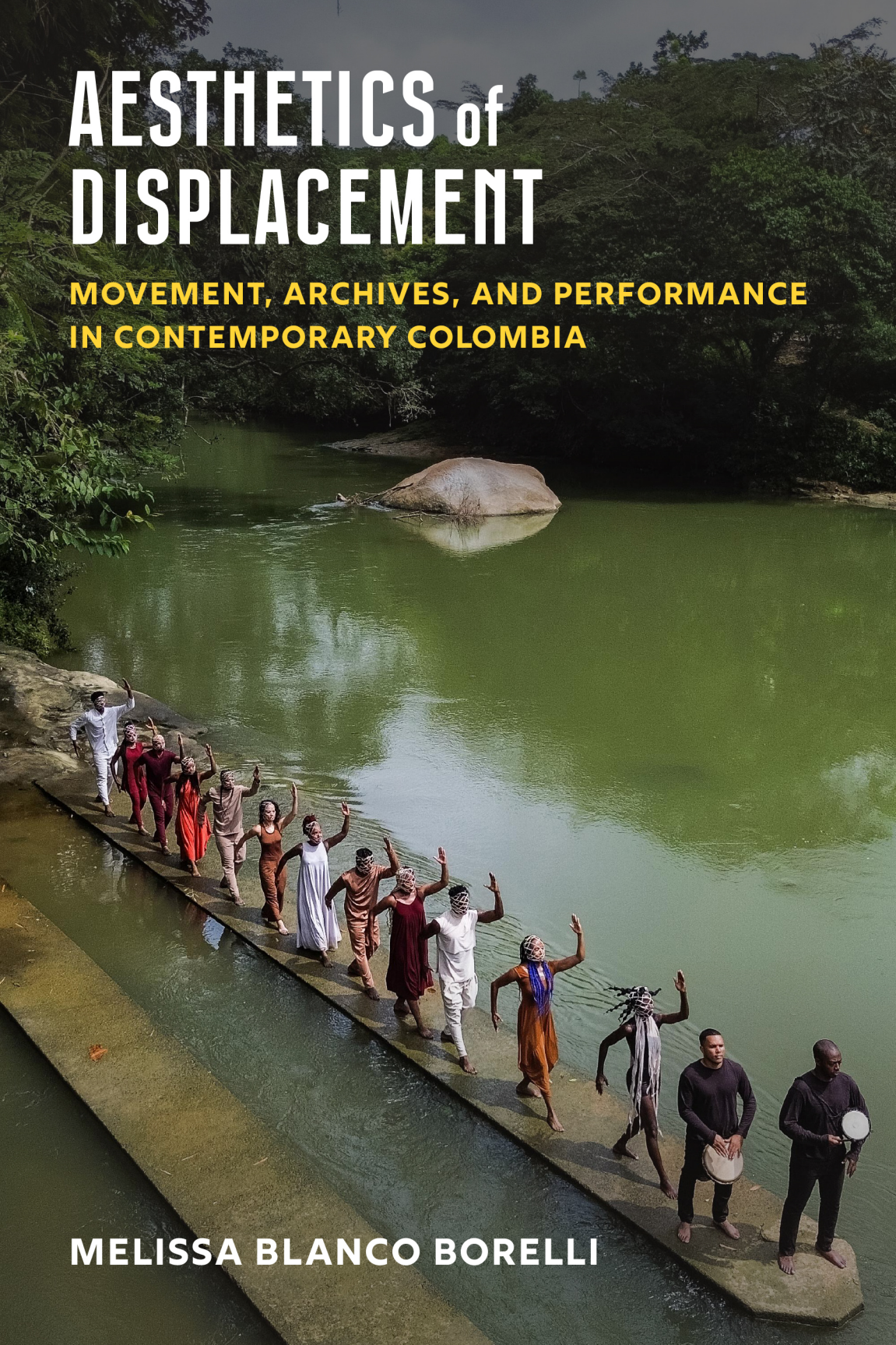
AESTHETICS of DISPLACEMENT
MOVEMENT, ARCHIVES, AND PERFORMANCE IN CONTEMPORARY COLOMBIA
MELISSA BLANCO BORELLI

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Movement, Archives, and Performance in Contemporary Colombia

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So much of the time spent reading, writing, editing, rewriting, and finalizing a book feels solitary, but it's a false sense of feeling alone. I realize that the thoughts, words, conversations, care, curiosity, and concern that friends, family, colleagues, and even strangers expressed during the process of completing this book have kept me buoyed and present to this challenge. These quotidian exchanges kept me focused and motivated. I offer a huge, massive thank you to those of you who feel included above.

As a runner, I often compare the process of writing to training for, and then running, a race. Sometimes the only goal is to cross that finish line injury free. Other times you want to achieve a personal best. Regardless, I do love placing the medal around my neck because it represents a tangible symbol of the hard mental and physical work I accomplished to get me to *that* moment. With book writing, a hazy finish line exists in your mind, and there is definitely no medal at the end. One marker of completion is when you send the final submission to your editor or publisher, but I usually feel done way before, maybe even now as I write these acknowledgments you are kind enough to be reading. In my usual manner, I have delayed writing these a bit longer than necessary mostly because I fear I will forget someone. Any omissions are unintentional. I need to remind myself what I tell myself as I run, "Forward is a pace,"[1] and so here we go.

I feel fortunate to love writing. What I struggle with, as many of us academics do, is finding the time to write. This book, like my first one, was not written during a relaxed sabbatical or a coveted academic leave. I spent time conceptualizing this new project as a grant during a fellowship at Freie Universität Berlin's Interweaving Performance Cultures Center from 2017 to 2018. My time there provided ample opportunities to read about decoloniality, aesthetics, Colombia's political situation, Black feminisms, and the digital humanities. After that experience, I had to find other forms

of writing support and be very disciplined with how I metered my time given several changes in personal and professional circumstances. From 2019 to 2021, I changed jobs twice in three years, moving countries and cities: from Royal Holloway in the UK to the University of Maryland in the greater DC area to the greater Chicago area, where I currently work at Northwestern University. Between managing an international grant project, being president of the Dance Studies Association, and trying to survive the pandemic while transitioning institutions, planning new courses, working with intellectually stimulating graduate students, and redesigning an undergraduate dance curriculum, my focus and time were minimal. I was also an avid runner during all of this. How else to keep sane? I am grateful for the University of Maryland's and Northwestern's initial course releases, which provided some time to organize my thoughts, read, and prepare bibliographies. At Northwestern, I am particularly indebted to the Provost Writing Workshops, organized by Dr. Joan M. Johnson (Senior Director of Faculty at the Office of the Provost), during the winter and spring quarters of 2023 and 2024. They also hosted summer writing workshops in 2023 and 2024 that gave participating faculty a weeklong "retreat" on campus, snacks and take-home dinners, and even short back massages. I would also like to thank Michelle Boyd and her amazing Inkwell Academic Writing Retreat, which helped solidify and validate my love of writing and the need to make it a priority in my life. I am especially grateful for my editor Sara Cohen and my anonymous peer reviewers at University of Michigan Press who supported and, most importantly, generously pushed my thinking.

