

Decolonial Sketches and Intercultural Approaches to Truth: Corporeal Experiences and Testimonies of Indigenous Women in Colombia

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the corporeal and testimonial memories of a group of female indigenous ex-combatants and victims in the Colombian Caribbean and Amazon. Although these groups have often been analyzed in the transitional justice literature, our primary objective is to analyze two local processes for retrieving indigenous women's memories and possible feminist participatory action research methodologies in the Colombian postconflict context. We examined empowering intercultural and intersectional methodologies to promote the political participation of indigenous women – both 'victims' and 'perpetrators' – in the Colombian Truth Commission implemented after the peace agreement was enacted. We explain how participatory action research should be used, including techniques such as indigenous women's body mapping, creating testimonial spaces and conducting ethnographic observations. The article is based on a transitional justice 'from below' perspective as well as local transitional justice practices.

KEYWORDS: indigenous peoples, women, ex-combatants, Colombia

INTRODUCTION

This article analyzes two local processes for retrieving indigenous women's memories and possible feminist participatory action research methodologies in postconflict Colombia. We explored empowering intercultural and intersectional methodologies to promote the political participation of indigenous women (both 'victims' and 'perpetrators') during the implementation of the Commission for the Clarification of the

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Truth, Coexistence and Non-Repetition (the Commission) after the enactment of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, or FARC) peace agreement.¹ The process of transitional justice (TJ) was initiated in Colombia with the Justice and Peace Law (975/2005). For the first time, it established legal and political measures concerning truth, justice and reparation through importing TJ's legal rules, institutions, practices of retributive and/or restorative justice, and expertise. Although more than 31,000 combatants from the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (*Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*) demobilized between 2003 and 2006 under international supervision, many paramilitary structures have since reemerged as new armed groups. In alliance with victims, feminist organizations and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), indigenous people pressured for Constitutional Court Decisions 004/2008 and 092/2008 and the Indigenous Victims' Decree (4633/2011) to be expedited. Decision 092 recognized indigenous women as a special subject of rights, due to the disproportionate damage they suffered from the armed conflict as women and specifically as indigenous women. The Constitutional Court ordered the creation of the Program for the Protection of the Rights of Indigenous Women who were displaced by the conflict and were at risk. Thus, one of the main lines of action proposed by the National Commission of Indigenous Women, founded in 2013 by national indigenous organizations, is to consolidate a training program for female leaders and to generate methodologies that can reflect the experience of indigenous women participating in the Commission.

The most recent TJ instrument is the final agreement between the Colombian government and FARC, signed in November 2016. The key points of agreement concern the process of surrendering firearms and ex-combatants' transition to legality and reincorporation into civil life. This process is being implemented in 20 Local Zones for Normalization and Disarmament (ZND) and seven Transitional Normalization Points. The data for this article were collected in the course of a diploma program (discussed later) held in two ZND: Tierra Grata and Pongores.

National and departmental institutions such as the Commission have encountered tensions and difficulties in conducting an intersectional approach to strengthen memory, reparation and violence management against indigenous women. The Commission's negotiation process has reproduced a hegemonic sexual and racial hierarchy and a delocalized perspective of TJ. Indigenous male leaders participated in important decisions related to the end of the conflict, despite the fact that indigenous women and children were the most affected by the violence. In fact, in such institutional discussions, the intersection between gender and ethnicity within TJ has rarely been considered. While recognizing the need for a differential approach, the Commission did not consider an intersectional perspective during the first 18

1 Two indigenous women, 21-year-old Wendi Kuetguaje (Uitoto member of the research team, anthropology student) and 27-year-old Dunen Muelas (Arhuaco member, gender studies masters of arts student), were the course teachers and co-researchers. Kuetguaje and Muelas are co-authors of this article. Three nonindigenous teachers – 25-year-old Paula Cáceres (political science researcher), 45-year-old Angela Santamaría (researcher and director of the team), and 26-year-old Julián Villegas (illustrator), as well as three students from Rosario University – completed the team, with the responsibilities of collecting and analyzing the data gathered during the diploma courses.

months of its existence. Nonetheless, indigenous women have long been involved in the construction of TJ ‘from below,’ building localized political strategies to make their demands visible.²

The peace agreement recognized the Commission, and in addition to contemplating the broad and pluralistic participation of individual and collective victims, it aimed at giving special attention to the victimization suffered by women and to the different forms in which the conflict affected them, particularly indigenous women. However, we cannot ignore the more recent efforts at engagement by indigenous women based on the gendered approach of the peace accord. This approach was oriented by a young indigenous woman, Leidy Pacheco from Autoridades Indígenas de Colombia (AICO), elected in September 2019 as the representative of the National Commission of Indigenous Women. Indigenous women’s memories and truths are not only of pain and violence but also of resistance, agency and restoration. Their traditional knowledge and cultural practices are at the center of their narratives and testimonies, but they were marginalized by the Truth Commission and the Ethnic Commission during their first year of existence. Another important tension in the Commission is the invisibility of the memories of indigenous women who are FARC ex-combatants. Women who played an active role as combatants in FARC accounted for around 35 percent of its armed forces. To recognize their experiences of pain and resistance, the Commission would require representatives and methodologies for analyzing this issue. As Sverker Finnström concluded regarding the case of Uganda, TJ and the truth commission could depoliticize the ‘perpetrators’ if women’s versions of the truth were ignored.³ Similarly, Kimberly Theidon examines how Peru’s truth commission produced a category of ‘innocent victims’ that contributed to the demonization of ‘perpetrators.’ They were denied the opportunity to testify before the truth commission and explain why so many indigenous people supported *Sendero Luminoso* and to illuminate the structural cause of violence from an intersectional perspective.⁴ Our principal argument is thus the following: If the Commission does not recognize, on the one hand, the indigenous female perspectives of ‘victims’ and ‘perpetrators’ and, on the other, the intercultural and intersectional perspectives that reveal the pain, resistance and agency of indigenous women, the experiences and memories of important actors will not be included in the final Commission report.

CONTEXT

We discuss two regional contexts: the Caribbean and Amazonia. Both areas feature indigenous rural communities that have been profoundly marked by the long-term dynamics of the Colombian conflict, which can be described as a combination of continued dispossession and exploitation as well as violence both before and during

2 Gabriel Gómez, *Justicia transicional en disputa: Una perspectiva constructivista sobre las luchas por la verdad, la justicia y la reparación en Colombia, 2002–2012* (Medellín: Editorial Universidad de Antioquia, 2010); Rosalind Shaw and Lars Waldorf, with Pierre Hazan, eds., *Localizing Transitional Justice: Interventions and Priorities after Mass Violence* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010).

