The 2019 Colombia Global Youth Connect Delegation was dedicated to Peace Accord Implementation with a Gender Focus

4 students from the United States and the United Kingdom came to Colombia in June 2019 for an opportunity to understand the complexities of the Colombian conflict, and the country’s progress toward building peace after the 2016 Peace Accord.

The delegation visited experts in the field in both the capital city of Bogotá, as well as Medellín and surrounding countryside town of Granada where the population was heavily affected.

By meeting with a range of professionals, academics, victims, and social leaders, the delegates were able to hear various perspectives to help them answer their research questions, and form a comprehensive understanding of the situation.

Meeting with community members in Granada to talk about how sharing their stories can help with healing.
Our 2019 delegation was led by Erika Rodriguez, Program Director, and Cristian Sáez Flórez, Program Assistant.

On our delegation, 4 students joined us from the U.S. and the U.K.

**Jason Choi**
Jason is a politics & international relation undergraduate student at Durham University, England. As a politics student, he wishes to pursue a career in global humanitarian aid and promote democratic progression internationally.

**Hannah Lawson**
Hannah is currently a student at Flagler College in St. Augustine, Florida, pursuing both a degree in political science and international studies, with a concentration in political science. She is also pursuing a professional certificate in Spanish language and will graduate a semester early in December of 2019.

**Winnie Lohof**
Winnie is a recent graduate from the University of Montana where she majored in history. Human rights have been her life long passion; she interviewed two Holocaust survivors by the time she was in the 5th grade. Winnie was inspired to study history and human rights after hearing stories of her grandfather who was a prisoner of war during WWII.

**Roxana Perez**
Roxana immigrated to the United States at the age of eleven from Cuba in search of opportunities for success. She obtained an Associate of Arts in International Relations from the Honors College at Miami Dade College. She then transferred to the University of Pennsylvania to pursue a Bachelor’s degree in International Relations.
This delegation gave me a well-rounded view of the conflict, but it also showed me how tenacious, vibrant, and hopeful communities can be after they have seen the absolute worst."

In Bogotá, we began with an overview of the conflict, and heard from various governmental officials and NGOs about the efforts toward implementation of the peace accord.

In Medellín, we met with human rights organizations to discuss how the city was specifically affected, how the city has been making progress toward peace.

In Granada we met with community organizations and visited local farms where delegates learned how capesinos/farmers and other victims of the conflict are building their societies back up after years of forced displacement and mass violence.
GENDER APPROACH

A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING

To align with the delegation’s focus on gender and reintegration of female ex-combatants into society after the peace agreement, we met with various organizations that helped the group gain a more well-rounded insight into the situation, as well as information on violence against women.

Two organizations in particular were more directly focused on women’s part in the conflict, and their path toward healing.

At La Gobernación de Antioquia, we spoke with the women’s secretary of peace and conflict coordinator, Valentina Cadavi. She explained to the group what sort of programs and peace assemblies are being implemented in the rural regions of the country. These advancements in Antioquia make it the first state to ensure implementation of the gender approach, and have made Antioquia a model for the rest of the country.

Another very important organization that our delegation met with that is advancing the rights of women and empowering them to heal is the Asociación de Mujeres de las Independencias. Its founders and their stories about how they have been role models for their neighborhood left our group speechless and feeling inspired by the progress they have made and their unwillingness to back down during rough times.
"This delegation gave me the chance to break stereotypes about Colombia while creating lifelong friendships."

Enjoying the views in the mountains of Antioquia

REFLECTIONS

BY 2 OF OUR 2019 DELEGATES

This delegation was an extraordinary learning and cultural experience that truly exceeded my expectations. Here, I was able to gain a well-rounded perspective of the conflict in Colombia as well as peace-building initiatives from not only governmental officials, but also community leaders.

-Roxana, GYC Delegate 2019

"This delegation has given me the opportunity to meet new lifelong friends, learn from strong leaders and representatives, soak in all that Colombian culture has to offer and to gain a deep understanding of the conflict and peace building process.

-Hannah, GYC Delegate 2019

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