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Early versions of this book have been presented at various conferences or universities where I was a panelist or an invited speaker. Thank you to Georgetown University's Department of African American Studies and LaMonda Horton-Stallings for the symposium "Black Studies Now: Georgetown and Beyond," where I was paired with Anita Gonzalez and shared parts of what eventually became chapter 1. The questions about the river and more-than-human relations within blackness were super generative. Thank you to Corinna Campbell at Williams College's Department of Music and the Class of 1960 Scholars and Fellows Program for the invitation to share my writings about Sankofa Danzafro included in chapter 3. Thank you to the University of Minnesota's Dance Program, where

I was invited as a Sage Cowles Land Grant Chair Visiting Scholar. I was able to share my work about *vivir sabroso* and movement. The questions I was asked by students and faculty (especially Diyah Larasati and Carl Flink) helped me to conceptualize the idea of a movement score and the (queer) poetics of waterways. It was so wonderful to spend time with my graduate school friends Cindy Garcia and Diyah Larasati and to contribute to Ananya Chatterjea's class. I have also presented versions of chapter 3 at Duke University's Collegium for African Diaspora Dance, the American Society of Aesthetics conference in Montreal, and the Dance Studies Association in Buenos Aires and Washington, DC. Thank you to those in attendance and for the questions and comments shared. Most recently, I offered a brief excerpt from chapter 4 on archives at Bennington's MFA Study Cycle in Montpellier. The topic this year (2025) was "*Of Things Not Seen: The Body as Witness and Participant*," curated by Gee Wesley. To be both a witness and a participant through our embodied experience is a major theme of this monograph, and, to be honest, a, if not *the*, crucial component of human life. We must witness and participate to feel alive, sometimes willingly and with love, solidarity, integrity, and care; sometimes unwillingly in the face of harrowing atrocities . . . and there are so many right now . . . so, so many.

I reserve this closing paragraph for those who are probably the main witnesses of my life: first, my parents Ramón and Teresita, the pair of feisty octogenarians, who continue to be proud of me even if they sometimes forget what this new book is about. I tell them that each of my publications is an homage to them and their support, work ethic, and determination to succeed; my brother Cy still can't believe I write and travel so much and is always a breath of fresh air with his dry wit; my sister-in-law Christina and my two glorious *sobrinxs* Sebastian and Sofía fill our lives with wonder and love; and last, but certainly not least, to my beloved Stratis, who has accompanied me from Athens to London to College Park to Evanston with unwavering support, strength, and love. I feel seen and bolstered by his emotional clarity, integrity, and delicate approach to experiencing our life together. Thank you for caring about our home and our precious cat Vitona each time I have had to go on writing retreats to get this book done. Thank you for your practical yet gentle words of encouragement that comfort my tears yet refuse to indulge my self-pity parties. It has been more than a decade since our first meeting over that magical cake, and you continue to offer peace and stability to my restless, curious yet world-weary soul.

Το αγαπημένο μου μέρος στον κόσμο θα είναι πάντα η αγκαλιά σου.
Montpellier, France, July 2025

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Images

Introduction

They say you never forget the first time you see a dead body. I was in Colombia when I saw my first. It was in Unguía, a small, rural town in the far northern region of the Chocó department. We had just finished eating lunch. The combination of the heat with the soporific effects of a substantial Colombian *almuerzo* had me feeling very sleepy. There were four of us that day; we were visiting Unguía for the first time as part of our initial visits to the territories we would be working with on our UK/Colombia collaborative grant project, Embodied Performance Practices in Processes of Reconciliation, Construction of Memory and Peace in Chocó and Medio Pacífico, Colombia (2018–2021), funded by UK Research and Innovation / Newton Fund and Miniciencias (in Colombia). This project examined the role that embodied performance practices have on post-conflict memories to aid in the processes of reconciliation and peacebuilding among the majority Afro-Colombian communities affected by the armed conflict in four municipalities. Its main objective was to cocreate a digital archive, Corpografías, www.corpografias.com, with these vulnerable communities. The archive features a collection of their oral testimonies, memorabilia, video footage of workshops and discussions, and embodied performance work. Our research objectives involved learning about the impact of embodied artistic practices in the discourses of postwar reconciliation. Primarily, we were interested in how communities and the performance artists create memories together through embodied practices. This trip to Unguía was particularly exciting because we had arranged to meet and learn about Indigenous (Gunadule) communities' embodied practices since the other three municipalities in our research were primarily Afro-Colombian.

After that afternoon's lunch, we managed to find someone to drive us to Arquía, the *resguardo* of the Gunadule (also known as Tule in Colombia or

Kuna in Panama). We crammed into the back seat of a pickup truck. I sat on the right-hand side next to the window. I longed to see the lush landscape from the relative comfort of a vehicle: deep green foliage, small hills in the distance, expansive farmland for cattle. The afternoon sun shone resolutely behind the low, tropical weather clouds dotting the sky. Lulled by the rocking motion of the truck and the calm natural environment, I began to fall asleep. I turned away from the window and faced forward to close my eyes. I thought I would rest my head against the window, but I suddenly noticed someone lying ahead by the driver's side of road. In my naive stupor, I thought this boy was napping, tired from working on the land all morning. My own desire for a nap clouded my judgment. As we drew closer, it became clear he was not asleep; he was dead.

Several men appeared from the deep foliage on our left and waved down our truck. Later, I found out that our driver "works" for the paramilitaries; they rely on him to help remove dead bodies. It is a pickup truck after all. My Colombian co-researchers were visibly concerned. One of them later shared with me that at that moment her inner monologue consisted of repeating to herself, "I hope Melissa doesn't turn around to see the dead body." But I had. Our guide told the men and the driver that he had a responsibility to drop us off at the *resguardo* first, stalling their insistence that the driver collect the body right away.

I could not stop looking at him, lying there. He had thick black hair; he wore a red-and-white striped shirt and was wearing black rain boots. These boots make it easier to work on swampy, wet land. His face was turned away; we never registered it. I will never forget the way his lifeless body lay encircled, protected even, by the tall grass.