3 Sverker Finnström, ‘Reconciliation Grown Bitter? War, Retribution and Ritual Action in Northern Uganda,’ in Shaw et al., supra n 2.

4 Kimberly Theidon, *Entre prójimos: el conflicto armado interno y la política de la reconciliación en el Perú* (Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 2004).

the internal armed conflict, and both face similar challenges in the current postconflict scenario.

Amazonia: Territory Still Awaiting ‘Transition’

The Miriti Parana reserve is located in southeastern Colombia in the Amazon Department. It has approximately eight indigenous communities whose livelihoods are based on fishing, hunting and farming. The region’s complex characteristics, including the great distances between municipal chief towns, have made it an important drug-trafficking corridor and an ideal area for activities by illegal armed groups. The first documented appearance of an armed group dates back to 1990 with the emergence of the FARC’s 63rd Front. At that time, most of the Amazon’s municipalities registered a considerable rise in the number of kidnappings and forced displacements. The department had been a strategic cocaine production area and distribution corridor for a long time. The indigenous communities living along the Caquetá and Miriti rivers faced considerable adversity, such as forced recruitment of minors and constant human rights violations. The peace agreement signed by the government and FARC was an attempt to end the conflict throughout Colombia. However, from a local standpoint, the Amazonian transitional process has been marked by the emergence of dissident FARC forces and consolidation of new drug-trafficking corridors along the river. The FARC’s 1st and 16th battalions did not accept the peace agreement. In the last four years, they have regrouped in Amazonia, specifically in the Caquetá, Guaviare and Vaupés departments, which are inhabited by indigenous Miriti River women, who are members of the Amazonian Captains’ Association (*Asociación de capitanes indígenas del Miriti-Amazonas*, or ACIMA). Different institutions have gathered information about how the dissident forces have forcefully recruited indigenous people, threatened leaders and attempted to gain territorial control in the post-agreement period.⁵ Led by traditional authorities, local communities have issued numerous warnings about suspect vessels on those rivers. They have also cautioned the authorities regarding the constant threats to government and NGO officials working for conservation of the Amazonian forest.

We conducted body-mapping and timeline workshops with a group of 36 women from the region’s indigenous communities.

Tierra Grata and Pondores: Caribbean ZND

The Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta is one of the world’s highest coastal mountain ranges, located in northeastern Colombia, and is an isolated portion of the Andes. The FARC reached this region in 1980. A core group of seven FARC combatants arrived at Pueblo Bello, a small village an hour’s walk from the Tierra Grata ZND. According to the National Center for Historical Memory, the FARC’s 19th Front was divided into two blocks: the 19th and 41st, also known as the Cacique Upar. In 1988,⁶ the latter shared territory with National Liberation Army (*Ejército de*

5 Eduardo Álvarez Vanegas, Daniel Pardo Calderón and Andrés Cajiao Vélez, *Trayectorias y dinámicas territoriales de las disidencias de las FARC*, Informe 30 (Bogotá: Fundación Ideas para la Paz, 2018).

6 Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, *Guerrilla y población civil: Trayectoria de las FARC 1949–2013* (Bogotá, 2014).

Liberación Nacional, or ELN) guerrillas in the Perija region, near the Venezuelan border. The FARC occupied that region for almost 40 years.

Some of the peace accord's key points regarding FARC were that it must surrender firearms, and ex-combatants must transition to legality and reintegrate into civil life. In 2017, the FARC surrendered over 8,500 firearms to the UN, which monitored the peace process. A socioeconomic survey conducted by the National University of Colombia found that 10,015 (55 percent) respondents were combatants (of whom 33 percent were women), 29 percent were militiamen and 16 percent were prisoners. The survey's findings further indicated that 18 percent of respondents were indigenous (of whom 24 percent were women).

METHOD

Participatory action research is a method by which co-researchers can work with indigenous peoples and their local knowledge and responses to violence and war. We used 'intercultural diploma courses' as a tool to produce collaborative knowledge between the participants (members of indigenous communities) and the members of our team. The courses created a collaborative space for learning and teaching activities in order to systematize and construct knowledge, enhance consciousness and engage in transformative action for change. Our role comprised creating the space for dialogue between indigenous women's knowledge and the legal and political tools required by national and international institutions in a postconflict scenario. We accomplished this by creating spaces for indigenous women to feel safe and to trace their individual and collective memories of pain and resistance from their own perspective, giving priority to female territorial defense; female traditional knowledge in the form of music, dance and rituals; and a healing process.

Selection of Facilitators, Partners and Methodologies

We designed the diploma courses with the participation of women from local communities as well as the support of the elders, spiritual leaders and political authorities. The courses were mainly conducted in indigenous languages and included 120 hours of instruction. National and local institutions such as the Colombian National Parks (CNP) and ACIMA invited us into indigenous territories. The entire project was designed and negotiated with Katherine Betancourt – a 40-year-old nonindigenous woman, agronomist, development studies master's student and CNP member. In the Amazonian region, the participants were principally the female representatives of more than 10 local communities of ACIMA and their male spiritual and political authorities. In the Caribbean region, the participants were chosen by the political authorities of the FARC zones. These methods were selected based on the outcomes of national consultation with indigenous people for the implementation of TJ. The first group comprised 36 indigenous Amazonian women members of the ACIMA indigenous organization. The second project involved 25 indigenous and nonindigenous women ex-combatants. For more than a decade, we have collaborated with local indigenous women to develop pedagogical and artistic methodological tools such as self-portraits, family trees, life histories, social cartography, participatory social mapping of places, and women's body maps. By working with community

members to safeguard their traditional messages, we keep restoration and resistance practices at the center of our methodologies. In the Caribbean region, all the processes were negotiated with María Pérez, an ex-commander from FARC and a member of the indigenous people from Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. Some local representatives traveled to Bogotá in January 2019 to participate in meetings with the team that involved the exchange of experiences related to peacebuilding. For us, the role of local women in the process of interpreting and gathering outcomes and findings is crucial. This phase took place in the Caribbean region a few months after an ELN bomb had exploded in Bogotá, and two of the chiefs of this FARC zone were rearmed in the Amazonian region of Colombia in September 2019. Knowing that possessing information about the locations and military practices of ex-combatants could put our team and local partners in danger, we chose to temporarily suspend the two projects for security reasons. Nevertheless, we participated in two meetings with the participants and co-researchers to continue the writing phase. The work to bring recognition to indigenous women and their knowledge and experiences continues to be difficult in the transitional context. Although the ethnic perspective and the decolonization of the Commission have given a central position to male authorities and their experience and voices, we believe the peace accord with FARC and an intersectional perspective offer good opportunities to connect with institutions, communities and academia.

