

Sophia Morales

CSU Honors Program

Honors Thesis

May 2026

**Colombian Roots, Memory, and Territory: An Oral History
of Struggles Over Land Rights**

CSU Honors College Program

Sophia Morales

Advised by: Anna Lavoie and Sarah Walker

Table of Contents

<u>Abstract</u>	3
<u>Introduction</u>	4
<u>Methodology</u>	7
1) Oral History and <i>Testimonio</i>	
<u>Literature Review</u>	10
1) Political Ecology and Land - Colombia	
2) Land Rights Struggles in Colombia	
<u>Case Study</u>	20
1) Family Genealogy and History	
2) Political Violence and Instability in Colombia	
<u>Conclusion</u>	30
<u>References</u>	32

ABSTRACT

For my honors thesis I employ an auto-ethnographic approach to explore the intertwined histories of my Colombian family and the broader socio-political conflicts over land rights and governance in Colombia during the mid-20th century. Central to this study is my grandmother, who grew up in Bogotá before emigrating to the United States at age eighteen. Through her vivid recollections and family narratives, I trace the legacy of my great-grandfather, a liberal senator whose advocacy for rural peasants, Afro-Colombians, and working-class citizens positioned him against powerful corporate and governmental interests. His political engagement and subsequent loss of family land during a period marked by violent land dispossession illuminate the complex and often turbulent dynamics shaping rural Colombia.

My methodology integrates oral history and *testimonio*, capturing firsthand accounts from my grandmother. These interviews serve as a foundation for an auto-ethnographic framework, blending personal experience with cultural and political analysis. This insider perspective enriches my understanding of Colombia's historical land conflicts, moving beyond abstract or generalized narratives to reveal the nuanced realities lived by families affected by these struggles.

My findings reveal that my great-grandfather's efforts, though modest within the broader political landscape, were significant in resisting exploitation and advocating for marginalized communities. However, these efforts also exposed my family to considerable risks and losses. My research further critiques government-led agrarian reforms, highlighting their inadequacy in addressing deep-rooted land inequality. My study contributes to a more textured comprehension of Colombia's socio-ecological and political history by situating personal family history within larger systemic conflicts over land and power.

INTRODUCTION

Motivation, Connection, and Question

Sometimes a story starts with a name, which leads to an unknown history, and ends up opening a Pandora's box of questions and connections stemming from this story. My professor and Honors thesis advisor, Dr. Anna Lavoie, asked me where my name came from in our initial meeting together about my thesis proposal. It immediately sparked a conversation about the story behind my name, and how I still have so many questions about my Colombian family that I have yet to answer. By being asked a question about where my name comes from, I felt inspired to dive into this research and documentation of my family history and ancestors in Colombia.

I was named after my great-grandmother, Sofia, and to be honest my name has always been an important part of my identity. It reminds me constantly of how much my grandma, Alicia, loved her mother, and how her legacy is able to be kept alive today. When I began to talk about my name and where it came from, it made me think of my great grandfather as well, and the unanswered questions that I have about who he was. More importantly, I wanted to know why he lost almost all of his political power, land, and home in Colombia when my grandma was growing up. Suddenly, I had many questions and ideas swirling around my head about how I could answer these questions and fill the gaps in my knowledge about who my relatives were and the struggles they faced. But before I dive into the oral history of my family I gleaned through my grandma, I want to explain the connection I have to my grandma, Colombia, and this family story.

When I think about all of the people in my life who I have loved and who inspire me, there are many that come to mind. My mom, dad, aunts, uncles, best friends, mentors, teachers, artists, and writers; all have impacted me in many ways. Another person who is deeply special to

me is my grandma. I feel like she and I have such a unique bond that she is almost like my best friend, and not many people can say that about their grandma. My grandma and I have a saying to each other that we started many years ago, “te amo a la luna y de regreso, mi corazon.” (I love you to the moon and back, my heart/love). Everytime I get to see her, which is usually via facetime, I say this to her. Not only is she one of my best friends, but she has seen me through every phase of life, much like an extension of my mom, who is her daughter.

My grandma watched and cared for me any waking chance she could get when I was a baby and throughout my childhood, which helped my mom tremendously. Most importantly, my grandma's helping hand allowed my mom to pursue her masters in public health at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland. It's safe to say that without this support, my mom would have been put in a much harder position to both support the family and complete her masters degree. Family is probably the single most important thing to my grandma; she values those relationships above all else. So doing this for my mom and also getting to spend her days with me was never a problem for her. In addition, going to higher education was never something that my grandma was able to do. I know that her being able to see my mom and my mom's brothers go to universities and pursue their passions is a huge source of pride and happiness for her. I know this because throughout my life I have been reminded in conversations with my grandma about how grateful she feels to have seen her children go to universities and do well in their lives. She reminds me that going to school is one of the most important things you can do in life, and that in coming to the United States as an immigrant, it was all she could have hoped for to see her children and grandchildren go to college and flourish in life.

Not only has my grandmother been by my side since I was a baby, but she has been present and a constant source of support throughout my entire life . When I was in high school,

she would pick me up three or four days a week after cross-country practice to drive me 45 minutes each way to my horse-back riding lessons. She would stand out in the freezing cold in the dead of winter in her enormous puffy that covered her head to toe, and watch me do my lesson or just ride on my own. She didn't have to do that, but she loved getting to see me ride horses and would do anything to see me happy and enjoying myself.

Even though I've been able to develop a special relationship with my grandma, it took years before her own children could feel that way towards her. Unfortunately, much of their childhood was filled with insecurity due to the absence of consistent parents figures. When my mom was just six years old, and the youngest, her father Herbert died after struggling with substance abuse and his mental health. He was buried in Dallas, Texas where they had lived and he had family. He was from Oklahoma, but my grandma never had the means or ties to his family to be able to have him buried there. With four children to support after his passing, my grandma, Alicia, worked tirelessly at an airline company and various other jobs to pay the bills and feed all of them. During this time my mom and her siblings were going to school, but this also left them to their own devices. When there wasn't much food in the house, my mom told me how she would sit in the kitchen and watch as her brothers would hold slices of bologna over an open stove and eat them with mustard for dinner. It was not an easy childhood for my grandmother's children, but they made do with what they had.

Although it can be hard to learn these realities about your family, I think it is important to understand what experiences and upbringings shape people into who they are. The more I learn about my parents, their parents, and even their grandparents, the more connected I feel to my family, and how those people and their stories may even relate to the interests and passions I have today. One purpose of my thesis is to track and document my Colombian family history,

because it has been largely unknown to me. I also intend to connect the story to broader themes of land governance and land rights conflict in the context of Colombia during the 1930s-60s. After presenting my research on these focal areas, I propose how the information I've garnered connects to the legacies of land rights struggles on today's environmental and social issues.