I start with this personal ethnographic anecdote about death to get "death" out of the way. I want to move it out of the way, not to make light of its existence and effects, but instead to steer the focus over to the Colombians who, with their resilience, fortitude, and deep desire to live in peace on their lands with animals, plants, and, most important, one another, are the main protagonists of this book. Through practices of living and working near rivers, collective theater-making, social protests, dance and choreography as resistance, filmmaking, and archiving embodied performance practices, the Colombians in this book find ways to displace death and engage with life and one another. In the subsequent chapters, I offer a variety of case studies that examine how movement, as an embodied sociopolitical poetics, counters the violences of displacement and the erasure of memory. Instead *Aesthetics of Displacement* centers performance, kinship, and resilience.

This book—while attendant to the specters of death, violence, and the aftereffects of the sixty-year armed conflict in Colombia—is about living and living with the dead. It considers the legacy of the "world-annihilating violence"[1] Colombians have endured throughout the country's violent history: from the initial encounters of the Emberá and Gunadule with the Spanish in Santa María la Antigua del Daríen in 1521, to the wars of independence in 1810, to the Thousand Days War (1899–1902), to the beginning of *La Violencia* in 1948 and the assassination of Liberal Party candidate Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, to the armed conflict from 1968 with the establishment of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), to the 2003 demobilization of the right-wing paramilitary Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia, to the 2016 signing of the peace accords during the Juan Manuel Santos presidency. The very real effects and aftereffects of violence allow the main protagonists of *Aesthetics of Displacement* to find ways, practices, beliefs, and forms of relationality to move toward living more fully and fruitfully in their everyday life.

I start with the more recent events of the twentieth century that led to armed conflict. Formed in the late 1950s, FARC consisted of mostly peasant groups combating landowners in the aftermath of a war between Liberal and Conservative Parties disputing power. This war was officially declared in 1948 with the assassination of liberal leader Jorge Eliécer Gaitán. It marked the beginning of a period called *La Violencia* and the formation of Marxist guerrilla groups. After severe confrontations with the state and civil society, the Colombian government started several peace processes with these groups. In the late 1980s, paramilitary groups emerged to confront the still active FARC and Ejército de Liberación Nacional guerrillas. In alliance with national and local governments and funded by multinationals, narco-traffickers, and landowners protecting their property and business, this third "army" took control of a great part of Colombia's territory, disputing with the guerrilla groups the control of regional politics, the economy, natural resources, and drug-trafficking routes. Rural populations were the most affected, while the Pacific region of Colombia became a central target for its natural resources and strategic location in the production, commercialization, and trafficking of illegal drugs. The twentieth century brought some hope with the demobilization of paramilitary groups in 2003 and 2006 and the signing of a peace agreement with FARC in 2016. Signed by Juan Manuel Santos's government, the accord was rejected in a popular plebiscite where 50.1 percent of the population voted no on implementation of the agreement. The most affected regions by the conflict massively said yes. The implementation

of the peace agreement alongside the recent sociopolitical emergence of a politics of memory functions hypocritically since the conflict persists.[2]

Within this political climate, one where conflict is historical yet ongoing, *Aesthetics of Displacement* looks to the affirmation of practices of everyday living by rural Afro-Colombian communities and records alternative versions of the conflict by highlighting the marginalized communities most affected by it. This book centers the embodied aesthetic strategies and practices of these Colombian cultural producers. They engage these strategies and practices to create dance, theater, and films representative of a politics of memory, blackness and/or indigeneity, and national identity. I am interested in examining the ways that these aesthetic strategies rely on corporealities, territorial affiliation, and cultural memories to make visible the effects of coloniality in contemporary Colombia. Through a theoretical frame of "displacement" and an examination of the Afro-Colombian philosophy *vivir sabroso* (to live harmoniously) *Aesthetics of Displacement* focuses on how particular community theater-makers, choreographers, filmmakers, activist groups, and photojournalists create from an embodied Colombian perspective informed by decolonial practices and thinking. By using the term "decolonial," I mobilize their reliance on aesthetic strategies and philosophies that emerge from Black and Indigenous (Gunadule) ways of knowing. Since aesthetic value is imbricated within regimes of capital and is always-already political, throughout the book a systemic analysis exposes the complexities of global racialized capitalism and the histories of coloniality in Colombia.

The artists featured in the book include Afro-Colombian community artists and activists from Guapi, Unguía, Bojayá, and Buenaventura, choreographer Rafael Palacios (artistic director of Afro-contemporary dance company Sankofa Danzafro), mestizo/Gunadule film collective Sentarte and Olowaili Green Santacruz, and white photojournalist Jesús Abad Colorado. This carefully curated collective of Colombian cultural producers offers a rich portrait of what it means to create work steeped in (counter) narratives of national history, racial formation, the armed conflict, and contemporary Colombian sociopolitical realities. Through close analysis of their work via the disciplines of critical dance studies, performance studies, Black diaspora studies, ethnography, transnational indigeneity, conflict studies, and the politics of transitional justice, this book opens up pressing research questions on what it might mean to engage in strategies of "displacement" in order to reassess national history, legacies of colonialism and racism, a politics of memory, and the inheritances of violence

related to the Colombian armed conflict. It proposes that the race of the creator/cultural producer is epistemologically significant as it shapes the raced individual's embodied experience in the world. This monograph aims to displace hegemonic narratives of Colombian cultural production, which has often focused on white or mestizo Colombians, by primarily focusing on majority Black and Gunadule cultural producers.

As a dance studies scholar, the physical implications of displacement stand out for me. Across geographies and histories, displacements have occurred when bodies are (re)moved from their lands due to events such as the transatlantic slave trade and its resultant racialized capitalism, settler colonialism, environmental catastrophe, war, or other forms of state-induced terror. These physical limitations and constraints put upon displaced people create alternative physical responses beyond the forced displacement. In other words, displaced people learn, adapt, and move differently in their new surroundings. They literally create new movements and physical vocabularies to recreate and reestablish new ways of moving in their everyday lives. Although violent political choreographies of power have caused displacement, in this book I consider how these violences and the aftereffects of the dehumanization process lead to practices that sustain Afro-Colombian and Indigenous life. How do the physical restrictions of displacement lead to embodied, physical, and "adaptive social innovations?"[3] What do the different movements of displacement do? How does movement offer a guiding frame to understand the aftereffects of displacement, armed conflict, and violence? In this book, I focus on expressive movements as forms of (Black, Gunadule, and decolonial) livingness that articulate ways of knowing and feeling. These expressive movements include theater and dance, political or social movements, innovative movements shifting from one aesthetic form to another, and everyday movements that may often be improvised but also repeated for efficacy depending on the task at hand. I argue that these movements stem from the violent inheritances of displacement, diaspora, and *destierro* and often inform the creative content and aesthetic form that communities affected by these inheritances create for cultural memory, history, survival, ritual worship, healing, or just making sense of their everydayness. I stress life over death, *convivencia* over conflict, relationality across difference, and the importance of striving for harmonious conviviality despite difference and, even more so, despite the vexed relationships of harmony across humans and more-than-human entities.

