

Teaching peace in Medellín: A public school after the peace accord

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A historic peace accord was signed in Havana between the Santos government of Colombia and the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC) in September, 2016. The impact of that fragile agreement is felt on every level of social, communal, and economic life, particularly in communities with close ties to former (and perhaps future) guerrillas. This paper is part of an ongoing ethnographic study of a pre-K-11 school in a working-class neighborhood in Medellín. In the evening session, which offers classes to people who have been unable to complete their education for whatever reason, are *reinsertados*, men and women who have returned from both the FARC and paramilitary forces to rejoin community life. In the daytime sessions, divided between grades 6-11 in the morning and K-5 in the afternoon, are children who were abandoned by parents during the conflict and sometimes, return during the school year to claim them. These children, who may have lived most of their lives with friends, relatives or foster parents who are strangers to their biological parents, present challenges for the school's social work infrastructure when *desmovilizados* (former guerrillas) return to claim them.

This paper focuses primarily on classes taught within a federally-mandated curriculum taught at all age levels, *La Cátedra de la Paz*, "The peace course." This pedagogical initiative presents the Colombian government's vision for its children's orientation to ethics, morality, and conflict resolution, even as public outrage over corruption colors discourse among older students and teachers. These fieldwork results are grounded in current theories that stress pragmatic peacebuilding, which focuses on finding context-sensitive, localized peace (cf. Hughes, Öjendal, & Schierenbeck, 2015; Miller & Rudnick, 2010).

Hughes, C., Öjendal, J., & Schierenbeck, I. (2015). The struggle versus the song – the local turn in peacebuilding: an introduction. *Third World Quarterly*, 36(5), 817-824.
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Miller, D., & Rudnick, L. (2010). The case for situated theory in modern peacebuilding practice. *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development*, 5(2), 63-74.