Lastly, my Honors thesis aims to fill my knowledge gap regarding how historical processes continue to shape contemporary environmental and social challenges in Colombia. Building on my studies in Human Dimensions of Natural Resources, which explore the root causes of environmental degradation and teach approaches to social and ecological repair, I draw on insights from my capstone course in Cultural and Political Ecology. There, I learned that environmental and social issues rarely have a single cause; rather, they arise from complex interactions of power imbalances, unequal resource distribution, and context-specific factors. Using my family's experience and the history of land rights in Colombia as a case study, this research applies political ecology and *testimonio* methodology to examine the intertwined causes of environmental harm and social injustice in Colombia.

METHODOLOGY

Oral History and Testimonio as Methodology

Telling an impactful and meaningful story requires both accurate information and storytelling. In the context of land rights and power struggles in Colombia, the events endured by my family have been tense and complicated. Due to this, it makes sense that over time the events of my grandma's upbringing and family story became part of a forgotten history. Over time the grief and discomfort of being dispossessed of family land and home may fade, but it is still important to recognize those hardships for what they were and how they impacted a family for

generations. The impacts of patriarchal society and structures are also a large part of my grandma's upbringing and family story that I feel is relevant and valuable to discuss. For these reasons, I chose to use the methodologies of oral history and *testimonio* to allow for an honest account of events, as well as a telling that is understood through the lens of historical power dynamics and injustices faced by Latino communities and women (Reyes & Curry Rodríguez, 2012 & Delgado Bernal et al., 2012).

Oral history and *testimonio* share similarities in their focus on documenting the lives and stories of people, especially those who have historically not had the chance to speak about their experiences. They are also similar in that they aim to not only document information, but to retain subjectivity and understand the deeper emotions and memories associated with the subject. However, they differ in that *testimonio* has a specific aim of bringing to light the injustices and violation of rights faced by people and their communities. At its heart, researchers and practitioners of *testimonio* methodology explain that *testimonio* works to give voice to silences and allow for representation of the other in their authority to narrate (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012). This method is particularly supportive for the topic of my thesis because it focuses on conveying the experiences and struggles of people who have faced persecution at the hands of their government and other socio-political forces in Latin American countries (Behar, 1993; Burgos-Debray, 1984; Lomas & Joysmith, 2005).

In practice, *testimonio* is a verbal qualitative research method that utilizes multiple avenues of data collection. It has been described as a “verbal journey of one's life experiences with attention to injustices one has suffered and the effect these injustices have had on one's life” (Brabeck, 2003). To arrive at these conclusions, researchers conduct interviews, pláticas (group conversations or interviews), co-create knowledge, practice collaborative reflexivity, and may

even incorporate art and visual media in *testimonio* (Garcia-Diaz, 2025). Multiple studies have focused particularly on *testimonio* as a method for dialogue on racism, nativism, sexism, and classism that participants experienced throughout their educational paths (Huber, 2009). The high level of engagement and collaboration differentiates *testimonio* from oral history, and has also been described by women as healing and empowering (Huber, 2009). I believe this is due to the fact that *testimonio* allows women to critically reflect and construct knowledge of their own lived experiences.

Many scholars have also described that the objective of *testimonio* is to “bring to light a wrong, a point of view, or an urgent call to action” (Reyes & Curry Rodríguez, 2012). Therefore, in my familial case study, this methodology can help uncover information and stories from my grandma that were never asked about or explored. Although there is not an immediate or pressing need to address an issue or share information, by just telling this story and giving voice to oppressive experiences my grandma had is its own form of advocacy and resistance. The historical turning away from these events in life may be a protective mechanism to avoid reliving or facing the trauma endured at any time. As other scholars discuss, it can also be the invalidity shown towards the knowledge from people of minority or marginalized identities. On this point, *testimonio* allows for a reshaping of the narrative and challenges the traditional notion of who is entitled to create and share knowledge. As Bernal et al. discuss in their paper, the concerns of this methodology are to “represent the other, reclaim authority to narrate, and disentangling questions surrounding legitimate truth” (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012). There can be many legitimate truths in this way, as *testimonio* allows for a reshaping and empowering of knowledge production based on various identities. In particular, natural resources decision-making and

research has historically been attributed to white males, and thereby a similar audience that gets to hear their perspectives (Adams & Mulligan, 2003).

Using the methodology of *testimonio* throughout my interview process with my grandma meant that I worked to understand her lived experiences that involved political and social oppression and struggle. I made sure to get permission from her to discuss these topics, as some of the stories she shared with me were bound to be violent and upsetting. I asked her questions of her experience during the period of *La Violencia* which displaced her family members and led to the murder of one of her family members during a bombing in Bogotá. In addition to asking about her general upbringing and the lives of each of her siblings and parents, I asked her to retell and reflect on how it was oppressive or difficult being set up for marriage when she was just 17, and how her lack of agency to continue going to higher education impacted her. As a young Latina woman from a prominent family in Colombia during the 1950s, I made sure to pay special attention to how her role as a woman was influenced by societal and familial expectations of the time. My decision-making process around these interviews and additional conversations were influenced by *testimonio* because I not only wanted to document the family history and genealogy, but also to uncover her realities within a larger context of political conflict and structural and systematic inequality.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Political Ecology and Land - Colombia

For my thesis I structure my analysis and understanding of this complex history through the lens of political ecology. It is useful as a framework for understanding the complex power dynamics of social-ecological systems in land rights issues in Colombia in particular. As I

learned from one of my capstone courses, Cultural and Political Ecology, the focus of political ecology is on natural resource access and control, decision-making, and knowledge creation related to gender, race, social status, and other related identities (Lavoie, NRRT 402, 2025). This field of research and its use as an analytic lens is especially critical in emphasizing that the link between human-environment relations and environmental change is best understood by addressing power relations. Power dynamics between government and industry often determine the management and decision-making of natural resources, which is influenced by the broader political economy. In this way we can understand the causes and impacts of environmental degradation and social impacts through the larger political and economic forces of the particular country or region.

According to *Political ecology: a critical introduction* by author Paul Robbins, there are five dominant narratives in Political Ecology that culminate from efforts to reveal the less visible forces at work in ecological struggle (Robbins, 1967). These five narratives also work to bring to light alternatives to continued environmental and social degradation in times of change. In my case study of Colombia, I have found that political ecology provides a critical perspective for discerning the true political and economic forces behind land concentration and land rights conflicts throughout history. Therefore, the burden of exploitation and degradation is not placed on some of the most vulnerable communities, which has historically been the case. The narratives that are most relevant to struggles over land and my case study are degradation and marginalization as well as environmental conflict and exclusion. For the scope of this thesis I provide a brief overview and explanation as to how they connect to the drivers of conflict and environmental degradation in Colombia.

