In this book, Joan C. Lopez and Beth Fisher-Yoshida offer an alternative narrative of youth and peacebuilding, to the popular one about youth, violence, and peacemaking.

Using testimonies of current and past youth community leaders in Colombia, Lopez and Fisher-Yoshida tell a story of hope, creativity, and unrelenting resilience. They bring attention to the ways peaceful responses to violent conflicts are formed in communities and how these have the potential to inform processes of peacebuilding in areas with similar social and historical characteristics. Focused on action-oriented initiatives, the book concludes by proposing ways in which social change can continue to happen and how we might be able to foster it. Lopez and Fisher-Yoshida specifically explore ways in which we can continue to support efforts and create new initiatives for other youth. Some of these ideas include doing more capacity building, fostering more networking and knowledge transfers, identifying ways of increasing social entrepreneurship, and building more effective youth leaders.

*Peacebuilding in Colombia* fills an important gap in the literature on the characteristics of peacebuilding. It is a must read for academics, students, and practitioners interested in the study and practice of peacebuilding in violent and post violent contexts.

**Joan C. Lopez** is Program Manager of the Youth, Peace, and Security Program at the Advanced Consortium on Cooperation, Conflict, and Complexity (AC4), housed at Columbia University’s Earth Institute at the Climate School. His work is situated on the border where processes led by community leaders meet with the production of spaces of peace in areas where violent conflicts are rampant. He focuses on understanding the ways community leaders organize to make sense of violent conflicts, and on how they construct practices and technologies to respond peacefully to the dynamics of such conflicts. In addition to his work at AC4, he teaches in the Negotiation and Conflict Resolution Master’s program at Columbia University, as well as in the cultural anthropology program at City College, CUNY.
Beth Fisher-Yoshida is Professor of Professional Practice and program director of the MS in Negotiation and Conflict Resolution, at Columbia University, where she teaches classes in negotiation, conflict resolution, and conflict systems analysis. Dr. Fisher-Yoshida is also Co-Executive Director of the Advanced Consortium on Cooperation, Conflict and Complexity (AC4) and Director of the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) program, both housed in the Earth Institute at Columbia University. In her role at YPS, she has been working to develop systemic approaches to building more effective communities through youth leadership in Medellín, Colombia. Dr. Fisher-Yoshida has authored many chapters, articles, books, reflecting her research and practice in negotiation and participatory action research (PAR).
“This work has great merit: it speaks of peace from a “discreet and delicate” point of view, which has the advantage of incorporating a wider perspective about the meanings associated with peace, and thereby uncovering overlooked community practices, while deepening and broadening old conceptual boundaries. In the case of Colombia, there is an account of the sufferings of the victims; some of them quite visible such as injuries and deaths, and others deriving from more complex mechanisms such as the dispossession of land. These forms of violence against communities behaved like an endemic cloud that altered the daily life of people who found themselves forced to find in the nearest rifle a way of survival: a radical way of limiting people’s liberty. I invite you to read this publication, not only as a collection of painful situations but most importantly, as a hymn of hope.”

Humberto De la Calle, Former vice-president of Colombia, Government’s lead negotiator during the Habana Peace Accords between the Colombian government and FARC, Senator

“Many Colombians affected by the violent conflict, like myself, have opened spaces to heal the wounds of the war. Just as our work is important for the consolidation of peace in Colombia, the documentation of these processes is pivotal. In spaces for the construction of territorial memory such as CARE in San Carlos, Antioquia, we seek to show the new generations what happened to us and invite them to not allow this to happen again. The authors, with this publication, make a contribution to the recognition of the victims and, above all, to their powerful and incessant search for peace.”

Pastora Mira, Coordinator of the Reconciliation and Reparation Center (CARE), in San Carlos, Antioquia, Colombia

“Based on years of fieldwork in Colombia and constant contact with its people, the authors of Peacebuilding in Colombia: From the Lens of Community and Policy, make an important contribution to understandings about how a term as elusive as “peace” is built and appropriated by communities in Colombia. The authors manage to show the diversity of the country, historically hit by violence, while highlighting optimistic and hopeful initiatives that come from underprivileged communities.”

Laura Betancur Restrepo, Associate professor of law and coordinator of the master’s program in Peacebuilding at Universidad de Los Andes
Peacebuilding in Colombia
From the Lens of Community and Policy

Joan C. Lopez and Beth Fisher-Yoshida
To those who have dedicated their lives to building peace in Colombia
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We want to acknowledge the people and organizations that oriented us on this project. Some of the names are “alias” for privacy and security reasons. The stories we tell in this book are their stories, and we thank them for being so generous in sharing their intimacies with us and with you.

There is no order of importance. Every story, suggestion, and support was equally important for the making of this book.