Convivencia means coexistence, but in the context of post-conflict

Colombia, I am first using the definition put forth by La Comisión para el Esclarecimiento de la Verdad, la Convivencia y la No Repetición. The commission explains that "la convivencia no consiste en el simple compartir de un mismo espacio social y político, sino en la creación de un ambiente transformador que permita la resolución pacífica de los conflictos y la construcción de la más amplia cultura de respeto y tolerancia en democracia" (coexistence does not consist in the simple sharing of the same social and political space, but in the creation of a transforming environment that allows for the peaceful resolution of conflicts and the construction of the broadest culture of respect and tolerance in democracy), as expressed in *decreto* 588 of 2017. I shift from this juridical proclamation of coexistence and refer to an Indigenous conceptualization of coexistence that extends beyond discursive understandings of coexistence and ultimately proclaims that "the work of decolonization is the work of restoring our relations."[4] *Convivencia*, then, is a decolonial turn to get right the relationality between humans, plants, and animals in a Colombia that, to its own detriment, has continued to privilege a liberal ideal of humanism stemming from European colonial ideologies.

Displacement as *Destierro*: Realities and Strategies

Colombia is the country with the highest number of internally displaced people (IDPs) in the Americas: 6.4 million. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre sets a figure of over 6 million IDPs in Colombia as of December 2023.[5] About 89 percent of these 6.4 million have been displaced from rural to urban areas by conflict and violence. In Colombian cities, informal settlements have become the last place of refuge for many IDPs.[6] Ten percent of Colombians are displaced. Within that 10 percent, the majority are farmers, peasants, Afro-Colombians, and Indigenous people. Thus, I start from the premise that literal displacement emerges from the machinations of the Colombian armed conflict. It is a tragic occurrence that first displaces people from their land and their homes. Then, its nefarious effects further displace a sense of identity, belonging, and citizenship. In the case of the Afro and Indigenous communities in Colombia, who are among the most disproportionately displaced communities, a relationship to land and territory is crucial to their worldviews: understandings of self, community, and daily well-being. When they are displaced from their ancestral land, they are psychosocially maimed. This

embodied trauma, I argue, functions as a quotidian ontology of haunting, and it is from this position of epistemological and psychosocial violence that I examine how and what they artistically produce to endure, contest, protest, and survive. How do they consider the government's acts of displacement beyond its very limits? In other words, is displacement something that is imposed upon them that they then contest through separate kinds of political and embodied movements? Do they themselves feel displaced beyond the physical dimensions of forced displacement? This book turns to how they forge through with a sense of empowerment despite the quotidian upheavals they encounter. It wonders how creating, working, performing, and dancing collectively offer a sense of healing, if they do.

The inextricable link of power to systems of racial, territorial, and economic oppression plays a significant role in my methodologies and my authorial positionality. I am following the lead of many Black/decolonial/Afro-Latina/femme scholars who envision working in modes that center relationality across difference. Macarena Gómez-Barris identifies a "decolonial femme method," one where "the nexus [of] experience, perception, and decolonization meet. This is the space for much of the analysis of the extractive zone that aims to explode unilinear and unilateral procedures by transiting in the murky epistemic and sensuous space of uncertainty. Situated and affective forms of knowledge production can provide new ways to analyze the colonial trace in ways that hopefully do not reproduce, tame, or obfuscate an intimate and intricate web of power relations."[7] Audre Lorde has written about the "relations across difference" as part of Black feminist practices.[8] María Lugones mobilizes the term "faithful witnessing" as a way to relate to, collaborate with, and be witness to the oppressed.[9] Sociologist and current Colombian minister of education Aurora Vergara-Figueroa addresses the violences associated with "deracination," a term she stresses as more efficacious than displacement in her important Black feminist work on the aftereffects of the Bojayá massacre of May 2, 2002.[10] More recently, Yomaira Figueroa synthesizes feminist decolonial approaches to offer the term and concept *destierro* to better grasp the machinations of power and coloniality amid and upon Black and Indigenous people.[11] For the purposes of this book, I rely on Vergara-Figueroa's and Figueroa's concepts and definitions of deracination and *destierro* as support systems for how I am thinking about displacement as a violence, an aftereffect of violence, and then as an aesthetic-political possibility for Afro and Indigenous cultural producers in Colombia. The deconstruction and displacement of meanings for more complex under-

standings of the processes of displacement are crucial here. Not all the artists in the book contend with physical displacement, but all have a relationship to its aftereffects, whether physical or psychically inherited. I situate displacement as a multivalent experience, a daily reality, and a historical and historiographic entity that has corporeal effects.[12]

From literal displacement I move to ontological displacement, or *destierro*, as a state of being that enables cultural production and forms of world-making and living. As Figueroa explains, "The concept of *destierro*, an untranslatable term for exile in Spanish, . . . is akin to being torn from land, because *destierro* remains a relevant and precarious condition for Black and indigenous peoples. In wrestling with the term, I turn away from its bourgeois underpinnings and instead understand it as a vector of dispossession constitutive of colonial modernity." It is a complex term that goes beyond the loss and suffering of exile, while still being attendant to these affective registers. It allows for resistance despite dispossession; these forms of resistance by Black and Indigenous peoples tie them back to "land-based practices, and multiple movements."[13] Movement informs the development of an Afro-Colombian and Indigenous consciousness in response to coloniality. To practice and to move with the land or one another as methods to map out autonomy and self-determination allow the (re)generation of strategies to contend with and upend the everyday realities of living under *destierro*. Movement, whether improvised or choreographed due to the familiarized routines of the everyday, or movement as a political process relies on collectivity and collaboration. Movement (and its subsequent structuring into choreography, particularly in chapter 3), as a form of corporeal sovereignty, resists teleological logics that expect a particular moment to arise when sovereignty finally happens. Instead, as Laura Harjo explains, sovereignty or, as I am arguing, movement-as-corporeal-sovereignty is "a relational and iterative practice that is future-oriented yet enacted in the day to day."[14] The foregrounding of resistances (however small or mundane) by Afro-Colombians enduring coloniality and its *destierro* is key.