Artistic Participatory Creations: Body Mapping and Testimonial Art Workshops

The workshops were created with the aim of identifying the memories of indigenous women and their daily resistances within a postconflict framework by using 'constructivist and discursive performances through which they narrated new, mobile, embodied meanings.'⁷ The workshops took into account indigenous women's own scenarios during the construction of narratives and collective knowledge. The importance of rituality, orality and knowledge in proposing activities was considered. Information was collected using different participative and creative tools, such as body mapping, painting, photography, autobiographical reconstructions, singing, dancing and making handicrafts. Young indigenous women acted as interpreters for indigenous grandmothers. They translated the information shared by our team into their own language.

When analyzing the findings, we prioritized the materials produced collectively in the workshops to avoid personalizing the testimonies in a way that might generate discomfort and risk for the participants. With respect to using personal photographs, we asked for verbal permission from each participant.

Autobiographical Experiences from Creative Arts

We proposed two workshops to explore the reconstruction of participants' autobiographical experiences. Creative and intercultural tools were prioritized to explore research practices that were respectful toward the participants in each workshop,

7 Alison Crosby and M. Brinton Lykes, *Beyond Repair? Mayan Women's Protagonism in the Aftermath of Genocidal Harm* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2019), 7.

ethical, comprehensive and useful for them.⁸ Different expressions and languages (verbal and nonverbal) were used to create safe spaces in which diversity, sensitivity and the transformation of moments of adversity were prioritized.⁹ Our work with indigenous women drew from that of M. Brinton Lykes and Alison Crosby, who designed a series of collaborative workshops to explore the transformative potential of the creative resources that Guatemalan indigenous women possess in dealing with the effects of armed conflicts.¹⁰

The workshops prioritized two nonverbal languages: drawing and photography. In the drawing workshop, we analyzed the methodological approaches of Tesania Velázquez and colleagues, who concern themselves with the micropolitics of representation of the armed conflict in Peru through visual representation.¹¹ In the other workshop, we turned to photography, for two reasons: as a provocative element to motivate the emergence of the participants' life stories, and as a way to break the ice and eliminate the barriers between the researchers and participants. We reviewed the work of four authors who explored the potential role of photography in reconstructing the lives of women who have faced domestic violence.¹²

Questions and Road Map

One of the critiques of TJ practices is that they can force dominant cultures on communities already suffering from the legacies of colonization and its cultural impositions. Thus, we considered the possibilities and risks of applying art-based cultural approaches to TJ, in which 'decolonial methodologies' continue to privilege masculine voices. We examined the possibilities offered by art-based methodologies to give voice to local female leaders, their legal practices, and their memories of agency and pain. We considered the methodological tools and application strategies that could stimulate recognition and revitalization of feminine artistic knowledge in local areas.

Later, we examine the framework for our study and the use of body mapping and testimonies within the context of our investigation. We then address the characteristics of local justice and the perspectives of indigenous women as well as their silence regarding the armed conflict. This approach allowed us to give visual form to voices that have been excluded from the official version of history and to articulate what has repeatedly been left unsaid. We look at what types of content and themes indigenous women privilege through body mapping in the local memory workshops within the context of the Commission implementation, and what kind of collective indigenous

8 Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books, 2012).

9 Cécile Rousseau, Louise Lacroix, Abha Singh, Marie-France Gauthier and Maryse Benoit, 'Creative Expression Workshops in School: Prevention Programs for Immigrant and Refugee Children,' *Canadian Child Adolescent Psychiatric Review* 14(3) (2005): 77–80.

10 M. Brinton Lykes and Alison Crosby, 'Creativity as an Intervention Strategy with Mayan Women in Guatemala,' *Intervention* 12(1) (2014): 30–42.

11 Tesania Velázquez, Evelyn Seminario and Iris Jave, 'Imágenes de la violencia: Los retos de la justicia transicional y su costo emocional,' *Anthropologica* 33(34) (2015): 203–225.

12 Rachel Clarke, Peter Wright, Madeline Balaam and John McCarthy, 'Digital Portraits: Photo-Sharing after Domestic Violence,' *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (2013).

women's memories emerge in contexts where armed conflict and FARC dissent continue to exist. We also explore whether articulation between customary law and a territorial Commission is possible in regions lacking a transition.

FRAMEWORK

We are a heterogeneous research team composed of indigenous *mestizos*, women and men. Dunen and Wendi are the daughters of female indigenous leaders affected directly by forced displacement. Paula, Angela and Julián are not direct victims of the internal conflict, but have lived through the conflict in the urban context of Bogotá. There is a big age gap between the young researchers' generation and that of Angela, who leads the team and has a more dominant position in the social and academic hierarchy.

The sensitivity to intersectionality introduced by Patricia Collins and colleagues¹³ has been reappropriated in recent years by authors such as Pascha Bueno-Hansen to analyze the TJ process in Peru.¹⁴ Bueno-Hansen's study offers tools for understanding how factors such as ethnicity, gender and language can interact to compound the effect of the internal armed conflict on *campesinas*.¹⁵ We use Walter Mignolo's decolonization concept,¹⁶ also employed by Bueno-Hansen in her study of Peru's transitional context.

As is the case for Peru, the Colombian situation and the experiences of indigenous women in these regions are unique sites for feminist intervention because institutions such as the Commission are ready for renegotiation and appropriation/rejection at the local level. Even if indigenous women from Amazonia and indigenous women ex-combatants in the Caribbean region have contributed to TJ 'from below,' they have not been sufficiently recognized as full political subjects by the Commission.¹⁷ Rosalind Shaw, Lars Waldorf and Pierre Hazan encourage problematizing local engagement with justice interventions and rethinking the orthodox TJ methodological paradigm centered in the memory of pain and violence, speech and verbal language, and personhood.¹⁸ This perspective is useful because the priorities of local actors and customary law represent the 'counterviews' to the formal goals of TJ mechanisms. The local practices of 'truth,' or their 'rejection,' have been a place of production of knowledge and practices of memory by others' languages and in others' temporalities and places. Localizing TJ and TJ 'from below' show how the dichotomy between 'victims' and 'perpetrators' originates in part from structural violence in communities at the micro level, and in this context, the dichotomy tends to be less

13 Patricia Collins, 'La política del pensamiento feminista negro,' in *¿Qué son los estudios de mujeres?* ed. Marysa Navarro and Catherine Stimpson (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1998); Sumi Cho, Kimberlé Crenshaw and Leslie McCall, 'Toward a Field of Intersectionality Studies: Theory, Applications and Praxis,' *Signs* 38(4) (2013): 785–810.