Ana Maria Gonzalez
Andrea Arteaga
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Wilmar Martinez
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Olga Ramirez
Jose Fabio Naranjo
Jaime Ruiz
Jose Macareno
Kelly Juliana Valencia

Fundación por la Educación Multidimensional, FEM: FEM is a non-profit organization based in Cartagena, Colombia, that seeks to make a daily difference in the lives of Afro and indigenous communities in general and local Colombian women in particular by listening to their needs, connecting them with relevant stakeholders, and fostering a sense of community ownership over sustainable development projects.

This non-profit organization was founded on the belief that listening to local communities’ needs and working alongside them as equals are the first steps to empowering these communities and ensuring a sense of ownership that results in successful and sustainable development projects.

Through their work, they have developed an extensive network of over 210 committed individuals and organizations that have partnered with them on several projects. These people include students and recent graduates who wanted the opportunity to volunteer abroad for free and long-term interns and associates who have undertaken major leadership roles as the head of various projects. In addition, they have partnered with ten professional networks, such as Architects Without Borders, two organizations that promote international cooperation, and 17 universities across Europe and the United States. In the past 7 years, FEM has grown from an idea about how to truly make a sustainable and direct impact in the lives of communities in need to a large and largely self-sustaining international non-profit organization.

Escuela Popular de Arte, Resisto y Pinto: EPA is a cultural and artistic organization, led by youth community leaders and artists, who offer community building and social transformation workshops through the use of artistic techniques, especially graffiti writing.

They are an arts school. *E.P.A, Resisto y Pinto* is located in comunas 5 and 7, in Medellin. They seek to strengthen skills in young people through art and culture, by providing educational programs, exchange of knowledge, and by constructing spaces to meet and reflect upon their social contexts and realities. They use methodologies and artistic techniques based on graffiti, muralism, illustration, painting, among others, to generate life alternatives for young people, given that they recognize the power of art to generate social awareness and thus social transformation. Their work seeks to de-normalize the use of violence as a tool of power and to design and execute peaceful responses to acts of violence coming from distinct sectors, including the government. Their educational approach is gender-based, and at the center, they seek to establish the non-normalization of violence within historically violent contexts.

Casa de la Memoria de Nariño Foundation: it was born in February 2018 and began activities in October of the same year. It is located in the lower level
of the Imperial Theater of the University of Nariño. This space is a meeting point that through different artistic, educational, and cultural activities enables the transformation of pain and conflict into opportunities for healing, resilience, and non-repetition.

The activities that take place in the house of memory correspond to three lines of action. The first is peace pedagogy through which commemoration actions, peacebuilding workshops, conflict resolution, movie theaters, and conversations are carried out. The second line of action is the support of victims that serves as a link between this population and the institutions, and also provides psychosocial support and training.

Finally, the third line is based on research, where the acts of violence committed in the framework of the armed conflict in the department of Nariño are deeply analyzed and investigated. The Museum initiative belongs to this, which aims to generate an exercise of empathy and reflection with the people who have suffered from the war.

**Red Montemariana:** the Montemariana Network is an organization made up of residents of the 15 municipalities of the departments of Bolívar and Sucre that make up the Montes de María region: María la Baja, San Onofre, Tolúviejo, San Antonio de Palmito, Colosó, Chalán, Los Palmitos, Morroa, Ovejas, El Guamo, Zambrano, Córdoba, San Jacinto, San Juan Nepomuceno, and El Carmen de Bolívar. It aims to strengthen processes of governance and construction of the social fabric, community self-management, the construction of community ties, consensus on policies for regional development, participatory planning, and the articulation between public and private institutions.

The Network derived from an initiative of Fundación Red Desarrollo y Paz de los Montes de María, an entity in charge of activating the Development and Peace Program in the area. It seeks to establish itself as an organized expression of Civil Society (social and institutional actors at the local and regional level) that functions as “a peace structure under construction at the service of the region.” The people and organizations that make it up do so voluntarily.

The Montemariana Network is also a territorial planning and management body, which is an active part of the Information and Planning System, which is an instrument of management and social participation. It promotes the intervention of the population in the diagnosis, formulation, follow-up, and evaluation of development plans, so that they can participate actively and resolutely in the construction of the social fabric and in the improvement of their living conditions, without losing the horizon of articulation and coherence with other territorial scales of development, both at the regional, national, and international levels.

**La Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres:** this is a feminist movement with national political action, which works toward a negotiated end of the armed conflict in Colombia and to make visible the impact of the conflict on the lives and bodies of women. It is a pacifist, anti-militarist, and non-violent organization in which
justice, peace, equity, autonomy, freedom, and the recognition of otherness are fundamental principles.