While displacement and *destierro* productively evoke the conditions hemispheric Black and Indigenous people (have) endure(d), Aurora Vergara-Figueroa complicates the use of the terms "forced migration" and "displacement" and prefers the term "deracination." For her, it accurately represents the conditions, histories, and structural violences that Afro-Colombian communities have experienced even before the Bojayá massacre. Deracination is in response to, and not a fixed condition of, dis-

placement. She defines it as an "uprooting from the ground . . . breaking the communal relations,"[15] echoing how many Afro-Colombians describe being forced to move away from their lands. Their struggles are tied to global Black diasporic struggles. Deracination is thus a four-hundred-year-long process starting from the abduction and commercialization of Black people in the transatlantic slave trade, to enslavement, to marronage settlement in the Colombian Pacific after manumission and the ongoing movements (both physical and political) and (re)settlements of Black Colombians on their lands. *Destierro* and deracination demand an engagement with processes—embodied, historical, political—that mirror the processes of structured movements and quotidian improvisational practices, that is, thinking with one's body, making choices, and structuring movements to find the alternative, life-affirming practices that Afro-Colombians and Indigenous communities from the Pacific region do to re-member themselves amid deterritorialization and dispossession. These subtle, perhaps even decolonial shifts in meanings open the analytical possibilities offered herein.

In *Palma Africana*, anthropologist Michael Taussig explains that in Colombia paramilitary forces have dedicated themselves to dismembering land and bodies for cattle and palm oil, so much so that "it seems almost inevitable that dismemberment acquires additional, even opposite, meanings, which we could call dismemberment/rememberment thus playing with the word *re-member* as much as the dynamic of eternal return of deterritorialization and reterritorialization."[16] Through his play with words, Taussig evokes the complex relationships among memory, violence, land, and displacement that loom over Colombia. Remembering relates to memory, but also to putting things back together, re-membering human remains for a dignified burial, for example: to re-member, to put back together somewhere else, a different place, to displace. How then to re-member for healing, continuity, resilience, and resurgence?

The macro-politics of displacement in Colombia are simply this: the history of coloniality whereby Afro-Colombian and Indigenous worldviews were displaced to allow, first, Eurocentric coloniality and to allow, second, the elitist mestizo-criollo worldview to step in as the replacement of the Spanish.[17] This book aims to develop, expand, and critically interrogate the aesthetic possibilities of "displacement." Some of the attendant questions to facilitate this objective include these: What does it mean to displace willingly inherited or valued Eurocentric aesthetics and center systems of knowledge, ancestral legacies, and aesthetic configurations

stemming from Afro-Colombian or Gunadule cosmologies? What does it mean to think about land as a cocreator and citizen worthy of being protected? How do bodies (visceral and aquatic, as you will see in chapter 1) help both to center and to displace memory? The subsequent case studies demonstrate what a Colombian artistic landscape might look like if it centered Black and/or Indigenous world-making. They also ponder the value of symbolic justice through artistic production in a country still reeling from the aftereffects of an armed conflict where impunity continues to reign. Movement and choreography emerge as efficacious terms to utilize in considering the processes of displacement (political, philosophical, material, and psychosocial) endured by these Colombian citizens. I use a rich disciplinary frame grounded in critical dance studies and performance studies to elaborate how corporealities in motion, doing and being, enact the theoretical frame of displacement.

Choreography, as an epistemological concept specific to dance studies, facilitates a way to think about the corporeal and cerebral processes working in tandem with one another. Choreography is the practice of generating movement through embodied practices and knowledge (the dance one knows and does) and then structuring the movement through aesthetic choices. The dancing body is thus sensing, feeling, and thinking. Mind and body work together. Choreography allows for this symbiotic relationship. The relationship between thinking and sensing/feeling is also theoretically evident in Colombian sociologist Orlando Fals's term *sentipensante* (a thinking-feeling human), which has been used by Latin American decolonial writers and philosophers to frame subjectivity beyond the Cartesian mind-body problem. *Aesthetics of Displacement* continues this trajectory with its always-already understanding of its protagonists as *sentipensante*. As a dance and cultural theorist, I engage across epistemological regimes and operate in full acknowledgment that the term *sentipensante* functions as a choreography of identity. To be a *sentipensante* means that the knower-feeler recognizes their subjectivity as one based on a relational practice between thinking and feeling. One is not more important than the other. This allows for a particular experience with the world that privileges mind-body-spirit integration. The Afro and Indigenous (Gunadule) *sentipensantes* in this book contend with vexed terms such as citizenship, justice, history, archives, the quotidian, and aesthetics. Through their performances, creative collaborations, protests, and quotidian practices, they call into question, reject, or reconfigure pat understandings of these terms. Ultimately, this is a book about Black and

Indigenous livingness in Colombia. It reminds us that Afro-Colombians and Colombian Indigenous communities, like the Gunadule artists I feature, are reconceptualizing their present through their ancestral practices and their aesthetic possibilities.

Hemispheric Black Study and Afro-Colombia

Colombia has the second-largest population of African descent in Latin America (after Brazil) and the fourth largest in the western hemisphere (following Haiti, Brazil, and the United States). According to the National Administrative Department of Statistics, Afro-Colombians make up 10.6 percent of the population of Colombia (about five million people), and they are primarily concentrated on the Pacific coast in departments such as Chocó, whose capital, Quibdó, is 95.3 percent Afro-Colombian. The Pacific region has been disproportionately affected by the armed conflict, thus linking the struggles of Afro-Colombians there to global Black struggles for sovereignty, self-determination, and dignity.

The armed conflict between guerrillas (FARC), the army, and paramilitary groups has its roots in the 1960s, even though *La Violencia* in 1948 is often considered the beginning of the Colombian civil war. By the 1990s, the illegal drug trade economy in Colombia had become one of the most powerful in the world. Paramilitary groups expanded throughout the country, many funded by the drug cartels and wealthy landowners, and they began to violently displace communities to grant drug cartels better access to rivers and other waterways and any other means that would facilitate the distribution and shipment of drugs. Between 1998 and 2002, an average of three hundred thousand people per year were internally displaced.[18] More than a quarter of Colombia's Indigenous population is included in this number, and almost one-third of the Black population is displaced. This displacement is ongoing. Black identity in Colombia is linked to territory and sovereignty on/over ancestral land. Despite exclusion, discrimination, poverty, forced displacement, and expropriation of their collective territories, Afro-Colombian grassroots communities honor the legacy of their ancestors and continue resisting and proposing peaceful solutions under the framework of Ley 70.

Ley 70, approved in 1993, identified the special territorial rights of the Black Pacific communities as ethnic groups recognized by the 1991 constitution. According to Ley 70, the Colombian government must guarantee

the protection of the ancestral territories of African descendants, invest in their economic development, and support their cultural identity and civil rights.