The thesis of degradation and marginalization contends that previously sustainable land management systems undergo degradation at the hands of state development intervention and increasing integration in regional and global markets, rather than by marginal people (Robbins, 1967). Environmental and land degradation which has long been blamed on less-powerful and marginalized people actually tends to be a result of larger political and economic contexts (Robbins, 2019). In Colombia and other Latin American countries, traditionally many people have depended on family and community land for their livelihoods and an essential part of their being. Dispossession of these lands by force or illegal means has led to increasing poverty and overexploitation (Castillo & Jenkins, 2026). Land has been highly concentrated in Colombia in the hands of wealthy land owners, corporations, and state actors, contributing to the extreme disproportion of land ownership (Demir, 2018). In the next section I will discuss the historical roots of land dispossession and concentration, and how it effectively evolved over time through changing regimes.

The second thesis that contributes to the focus on struggles over land is environmental conflict and exclusion. This narrative provides an explanation as to how access to the environment changes, and how conflicts over exclusion from it result (Robbins, 2019). Exclusionary practices have long been some of the main tools enacted by Colombian government and elites to control who has access and ownership to land. Land in Colombia is so highly sought after because of its resources; it is known for having plentiful minerals, agricultural land, and space to expand infrastructure projects. By excluding poor farmers, Indigenous peoples, and other communities from land ownership and decision-making, the government and its global markets reap the financial benefits of exploiting people and land (Malik et al., 2026). Systematic exclusion from natural resources and land is therefore one of the

main drivers of conflict, protests, and resistance from local communities. Both of these important narratives tie into the ongoing conflict over land, showing how power dynamics and historical inequalities shape environmental degradation and exploitation.

Land Rights Struggles in Colombia (1500-1960)

The inequalities with land ownership and concentration in Colombia can be traced back to Spanish colonization and conquistadores who sought to control land for various reasons, but most notably to mine for gold, silver, precious gems, and other raw materials (CPT Colombia, 2021). Land accumulation and exploitation was one main objective during this period of domination by the Spanish Empire which was able to be carried out through modes of production such as *encomiendas* and *haciendas* (Richani, 2015). An exploited labor force emerged on the land through *encomiendas*; a system that forced Indigenous peoples into manual labor on farms and other large land settlements. Natives were obliged to work on European settlers farms, mines, and as their servants in exchange for protection and instruction in Catholicism by *encomenderos* (Faguet et al., 2025). The construction and division of *encomiendas* throughout Colombia led to widespread abuse and brutality towards Indigenous populations, using Indigenous labor to construct the local state which still exists today throughout Colombia. What is interesting, is that in certain areas where *encomiendas* were established, studies have found higher levels of state building and development that provided public goods and population growth to various regions (Faguet et al., 2025). Comparatively, according to Faguet, municipalities that did not have *encomiendas* and were incorporated later on are found to have worse economic and human development outcomes today. This finding does not ignore that the *encomienda* system was abusive, brutal, and extractive, but it posits that because of Spanish

involvement in state building, regions that did not have *encomienda* waited much longer to develop.

Encomiendas retained control in colonial Colombia until their decline in the early 1600s due to a decimation of the Indigenous population. The Indigenous population collapse was due to deaths resulting from *encomienda* work, disease brought by Europeans, violent conflict, and natives fleeing exploitation (Faguet et al., 2025). Even with *encomiendas* disappearing, the long lasting effects of them are visible due to the role they played in state building and localization of power. What resulted and still exists today is vast inequalities in land concentration, where 14% of the population holds 80% of land in Colombia (Oxfam Research Reports, 2013). Many of these inequalities have persisted into current day politics and socio-economic status', causing high levels of poverty, disenfranchisement, and altering many people's relationship with the land.

Colombia gained its independence from Spain in 1819 following an almost 10-year revolutionary war championed by Simon Bolivar. Although the country was liberated from Spanish rule, in many ways the new government upheld and reinforced the prior structure of land tenure (Richani, 2015). The process of concentrating large swaths of productive agricultural land into *haciendas*, which took land from Indigenous peoples and peasants, thereby forcing them onto marginal lands throughout Colombia, only continued. This demonstrates how accumulation via dispossession was a strategy used by powerful actors to control the lands of less powerful actors (Robbins, 1967). Seeking to cover expenses from the War of Independence, the government issued bonds that were exchanged or redeemable in public lands. What resulted was that most public lands fell into the hands of wealthy businessmen and landowners (Sánchez et al., 2010). Thus, the most wealthy elites and businessmen in agribusiness retained control over those lands, perpetuating inequalities in land ownership and use.

As Colombia developed throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, the economy relied heavily on accumulation and exploitation of raw materials and land to expand the capitalistic interests of different state actors (Villarreal-Escallón et al., 2025). Several policies took effect to change the structure of the economy towards agricultural productivity. Law 61 in 1874 was a starting point for increased conflict and tensions. This law established that “settlers who occupied terrains for five years or more and made productive use of them would be awarded property titles” (Sánchez et al., 2010). This law effectively worked to protect settlers, promote the productive use of land, and boost the export economy. It did not protect small farmers and peasant communities against powerful landowners, and paved the way for the dissolving of Indigenous territories or communal lands (Sánchez et al., 2010).

Moving into the 20th century, the transformation of the agrarian landscape was perpetuated to meet the demands of international markets and agribusinesses. The main crops grown in Colombia and sold to international markets have historically been coffee, bananas, sugar, cocoa, and tobacco. As the demand for such crops increased throughout the late 19th century and early 20th century, fertile and productive land continued to be bought and developed for intensive farming purposes. A relationship of mutual gain was established between the Colombian government and capitalistic agribusiness, leading to the richest of the rich having control and influence over governmental structures so that policy and regulations could work in their interests (Oxfam Research Reports, 2013).

With continued concentration of land and inequalities in ownership, displaced populations of people have fought back and resisted the encroachment of industry and large scale farming on their ancestral territory. Studies have shown that because of the failed agrarian reforms of the former time period, in addition to historical struggles over land ownership, led to

the tensions that emerged between peasants and elites (Villarreal-Escallón et al., 2025).

Importantly, many attempts by civilian groups to break up the monopoly holdings and seek justice from landholding elites have been the root of civil wars in Colombia and Latin America (Richani, 2015). What started as armed peasant uprisings against the state during the 19th and early 20th centuries, ultimately turned into the founding of guerilla groups such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) in the 1960s, emerging after *La Violencia*.