It emerged publicly in 1996 as a response to the situation of violence experienced by women in conflict zones, both rural and urban. In its years of its existence, it has built an action model that is maintained and perfected as part of its action methods, such as: mobilization (more than 100,000 women mobilized in the country), sit-ins, training, strengthening women’s organizations in the territories, advocacy, psychosocial and legal support, and knowledge management. All of this is aimed at building a social and political fabric to achieve changes that secure women’s rights.

The Route is made up of women representatives of 300 organizations that spread their actions to nearly 10,000 women located in more than 142 municipalities in 18 departments of Colombia: Antioquia, Atlántico, Bogotá, Bolívar, Caldas, Caquetá, Cauca, Guajira, Chocó, Huila, Magdalena, Nariño, Norte de Santander, Putumayo, Quindío, Risaralda, Santander, and Valle del Cauca. The women of La Ruta are peasants, indigenous, Afro-descendants, Raizal, young, elderly, students, professionals, victims, rural, urban from popular neighborhoods, workers, trade unionists, belonging to feminist organizations, feminist NGOs, women’s networks for sexual rights and reproductive organizations, ecological women’s organizations, diverse women’s organizations, and artists’ organizations. They are the bastion of the proposals and actions that are promoted on a daily basis in representation of the ethnic and cultural diversity of Colombia.

**Casa Kolacho:** this is a Hip Hop cultural center located in Comuna 13, Medellín. Casa Kolacho is also an artistic youth collective that builds spaces of peace and peaceful coexistence in the middle of social conflicts. It is a space led by the Hip Hop collective C15 and other youth leaders from Comuna 13. Throughout their history they have contributed to the process of formation and strengthening of the Hip Hop movement in Medellín, being recognized as one of the promoters of Hip Hop festivals such as “Revolución sin muertos.”

One of their signatures is the Graffitour, which they describe as a historical, aesthetic, and political journey carried out by street artists from the Hip Hop movement in the neighborhood. According to Jeihhco, Casa Kolacho’s director, “through graffiti, we tell the stories that move and inspire hope and the search for better conditions of our community, and also the stories of inequities and historical violence that are still present in comuna 13.” Casa Kolacho offers workshops for children and youth, utilizing their own pedagogical methods, Parce and ParchArte.

**Corporacion Cultural Nuestra Gente:** this organization was born in 1987, encouraged by the need to unite efforts, initially by young people from the Northeastern comunas of Medellín. Later on, the girls and boys, grandmothers and grandfathers manifested a fundamental urgency: to construct an account of the positive aspects of the neighborhood and of how art and culture are a vital expression of its inhabitants.
Nuestra Gente Cultural Corporation is a social project built with love that seeks that women and men live in solidarity. The corporation seeks to link the inhabitants of the territory to their cultural and pedagogical offerings and promotes spaces for coexistence from the perspective of culture. It promotes training and training processes, research, and reflection that allow the growth of the group, by contributing to the development of capacities and to social change.

The Corporation is geographically located in the Santa Cruz neighborhood, La Rosa, in comuna 2 of the Northeastern zone of the city of Medellín, Department of Antioquia.

The main areas of influence are the neighborhoods of comunas 1, 2, 3, and 4 belonging to the northeast area (Santa Cruz, La Rosa, Moscow, Villa del Socorro, Villa Niza, Andalusia, Villa de Guadalupe, La Salle, Aranjuez, and San Isidro).

**Corporacion Hatuey:** it is a social and community organization whose purpose is to open and create spaces for the construction of a new social and cultural fabric, through the development of artistic practices, educational and psychosocial accompaniment, in territories in need of spaces for conflict resolution, and the promotion and defense of Human Rights.

It was born in 1999. Their work covers the following Bogotá neighborhoods: El Dorado, Los Laches, El Consuelo, San Dionisio, La Selva, Santa Rosa, Girardot, among others. They are interested in educating the inhabitants of these neighborhoods about how to participate in a democracy and how to claim their human and citizenship rights.

**Corporacion Desarrollo y Paz, Cartagena:** the “Development and Peace Corporation” of the Canal del Dique and Coastal Zone is the facilitating entity of one of the 25 Development and Peace Programs in Colombia that make up the RedProdePaz at the national level. The Development and Peace Programs, PDPs, are expressions of civil society that, in alliance with representative actors of the regions, promote inclusive processes of broad citizen participation in order to generate conditions for development and peace under a comprehensive human development approach that guarantees sustainability. They are defined as initiatives conceived, promoted, and structured from civil society organizations and institutions aimed at articulating the public, private, and community efforts for the joint construction of national peace.

The Corporation’s mission is to facilitate and accompany a development and peace program through five strategic axes with community participation in the construction of a culture of dignified life, the common good, and a healthy environment in the municipalities of Canal del Dique and Coastal Zone and Montes de María.

