

- Diversity
  - Cultural
  - Natural
  - Recent Peace agreement with FARC guerrilla (2017)
    - 50 years
    - 200,000
    - 7 million

- Bogota
  - Colonial History
  - Mountainous area

- Buenaventura
  - Colombia’s main port in the Pacific
  - Surrounded by Rain Forest
Colombia

• Colombia’s recent history
  • Longest insurgency conflict in America
  • Recent Peace agreement Pact (2017)
  • Drug trafficking and apparition of new armed actors other than guerrilla

• Buenaventura’s Armed Actors:
  • Groups of Guerrilla
  • Paramilitary Forces – Created as anti-guerrilla forces became responsibly for large forced displacement of people due to their cruelty
  • Military – Attempts to control areas vacant by guerrilla after peace treatment
  • Criminal gangs “Bandas Armadas” (Urabenos/Empresa) – Drug and arms trafficking
African Descendants in Colombia

Decree grants freedom to palenques of Sierra de Maria (1793 Haiti)

Law 70, grants collective land rights to Afro-descendants

1691 1991 1993

Colombia recognizes Afro-Colombians as unique ethnic; mestizaje cease being dominant ideology

afropedea.org
NGO's

Corporación Vínculos "Corporation of Networks" (Bogotá): A non-profit organization which works with people, communities, organizations and social networks of victims of socio-political violence. They focus on a systemic-constructionist psychosocial perspective, also implementing attention processes, creating and building a culture of peace and producing knowledge through research, training and victim advocacy.

• CARITAS "Many Faces or Faces of children" (Bogotá): Barrio Rafael Uribe Uribe

• Atenciones de mujeres y niñ@es "clinical work/therapy on women and children"
  • Mariposa de Alas Nuevas "Butterfly of new wings, in connection and liberty" (Buenaventura)
Corporación Vínculos
Corporación Vínculos: CARITAS

- Mountainous area in Bogotá
- High Violence rates
- School as a Community space
  - Pedagogic space
  - Investigation
  - Communication
Corporación Vínculos: CARITAS

• Ni un joven más para la Guerra – (Not a single more youth for war)
• Community Engagement and Activism (Minga)
• Gender Equality
• Nuevas masculinidades – (New Masculinities)
Corporación Vínculos:
Atenciones de mujeres y niñ@s
*(clinical work/therapy on women and children)*

- Clinical psychologist from Vínculos
- Psycho-social therapy in Buenaventura
- School & hospital
- Runs workshops for girls
- Individual sessions for women and children
Buenaventura

• Colombia’s port in the Pacific (it handles 50 – 60% of all Colombia's foreign trade)

• Guerrilla, paramilitary, criminal gangs fight for control of drug and arm trafficking routes
• Humanitarian Crisis – created by decades of administrative mismanagement, violence, and massive forced displacement of population
Buenaventura

• Military is trying to get control of area after peace agreement
• *Bandas Armadas* such as Urabeños and *Empresa* still control large areas of the region
• All armed factors are responsible for serious violations of human rights

• All those who advocate for:
  • Human Rights
  • Land Rights
Buenaventura

Paro Cívico - Civil Strike

• Structural Racism: 90% population is Afro-Colombian but they lack
  • Water
  • Schools
  • Hospitals
• Privatization of port services
• Poverty 80%
• Unemployment 64%
• Forced displacement of population
• Human rights violations specially against community based organizations
Forced displacement of population
Cultura Afro-Colombiana de Buenaventura

July 25th is the International Afro-Latin American and Afro-Caribbean Women’s Day
Buenaventura

Comadrera:

• An Afro-Colombian welcoming ritual from the bonavorense culture, Comadrera means to be a godmother of the community and has a similar role of what a Catholic godmother should be. It also is a blessing to the person to whom they are making a comadre.

• Gloria and the other community lideresas (female leaders) spoke to the mixture of Catholic and African traditions. They explained how important these traditions are but many have been modified and lost as time goes.

• Something that they are trying to do is to establish is a summer program on empowerment and teaching/embrace of Afro Colombian traditions.
Mariposa de Alas Nuevas, En Red y Libertad
"Butterfly of new wings, in connection and liberty"

• The goal of this grassroots organization is so that women had a tangible resource of other women in Buenaventura. They were to support each other to get out of abusive relationships, accompanied each other to the police station when needed and have the support they need for getting medical and psychological help.

• School Involvement (workshops)
  • Gender Based Violence (GBV) Prevention
  • Promoting Human Rights

• Community Organizing
Mariposa de Alas Nuevas, En Red y Libertad
(Butterfly of new wings, in connection and liberty)

• Mariposa is composed of about 120 core volunteers.

• Each woman is tasked with recruiting five new women so that their reach will become wider.