Following a roughly 45-year period of Conservative party rule from 1885-1930, regarded as the Conservative Republic, the Liberal party came into power again from about 1930-46. The main goal of the state during the liberal republic was to create stable conditions to allow for capitalistic development (Skretteberg, 2024). With continued tensions between the group of rural peasants and small scale farmers and wealthy elite landowners, the basis for armed groups started to form as well. These armed groups that were created by rural Colombians had resorted to acts of violence to bring about societal change (Villarreal-Escallón et al., 2025). Then, the worst outcome imaginable happened: a violent civil war broke out in Colombia, known as *La Violencia*.

The civil war was triggered by the assassination of liberal leader Jorge Eliécer Gaitán who was an immensely popular leader and expected to be the next president (Turel, 2013). Nearly 250,000-300,000 people died during this enduring conflict from 1948-1957 which was mostly fought in the countryside of rural Colombia. The Liberal party had been oppressed by police and army at the orders of the Conservative party for years leading up to the outbreak of conflict. Many people were excited and hopeful about how the leadership of Gaitán was going to improve their lives, so his death was a major upset and sparked the three day uprising, Bogotazo, which destroyed much of Bogotá and led to the onset of violence in the countryside of *La*

Violencia (Turel, 2013). Some scholars argue that the origins that *La Violencia* revolved around were not land reform issues, but that of the struggle between two political parties (Flores, 2014). This power struggle evolved towards a more class based and criminalised confrontation, as rural peasants and farmers rioted against the elite landowning class (Sasin et al., 2007). During this time the Liberal party, composed of armed peasants, civilians, and rural farmers also went after members of the Catholic Church which was associated with power ties to the Conservative party.

The resulting state actors in control of land throughout this time were the political and economic elites, state institutions, and illegal armed groups (Villarreal-Escallón et al., 2025). During this time government control was swapping back and forth repeatedly between the liberal and conservative parties as well. In 1949 there was an attempt to end the violence through bipartisan partnerships between the Liberal and Conservative governments. However, this failed as well and eventually Conservative candidate Laureano Gomez won the election (Dugas, 2009). Gomez and his government were not able to put an end to the violence, and in 1953, military general Gustavo Rojas Pinilla was installed as president, seeking to end *La Violencia*.

In similar fashion to his predecessors, Rojas Pinilla was generally on good terms with the public when he came to power, and was regarded as someone who could help resolve the conflict between the two parties. During his dictatorship, there was an amnesty offered to demobilize armed peasant groups. Although liberal leaning guerilla groups mostly laid down their arms, communist factions saw the amnesty as a ploy for the elite to expand capitalist agriculture (Flores, 2014). Rojas also sought to enact agrarian reform during his dictatorship, which was fiercely opposed by elite landowners and did not end up working or creating more equal land distribution. The agrarian reform failed due to the fact that land that was seized was put on the market for sale, and because many rural people could not afford to buy the land to farm it

themselves. Productive land continued to be concentrated in the ownership of a few. By the end of his first term, Rojas was clinging to power as much as he could, and trying to extend his dictatorship in perpetuity. He used military force to suppress opposition, banned opposition news and journalism, and was making himself and his closest allies rich at the expense of Colombia's national economy (GNVA Database, 2009). Eventually in 1957, Rojas was toppled from power as he was not able to keep the support of the public or his own military.

The end of *La Violencia* as a large-scale armed conflict was brought about by the *National Front*, a political agreement established in 1957 wherein the presidency and political positions would alternate between the two parties every four years. This reduced conflict between the two parties and set forth a framework for better cooperation. However, social divide and inequalities still persisted due to the lack of inclusion and democratic processes afforded for rural Colombians. Even with this new governing system, armed groups continued to form and develop because of poverty, inequality, and exclusion (Villarreal-Escallón et al., 2025).

Current Day Conditions (1960s-Present)

Although *La Violencia* was effectively put to an end by the National Front, new issues had emerged during and following the conflict. The most prominent of these issues was the rise and founding of guerilla military groups that used the Colombian countryside in large numbers to organize their armed forces. The emergence of FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) and the ELN (National Liberation Army) as guerilla movements further escalated the armed struggle between peasants and elites to achieve equitable agrarian reform (Villarreal-Escallón et al., 2025). Overall, from the period of the 1960s to the late 1990s state policies were put in place that promoted the privatization of public and communally held lands

for the profit of agribusiness and foreign companies. Therefore, the armed insurgencies focused on land retribution and agrarian justice during this period (Villarreal-Escallón et al., 2025). Some progress was made for displaced and minoritized communities, such as Law 70 of 1993 which “acknowledged the territorial rights of black communities over uncultivated lands in the Pacific Basin” (Villarreal-Escallón et al., 2025). However, much of the adjudicated land ended up in protected areas or unproductive areas where small scale farmers couldn’t cultivate adequate crops.

Subsequent government administrations have enacted laws, such as the Land Restitution Law (LRT) that created the Land Restitution Unit (URT) with the goal of returning land dispossessed between 1991 and 2021 to victims of the long history of conflict (Villarreal-Escallón et al., 2025). Significant pushback from landowning elites and agribusiness has caused the implementation of laws such as these to be slow-moving. Inequality not only persists due to the power dynamics at hand in land concentration in Colombia, but other economic and social group-level differences drive conflict and struggles to control land (Lopez-Uribe & Sanchez Torres, 2024). From 1985 to 2015, almost 6 million people were displaced by illegal and violent means, and between 6 and 8 million hectares of land were taken by illegal and violent means, likely by agricultural land owners and armed militant groups (Richani, 2015). To this day, the Colombian government is grappling with the consequences of these actions and the long-term work needed to be done to reconcile and return land to dispossessed communities.

CASE STUDY

Family Genealogy and History

My grandma, Alicia Peñaranda Ruan, was born in Bogotá, Colombia on September 13th, 1937. Her parents, Sofía Dolores Ruan Armas and Guillermo Peñaranda Arenas, had seven children including Alicia, who was the youngest. Alicia was very close with her mother, so much so that my mother knew how important Sofía was to my grandma, and she decided to name me after my great-grandmother. Alicia being the youngest of seven was “a little princess” and adored by everyone. Her brothers and sister from oldest to youngest were Jaime, Alfonso, Marta, Jorge, Gabriel, and Guillermo. It is important to mention that my grandma has no living siblings; she is the last surviving child of Sofía and Guillermo. As such, none of the names mentioned in this thesis have been changed. The children and families of her other siblings have also not been changed, and I received consent from my grandma and her living relatives to include their names as well.