**Redprodepaz:** this is a network of peacebuilding organizations around the whole national territory. They conceive the organization as a platform for meeting and promoting the construction of peace and development in 24 regions of Colombia, through the coordination and articulation of the Regional Development and Peace Programs (PDP) that work in these areas of the country. Their
actions promote the construction of an inclusive, equitable country, respectful of diversity, guarantor of Human Rights, and caretaker of natural resources, from the territories.

They coordinate multi-actor and multi-territorial work through alliances with civil society organizations and the State, managing social dialogue and the creation of shared agendas. They work with a gender and differential perspective, oriented toward development and the construction of peace in the territories and at the national level, under a sustainable, equitable, and supportive comprehensive approach, which seeks the inclusion of all the inhabitants of the territory. They offer their capacities in building social dialogue scenarios and the ability to perform services, which constitute a series of business units, with a multi-stakeholder approach and multi-territorial scope.

**Las Pirañas Crew:** they are an interdisciplinary organization of feminist women that, through graphic urban art, collective practices, and critical pedagogies, enables the mobilization of free sexualities, the feminization of spaces, and the elimination of all forms of gender-based violence against women. They assert their dissident/non-hegemonic corporalities and sexualities.

Some of their actions include the development of artistic and feminist practices for the claim of public space, where art is a platform for sensitive horizontal interaction to enable the creation of other necessary and urgent worlds; they generate training strategies based on critical pedagogies to contribute to the transformation of discourses and practices that perpetuate discrimination against women and dissident/non-hegemonic corporalities and sexualities; the promotion of alliances and exchanges of experiences with organizations and initiatives to achieve common objectives and related to our vision and principles; and they contribute to the eradication of the feminization of poverty through circuits of feminist economy promoted by women to make visible and strengthen their works and enterprises.

**Jóvenes Creadores del Chocó:** this corporation was born in 2008 in Quibdó, Chocó, and is led by Katherine Gil. Their objective is to form the youth of Quibdó in traditional and urban dance, and teach them that they can have a gainful life through the arts. This is done in one of Colombia’s most conflict-ridden zones. They are strong in teaching their students that there are political and “epistemological” subjects, which means that they have the ability to participate in the production of knowledge and in processes of social transformation. Through their work, they seek to claim the community rights of the Afro-Colombian communities, as well as open up spaces for women’s political and cultural participation. They understand themselves as “ambassadors of culture” when they leave Quibdó to perform around the country.

**Cabildo de Tambores:** this music school is directed by musicians, Rafael Ramos and Cecilia Silva, and it aims at contributing to the diffusion, acknowledgment, and respect for the diversity of artistic forms in Colombia. Their pedagogical programs, which have the drums as their basis component, seek to
strengthen the African roots of Colombian society. Their work is mostly with children and youth in La Boquilla, Cartagena, a neighborhood that is known for its Afro-Colombian presence, and that has been stigmatized as “dangerous.” This sector of Cartagena is inhabited by about 17,000 inhabitants, mostly artisans and fishers. They claim that their territory is being threatened by a process of gentrification, and part of their work seeks to protect their right to that territory. They utilize the arts as a form of communication and social transformation, and also have presence in Montes de Maria and La guajira, in the northernmost part of Colombia. They believe that “we are all one and the same.”

**Barrio Comparsa:** they are an educational, recreational, ecological, and cultural entity that has been implementing, since the 1990s, the Transformation Methodology (MLAPT) of artistic and social intervention.

Their objective is to promote creativity and contribute to reformulating relationships with the inner being, with other people, and with the natural environment, by encouraging recognition of the historical and cultural environment, human rights, and the values and idiosyncrasies of their culture. They work with the community in processes of artistic, cultural, and social awareness, with a deep sense of human development.

We would also like to thank our colleagues at AC4—Columbia University for their continued support during this research and our graduate students at Columbia University who, with their questions, refined many aspects of this project. We also had a group of research assistants that provided invaluable support. Thanks to Andy Gudman, Mariana Torres, Harrison Raskin, Juanita Naranjo, and Gonlazo Miranda.
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<th>Acronym</th>
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<tr>
<td>AUC</td>
<td>Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia</td>
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<tr>
<td>CARE</td>
<td>Centro de Acercamiento para la Reconciliación y la Reparación</td>
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<tr>
<td>CMM</td>
<td>Coordinated Management of Meaning</td>
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<tr>
<td>DST</td>
<td>Dynamical Systems Theory</td>
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<tr>
<td>EPL</td>
<td>Ejercito del pueblo or Army of the people</td>
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<tr>
<td>EPA</td>
<td>Escuela Popular de Arte, Resisto y Pinto</td>
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<tr>
<td>ELN</td>
<td>Ejercito de Liberación Nacional</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESMAD (policía antimotines)</td>
<td>Anti riots police</td>
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<tr>
<td>FARC–EP</td>
<td>Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo</td>
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<td>IACHR</td>
<td>Inter American Commision on Human Rights</td>
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