Important to note here is that the only acknowledgment of racial difference prior to Ley 70 was the denomination of *indio* (Indigenous) as an institutional identity. Until Ley 70, the category "Black" historically had not been defined or had remained ambiguous.[19] Many of the defenders of the territory are community activists and humanitarian leaders of Black or Indigenous descent. They are often targeted and assassinated by paramilitary groups or the state since they pose a threat to the interests of the illegal drug trade and multinational extractivist capitalism. Pervasively threatened, many leaders leave their rural, riverain towns and move to Quibdó, the capital of Chocó and the nexus of displaced African and Indigenous persons. Others move farther, to Medellín, Cali, or the capital, Bogotá. Thus, while the state recognizes the ethnic and territorial legitimacy of the Black and Indigenous populations by discursively rendering them rights and recognition in a new constitution, the actual presence and enforcement by the state of these rights in these territories remains inconsistent or strategically absent.[20]

The escalation of the armed conflict in the 1990s made the nascent (Black) grassroots organizations, community councils, and the spaces where they were revitalized important processes of resistance to armed conflict and forced displacement.[21] In essence, the constitution of 1991 and Ley 70 constituted "the invention of black community" and "the ethnicization of blackness in Colombia."[22] The state thus defined a new political interlocutor[23] who continues to be nonetheless silenced in deference to multinational, neoliberal (racist) agendas that see the rich lands as part of the greater projects of extractivist capital and the road to economic "progress." Forced displacement becomes a tragic result of these processes. As anthropologist Pilar Riaño-Alcalá explains, "Forced displacement is a threshold experience that includes multiple losses—one's home, life and material goods. A precipitous and forced exit from a place of residence causes a series of ruptures and discontinuities in the lives of individuals, families and communities."[24] These contexts made the ethical responsibility of the grant project, and my initial contact with the Pacific region and Chocoanos, crucial. I could not allow my affiliation and allegiances with blackness to function without forethought and considered ethical deliberation. I knew I wanted to use my research and training in US-based Black studies to extend and expand the discourses around hemispheric Black

cultural production and worldviews, but I also had to contend with its cultural specificities in Colombia and my own positionality. Let me explain.

Although I am Colombian on my mother's side, she is from Barranquilla, on the Atlantic/Caribbean coast. I remember growing up in the late 1970s and 1980s and hearing about how dangerous the interior of Colombia was. My relatives in Barranquilla spoke about the armed conflict, but I never paid any attention since most of my childhood memories of Colombia involved pools, beaches, good food (*mojarra frita, arroz con coco y tostones*), and other things related to middle-class family reunions. It was only after thinking about this book project and conceptualizing the grant Embodied Performance Practices that I made the decision to start learning about Colombia beyond the imaginaries I had constructed through music, dancing, food, and family.

Raymond Williams's concept of "structures of feeling" refers to the lived, affective experiences and emergent social meanings that exist in tension with formalized cultural norms, capturing how people collectively sense and articulate changes in society before they are fully recognized or codified. Other than speaking the language and understanding certain Colombian structures of feeling, I decided to privilege my outsider identity in the project, but an outsider who practices relationality through listening and learning. We have Black ancestry on my maternal Colombian side, and I have more Black ancestry on my paternal Cuban side. While I have written about being interpellated as *mulata* in an earlier publication (*She Is Cuba*, 2015), I noticed I was not read similarly in the Pacific region of Colombia. Furthermore, I was told by one of my co-researchers that the term *mulato/mulata* is considered offensive in Colombia. The term *moreno* (dark-skinned) is more popularly accepted in lieu of calling someone *negro/negra*, but I cannot claim *morena*, nor have I ever been interpellated as such, at least not in a Latinx / Latin American context. As I continue to think through my positionality in the research I do and how it articulates my commitments to decolonial, anti-Black, feminist methods, I relate immensely to the words of philosopher and decolonial feminist Xhercis Méndez, which I could not have written better myself:

> [I] engage what it means to be a light-skinned Latina who seeks to work against the erasure of my own Afro-descendancy without claiming a history of oppression I did not live. I also wanted to mark my particular location . . . whose identity has been forged and grounded in Afro-Latinx/Caribbean ways of being and know-

> ing and in relation to black folks (primarily African Americans and Afro-Caribbeans) in the United States. My intention is to work against a pan-Latinidad that bypasses and/or obscures the question of race and the pervasiveness of antiblackness in Latinx [and in this book's case, Latin American / Colombian] communities.[25]

I am not unaware of my privilege here in being able to "move" between insider/outsider whenever I want. My training in Black feminist practices, critical dance studies, performance studies, and ethnography facilitated the process. As a representative of a UK institution at the time of the research project, I became aware of the notoriety of international researchers "helicoptering in and out of the Pacific region" (many of our interlocutors spoke about this process in these exact terms) and the vulnerability of the communities sharing personal, cultural, or political information. I began to experience their silence or discernment over sharing information as positive occurrences, not limitations for the research. Anthropologist Savanna Shange writes about the practice of "ethical distance" and how it "embraces opacity as a historically grounded protection for black people who have long been mistreated in and by institutional study."[26] This methodological ethic has remained with me since the inception of the grant project. As a result, I have mainly chosen to highlight materials already shared and made public via the Corpografías website within the broader context of the book, thereby maintaining much of the opacity required.

The Afro-Colombian and Indigenous communities featured in *Aesthetics of Displacement* experience varying conditions of precarity: economic, emotional, political, and psychosocial. Their bodies carry the memories of the armed conflict and its nefarious effects on their quotidian livelihoods. This, in turn, requires sensitive methods for considering the machinations of necropower on their bodies. However, I reiterate that I do not center death, but rather look to practices that model a "radical potential of the now."[27] Thus, the book aligns itself to the field of Black studies and its critical concerns of Black ontology and the ways in which Black performance centers being and doing.

I offer a hemispheric perspective to the study of Black livingness. This monograph looks at Black life in Colombia through both US and Latin American Black studies to dialogue with the growing anti-racist, anti-oppression, decolonial conversations about Black life living and breathing in the here and now. In the book, I engage with "Afro-presentism," an incisive critical offering from Julius Fleming. Fleming articulates the

notion of Afro-presentism as a "radical structure of racial time . . . a black political and ontological orientation toward demanding and enjoying the 'good life' in the here and now."[28] He elaborates on what he means by "the good life": "one that is sometimes political, sometimes social, other times cultural; one that reminds us that in the midst of black people's (often failed) strivings toward the good life of liberal democracy, blackness itself is good."[29] While Fleming centers his discussions around the US civil rights movements and the way that African American theater materialized a "radical refusal to wait," I turn to the Afro-Colombian philosophy of *vivir sabroso*, to live well, harmoniously, deliciously, as an embodied poetic that permeates the everyday of these mostly riverain communities on the Pacific coast. Also political, social, and cultural, *vivir sabroso* exists as a type of relational practice for resistance, resurgence, and resilience. While it could be encapsulated within Fleming's neologism, I want to keep it separate yet relational for the purposes of geographical, cultural distinction and political nuance.