When I interviewed my grandma about her siblings and upbringing she was able to tell me many details about who they were and what they did in their lives. Starting with Jaime who was her oldest brother. She says that he was a very nice guy, and he went to the United States to become an architect. Much of her family dispersed to other countries throughout her upbringing. Music was an important part of his daily life, and as such he also played the guitar and was skilled at that. When he had finished school in the states and became an architect, he returned to Bogotá where he started building houses with his father, Guillermo. The two of them had a very close relationship and that led to their ability to work closely beside one another. According to my grandma, some of the houses that he built with his father are still standing today. The next to

be born was Alfonso. “I have to tell you something very funny about Alfonso and Jaime” my grandma tells me mid-sentence:

My parents were living in the state of Santander, and my father and my mother lived in a place called Santander de las Palmas. Santander de las Palmas is a palm tree, the big, beautiful palm trees in Colombia. And my father wanted to go to Bogotá to study law and to finish, to do some schooling. And so the way to get to Bogotá was to go with mules on the road. So the babies were in baskets hanging from mules. And that's the way they got from Santander to Bogotá. My father and mother riding horses and the people that were helping them with everything. They were riding mules behind them or with them or in front, whatever.

It was not unusual for families to travel by mule or horse from the rural areas to the city of Bogotá back in that time. Alfonso pursued a law degree and became a lawyer under trying physical conditions. He had a cast from his neck all the way down to his legs because of an injury in his spinal bones, so he worked towards his law degree in bed. This wouldn't be possible without his girlfriend at the time, Josefina Lleras, whose father would later go on to become the president of Colombia. When my grandma told me this information, I was surprised by how casually she said it, “oh yes and by the way my brother's girlfriend was the daughter of the president of Colombia.” My great grandfather was highly politically connected, and as such his children were also surrounded by the children of political elites. His girlfriend read all the notes from his studies to him in bed, and he eventually graduated from law school. They went on to be married for a long time and had two daughters, but were later divorced. He then married his secretary and had no more children.

My grandma's sister, Marta, was born after Alfonso, and my grandma was very close with her throughout her life. Marta had three children, one of them which I have met in

Colombia, Juanita. Marta went to study to be a pharmacist in Jamaica. Instead of going to Europe with the family in the 1950s, she decided to go to Jamaica. However, even after studying pharmacy she never practiced and she instead took jobs selling real estate. After Jamaica she returned to Bogotá and married Enrique Vejarano, who is the father of Juanita. Similarly to Gabriel, who I will mention later, her husband Enrique named his son after himself, and their last daughter was Leonor.

Then there was Jorge who was born five years after Alfonso. I hear a lot about Jorge because my grandma is very close with his wife, Maruja. Jorge was originally sent to Spain to study law. It was common at the time for affluent families to send their children to boarding schools or colleges in Europe. Jorge left Spain for England to study law there instead, but he ended up becoming a fútbol player. My grandma said that

He loved fútbol. And then he never graduated law. He went to Colombia, and he was the general manager and owner of a team called Santa Fe. And he was a very interesting guy.

Back in Colombia, he went on to marry Maruja, who I know and met when I visited Colombia in the fall of 2024. He wasn't only a fútbol player and owner of a team, he had many businesses with Maruja. One of them was importing movies from the U.S. and distributing them all over Colombia. He had a "movie station" with films and other things.

The next sibling in line was Gabriel. Gabriel was sent to New York City for university, but she did not know what he was studying. He went to New York University, and then back to Colombia where he had a business in advertisement. According to my grandma, "he was a little bit of a nut" since when he worked for a company that made cookies, he stole the recipes and founded his own company with them. Now, I don't know how well this worked out for him but she thinks it's hilarious that he was crazy enough to do that. He also had children with two wives,

the first being Christina Moros. She was a Venezuelan woman. With Christina he had a son who he named Guillermo after his father, and two daughters, Rossina and Daniza. I know Rossina the best and have spent time with her throughout my childhood.

Eventually Gabriel and Christina got a divorce, and Gabriel married his secretary in New York, Mildred, who was also from Venezuela. According to my grandma, they had at least five kids. This is where I start to understand why she calls him a crazy man, even mean and cruel at times. With Mildred he also named his first son with her Guillermo, which may have been due to following the tradition of naming your firstborn son after your father, however he had already done that in his last marriage with his first son. I could never imagine what it would be like for my father to marry another woman and then have a daughter who he decides to name Sophia as well; it must have been so hurtful. However, I don't know much of the context about why that happened.

He also undertook risky business ventures such as trying to install a museum between Venezuela and Colombia. It was an art museum, and it never really took off so he lost a lot of money. The list goes on— he also started a real estate division of houses in the Cucuta section of Colombia that his father, Guillermo, and his brother Alfonso invested money in with him. Sadly but not surprisingly, they lost every last bit of it. With that business failing, Gabriel left and went to Venezuela, and the last thing he did was a business selling meat in a *mercado*. He had a wholesale store for other people with beef and pork. It was a nasty business, as my grandma recalls.

My grandma, Alicia, is the youngest of the siblings. She was raised in Bogotá, Colombia and attended a Catholic boarding school until she was around 13, when the family moved to Spain. On the boat ride over, she met a boy who she was madly in love with. She wanted to be

with him, but her parents would not allow it and she was quickly separated from him by her time at boarding school. She went to Madrid with her parents and a few of her siblings, but was then sent to a boarding school in Bordeaux, France. During her time at boarding school she was mischievous and tended to misbehave. She hated the boarding school so much in France and said the nuns were the meanest nuns she'd ever had, so she ran away from the school. I'm not sure where she ran away to or how that played out, but her parents brought her back to Madrid for a short length of time before sending her to another boarding school in England. She attended this Catholic boarding school in England around 1951. She was in England for a little more than a year and half, before she abruptly moved back to Colombia to be married. Her father, Guillermo, had found a suitable husband for her back in Colombia, and it was time for her to leave.

In 1954, my grandma returned to Colombia to get engaged and married to Herbert Smith. Initially when she moved back, she worked for Pan Am Airlines in Bogotá. At 17 years old, she was married to Herbert. It happened because her father, Guillermo, had been at a bar in Colombia when he met a young man from Oklahoma, Herbert, who was there working for Texaco as a reservoir engineer. Herbert's job involved measuring oil reserves in different fields, and at the time, he was also looking for a wife. During their conversation, Guillermo mentioned that he had a daughter, Alicia, who was returning from England. He suggested she might be a perfect match for Herbert. They married that same year in Colombia, and their first child, Herb, was born in Bogotá the following year.