14 Pascha Bueno-Hansen, *Feminist and Human Rights Struggles in Peru: Decolonizing Transitional Justice* (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2015).

15 María Lugones, 'Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System,' *Hypatia* 22(1) (2007): 186–209.

16 Walter Mignolo, 'Epistemic Disobedience, Independent Thought and Decolonial Freedom,' *Theory, Culture and Society* 26(7–8) (2009): 159–181.

17 Shaw et al., *supra* n 2.

18 *Ibid.*

clear.¹⁹ Kimberly Theidon's concept of 'violence among neighbors' expresses this kind of experience. Those who have to live with their neighbors in contexts of chronic insecurity do not share the priorities, memory projects and speech practices of TJ.²⁰ As various authors have shown for the cases of Burundi, Rwanda²¹ and Sierra Leone,²² for example, 'complex practices of secrecy, concealment, silence, ambiguity, dissimulation and indirection have developed as strategies for living and protection with the threat of death, specifically for women.'²³

Harvey Weinstein and colleagues have demonstrated the tensions that exist between the goals of the Commission and the priorities and realities of local communities.²⁴ These authors locate this gap in a specific historical context. Discrepancies exist between the different phases of the origin of TJ and the right to the truth after the Second World War, and contemporary internal armed conflicts and the needs and desires of the 'victims' of abuse in contexts of insecurity. Studies have shown how secrecy, silence, ambiguity and dissimulation are more important for local communities than an explicit and dangerous 'truth' in this kind of context.²⁵ In the case of Burundi, Ann Nee and Peter Uvin highlight that many local women and tribes have rejected the classic truth-telling mechanism that uncovers every detail of the violent past. These authors call for local mechanisms that promote dialogue to restore relationships.²⁶

In another approach, scholars such as Shaw have introduced the idea of divorcing TJ studies and the 'right to the truth,' where 'victims' are the subject of reparations, from disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) studies, where 'perpetrators' are the subjects of 'accountability' in some cases, such as Uganda and Peru.²⁷ Nevertheless, in several instances there exists a continuum between victims/perpetrators, and the memories and 'truths' of all the actors are crucial to understanding the multiple acts of violence against them. The work of Laura Arriaza and Naomi Roht-Arriaza includes oral tradition, communitarian projects, and local mediation practices to create new spaces for truth telling, dialogue and justice in intercultural societies.²⁸

19 Ibid.

20 Theidon, *supra* n 4.

21 Danielle de Lame, *A Hill among a Thousand: Transformations and Ruptures in Rural Rwanda*, trans. Helen Arnold (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005).

22 Shaw et al., *supra* n 2.

23 Mariane Ferme, *The Underneath of Things: Violence, History, and the Everyday in Sierra Leone* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011), 23.

24 Harvey M. Weinstein, Laurel E. Fletcher, Patrick Vinck and Phuong N. Pham, 'Stay the Hand of Justice: Whose Priorities Take Priority?' in Shaw et al., *supra* n 2.

25 Eric Stover and Harvey Weinstein, eds., *My Neighbor, My Enemy: Justice and Community in the Aftermath of Mass Atrocity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

26 Ann Nee and Peter Uvin, 'Silence and Dialogue: Burundians' Alternatives to Transitional Justice,' in Shaw et al., *supra* n 2.

27 Ibid.

28 Laura Arriaza and Naomi Roht-Arriaza, 'Social Reconstruction as a Local Process,' *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 2(2) (2008): 152–172.

BODY MAPPING AND TRANSITIONAL EXPERIENCES OF 'VICTIMS' AND EX-COMBATANTS

Corporeal Experiences of Female Indigenous Ex-Combatants in the Caribbean Region

We proposed the use of body mapping as an important tool for promoting reconciliation and allaying the stigmatization experienced by women ex-combatants. Our aim was to promote spaces where bodies could be recognized and acknowledged beyond the prejudices that led to their consideration as a group of 'abnormal bodies on the margins.'²⁹ The borders between 'ex-combatant' and 'victim,' and people at the borders, provoke powerful and painful feelings. Instead of denying them, Gloria Anzaldúa appropriated them and created something new, powerful and subversive.³⁰ We drew on her idea of rendering this group visible in order to methodologically integrate the Commission's goal of 'truth' and some of the goals of the DDR programs. Using the same methodology with 'victims' and 'perpetrators,' we wanted to transcend the moral dualism of this dichotomy. This methodology has helped to make visible the micro narratives of indigenous women, who have been presented as 'victims' or 'perpetrators' in a macro narrative of violence.

During our encounters with ex-combatants, they talked about the desire to be considered human beings and not 'monsters, murderers, or three-headed aliens.'³¹ They are generally subjected to accountability, parameterization, classification and quantification (in relation to the abandonment of weapons) but are not widely considered as active subjects in the construction of social peace at local levels. This methodology played a crucial role in dignifying these women's wartime memories and experiences during the participatory diagnostic phase of the project, and in contributing to their inclusion.

We organized workshops and dialogue spaces that would enable our team to build trust and promote the deconstruction of prejudices and stigmatization and the release of pain within a safe space where the chance of revictimization was remote. Given the more than 50-year duration of the FARC armed conflict in Colombia, all team members and participants were vulnerable. It was therefore crucial for us to center our bodies and emotions in our research to identify common viewpoints, similarities and equivalences in our biographies, so that as the subjects of social transformation, we could build relationships based on empathy and recognition of others. During the first meeting of the entire group of participants held in Ponedores, we proposed organizing the body-mapping workshop as the principal methodology for our work together. The participants were divided into nine groups, each comprising five participants and one member of the research team. Each group painted a collective body that they used for recalling different memories from their experiences during the war and transition periods. At the end of the session, a potent image emerged in front of us on one of the walls of the room – a corporeal atlas of women ex-combatants. This atlas portrayed multiple representations of borders, ruptures and

29 Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: La nueva mestiza* (Madrid: Capitán Swing, 2016), 99.

30 Ibid.

31 Luz, *Tierra Grata*, April 2017.

corporeal boundaries.³² The invisible borderlands that we identified during our first conversations represented the geographical milestones that we would subsequently analyze. The lines and traces on these maps were indicators of the complex and penetrating processes of deconstructing gender identities.