Black liberation is part of the *longue durée* of coloniality. In the diaspora's practices of emotional, political, cultural, and quotidian care for the varieties and variances of blackness, the culturally specific modes of living while Black require critical care and attention. As Fleming explains, "Afro-presentism imagines, crafts, and accounts for the aesthetic, experiential, and political strategies that black people use to embrace the possibilities of the present while continuing to engage in the necessary practice of black freedom dreaming; of spying the horizon; of pursuing the not-yet-here."[30] A focus on aesthetics and cultural production among Afro-Colombians centers the now of performance-making, cocreation, collaboration, working together to mobilize and materialize methods for sovereignty and liberation in the always-hoped-for future. The future looms speculatively in the ether of possibility, but that does not mean that the present moment, with its everyday richness, does not provide opportunities to put into practice that future.

Afro-presentism emerges as a response to Afropessimism, a philosophical branch of US-based Black study that examines the structural position of blackness in society. For Afropessimists such as Frank Wilderson, who introduced this analytical framework, anti-blackness is foundational to the modern world.[31] Black people are not afforded "humanity," social recognition (as evidenced by his concept of "social death"), and are subjected to perpetual violences through structural and institutional frameworks. Wilderson argues for a redefinition or reevaluation of the

Western intellectual tradition's definitions of humanity. Similarly, Jamaican polymath Sylvia Wynter calls for a broader cultural, historical, and ecological definition of the "human" taking into consideration decolonial configurations through what she terms deciphering practices—ways to question and dismantle the culturally constructed narratives about the origins of "human."[32] These deciphering practices reveal the cultural and symbolic codes that generate meaning so that, in response, Black cultural production and Black performance can function as crucial forms of Black humanization. Wynter highlights the practices of "black humanization—marronages, mutinies, funerals, carnivals, dramas, visual arts, fictions, poems, fights, dances, the blues, jazz, revolts, and 'periodic uprisings . . . the ongoing creation of culture'"[33] because "making black culture reinvents (black) humanity and life."[34] Dance scholar Thomas F. DeFrantz asserts Black life with the irrefutable premise that (Black) performance "involves subjectivity occasioned by action born of breath."[35] Within these pages, I focus on practices that require breath: collective mourning, screaming, protesting, dancing, singing, rehearsing, walking, balancing, fishing, swimming, rowing, grieving, weeping yet resolutely living. These spirited strategies of Black people in movement audaciously affirm their right to exist, take up space in the world, and make political claims.

Aesthetics of Displacement's commitment is to Black and Indigenous world-making. It honors Wynter's desire to imagine a world that could embrace blackness beyond. In that world, "a world of many worlds," as anthropologist Marisol de la Cadena might describe it,[36] an incontrovertible relationship between aesthetics and politics exists. Aesthetics always already contain politics. These aesthetics grow out of experiences of *destierro*, the aftereffects of armed conflict, memories, and ancestral knowledges. They articulate an ontological politics that calls into question the entire modernist project of the nation-state and its inability to accept Black and Indigenous worldviews. Aesthetics, as literary scholar Kevin Quashie explains, are "a means to explore the specificity of aliveness."[37] The case studies within this monograph demonstrate the Afro-Colombian and Indigenous aesthetic manifestations of aliveness as a methodology. The aesthetic worlds created move beyond the marginalization or victimization narratives consistently attributed to these communities historically.

Analola Santana's *Freak Performances* frames the marginalization of the Black and Indigenous bodies in Latin America. Because of coloniality, colonial subjects who did not adhere to the aesthetic or moral standards of the colonizer were deemed aberrant, marginal, or "freaks." Coupling

disability studies with theater studies, Santana makes a case for how the centuries-old marginalization of Blacks, Indigenous, and rural peasants in Latin America labels them as less than humans, ergo less than citizens. They inhabit a space of monstrous abjection. Shifting from coloniality to "independence" to neoliberalism, these "monsters of the past become the freaks of the present, as they are deemed incapable of fitting into a mercantile 'body' politic."[38] One of the ways that Black, Indigenous, and peasant Colombians fail to fit the Colombian "body" politic within the logics of coloniality and modernity's neoliberal state is through their legitimate claims over the land, their abundant cosmological worldviews that rely on pluralistic and communal modes of coexistence, and their engaging with the preservation of the environment, particularly on the Pacific coast. In this book, I tie their political convictions to their expressive cultures to center practices of living that Afro-Colombian and Indigenous communities engage in daily.

Navigating Displacements: Chapter Summaries

Because I center life and livingness, the organizational structure of the chapters privileges the sensorium: the visual, the aural, and the corporeal. The case studies offer compelling lines of inquiry: They show the processes or inspirations behind the artistic practices; they complicate the lenses of race, class, and national identity; they explore and examine collaborative art and performance-making models. The case studies also highlight the different frames through which to experience "displacement": on the stage; in urban protests; in contemporary choreography and the bodies of the dancers; in ritual and social dance practices; in the embodied memories of victims of the armed conflict; in the movement between the corporeal and the digital as part of a digital or photographic archive (and its subsequent exhibition); in short documentary films that narrate everyday Gunadule practices and traditions. I offer these frames as starting points that, throughout the book, demonstrate how each frame could potentially displace another one to create a more capacious understanding not just of the term "displacement" but of the aesthetic strategies used to ground such displacement. In other words—and this is a methodological conceit—the content in the case studies informs the analytical and performative writing of the book.

Chapter 1 functions as the bridge between this introduction and the

case studies. It immerses the reader in the landscape, geographies, and histories of the Pacific region. The philosophy of *vivir sabroso* serves as an orienting compass and makes a claim for it as movement poetic of the Afro-Colombian quotidian. *Vivir sabroso* relies on a deep relational understanding of knowledge as collective and the collective as a site of political power. Accordingly, I look to the daily movements, gestural vocabularies, and emplaced knowledges alongside "encounters, movements and relations with the river"[39] to present their own poetics of Afro-Colombian livingness. I draw from images, experiences, and interviews with community members featured in the digital archive Corpografías. This chapter focuses on the relationality between humans and other-than-human entities, in this case rivers, and a particular river, the Atrato. The movement poetic of *vivir sabroso* frames the ontological, epistemological, and phenomenological (and compositional) elements that inform the subsequent case studies. Movement, the ability to move or be moved, what dance scholar Charmian Wells calls "Black spatial self-determination,"[40] is the primary thrust.

Chapter 2, "Staging Displacement," focuses on a play, a dance for the dead, and a civic protest. The first part of the chapter examines a 2019 production and performance of a play, *Honrar a los Sagrados Espíritus*, that commemorates the 2002 Bojayá massacre victims and celebrates the return of their remains to their families after a seventeen-year juridical and political process. The inability to bury one's dead prevents the ability for *vivir sabroso*. I engage with a particular ritual for dead babies and children, the *gualié*, in order to demonstrate the significance of ritual, communal mourning, and embodied practices for the communities of Bojayá. Performance—dance and theater specifically—become efficacious tools for these post-conflict communities to be able to process violence and trauma and, more important, to stage political demands and critique the Colombian's state ineffectual procedures of restitution. The role of community and their collective demands frames the last section of this chapter, where I provide details about and analysis of the 2017 Buenaventura civic protests. Overall, I make a case for how the commemorations and protests seek to displace the narratives of victimization and marginalization imposed upon the performers and protestors by the state. I specifically attend to how *vivir sabroso* informs civic and creative engagements among these communities. This chapter also aligns protest movements with artists and examines the ways in which dance, song, and music become powerful modes of protest for Black communities in Colombia.