Herbert's job with Texaco required frequent travel, so the family relocated to the U.S., originally getting settled with Herbers mom in Kansas. He lost his job with Texaco, and decided to start a business with friends of his in oil fields in Missouri, which initially thrived but later declined. After the business closed, they moved back to Newton, Kansas, to stay with Herbert's

mother, Belva May, while he searched for new opportunities. Eventually, Herbert secured a job in Libya, and the family joined him there for three years. Before Alicia arrived in Libya, she had to stay on the island of Malta temporarily to finalize her citizenship to be able to enter the country. During this time Herbert would write lots of letters to her, and she still has all of them saved. She was in Malta while 9 months pregnant with their second son, Mark. Finally, she went to Libya where Mark was born in 1962. Their third son, Kurt, was born in Libya in 1963.

After Libya, they moved to Los Angeles, where Herbert worked for a different company. Life was challenging; money was tight, and my grandma worked multiple jobs to support the family, including night shifts at the airport and at an anodizing plant. Herbert lost his job in California, and they relocated to Caracas, Venezuela for a short time, and later to New York. My mom, Diana, was born just outside New York City in Tarrytown. Herbert, who disliked city life, quit his job, and the family moved back to Kansas to stay with his mother again.

The next leg of their journey is a bit unclear, but they eventually moved to Angola after Herbert bumped into a friend on the street in Kansas who offered him a job in the oil industry. The oil business was unstable at the time, and Herbert struggled to hold down jobs. They lived in Angola for a couple of years, but later returned to Kansas to live with his mother again.

While they were getting things figured out again in Kansas, finances were tight, so Alicia took a job in Dallas as a manager for AAA, leaving the children in Kansas with Herbert. Eventually, Herbert joined her in Texas, where they lived in Farmers Branch, a suburb of Dallas. Their time there was short-lived; Herbert passed away when my mom was just six years old. After his passing, my grandma remarried a scientist who worked for NIH in Bethesda, Maryland named Hilton, and the family moved to Maryland where they've lived ever since. I grew up there, and our family has called Bethesda home for decades.

My grandma faced immense challenges during her immigration to the U.S. and in between living in foreign countries. She was often alone, working tirelessly and at least two jobs to keep the family afloat, all the while being a mother at such a young age. She's always said, "Family is everything," and I believe the hardships and struggles she and her family endured only strengthened their bonds. In the next section, I'll focus on the timeline of events that led to the political and civil unrest in Colombia during her teen and adult years.

Political Violence and Instability in Colombia

When my grandma was growing up there was a great deal of political instability and violence in Colombia as I discussed in the literature review. It is a country that has historically struggled with state conflict and socio-economic inequality, especially with the rise of rural guerilla militias. When the rioting began after the assassination of Gaitan which led to *La Violencia*, my grandma was living in Bogotá and remembers distinctly how terrifying that time was. She explains that the people loved Gaitan so much because he was a *campesino*, or peasant farmer, who was not a very prominent man, but who the people loved because they believed he was going to improve life for them. When Gaitan was killed, this sparked massive amounts of rioting and fighting in Bogotá. The two political parties were fiercely pitted against each other, and since the conservative party was tied to the Catholic Church, rioters and armed groups pursued members of the Catholic Church.

During this time, Alicia was going to boarding school in Colombia with Clemencia Lleras, who was the daughter of the president Carlos Lleras Restrepo. Since she was attending a Catholic boarding school, all of the students were told to go home and hide from the protesters.

They closed the school, and they told us to go home because it was a Catholic school. They knew that they were going to be targeting the schools. As a matter of fact, my brother Jorge was going to a Jesuit school, he took two priests out of there, and hid them in our house. I was in Bogotá in a private school and since the mob was against the church and I was at a catholic school they told us to go home anyway possible. It was scary and I still remember hiding in bushes when they went by in trucks. We hid two catholic priests at the house. All this was when Gaitan was killed. Even the maids didn't know that we were hiding them.

Her father, my great grandfather, was working for the government as a liberal senator for at least four years in the mid 1940s to mid 1950s before Rojas Pinilla assumed a dictatorship in 1953. He was directly a part of the opposition to the brutal and repressive dictator regime of Rojas Pinilla. What I start to realize as I'm uncovering this story through oral history documentation is that the events that happened to my family and what my great-grandfather undertook are hard to believe.

In addition to being a liberal senator advocating for the working class people through government and policy, Guillermo also wrote for the newspaper "El Tiempo" meaning *The Time of Bogotá*. It was and still is a liberal newspaper that openly opposed the government of Rojas during his presidency. Due to this, the newspaper was banned by Rojas for about nine months in his attempt to restrict the press from reporting on opposition to him. According to an archive article from The New York Times originally printed in 1956, people felt that El Tiempo's repression was inexcusable, and for several months had been coming out under the name "Intermedio". Even with the press ban lifted, "the Colombian press [was] still under heavy censorship" (The NYT, 1956). Rojas was losing popularity among Colombians which could be a possible explanation as to why he decided to lift the ban on El Tiempo.

In these times of censorship and strict control, there was also dangerous conflict and a military dictatorship under the rule of Gustavo Rojas Pinilla. My grandma remembers it being very dangerous to live in Bogotá during this time, and because of this, her parents moved to Europe and she went with them. She was only 15 when they left. During this time it was not uncommon for violent events to occur in public spaces tied to government interests. To give an idea of the brutality of Rojas Pinilla, my grandma told me a story of how there was a bull-ring show, which was traditional and common at the time. Here, spectators would buy a ticket to watch the bullfight in a public *corrida de toros* where the wealthy elite and politicians would watch from boxes above the ring, and the lower down the seating you went, typically the lower-classes of people you would find. On this occasion in 1956, my grandma was 19 and back in Bogotá attending the bullfight with her father and husband. A week prior, Gustavo Rojas Pinilla's daughter and her husband attended the opening bullfight, and were booed out of the stadium. This must have incited rage in Pinilla, because the next time he came to the Santamaria bullring, it was with an armed group of bullymen who were there to intimidate and head off opposition. When oppositionist fans were identified, Pinilla ordered all entries and exits to be secured, and then proceeded to order his military to attack his opposition with knives and guns, leading to eight deaths and dozens injured. My grandma witnessed this, and remembers being terrified when Pinilla's men attacked and opened fire on the crowd. Luckily, Alicia, her husband and father were able to make it safely out of the bullring stands. Looking back, she reflects how that day could have gone much differently for them if they had been identified by the bullymen or Pinilla himself because my great-grandfather was an outspoken oppositionist at the time.

The history of conflict and instability in the country is a long one with complex social, political, and economic factors leading to the current state. At the root of much of the conflict

and violence in the country, is the connection back to land concentration, unequal distribution with large amounts of land in the hands of wealthy landowners and corporations. The vastly unequal distribution of land has been both the precursor and result of armed conflict throughout the last century, as well as a driving force of rural poverty and forced displacement of small landowners (Oxfam, 2013).