The first map depicts a divided body inhabited by bodies divided in half, expressing contrasting identities and experiences (Table 1). However, despite this tension, these bodies apparently manage to coexist. The figure of a smiling woman with two 'pigtailed' represents the body of Sol, a young ex-combatant from the Kankuamo community in Tierra Grata, who joined the guerrilla war at a very young age. The left half of her body is depicted dressed in military camouflage and rubber boots. A miniature version of a rifle can be seen next to a large open hand. This map symbolizes the group of bodies divided by the signing of the peace agreement and suggests the possibility of continuities between apparently opposite bodily experiences. From our perspective, these milestones represent a collection of scars and geographical accidents contained in the biographies of this group of women. The atlas information that we compiled was crucial for developing a participatory diagnosis of the bodies and emotional representations.

The first identifiable geographical milestone in this map (Table 1) is the FARC uniform. Its colors, texture and fabric evoke the camouflage clothing that the women wore during the time they spent in the guerrilla group (10 years in the case of the younger women and 25 years in the case of former commanders). Focusing on the colorful portrayal of the camouflage reveals the diverse feelings associated with it. For some participants, leaving it behind, as mandated by the peace accord, meant losing the primary symbol of their militant identity. Others kept their uniforms, which they treasured in secret, and some decided to burn it as a symbol of accepting their new lives. Regardless of the women's individual decisions, all of the body maps depicted the camouflage. In our discussions, we focused on its various representations because it influenced the decisions of many women to join FARC:

Paramilitary violence against the Kankuamo people was very hard for my community. They would kill anyone with the last name Arias. We are all named Arias; just picture that! I remember when I first saw the female guerrilla fighters walking [by] with their boots and their uniforms. They seemed so strong and I wanted to be like them. When I turned 15, I left with them without telling anyone, not even my little boyfriend.³³

At the micro level, there is a fragile border between 'victim' and 'perpetrator.' As Shaw and Theidon have shown, local conflict developed among neighbors, and on many occasions indigenous women were left with little choice but to join the guerrillas due to the complexity of the violence.³⁴ However, women like Sol have since joined the peacebuilding process, despite the difficulties, and are now leading

32 Gerhard Richter, 'Atlas, 1962–2013,' <https://www.gerhard-richter.com/en/art/atlas/atlas-17677/?&p=1&sp=32> (accessed 2 December 2019).

33 María Galindo, Tierra Grata, January 2018.

34 Theidon, *supra* n 4; Shaw et al., *supra* n 2.

Table 1: From rifle to purse: Radical transformations

	Before reincorporation: Left side of the body	After reincorporation: Right side of the body
	Type of dress: military uniform composed of camouflage pants and a long, dark-green T-shirt	Type of dress: camouflage pants
	Objects and accessories: rifle, associated with the idea of strength (written in capital letters)	Objects and accessories: green and pink purse
	Colors: green and black	Colors: pink, blue and black
	Positive emotions evoked: Located in the head: love, resilience, optimism, strength and self-determination Located in the sexual and reproductive organs: pleasure and self-determination Located in the hands: strength	Positive emotions evoked: Located in the head: resilience, dreams, love, joy, strength, self-determination, optimism and empowerment Located in the sexual and reproductive organs: pleasure, self-determination and self-care Located in the hands: strength and healing
	Emotions and negative experiences: Located in the head: anguish, fear, psychological violence and discrimination Located in the sexual and reproductive organs: pain and difficulties of everyday life, e.g. during hiking	Emotions and negative experiences: Located in the head: uncertainty and anguish Located in the gastric tube: fear and anguish Located in the sexual and reproductive organs: pain

Source: Participants' self-representations

community memory processes such as those proposed by Arriaza and Roht-Arriaza in Guatemala.³⁵ The participants' body maps enabled us to observe the transition of their identities that occurred within a context of positive emotions, notably love, resilience, optimism, strength and self-determination.

During a visit to the FARC's House of Memory in Pandores, the ex-combatants displayed their uniforms proudly. It was difficult for us to grasp how representations of the FARC uniform could be founded in love, joy and pride. We considered this uniform to be a symbol of horror and war. Some of the participants showed us pictures of their children holding rifles. These images shocked us and reignited our own prejudices and anger.

This process of deconstructing identities and bodies was quite painful for some of the participants because their uniforms symbolized safety and a set of values that played the role of fundamental emotional referents. Helena's case is illustrative:

It hurt me to take it off. I still keep it. Also, it was very hard to leave my rifle behind. For us, guns were our protection and the uniform was a symbol of respect and identity. They allowed me to walk freely and discover many places.³⁶

The body mapping represented an opportunity for these women to recreate their dress code and identities in alignment with the reconfiguration of their corporeal identities. This was illuminating for us and enabled us to develop our ability to listen, understand and respect their needs. However, we had to effectively communicate that we opposed the FARC's clandestine struggle, which was difficult. We were angry and afraid when we discovered that these ex-combatants were also victims prior to and during the guerrilla war, and were also conflicted because of our belief in the value of historical memory and nonviolent action. Thus, the research process was crisscrossed by our own emotions as well as those of the participating ex-combatants and members of the team.

Body Mapping with Indigenous Women 'Victims' from Miriti

In the same way that the indigenous ex-combatants' corporeality and memories had become invisible, the identities and pain of the Miriti women remained inaccessible to the rest of Colombia owing to their extreme isolation. We developed a workshop for them that resulted in six body maps. For the participants, that workshop was the first opportunity they had to paint and visualize their bodies and their 'female indigenous repertoires.' Their body maps displayed the main features of their corporeal memory. It was interesting that there were no portrayals of pain or sorrow associated with the conflict. In that region, suppression of the FARC has led to the reinstatement of cultural practices as the main form of political action. Fiona Ross detected similar strategies of self-protection in South Africa, specifically regarding sexual violence practices.³⁷ Thus, we identified a historical process of corporeal disciplining in the maps; it was reflected in the indigenous women's narratives during their socialization exercises.

35 Arriaza and Roht-Arriaza, *supra* n 28.

36 Helena, Pandores, December 2017.

37 Fiona Ross, *Bearing Witness: Women and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa* (London: Pluto Press, 2003).

Table 2 Corporeal memories

Portrait of Marciana Yucuna (60 years old) from the Wacaya River. Visualization of face painting for traditional dances.

Colors: blue and red



Representation of Regina Matapí, *chagrera* and traditional authority Marceliano's partner. The hands in the vaginal area indicate the secret place and the importance of menarche.

Colors: red and black

Emotions and territories of FARC dissidents: Silencing of pain; return to the culture as an encrypted language, which has allowed the women to offer their reflections and politically practise resistance. Because of the risks involved, there is a retreat to the private sphere and cultural memory.



Joaquina Letuama (59 years old), one of the most important traditional pottery teachers in Puerto Guayabo.

