

**Peace and Reconciliation after Transgenerational Trauma: Constructing
Community with the *Memories in Color* Project.**

Forgiveness is the highest form of forgetting because it is
forgetting in spite of remembering

Paul Tillich

To find the dignity in others, their suffering has to be
acknowledged.

Jack Kornfield

Project Description. In the context of a globalized world, KSU students should develop a grounded understanding of the strategies involved in conflict resolution and linguistic and cultural translation to be effective agents of change in diverse communities affected by conflict and inequality. This project aims to facilitate such learning by engaging the campus community in a combination of activities related to *Memories in Color*, a peace and reconciliation nonprofit developed in Colombia by Edwin Rodríguez. *Memories in Color* brings together perpetrators and victims of transgenerational trauma using art to build a symbolic space to house their new roles as productive and empowered members of society.

Peace and Reconciliation entails a campus art exhibit with 25 miniature houses developed through *Memories in Color* by ex-combatants, victims and artists committed to leaving behind Colombia's violent past to build a peaceful future together. To complement the exhibit, Mr. Rodríguez would visit campus to share his experience with the communities involved in Colombia and conduct a hands-on workshop with KSU students.

This initiative creates service-learning opportunities for students in Spanish translation courses, who would apply and develop their skills to create bilingual materials for the exhibition and provide interpreting for the visit. Undergraduate and graduate students in Spanish would directly benefit from the immersion setting of the linguistic-oriented activities, and students from a variety of academic fields (Art, Human Ecology/Certificate of Conflict Resolution, Latin American Studies, Political Science, Social Work, Geography, History, Anthropology, Journalism) would also benefit from the talks, exhibit, creative workshop, interviews, and other programmed events. The campus community would gain insight into incorporating symbolic language to transcend conflict.

Background. Generations of Colombians have faced the devastation caused by various modalities of violence. Considering just the last 60 years, clashing groups—the traditional parties (Liberal and Conservative), the guerrilla (FARC, ELN), the paramilitary (AUC), some sectors of the State Forces (Army and National Police), and criminal organizations associated with narcotrafficking and hired killings—have engaged in an ongoing power struggle to control territories and resources, gain national and international political and social status, and intimidate the Colombian populace through violence into complying with their respective agendas.

Various extended periods of intense confrontations throughout the nation account for much of the devastation afflicting Colombia today. In the first half of the 20th century, political assassinations and sectarian rule left a legacy of more than 200,000 lives lost, a devastated countryside, and a deep gaping national wound. Statistics provided by the *Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica* (CNMH/ National Center for Collective Memory) tell a more recent but equally chilling story regarding the so-called armed conflict. Researchers at the CNMH divide the armed conflict in four different stages (1958-82, 1982-96, 1996-2005, 2005-12) characterized, among other factors, by complex changes in the type of violence (from bipartisan to subversive violence), by the increasing political, economic, and territorial power of the guerrilla and the paramilitary, and by the drug traffic boom, all within the context of polarized public opinion and a partially failed State attempting to create a more democratic profile after the Constitution of 1991. Between 1958 and 2012, 218,094 people died in Colombia as a result of the armed conflict (81% of them civilians). From 1985 to 2012, 150,000 victims were selectively killed by the paramilitary, the guerrilla, the armed forces, and non-identified armed groups; during the same years, 13,733 people were

massacred by these same agents, 25,000 were forcefully disappeared, 5,712,506 were displaced, 10,189 were victims of landmines and 5,156 were recruited illegally. The documentary *No hubo tiempo para la tristeza* (There Was No Time for Sadness) by the CNMH, dedicated to the memory of the victims, lends individual stories and faces to the brutal modalities of violence that developed during 1995-2005, precisely after the Constitutional reform of 1991 which was supposed to open new democratic spaces. How is it possible to reconfigure the sociopolitical body of such a displaced, dismembered, dispossessed nation, divided even today by the imminent implementation of the peace accord signed in 2016 by President Juan Manuel Santos and the FARC guerrilla?

Needs Addressed. Colombia's inner political and social conflict is representative of turmoil in many parts of the world today. Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Myanmar, Somalia and literally dozens of other countries have been engaged in devastating wars that have resulted in deeply traumatized social bodies. The United States is no exception to the increased racial, political, socio-economic, gender and religious polarization of the last decades. Universities, particularly public land-grant universities, have a responsibility to open spaces for peaceful dialogue and equip students with skills for working in diverse communities that may have painful histories. Edwin Rodríguez's inspiring work with *Memories in Color* illuminates questions that concern us all: what can individuals do to rebuild a fractured community? What "languages" and strategies can be developed to build bridges in communities torn apart by resentment, hatred, violence, and hopelessness?