This brings me to Campo Alicia, a town in the tropical montane forests of Norte de Santander in Colombia. Campo Alicia is where my great grandfather owned land that was used primarily for agriculture and farming. Since the climate is moist and receives regular rainfall, this was a perfect place to grow bananas, citrus fruits, and coffee, and livestock such as pigs and chicken. At his farms he employed the local people and supported agriculture that brought more crop diversity to the region, instead of deforesting land to farm monoculture crops. He owned two farms which were in the Campo Alicia town and region.

Following the rise to power of Rojas Pinilla, our family land and the farms that Guillermo owned were taken from him by the government with the reasoning of establishing an agrarian reform through land redistribution. The new regime was promoting themselves as invested in the interests of the poor farmers and peasants. However, when the land was taken, it was put on the market for sale, and because many rural people could not afford to buy the land to farm it themselves, other wealthy landowners and elites came in and bought the land, causing the whole reform to fail. It ended up transferring land rights and ownership into the hands of other wealthy landowners who may not have been able to or chose not to employ the local people any longer. This was devastating to many rural farming based communities who depended on employment on these farms for their livelihoods.

Failures such as these were not only happening in Colombia, but also in Venezuela, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and many other Latin American countries where agrarian reform took place. Because of the interests of powerful landholding elites, retribution for land dispossession has minimally been achieved today. I recognize that my great grandfather was a part of that system, and that his business in farming and agriculture had opposing interests. As a land owner and employer, he benefited people but also kept them from securing agency over their traditional lands. In light of these facts, I find myself grappling with the reality of the process of learning about my family history, which is not always desirable or positive. Although it is uncomfortable to know that my family profited from other peoples' loss of land at certain points in time, I do take pride in learning who my great grandfather was and how he sought to make change during his political career. If there is one thing I have learned from this research it is that land rights and conflicts are dynamic and rooted in a historical system of appropriations (Sánchez et al., 2010). Conservationists, social science practitioners, passionate and motivated students, and professionals working to bring about more equitable land divides can look back on failed reforms or programs and create new alternatives and paths forward. Through my enhanced understanding of the complex dynamics at play in these issues, I am working to decolonialize my understanding of conservation and take steps to contribute positively to the field going forward.

Conclusion

Many of the current day environmental and social issues in Colombia can be tied back to historical land dispossession and conflict over land rights. Colombia is a country with one of the highest levels of land concentration and accumulation of land by wealthy state actors, international agriculture markets, and other political elites. In researching land conflict in

Colombia and my family relationship to these issues, I sought to confront the knowledge gap I had on the subject, as well as knowing who my Colombian family was.

Throughout my college academic career I have been immersed in learning about issues plaguing the environment. From deforestation, environmental injustice, loss of biodiversity and species extinction, to adverse impacts of industrial mining and agriculture operations, the list goes on, and at times it can all become pretty overwhelming. Sometimes, I struggle to see how there could be a path forward from all of the harm that is being done to the planet and people across the world. However, writing this thesis provided me with answers to some of the biggest questions I've had on my mind, and in particular, why Latin America has struggled throughout history with social inequities, violent conflict, and environmental damage. Through my specific case study, I gained valuable insights into how the social-ecological landscape has changed over time and how the drivers of environmental change, for better or worse, are complex and multi-dimensional within their respective political, social, and economic circumstances.

With this deeper understanding I have acquired about the linkages of land and power in Colombia, I am able to see how there are ways forward to continue repairing lost relationships to land and build greater resilience within communities in the face of change. One way to do this is to start on the personal level with your family story, which for me was the central focus of my thesis. By becoming so close to my grandma throughout my childhood, I was able to break through the generational barrier to accessing these details and information, leading to my greater understanding of how and why immigrating to the U.S. was so important for my grandma. The legacy of her family continues on within herself and myself, and continues to inform the choices I make towards my future and ambitions. I am deeply moved by the generational knowledge and storytelling that my grandma has allowed me to be a witness to, and I hope that by bringing to

light this story of territory and memory, it can inspire others to connect with their familial ties and its relation to environmental topics.

References

- Adams, W. M., & Mulligan, M. (Eds.). (2003). *Decolonizing nature: Strategies for conservation in a post-colonial era*. Earthscan Publications.
- Autoethnography | Ethnography Made Simple*. (n.d.). Manifold @CUNY. Retrieved March 1, 2026, from <https://cuny.manifoldapp.org/read/untitled-fe9c096b-ef1c-4e20-9b1f-cce4e33d7bae/section/210e7cfa-52e3-4412-b107-d38cfb124de5>
- Ávila-García, P. (2016). Hacia una ecología política del agua en Latinoamérica. *Revista de Estudios Sociales*, (55), 18–31. <https://doi.org/10.7440/res55.2016.01>
- Bassols, N. (2016). Branding and promoting a country amidst a long-term conflict: The case of Colombia. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 5(4), 314–324. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2016.10.001>
- Bodini, A., Vivian, J., Vargas, J., Clerici, N., & Scotti, M. (n.d.). The web of conflict-related interactions in Colombia: Exploring causal linkages between ecological and social variables by the qualitative loop analysis. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, 379(1909), 20230165. <https://doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2023.0165>
- Brabeck, K. (2003). IV. Testimonio: A Strategy for Collective Resistance, Cultural Survival and Building Solidarity. *Feminism & Psychology*, 13, 252–258. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353503013002889>

- Carmona, J. F., Hamzeh, M., Bejarano, C., Sánchez, Ma. E. H., & Ashmawi, Y. P. E. (2018). PLÁTICAS~TESTIMONIOS: Practicing Methodological Borderlands for Solidarity and Resilience in Academia. *Chicana/Latina Studies*, 18(1), 30–52.
- Castillo, M., & Jenkins, K. (2026). Political Ecology, Gender, and the Environment in Latin America: An Introduction to the Field. *Latin American Perspectives*, 53(1), 4–16.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0094582X251411334>
- Colombians overthrow dictator, 1957* | *Global Nonviolent Action Database*. (n.d.). Retrieved April 8, 2026, from
<https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/colombians-overthrow-dictator-1957>
- Colombia's bloody history*. (n.d.). NRC. Retrieved April 6, 2026, from
<https://www.nrc.no/perspectives/2015/nr-4/colombias-bloody-history>
- Colombia's "La Violencia" and How it Shaped the Country's Political System – E-International Relations*. (2013, March 20).
<https://www.e-ir.info/2013/03/20/colombias-la-violencia-and-how-it-shaped-the-countrys-political-system/>
- Craven, K. (2025). Testimonio Research Methodology. In *Issues of Equity*. Routledge.
- Delgado Bernal, D., Burciaga, R., & Flores Carmona, J. (2012). Chicana/Latina Testimonios: Mapping the Methodological, Pedagogical, and Political. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 45(3), 363–372.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2012.698149>
- Demir, J. (2018, April 3). Understanding the causes of Colombia's conflict: Land ownership. *Colombia News*.

