Historical Memory and the Right to Truth

The 2017 Colombia Global Youth Connect Delegation was dedicated to “Historical Memory and the Right to Truth.”

Fourteen undergraduate and masters level students from the US and Colombia traveled to Bogotá, Medellín, and San Carlos (Antioquia) to examine truth-seeking measures that have been used to address human rights abuses in Colombia.

The delegation met with a range of experts—from government officials in the capital to community leaders in the countryside—to discuss the promises and challenges of conflict transformation, transitional justice, and human rights work in Colombia.

Guiding Questions

Our delegation was centered on the following Guiding Questions:

To what extent are international and national human rights laws empowering victims of human rights abuses in Colombia?

What are some challenges and benefits to truth seeking during a transition from conflict?

What role can the right to truth and historical memory play in pursuing peace?

What’s Inside?

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SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS & SITE VISITS

Bogotá:
- Historical Overview with Political Science Professor
- Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (CNMH)
- Visit to la Candelaria
- Centro de Memoria, Paz y Reconciliación
- Colectiva Matamba Acción Afrodisáspórica
- Dejusticia
- Oficina Presidencial de Derechos Humanos
- Oficina del Alto Comisionado para la Paz
- Casa Nariño
- Consultoría para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento (CODHES)

Medellín
- Agencia Para la Reincorporación y Normalización (ARN)
- Universidad de Antioquia
- Museo Casa de la Memoria
- Casa Diversa Comuna 8
- Comité de Impulso de Acciones de Memoria Comuna 13
- Presentation on Reparations with Human Rights Lawyer
- Meeting with Senator from Centro Demócratico
- Asociación de Mujeres de las Independencias (AMI)

San Carlos
- Jardín de la Memoria
- Centro de Atención para la Reconciliación y Reinserción (CARE)
- El Salón del Nunca Más

June 18th- 30th:
In Bogotá, we started with an overview of the Colombian conflict, discussed governmental and non-governmental initiatives to redress human rights violations, and visited historical sites around the capital.

In Medellín, we spoke with human rights leaders, visited memory sites, and heard about on-going threats in different parts of the city.

In San Carlos, we learned about the impact of violence in the countryside, resistance during the armed conflict, and community efforts to address widespread trauma.
SNAPSHOTS FROM THE DELEGATION

Centro de Memoria, Paz y Reconciliación
Tuesday, June 20th
“The Centro de Memoria, Paz y Reconciliación works to preserve the memory and history of the Colombian conflict. It maintains literature, photos, exhibits, and more to ensure that the Colombian people and the international community has a reminder of what has occurred and what is hoped to come—peace, healing, and positive change.” - Lily Fuentez, GYC Delegate

Visit to the Presidential Office of Human Rights
Wednesday, June 21st
“At the Presidential Office of Human Rights in Bogotá, we had the opportunity to learn about a public discourse and strategy that has been created to ensure human rights for the victims of Colombia’s armed conflict.” - Brittnay Bringuez, GYC Delegate

"I had spent a lot of time studying the armed conflict as thoroughly as possible before the trip but so much of what has happened and what continues to happen in Colombia can only be learned in Colombia – doing exactly what GYC is doing, allowing different people to come together and learn and listen to different perspectives because the conflict is so incredibly complex."
San Carlos Memory Garden and meeting at CARE
MONDAY, JUNE 26TH
"Four hours from Medellín, the town of San Carlos has become a symbol of resilience, rebuilding, and remembrance. In the center of the town’s main square, lies El Jardín de la Memoria, a memorial site dedicated to the victims of the conflict in San Carlos — the garden is a reminder of the town’s painful past. Pastora Mira and CARE’s emphasis on healing, forgiveness, and reconciliation in the face of trauma and violence is helping San Carlos transition from a state of negative to positive peace."
- Dana Hoyes, GYC Delegate

"I believe this was an incredibly life-changing (emotionally and professionally) opportunity and I am thankful for all of the people, from vast backgrounds, that we got to meet and interact with."

El Salón del Nunca Más
TUESDAY JUNE 27TH
"El Salón de Nunca Mas has created spaces for the community, in particular women, to support one another and address each other’s needs. With newfound support from international organizations, and through the use of social media, Granada has served as an important case demonstrating the power of grassroots advocacy and organization. Gloria’s personal strength and endurance were inspirational, and her presentation reminded us of the need to continually work to defend human rights in the process of building historic memory and ensuring non-repetition."
- Hanan Mohamed, GYC Delegate
"The GYC delegation welcomes you to Colombia with open arms. It is an opportunity to learn about the intense complexities of the Colombian conflict, while also exploring the immense beauty the country has to offer. Overall, it is a life changing experience that makes you sad its only 2 weeks long!"

- Kelsie Rohler, Undergraduate student in Global Affairs, George Mason University

"This delegation has been one of the best experiences I have ever had"

"As a GYC delegate, you not only get to hear about the many pieces to the Colombian conflict puzzle, but you get to form a bond with those affected by it and take back memories that will forever change the way that you view the situation. It will turn you into an advocate and hopefully a messenger for the people of Colombia that deserve the peace that has been promised to them."

- Erika Rodriguez, Masters student in Global Affairs and Human Security, University of Baltimore

Global Youth Connect was a once in a lifetime experience.

- Rebecca Perloff, Masters student in Organizational Leadership, Johns Hopkins University
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