Engagement Activities and Timeline

Pre-campus visit and exhibit (Summer 2018/Fall 2018/Spring 2019)

1. L. Garavito will collect material in Bogotá (Colombia) for students to incorporate in the coming semesters when developing narratives to accompany the programmed exhibit (summer 2018).
2. Students will do research on the historical and sociopolitical background of Colombia (classes in Modern Languages and in Conflict Resolution). L. Garavito will provide guidelines.
3. Screening of the documentary *No hubo tiempo para la tristeza*. Discussion. (L. Garavito)
4. L. Kanost will integrate service-learning activities in preparation for the art exhibit into courses in Fall 2018 (SPAN 575, Introduction to Translation and SPAN 774, Introduction to Translation and Interpreting in the Community) and Spring 2019 (SPAN 771, Advanced Spanish Translation.)
5. KSU students (room capacity 15) participate in Visual Thinking Strategies sessions with Dr. Linda Duke.
6. KSU students will create English subtitles for the video component of the exhibit (with L. Kanost).
7. KSU students will translate and/or compose the written narratives to be incorporated to the exhibit. In collaboration with L. Garavito and L. Kanost.
8. KSU students will interview Mr. Edwin Rodríguez and/or members of the *Mil colores para mi pueblo* (A Thousand Colors for my Town) foundation via Skype (conducted in Spanish).

Campus visit and exhibit (Fall 2019)

1. Art Exhibit (Peace and Reconciliation after Transgenerational Trauma: Constructing Community with the *Memories in Color* Project). 25 houses painted by artists, ex-combatants and victims will be the focus of this exhibit. An additional sample of houses (so far there are more than 300 in the total collection) would be simultaneously shown on a screen with voiceover in Spanish by Mr. Rodríguez and English subtitles by KSU students.
2. Formal talk by Mr. Rodríguez at Beach Museum. Interpreting by a KSU graduate student. (room capacity 80).
3. Informal question/answer sessions with Mr. Rodríguez at the exhibit. KSU students enrolled in Kanost's SPAN 774 as interpreters.
4. Hands-on creative workshop for students led by Mr. Rodríguez. KSU students enrolled in Kanost's SPAN 774 as interpreters. (room capacity 20)
5. KSU class visits by Mr. Rodríguez (disciplines such Art, Conflict Resolution, Spanish, Political Science, History). KSU students enrolled in Kanost's SPAN 774 as interpreters.

6. Video screening and talk by Mr. Rodríguez at the Manhattan Public Library. KSU students enrolled in Kanost's SPAN 774 as interpreters.

Reflection and Synthesis (Fall 2019 and Spring 2020)

1. Bilingual blog on this experience by KSU students.
2. Students develop bilingual creative/reflective narratives based on the exhibit and talks by Mr. Rodríguez. A selection of these narratives is presented at *Initials*, the forum for undergraduate and graduate creative/research contributions in the Department of Modern Languages.
3. Students select literary texts or art works that embody challenging experiences to propose a symbolic approach that may bring peace and reconciliation. To preserve personal privacy, these challenging experiences may focus on issues of world, regional or national concern such as a devastation caused by a tornado or an ecological or environmental disaster, for example.
4. L. Garavito and/or L. Kanost will prepare a presentation on the partnership results for a professional conference.

Accomplishment Benchmarks.

1. Service-learning experiences for KSU students in SPAN 566, SPAN 575, SPAN 771, and SPAN 774 during 2018-19 academic year and Fall 2019.
2. Campus art exhibit featuring 25 houses and a video in Fall 2019; linked Visual Thinking Strategies event for students.
3. Formal talk and workshop by Mr. Rodríguez at the Beach Museum in Fall 2019.
4. Class visits and Manhattan Public Library event by Mr. Rodríguez in Fall 2019.
5. Student presentations at *Initials* research forum in Spring 2020.
6. Conference presentation on the partnership in 2019-2020 or 2020-2021 academic year.

Collaborative Partners and Their Role

Dr. Linda Duke. Beach Museum, Visual Thinking Strategies session. In collaboration with L. Garavito: organization of exhibit, formal talk by Mr. Rodríguez, and creative workshop. L. Duke will also help to develop publicity material.

Dr. David Thompson. Conflict Resolution Certificate. Organization of class visits, talks and interviews with Mr. Rodríguez.

Ms. Rhonna Hargett. Manhattan Public Library. Organization of video presentation and talk by Mr. Rodríguez.

Mr. Edwin Rodríguez, *Memories in Color*. Guest activist, artist, speaker, workshop leader.

Potential Impact for All Collaborative Parties.

The KSU community will develop conflict resolution and intercultural communication skills, making connections between their own experiences and international concerns and gaining awareness of the role of narrative and images in communication. Three Spanish translation courses will be enhanced by service-learning experiences, and other faculty and students will benefit from class discussions, visiting the art exhibition, and participating in the workshops. *Memories in Color* will find an international forum to voice and display testimonial narratives connected to the configuration of collective memory in a community that has experienced transgenerational conflict. It will broaden its approach to the restorative power of symbolic language by having a workshop in a different socio-political and cultural setting. It will develop its international network and gain materials in English to strengthen its humanitarian efforts to support communities in need.

Amount of Funding Requested.

6,282.00

See budget page for itemization.