Global Youth Connect's July 2018 delegation to Colombia took an in-depth journey to Bogotá and Cali. The delegation sought to gain an understanding of both the history and current reality of Colombia’s long-running civil conflict.

The delegation met with government entities, international organizations, NGOs, and grassroots community organizations, which allowed for a well-rounded vision of human rights issues through a critical lens.

GYC is proud to be working with Warren Wilson College to provide academic credit to participants of this delegation.
The 2018 Colombia Global Youth Connect delegation was dedicated to the links between civil society and the state.

Delegates met with relevant government officials, community leaders, and other experts from around the country who presented diverse perspectives on the country’s history of violence and progress towards protecting human rights. They were encouraged to reflect on their personal and collective understandings concerning the conflict as well as the country’s future opportunities.

Delegates examined how institutional policies affect local organizations and how the rhetoric of state agencies and community organizations differ.

The delegation centered around the following guiding questions:

1. What implications could the results of the presidential election have on the peace process in Colombia?
2. Why is historic memory and reconciliation important for the path toward peace?
3. What is the role of the civil society in the peacebuilding process in Colombia?
Learning Objectives

By the end of this delegation, participants were able to:

1) Explain the internal conflict in Colombia and its impact on the country. Delegates were exposed to diverse perspectives concerning the origins of the violence and experience of victims, which gave them a deeper understanding of Colombia's civil war.

2) Compare governmental and non-governmental initiatives to trace Colombia's history of conflict and promote the right to truth. Delegates were able to critically consider the social and political process involved in constructing a narrative of the violence.

3) Discuss the peace process with the FARC and the proposed transitional justice measures. The delegation provided in-depth information about the Comprehensive System for Truth, Justice, Reparations and Non-Repetition established to address victims' rights.

4) Assemble information about groups working to protect human rights and promote peace in Colombia. Delegates were encouraged to support peacebuilding initiatives beyond the delegation.
Schedule of Meetings

Bogotá
1. Colombian Conflict Timeline Activity
2. Professor Samuel Escobar - Universidad del Rosario
3. Dejusticia - Camila Bustos
4. UN Verification Mission
5. Jurisdicción Especial Para la Paz
6. Casa de Nariño
7. Vidas Silenciadas
8. Defensoría del Pueblo
9. Diakonia
10. Centro de Memoria, Paz y Reconciliación
11. Kroc Institute
12. Graffiti Tour

Cali
1. Biblioghetto
2. Heartland Alliance
3. Fundación Paz y Bien
4. Documentary Screening
5. Santamaría Fundación
“I found that this activity, put together by Erika, Alex, and Lona, was actually very helpful in learning the nitty-gritty details and dates that were especially useful throughout all of the meetings we had with the various individuals and organizations we spoke with. This activity was especially important in my understanding of historic memory and further opened my eyes to how political changes (election of new presidents or change in ideology) impact the peace process.” - Maria Brighten
Reflections from the Delegates

Sam Escobar, July 10, 2018

“Due the small size of our group, we were able to ask multiple questions each and got an in-depth (considering the time) history lesson about the conflict in Colombia. What especially interested me was the fact that the newly elected president had the support of the evangelical church and what that could mean for Colombia’s LGBTQ community and gender rights.” - Maria Brightman

Dejusticia, July 10, 2018

“Given that her (Camila’s) own work at Dejusticia is mostly focused around the environment, there was particular concern about the re-introduction of the fumigation of coca crops. This was one area where she, and others, were quite sure that policy would change and fumigation would once again become a reality, but the logistics are still very much up in the air. Nobody really knows when fumigation will start, what geographical areas will be most affected, and of course, what the long term effects will be on coca production, environmental impact, and the health of the population.” - Juan Odorico
Reflections from the Delegates

Diakonia, July 12, 2018

“The focus on women and women’s different experiences of violence and conflict is very important, and the fact that the Swiss government and Diakonia operate with an explicitly feminist focus is interesting, as feminism can still be a contentious concept, perhaps particularly in the more machista cultures that exist in Latin America.”
- Juan Odorico

Diakonia, July 12, 2018

“This organization and what they do to help communities was heartwarming and gave me hope for the future. Their work focuses on supporting vulnerable populations (women, Indigenous groups, Afro-Colombians), dealing with environmental rights, and doing their own investigations. Their role as a nongovernmental organization put them at an advantage because people can trust them and therefore they can further their reach and help more people.”
- Maria Brightman
Reflections from the Delegates