Traditional jewelry and body painting are fundamental in traditional dances. They play a key role in the healing process associated with the dances. The makeup is very important because, for example, it hides the sweat during a dance. The person who performs the dance is freed of laziness, bad moods and aging.

Colors: red and black

Source: Participants' self-representations

Unlike the ex-combatants, the Miriti women portrayed themselves in a complete and nondichotomized manner. Their depictions of clothes were defined by traditional aspects such as makeup, jewelry and pottery, which are central elements of their collective memory and identity (Table 2).

In Miriti, art and war are part of everyday life. Nevertheless, art relates stories only about cultural resistance and reinforces cultural beliefs. Narratives related to violence and the conflict are not allowed in public spaces, thereby serving as a survival and protection strategy, as found in other local experiences, such as in Burundi.³⁸ No one is allowed to speak about the suffering caused by the war at any time or place. The political transition has not begun in this region and the narrative of war remains implicit and ingrained within the populace.

We decided to reconstruct the narratives of the ACIMA female resistance. Those narratives were centered on female agriculture, handicrafts and motherhood during the armed conflict and the post-agreement period in Colombia. The indigenous female body is associated with the yucca plant and other traditional identity symbols, such as Amazonian jewelry and pottery. The female body is considered part of an isolated universe unrelated to war or political power. Menarche is one of the main elements in women's narratives and is evoked by the representation of two hands covering the vaginal region (Table 2). During the workshop, the participants did not discuss the violence associated with the armed conflict. The only blood-related topic was the notion of menarche as a biographical milestone.

I am married and have three daughters. I'm a midwife, pottery teacher, and grandmother. Women give birth to their children far away in the bushes. Similarly, when we're menstruating, we aren't allowed inside the *maloka* [sacred temple]: we have to remain isolated because the blood of life could kill the shaman. When a woman becomes pregnant, she has to follow the diet, prayers and advice given to her by the grandmothers, mothers and [Juan] the Traditional One. When children are born, their whole body is painted with a hog to clean it. The mothers are given chili to cleanse them.³⁹

When Miriti women experience their first menstruation, they have to be left alone. They are instructed to leave their *maloka* and follow established cultural rules along with their mothers' and grandmothers' advice. During menarche, they are viewed as a kind of spiritual polluting agent. As Diana Rosas and María Clara van der Hammen note, women in the Amazonian region are associated with reproduction and domestic practices, such as taking care of seeds, children and cooking.⁴⁰ Menarche is a fundamental rite of passage that girls go through to become women. During that process, their bodies are exposed to special diets, cures and incantations. Regina expressed this as follows:

I am the daughter of Ernesto Matapí and Graciela Yucuna. My father was a very powerful shaman. When I was born, my father gave me a *curación* [secret healing] to become a *chagrera* [guardian of seeds and food]. During my first menstruation, my mother gave me secret advice to take better care of seeds and food.⁴¹

39 Joaquina, Cocotal, December 2018.

40 Diana Rosas, 'Reflexionando sobre la noción de mujer: Una "blanca," entre mujeres letuama, matapí, yukuna, tanimuka del río Mirití-Paraná Amazonas,' *Boletín de Estudios Amazónicos*, Unidad de Post grado de Ciencias Sociales/Maestría en estudios Amazónicos, Universidad Nacional de San Marcos, Lima (1): 73–80; María Clara van der Hammen, *El manejo del mundo: Naturaleza y sociedad entre los Yucuna de la Amazonia colombiana* (Bogotá: Tropenbos, 1992). According to those authors, women receive seeds as a form of inheritance from their mothers and grandmothers. For that reason, all women are considered 'sisters.'

41 Regina, Cocotal, December 2018.

Although our questions during the workshop were oriented toward conflict-related memories, reflections on TJ and the pain and suffering inflicted by FARC's violence on indigenous women were implicitly rejected and met with silence, as was also the case in Rwanda.⁴² Instead, some participants wanted to highlight their roles as mothers, grandmothers, midwives, *chagreras* and pottery teachers. The atlas that the indigenous Miriti women created was one of the few times that they were able to view themselves and their stories, voices and traditional knowledge as protagonists.

A profound difference between the collective body memories of indigenous ex-combatants and noncombatants was evident in their maps. For ex-combatants, the transition stage amounted to abandonment of the symbols of their combat life (uniform and rifle). For noncombatants, the everyday challenge amounted to defending their identity symbols as women through traditional community roles. When indigenous women joined the FARC, they had to forfeit the symbols of their indigenous identity: pottery, jewelry and traditional knowledge in general. The FARC fronts operating in this region did not accept the peace agreement. There was hence no collective demobilization of FARC combatants. The situation in the Amazon was not prioritized in the new integrated peace jurisdiction system. No references to or comments on FARC ex-combatants' daughters or relatives were made during the workshop, except for the case of Juan, the Traditional One.

The atlas of Miriti women articulated the work of the participants and our research team (Figure 1). The experience provided the participants with an unprecedented opportunity to relate their stories and recall their experiences of resilience as part of a pedagogic project linked to the construction of peace, gender and ethnicity.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL EXPERIENCES WITH THE WOMEN OF TIERRA GRATA AND PONDORES

During the workshop, we aimed to promote memories of various experiences and to investigate the role of such memories at both individual and collective levels. We also aimed to assess how official memory narratives are constructed. We present two experiences in which both groups of participants employed artistic tools that allowed them to communicate their stories. This was achieved through eliciting the testimonies of individuals who were immersed in the conflict and through the potential of art to articulate the reconciliation process at the local level.

Throughout the activity, we observed the emergence of different approaches to language, both verbal and written. We wanted to highlight Helena's experience: she was an indigenous Wiwa ex-combatant and chose to tell her story through a drawing (Figure 2), in which she portrayed her displacement by a paramilitary group that operated in the Guajira region. Given the multiple marginalizations faced by women ex-combatants during reincorporation,⁴³ we considered it important to include such autobiographical stories in our analysis. As Helena described each element in her

42 Lars Waldorf, "Like Jews Waiting for Jesus": Posthumous Justice in Post-Genocide Rwanda,' in Shaw et al., supra n 2.

43 Luisa Dietrich, 'La "compañera política": Mujeres militantes y espacios de "agencia" en insurgencias latinoamericanas,' *Colombia Internacional* 80 (2014): 83–133.