<https://colombiareports.com/understanding-the-causes-of-colombias-conflict-land-ownership/>

Faguet, J.-P., Matajira, C., & Sánchez, F. (2025). Encomienda, The Colonial State and Long-Run Development in Colombia. *The Economic Journal*, ueaf108.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/ej/ueaf108>

Flores, T. E. (2014). Vertical Inequality, Land Reform, and Insurgency in Colombia. *Peace Economics, Peace Science, and Public Policy*, 20(1), 5–31.

García Corrales, L. M., Avila, H., & Gutierrez, R. R. (2019). Land-use and socioeconomic changes related to armed conflicts: A Colombian regional case study. *Environmental Science & Policy*, 97, 116–124. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envsci.2019.04.012>

García-Díaz, M. (2025). Testimonio Methodology: A Systematic Analysis of the Data Collection Methods. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 24(3), 743–759.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/15348431.2024.2399592>

Geni—Guillermo Peñaranda Arenas (c.1894-1978)- Cúcuta. (n.d.). Retrieved September 5, 2025, from

<https://www.geni.com/people/Guillermo-Pe%C3%B1aranda-Arenas/6000000035573431301>

Griffin, G. (2013). *Research Methods for English Studies*. Edinburgh University Press.

History of Colombia | Independence, Government, & Facts | Britannica. (n.d.). Retrieved

September 11, 2025, from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/history-of-Colombia>

Huber, L. P. (2009). Disrupting apartheid of knowledge: testimonio as methodology in

Latina/o critical race research in education. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 22(6), 639. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09518390903333863>

La Violencia. (2025). In *Wikipedia*.

https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=La_Violencia&oldid=1292264339

Li, T. M. (2014). What is land? Assembling a resource for global investment. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 39(4), 589–602.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/tran.12065>

Lopez-Uribe, M. del P., & Sanchez Torres, F. (2024). Ideology and Rifles: The Agrarian Origins of Civil Conflict in Colombia. *World Development*, 173, 106387.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2023.106387>

Malik, I. H., Borde, R., & Ford, J. D. (2026). Political ecology: Past, present, and future.

Discover Sustainability, 7(1), 374. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43621-026-02707-x>

Mazucca, S., & Robinson, J. A. (2009). Political Conflict and Power Sharing in the Origins of Modern Colombia. *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 89(2), 285–321.

<https://doi.org/10.1215/00182168-2008-085>

Morris, M. L. (2017). La cuestión de la tierra: El despojo y la posesión en el trabajo etnográfico. *Revista Colombiana de Antropología*, 53(1), 27–57.

Moura, J. T. V. de, Cavalcante, L. V., Jara, C. E., Saettone, J., Fernandes, B. M., Villalba, A. E., Bitencourt, S. O. M., & Bolañez, C. Y. F. (2024). A Political Ecology of Resistance: Actions and Reactions of Agrarian Socio-territorial Movements in Latin America. *Latin American Perspectives*, 51(1), 40–62. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0094582X241242418>

Navarrete-Cruz, A., Birkenberg, A., & Birner, R. (2023). Agrarian change and land dispossession linked to the armed conflict in Colombia – a review. *Third World Quarterly*, 44(7), 1526–1545. (164286296).

<https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2023.2189582>

- Oxfam Research Reports. (2013). *Divide and Purchase: How land ownership is being concentrated in Colombia*.
- Peluso, N. L., & Lund, C. (2011). New frontiers of land control: Introduction. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 38(4), 667–681. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2011.607692>
- Perez, D. R., & Cantú, N. E. (2022). Talking Testimonio: Telling History and Memory. *Journal of American Folklore*, 135(536), 150–163.
- Pham, D., & Gothberg, J. (2020). Autoethnography as a Decolonizing Methodology: Reflections on Masta’s What the Grandfathers Taught Me. *The Qualitative Report*, 25(11), 4094–4103. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2020.4362>
- RETURN OF EL TIEMPO. (1956, May 8). *The New York Times*.
<https://www.nytimes.com/1956/05/08/archives/return-of-el-tiempo.html>
- Reyes, K. B., & Curry Rodríguez, J. E. (2012). Testimonio: Origins, Terms, and Resources. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 45(3), 525–538.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2012.698571>
- Richani, N. (2015, April 20). *Forced Displacement, Concentration of Land Property, and the Rentier Political Economy in Colombia | Columbia | Journal of International Affairs*.
<https://jia.sipa.columbia.edu/news/forced-displacement-concentration-land-property-and-rentier-political-economy-colombia>
- Robbins, P. (2019). *Political Ecology: A Critical Introduction*. John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/csu/detail.action?docID=5939446>

- Sánchez, F., del Pilar López-Uribe, M., & Fazio, A. (2010). Land Conflicts, Property Rights, and the Rise of the Export Economy in Colombia, 1850-1925. *The Journal of Economic History*, 70(2), 378–399.
- Sanín, F. G., Acevedo, T., & Viatela, J. M. (n.d.). *VIOLENT LIBERALISM? STATE, CONFLICT AND POLITICAL REGIME IN COLOMBIA, 1930-2006*.
- Stocks, A. (2005). Too Much for Too Few: Problems of Indigenous Land Rights in Latin America. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 34(1), 85–104. (18429188).
<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.anthro.33.070203.143844>
- Tarisayi, K. S. (2023). Autoethnography as a Qualitative Methodology: Conceptual Foundations, Techniques, Benefits and Limitations. *Encyclopaideia*, 27(67), 53–63.
<https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.1825-8670/17815>
- TIME. (1956, February 20). *COLOMBIA: Bull-Ring Massacre*. TIME.
<https://time.com/archive/6610502/colombia-bull-ring-massacre/>
- Vanden, H. E. (with Prevost, G.). (2009). *Politics of Latin America: The power game* (3rd ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Vélez-Torres, I., Varela, D., Cobo-Medina, V., & Hurtado, D. (2019). Beyond property: Rural politics and land-use change in the Colombian sugarcane landscape. *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 19(4), 690–710. (138519317). <https://doi.org/10.1111/joac.12332>
- Villarreal-Escallón, J. M., Córdoba-Campaña, A. J., & Verdugo-Escallón, L. F. (2026). Land grabbing and armed conflict in Colombia (1874–2019): A historical analysis from a political ecology perspective. *Land Use Policy*, 162, 107891.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landusepol.2025.107891>