• Part of their strategy is to stay below the radar of the armed groups, because of prosecution of community-based organizations.
Mariposa de Alas Nuevas, En Red y Libertad
(Butterfly of new wings, in connection and liberty)

School as a Community Space

Work Shops
1. Self-care and protection
2. Empowerment personal and political
3. Practice of resistance and re-existence
4. Laws and human rights
5. Alternative masculinities, eradicating the patriarchy that we have inside
6. Community feminism
Mariposa de Alas Nuevas, En Red y Libertad
(Butterfly of new wings, in connection and liberty)
Mariposa de Alas Nuevas, En Red y Libertad
(Butterfly of new wings, in connection and liberty)

Photo Credit: Vanessa, Fiscalía de Buga (Feminicidio) November 2017

Facebook Post: PLANTÓN DEL COLECTIVOS DE MUJERES RED MARIPOSAS DE BUENAVENTURA EN LA FISCALÍA DE BUGA, EXIGIENDO LA VISIBILIDAD, Y Celeridad a los casos de feminicidios de Buenaventura e Inclusión del enfoque de género y étnico en su atención!
Working with the Community-Internship Fellows

Mariposa de Alas Nuevas, En Red y Libertad
Gloria

• *Lideresas* – Black Feminism
• Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Prevention
• Lessons from Strong Women Strong Girls (SWGS)
• Buenaventura’s Outskirts
  • Mentoring
  • Mentor's training
Working with the Community-Internship Fellows
Strong Women, Strong Girls (UMass Boston)

• Strong Women, Strong Girls strives to support positive mentoring relationships between college women and pre-adolescent girls in underserved local communities in both Boston
• Majority of girls are of color
• Mission: to “empower girls to imagine a broader future" through a curriculum grounded on female role models

Curriculum - Lesson Plan
• Get Active
• Knowledge Swap
• Biography - Vocabulary
• Activity
• Journals/Reflection
Mariposa de Alas Nuevas, En Red y Libertad
(Butterfly of new wings, in connection and liberty)

School as a Community Space

**Mariposas: Work Shops**
1. Self-care and protection
2. Empowerment personal and political
3. Practice of resistance and re-existence
4. Laws and human rights
5. Alternative masculinities, eradicating the patriarchy that we have inside
6. Community feminism

**SWSG: Curriculum - Lesson Plan**
- Get Active
- Knowledge Swap
- Biography - Vocabulary
- Activity
- Journals/Reflection
Mariposa de Alas Nuevas, En Red y Libertad (Butterfly of new wings, in connection and liberty)

Becoming a Mentor: Empowering each other
Afro-Colombianas, Feminism and Youth Development in Colombia:

Research objective

Location: Buenaventura, Colombia. Specifically, I focused my interviews around non-profit organizations with some type of involvement on GBV preventive method with youth/young adult and the community.

Sample:
• I was able to interview five women, all part of a nonprofit organization and all identified as Afro-Colombians (one was part afro and indigenous)

The objective of my study is to answer the following questions:
• What does Afro-Colombian identity mean in Buenaventura?
• What is the current work being done on gender and racial equity?
• How is empowerment defined?
• What are the first-hand worker’s ideas for a more just society? How does activism look like in Buenaventura?
Afro-Colombianas, Feminism and Youth Development in Colombia:

Research Design

We conducted five face-to-face interviews, which took approximately 45 to an 1 hours and a half to complete.

Methodology:
Semi-structured interviews: The questions (34) allowed us to examine key themes and concepts of the interviewees' perceptions and experiences as Afro-Colombian women.

• Participant observation: During 5 workshops

Questions looked at the:
• Demographics
• Family History
• Life in Buenaventura
• Work Experiences
• Empowerment and Feminism
Afro-Colombianas, Feminism and Youth Development in Colombia:

Findings

• Deconstruction of masculinity
• Resistance

Corporación Vínculos (Bogotá), Mariposas (Buenaventura), SWSG(Boston)

• All their approaches are different, but their ultimate goal is to empowerment, gender equity and community participation using activism.
• Providing support and hoping to prevent gender-based violence.
Afro-Colombianas, Feminism and Youth Development in Colombia:

Why is this of importance?

- Global issues:
  - Human Rights
  - Gender-Based Violence (GBV) prevention
  - Women continue to be used as weapons of war
  - Community involvement
  - Empowerment
  - Peace and Social Justice
Afro-Colombianas, Feminism and Youth Development in Colombia:

**Further Research**

- Making unequal racial structures visible in Colombia and unacceptable
- Developing more violence prevention programs to empower young girls such as SWSG. Bringing these knowledge, empowerment practices to the outskirts of Buenaventura (and all in land areas).
- Promoting culture of Afro-Colombians, empowering their community by focusing on their assets and highlighting their contributions
- Examining Case studies of the different organizations in Buenaventura that focus on gender equity and racial equalities
- Understanding the differences between the Bonaborence community of the city and the outskirts in respect to racial and gender discrimination, educational disparities, gender equity
- Examine how community feminism is practiced within the Port City as a whole (outskirts, and the city itself)
Personal and Educational Impact

• Becoming more involved
• Mentoring
• Solidarity with the African decedents
• Intrigued to learn more of other Latin American countries

Photo Credit: Evelyn Bonilla; Rafael Uribe Uribe
Personal and Educational Impact

- Identity Exploration
- Eager to learn about other African descendant's (Latin America)
- Hopeful and Powerful
- Community Involvement
- Collective Learning

- Community Involvement
- Direct and outside
- Research
- Mentoring and effect on GBV prevention
- Community Feminism
- Developing more programs to empower young girls such SWSG & Mariposas. Bringing these knowledge, empowerment practices to the outskirts of Buenaventura—all in land areas.
This project was possible thanks to the
Robert Hildreth Latin America Travel Internship Award

A big thank you to:
Robert Hildreth
Ester Shapiro
Maria Idalí Torres
Lorna Rivera
Fabián Torres-Ardila
and all others who in some way or another have been a part of this.
Thank you!

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