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Mellon Foundation Area and International Studies Fellowships for Incoming Graduate Students

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I used my fellowship to conduct research in Colombia between August 15 and September 12, 2016. During my visit, I attended a conference on media, memory and the peace process, spent a weekend with peace activists and Ministry of Culture functionaries, visited with the editor of an English language news organization, and met with researchers in Bogota to discuss the role of communications in constructing a post conflict society.

I first traveled to Cartagena to attend a conference entitled, "The Caribbean Says Yes to Peace and Change" held between August 18 to 20. I was invited to the conference by Soraya Bayuelo, Director of the *Colectivo de Comunicaciones de los Montes de Maria* (a youth-run community television station) who I had collaborated with on several projects on previous visits to Colombia. The conference examined the importance of the recuperation of historical memory of the country's sixty-year conflict in constructing a post conflict future, and the role of community media and other grassroots organizations in that process.

I next traveled to El Carmen de Bolívar, where the above *colectivo* is located, for a weekend retreat with political activists and cultural workers from around the country. There I met several prominent Colombians working with the country's Ministry of Culture, as well as Colombian Senator Claudia Lopez, a member of one of the country's opposition parties and interestingly, a PhD candidate at Northwestern University. This weekend proved to be a valuable opportunity to probe the minds of so many about the role of the commercial media in fanning the flames of the conflict, and the potential for noncommercial cultural production to help to usher in peace.

After this I went to Medellin to meet with Adriaan Alsema, director of *Colombia Reports*, the country's largest English language news service. Adriaan provided valuable insight into the continuing challenges of reporting on Colombian politics, and also connected me with people who will be helpful for future research into the incident at the University of Antioquia that I described in my project proposal.

I spent the rest of my time in Bogota where I talked with a broad spectrum of researchers. Most valuable were the connections I made at the Center for Historical Memory while investigating internationally-funded communications programs that will be implemented once (if) the peace agreement is signed, and meeting Tatiana Duplatt, Director of Señal Colombia, Colombia's public television station dedicated to cultural programming, with whom I discussed on several occasions the value of applying classical rhetorical studies to modern communication, and in particular, to the use of Twitter, to persuade Colombians to opt for peace.