Figure 2. 'My Curazao memory' (illustration by Helena, 18 October 2002)

drawing, she shared emotionally charged experiences about her displacement with the group:

We were displaced on October 18, 2002. They destroyed all my family's dreams. I and my brother were the eldest. I was terrified when they killed my father. Everyone in my family was threatened. When I saw the guerrillas walk away on road from the farm, I left with them. Doing that was very hard on my family – and also on me. It was difficult getting used to life in the mountains: learning to hike at night, carrying around the heavy equipment, and defending myself from an unknown enemy. We were in the middle of a conflict. It was really tough.⁴⁴

Helena's drawing was a vehicle that allowed her to speak about traumatic experiences. The drawing's potential for storytelling exemplifies the potential of nonverbal means to denounce and resignify a traumatic past. This approach offers a methodological alternative to what Veena Das calls the impossibility of finding words that correspond to the magnitude of what was experienced.⁴⁵ For instance, one of the main challenges that truth commissions and justice tribunals have faced with eliciting testimonies has been recollection practices that oblige witnesses to undergo disquieting sessions and revisit painful, horrifying experiences.⁴⁶ By contrast, Helena's shared experience allowed all present to properly reflect on her stories; they were set in a complex context and challenged the established dichotomy between 'victim' and 'perpetrator.' It is important to approach the life histories of women like Helena

44 Helena, *Tierra Grata*, January 2018.

45 Veena Das, 'Trauma and Testimony: Implications for Political Community,' *Anthropological Theory* 3(3) (2003): 293–307.

46 Bueno-Hansen, *supra* n 14.

using methodologies that explore their transforming aspects in the transition scenario. The complexity of their stories is vital for constructing the truth from different perspectives that allow us to understand the dynamics of local violence.⁴⁷

Our approach to such experiences allowed us to handle ‘gray’ cases like Helena’s. All such stories are configured through polyphonies;⁴⁸ they are shaped by both a specific context and the experiences of their narrators. In Helena’s case, her drawing represented one of the voices that women have assumed during the reincorporation process. From this perspective, we were able to access a subjective component that official versions have ignored when identifying the collective narrative in the Colombian armed conflict. Methodologies addressing the polyphonic histories of indigenous women ex-combatants can greatly contribute to consolidating the reports of the Ethnic Commission of the Truth Commission. Their inclusion at present in the Truth Commission is practically nonexistent, and their voices have been silenced in the construction of the socialization agendas of the Ethnic Commission.

Autobiographical Experiences of Miriti Women

This exercise resulted in an artistic representation of the Miriti River (Figure 3). The participants’ testimonies were organized along a symbolic river according to the geographic location of their home communities. Each participant placed their history in the collective construction, along with a photograph.

This helped us create a common trajectory for the rebuilding exercise among the memories of the Miriti women. Through a symbolic intervention, the indigenous women made their own version of the conflict’s effects. This version did not focus on the denunciation of pain and suffering but rather on the demand for access to the educational system and the historical reconstruction of their daily leadership.

Miriti River Claim

This was the collective message the workshop participants produced after they had finished organizing their memories along the symbolic river that linked their communities. The emblematic power of the activity was highlighted by the collective memory space it established through a common identity element; it was also underlined by how participants used that space. They were able to identify the river as a collective space of great importance and express their concerns regarding its well-being. The participants also used the activity space to present the personal experiences that had marked their lives and identities as indigenous women. The exercise allowed us to identify a common claim for access to education aimed at repairing and transforming the local situation. We considered this an effective action in helping them deal with the damage inflicted by the conflict. We present two testimonies that were part of the women’s collective creation: the first by Ana, a 20-year-old woman, one of the activity’s younger participants; and the second by Carmen, a 43-year-old woman who attended the workshop with four of her six children.

47 Priscyll Anclit, ‘*Cuerpos vulnerados, cuerpos violentos*’: *Narrativas de mujeres en proceso de reintegración en Bucaramanga, Santander* (Bogotá: Corporación Descontamina, 2017).

48 We use this term to refer to the coexistence of multiple voices in the participants’ life stories.



Figure 3. 'The River of Our Memories': Outcomes of Miriti women's collective creation

In both testimonies, a desire to receive education was observed in statements like 'I tried to run away from my parents and leave with my brothers to go to school' and 'My parents never gave me the opportunity to study.' With younger women like Ana, we noticed a certain discomfort when speaking about their experiences. Some

participants stated that although many private and public institutions had approached their communities to deal with the situation regarding education, nothing had yet been done to tackle the problem. The stories shared did not explicitly mention situations experienced while living amid war. However, the participants denounced one of the effects of the armed conflict in their territory: the limited opportunities in educational processes. Institutions in charge of truth reconstruction processes in transitional contexts should take into account voices from the local level. To completely visualize the truth of the violence against and resistance of indigenous women, it is essential to pay attention to the complex elements that interweave their daily histories. For example, Ana's and Carmen's claims regarding limited educational access suggest that structural elements dispossess and exclude indigenous women in Colombia.

EXCLUSION OF INDIGENOUS MIRITI WOMEN FROM TJ

We implemented our diploma courses following the first consultations of the Commission system in the Miriti region. Indigenous women who participated in those courses emphasized the inability of authorities to understand the issues within the framework imposed by the Commission and its conceptualization of 'truth.' In this sense, Shaw et al. have emphasized 'the proper work of speech and remembering, the understandings of damage, social repair and redress, and the models of personhood, as a critical weapon against repressive violence.'⁴⁹ During this globalized phase, TJ is usually applied after low-intensity intrastate conflicts characterized by violence 'among neighbors.'⁵⁰ This is the case in the Miriti region, where young indigenous men and women from ACIMA were recruited by FARC and their dissidents. The family members of several participants of our diploma course were members of these armed groups. They stated that their voices regarding the conflict and pain had been effectively silenced. Memory projects and speech practices of the Commission are not a priority in a context of repression and insecurity.⁵¹

Indigenous justice in this region is a communitarian system based on the spiritual power of the *tradicionales* – life law interpreters who guide *comuneros* (community members) with their advice. National concepts and TJ methodologies are foreign to the everyday life of the people. For the first time in Colombian history, a woman, Patricia Tobón, was selected as one of the 11 truth commissioners. She not only represents the Amazonian people but has also been given responsibility for the memory processes of all 105 Colombian indigenous peoples.

Miriti Women Drawing the Practices of Local Justice

The plenary focused on formal and abstract discussions about violence against indigenous women and children. Participants discussed the topic beside the Miriti River at bath time and in other informal spaces. Communities in this area are very secretive when speaking about violence generally, and violence against indigenous women in particular, due to the presence of FARC dissidents in the region. Some *captains*

49 Shaw et al., supra n 2 at 5.

50 Theidon, supra n 4.

51 Shaw et al., supra n 2.

(indigenous authorities) have received threats from FARC dissidents, and a clandestine drug-trafficking landing strip was constructed in 2018. Representatives of CNP received threats in the final months of 2018, and neoparamilitary groups killed one such representative in the Caribbean region.

