

My internship experience at la UdeA - summer 2022

Isabel Orozco Piedrahita¹

My name is Isabel Orozco Piedrahita. I am a student at Wellesley College, a small historically women's college in Wellesley, Massachusetts, USA. I am double-majoring in Psychology and Latin American Studies and am currently in my last year. I had the privilege of supporting Dr. Beatriz Elena Arias Lopez's work at la Facultad de Enfermería, which aligned with my interest in collective healing and reconciliation in Colombia and Latin America.

Both of my parents are from Colombia, but I was born in the United States. My mother studied at Universidad de Antioquia briefly, but was unable to finish because UdeA was closed due to violent activity in Medellín in the 80's. She then made her move to the United States. Growing up, she made a huge effort to keep me

connected to my Colombian roots. It has been a massive privilege to be able to go to Colombia every summer since I was five years old to visit family. Colombia is so beautiful. Getting to see Feria de Las Flores, eating sancocho with loved ones, admiring the tallest palm trees I have ever seen in a sea of green hills, and hearing the accent roll off my grandmother's tongue are all things that fill my heart with pride and adoration. Although Colombia, for me at least, is the most beautiful place on earth, there are also a lot of memories from my visits to Colombia that troubled me. I often think about all the moments in which my family and I were crowded around a table at the end of the night. Quietly, they spoke about when they lost someone they cared about to violence, or as a result of conflict.

¹ Pasante en Facultad de Enfermería UdeA, estudiante de Wellesley College

Being around for the tales they told was a multi-dimensional experience. Each story was told so matter-of-factly, like it was just the way life is. At the same time, they were told with such detail, so much so that you got sucked in. The moment in which the story was being told almost crystallized. You could feel the pain in each word the person uttered. And even more shockingly, almost everyone I encountered had a story about loss and political violence. As I got older, these memories of the stories I heard from my loved ones transformed into my interest in conflict resolution, peace, and collective and individual trauma in the Latin American context.

The summer after my sophomore year of college, I had the privilege of supporting Professor Beatriz Elena Arias Lopez's work at Facultad de Enfermería. It was fascinating to learn about the healing power making textile art carries. The creation of textile art allows us to be mindful, to step away for a moment and almost meditate. It can facilitate the exchange of ideas, experiences, beliefs. It can embody resilience when voices are otherwise silenced or overlooked. It can turn pain into something beautiful. Learning about the power of the (Des)tejiendo workshops hosted with FARC-EP reinsertados and marginalized community members in Bronx, Bogota demonstrated to me how quickly humans jump to conclusions and separate themselves from

others, instead of expressing interest in learning more about experiences outside of their own. Our humanity is a common factor among us all that no frontiers, group membership, race, gender, socioeconomic tier could fully take away from us. Our pain is often the root of our instinct to separate ourselves from others and build the idea of the "other". Supporting the (Des)tejiendo project improved my ability to be understanding, open minded, more appreciative of what I have in common with others, and less afraid of the differences between myself and others. I feel incredibly grateful to have supported this work, as it solidified my interest in psychology and Latin American Studies.