UNVM July 11, 2018:
“It was interesting to visit The United Nations Verification Mission, which monitors the implementation of the peace accords. This organization differed somewhat from others in their objectivity and apolitical outlook.”
- GYC Delegate

Casa de Nariño, July 11, 2018
“We we able to visit Casa de Nariño to see the ceremonial change in guard at the presidential palace. It was lovely to have the opportunity to tour the building and take in all of the historic memorabilia: if only they applied this impressive memory to remembering and incorporating Colombia’s history and applying it to the peace process.”
- Maria Brightman

JEP, July 11, 2018
“It was an interesting experience to visit the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, an important judicial entity in the peace process - especially at a time when its existence could be threatened by the incoming government.”
- GYC Delegate
Reflections from the Delegates

Centro de Memoria, Paz y Reconciliación, July 13, 2018

“There really was a feeling, at least in the art and the cafe, that the center was focused on victims of all sides. Of course there will always be a debate about community memory versus official memory, but in my opinion the center does very well to be inclusive within the confines of a government sponsored entity.”

- Juan Odorico
Reflections from the Delegates

VidasSilenciadas, July 12, 2018

"I think that similar groups of activists and academics can be incredibly important in holding those in power, accountable, because of their own relative positions of power (or at least visibility) within academia. I do hope that this type of collective continues to grow with younger academics." - Juan Odorico

Defensoría del Pueblo, July 12, 2018

“What I most took out of this meeting was the information related to the process of registering as a victim. While it seems reasonably straightforward from my point of view, I can imagine this may not be the case for those actually attempting the process.”

- Juan (LAST NAME)

“I was especially interested in the agricultural discussions because land reform is the reason behind the conflict. They informed me on what lands could be distributed and when I asked about replacement crops (instead of coca) they informed me of how difficult it is without proper infrastructure and markets.”

- Maria Brightman
Reflections from the Delegates

Graffiti Tour, July 14, 2018

“In one instance, and perhaps my favorite, there were pamphlets glued on a wall of the new president elect portrayed as a puppet and Uribe shown as the puppet master. Although much of the art is up for interpretation, there is a clear focus on human rights, ugly truths, corruption, racism, and satire.”
- Maria Brightman

Biblioghetto, July 17, 2018

“While Petecuy shows no signs of becoming a particularly prosperous neighbourhood, they do seem to be making strides in public safety and civic engagement, and it seems to be largely due to the grassroots community activism and engagement of people like Gustavo. The fact that these kinds of improvements can be made even in an area where many people have been displaced and are living in poverty which is one of the most positive, hopeful things I saw during the delegation.”
- Juan Odorico
"The Kroc Institute, similar to Dejusticia, writes and publishes reports and research. This information is crucial to government and therefore gives this organization more notoriety and power to make recommendations and be more political. They were more than happy to answer our questions and were great sources of information to further our knowledge of the current peace process and the role of NGOs in politics.”

- Maria Brightman
Heartland Alliance, July 17, 2018

“I think it would be interesting to see how their model could be expanded in Colombia beyond the Pacific region and into other parts of the country affected by the conflict, especially given their focus on mental health and mental health awareness.” - Juan Odorico

Fundación Paz y Bien, July 18, 2018

“I also found this to be one of the more interesting meetings because we got to hear from such a large number of people, all involved in the frontline work in the community and some of whom had previously accessed services at the houses that the foundation runs.”

- Juan Odoric
“It was interesting to see the impact of the conflict and all of its sub-effects on an already marginalized group and how Sanataria Foundation has stepped in as one of the few voices advocating for trans women in Colombia.”
- Juan Odorico

“Despite the massive amounts of money that the government of Colombia has spent on the conflict, organizations have proven to be far more efficient with less financial means and “power”. I have come to realize that it is impossible to achieve peace by government and state efforts alone, organizations and other entities also play a major role and should be given more credit than they have been given. Together, both state and civil societies must work together in order to be as efficient as possible and not only achieve peace but to also sustain it and improve the lives of victims and those who are in need.”
- Maria Brightman
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**Acknowledgements**