The silences and secrecy around the subject of violence have been studied by Waldorf, who looked at defensive strategies for living under unpredictable rulers during the Rwandan genocide,⁵² and by Ross, who states that silence was a protective mechanism for South African women in that country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission.⁵³

Another reason for the secrecy is cultural. In these cultures, if a person talks about the violence or pain they have suffered, they are obliged to visit the *mambeadero* (male sacred space in the *maloka*). There, they follow the advice of the Traditional One (spiritual authority) for several nights. Thus, women do not have much political or public space to address the violence against them.

Our workshop provided a safe space where indigenous women could talk about such issues for the first time. The body of an indigenous woman is considered a vehicle for working in the *chagra* (orchard) and for reproduction and the passing on of culture. There are not many opportunities to analyze it in terms of political recognition, special rights, defense, or caring and self-caring. Hence, we chose body mapping to visualize the role of indigenous women in customary law and reflect the female body in a transitional society.

Shaw notes that one important strategy for creating a locally effective TJ is to employ local justice practices and institutions.⁵⁴ However, in the case of Miriti, the region has not been chosen as a priority area for the Commission. *Tradicionales* thus do not have the support of central institutions such as the Commission to promote local memory projects and security conditions for indigenous women to tell the truth. Their voices in this context are consequently doubly silenced. During the memory and Commission workshops, we were unable to speak openly about violence against indigenous women in the context of the armed conflict and in community contexts.

In the postconflict period, *captains*, leaders and traditional authorities are responsible for implementing regulations for the community. However, owing to the lack of institutional protection, FARC victims are unable to voice the suffering to which they have been subjected. There is considerable impunity in this region. As noted, the Commission did not prioritize this area when it investigated the crimes committed by the FARC. The only way for ACIMA to participate in the Commission is to compile a special report dealing with FARC crimes in the region. However, ACIMA lacks the economic, security and human resources to take on such a task.

All the juridical authorities are male; indigenous women contribute to Origin Law (natural law created by invisible beings and left to the territory to fulfill) by bringing up children and giving them advice. At the community level, regional and local statutes deal with both serious and minor transgressions and administer appropriate

52 In Shaw et al., supra n 2.

53 Ross, supra n 37.

54 Shaw et al., supra n 2.

punishments. They are applied by the political and spiritual authorities of each community. *Tradicionales* guide *comuneros* with their advice. Failure to follow such advice implies disobedience, punishable by black magic, which can result in body pain, diarrhea, vomiting, tumors and even death. If a case is not solved at the community level, it enters the jurisdiction of ACIMA. If ACIMA is unable to deal with the matter, it is transferred to the ordinary justice system. According to the indigenous women's narratives, Miriti's customary law is ancestrally similar to revenge and the law of retaliation. Ancestrally, 'victims' and their families were allowed to take the aggressor's life. However, things have changed. One participant said: 'You could not harm your neighbors; if you did, it could be punishable by death. Today, there are political indigenous authorities and *captains* that punish those who harm others.'⁵⁵ The *tradicionales* affirmed that in Miriti, there is no indigenous justice system: there is only Origin Law. As is evident, there is no articulation between customary law and the Commission. Violence against indigenous women during the internal conflict was taboo, but sexual and domestic violence were reinforced by the conflict and the isolation of the region. As for *campesinas* in the Peruvian case, Amazonian indigenous women are treated as second-class citizens and excluded from formal TJ processes.⁵⁶

CONCLUSIONS

This article presented the results obtained from our art-based research, exemplified by exercises such as body mapping and the corporeal memory atlas of indigenous female participants. Using those techniques, we were able to promote a decolonial, intersectional reevaluation of TJ concepts, procedures and methodologies that are irrelevant to indigenous women. The Truth Commission did not prioritize the experiences of either indigenous Amazonian women or indigenous women ex-combatants in the Caribbean region. However, our methodologies helped revitalize their female indigenous knowledge, war-related actions, rituals and voices. Those aspects have often been marginalized through the orthodox practices of legal and memory researchers. Such aspects have been ignored to prioritize official archives, formal interviews and focus groups, where the masculine voices of military authorities and indigenous leaders are hegemonic. Considering the Amazonian case, painful memories associated with the armed conflict have been healed through the performance of traditional Amazonian dances that closed the 'pain and suffering basket, and sweetened the spirits of victims, animals, and nature so new generations may remain unharmed.'⁵⁷ Through songs and traditional dances, women are able to communicate with the spiritual owners of the territory and its sacred sites. Those spiritual owners grant the women favors such as abundant food, healing and the prevention of illness.

The article also discussed individual and collective events related to both violence and resistance in the experiences of indigenous Amazonian women and Caribbean ex-combatants.

Finally, we presented the use of body mapping and painting to analyze customary law and the role of indigenous women. We were thus able to observe the legal

55 María, a teacher from Puerto Nuevo, December 2018.

56 Shaw et al., *supra* n 2.

57 Personal interview, Fanny Kuiru, Bogotá, December 2018.

practices of indigenous women and the challenges they face in dealing with local justice under the Commission. The art-based methodologies allowed us to talk with indigenous women regarding complex issues in a region affected by structural violence, FARC dissidents, drug trafficking and illegal mining. In the Caribbean region, President Iván Duque Márquez's lack of political will to implement the peace accords led to some female indigenous ex-combatants abandoning the collective reincorporation process. They lacked the security, political or economic conditions to perform their own collective memory exercises. Thus, we were obliged to quit both projects owing to the lack of security and potential violence in those regions.

Some of the other challenges we faced while implementing our work were technical and formal requirements related to reports and documents that we will present before the Commission. To be accessible and pertinent to judges and commissioners, our art-based research needs a cultural and legal translation. Qualitative methodologies are still centered on political and spiritual male leadership and issues. However, female indigenous empowerment is founded on a specific relationship with female spirituality and the power of menarche.

Art-based methodologies have several merits. First, they can help female indigenous representatives articulate the voices, experiences and stories of pain and resistance at the local and national levels. Second, they offer tools to these representatives and other actors (such as our research team members) to translate and link technical knowledge to the everyday lives of indigenous women in a territory. Third, they offer the possibility of recognizing the knowledge and specific political experiences of indigenous women ex-combatants outside the indigenous communitarian context. As we observed, one decolonization possibility with the indigenous women's atlas was to transcend the dichotomy between 'victims' and 'ex-combatants,' and it revitalized their agency. These methodologies could be adopted by the Commission to revitalize indigenous justice.