Chapter 3, "Choreographing Displacement," examines the choreographic work of Rafael Palacios, artistic director of Colombian Afro-contemporary dance company Sankofa Danzafro. It looks to the political role that movement has. It functions as an inherent quality of Black diasporic livingness to assert sovereignty and make claims about Black citizenship in the world. Thinking alongside dance scholar Ananya Chatterjea's conceptualizations of the "contemporary" in South-South choreographies along with hemispheric Black studies, this chapter considers how Sankofa's work addresses some of Chatterjea's provocative questions about Black and global majority choreographers. She asks, "What strategies do these choreographers employ to resist and subvert expectations? What choreographic tools do they use to stage boisterous difference and instigate a resistant aesthetics? How do they dismantle and reimagine practices marked as 'tradition' and 'convention'? In what ways do these acts of dance embody commentary on current local-global conditions?"[41] In this chapter I will move through several of Palacios's choreographies: *La Ciudad de los Otros* (2010), *La Mentira Complaciente* (2019), and *Detrás del Sur: Danzas para Manuel* (2020). This chapter ultimately showcases how Sankofa offers anti-racist engagements with the Black dancing body in Colombia while choreographing the embodied experience of *destierro*.

Chapter 4, "Displacing Archives," examines three distinct archival projects: Jesús Abad Colorado's photographic exhibit *El Testigo / The Witness* (2018), the short films of the Gunadule arts collective Sentarte (2021 and 2022), and the digital archive Corpografías (2021), produced as part of a UK research grant. First, I consider how the exhibit *El Testigo* functions as an archive of the armed conflict from the perspective of the peasant, poor, Afro, and Indigenous displaced Colombians. I engage with the scholarship of Ariella Azoulay, María Lugones, D. Soyini Madison, and Bracha Ettinger to think through the terms co-performative witnessing, wit(h)nessing, and faithful witnessing in order to consider the complex effects that Abad Colorado's photographs have as affective sites of healing for their spectators while simultaneously providing a haunting photographic archive of the Black, rural, poor, Indigenous Colombians most affected by the armed conflict. I attended the exhibit twice while in Colombia and draw from those experiences in this first section.

I then turn to the work of Colombian film collective Sentarte, specifically Gunadule filmmaker Olowaili Green Santacruz. who produces animated shorts and documentaries that feature dance and *molas* (Gunadule reverse appliqué handicraft practice) in movement (*Mugan Boe*, and *Galu*

Dugbis, la Memoria de las Abuelas). Green Santacruz correlates her aesthetic to the concept of *oralitura* (orality or oral literature), a word that helps her translate her Gunadule ancestral oral traditions into knowledge passed down across generations. This section addresses how Gunadule communities visually represent their cosmologies, through the use of the *mola*, amid armed conflict and, in general, coloniality. The great *destierro* for Colombian *pueblos originarios* is the state of coloniality they have encountered since 1510, when Santa María la Antigua del Darién, the first city erected by Spanish conquistador Vasco Núñez de Balboa in mainland South America, appeared. In this chapter, I look at two film shorts, one animated, one documentary, that honor Green Santacruz's matrilineal heritage and her ancestors despite the violences of *destierro*. Both pieces utilize *molas* in movement to articulate (the) Gunadule (present) presence.

The last section of this last chapter turns to the initial grant project, Embodied Performance Practices, and its major output that subsequently informed the conceptualization of this book: the digital archive Corpografías, cocreated in collaboration with Afro-Colombians and Indigenous communities.[42] This digital archive features the artistic and cultural practices of these communities that function as possible counternarratives to the armed conflict. While much work about the Colombian armed conflict exists within frameworks from politics, human rights, sociology, and anthropology, a digital humanities lens accompanied by a strong dance/performance studies methodology offers new framings. Corpografías is "an attempt to reconfigure 'the archive' as an archive particular to the needs of the communities: as sites of memory, re-existence, and epistemological justice."[43] This chapter also questions the limits of digital and photographic archives as methods of reconciliation and transitional justice. What is the impact of symbolic justice? Can it ever lead to transitional justice? This is particularly pertinent to the Colombian situation, which is rife with impunity. The chapter concludes with considerations of how embodiment, memory, and affect—as archivable entities—displace notions of archives and transcend ideas of legal and political justice to position alternative models for peacebuilding after conflict.

I conclude this book with some thoughts about the utility of artmaking practices as symbolic justice and with an epilogue. I offer two short analyses of performances from the nationally televised performance commissioned by Colombia's Comisión de la Verdad, *Develaciones: Un Canto a los Cuatro Vientos* (April 2022), and a local dance festival (June 2019) in Santa María la Antigua del Daríen to make a case for the political

significance of Afro and Indigenous relationality, specifically *convivencia*/coexistence in contemporary Colombia.

In Colombia, the Indigenous communities use the term *el buen vivir*, while the Afro communities utilize the term *vivir sabroso*, to approximate what it means to live in harmony with other humans, plants, and animals. These terms are culturally specific, pluralistic understandings of planetary cohabitation that do not privilege one living being over another. *Vivir sabroso* was used by current Colombian vice president Francia Márquez during her campaign to mobilize alternative ways of imagining a new post-conflict Colombia based on Black and Indigenous ways of knowing. What might a reconciled Colombian society look, feel, or move like? What would a post-conflict, reconciled Colombian "community" do? As legal scholar Andrew Schapp writes, "If we are to conceive reconciliation politically, . . . we cannot presuppose community but must recognize it as the contingent outcome of politics. Consequently, political reconciliation begins (rather than ends) with the invocation of a '*we*.'"[44] How are these Indigenous and Black communities modeling a new "we" for Colombia through their embodied artistic and memory practices? Anthropologist Veena Das astutely comments that "community is constituted through agreements and hence can also be torn apart by refusal to acknowledge some part of the community as an integral part of it."[45] A tragedy of the Colombian armed conflict was the belief that poor, rural, peasant farmers and Black and Indigenous communities were dispensable citizens. How can communities coalesce under some banner of national attunement or *convivencia* built on principles beyond those of the modern liberal nation-state?

Most modern liberal nation-states continue to fail their most vulnerable citizens; the most vulnerable, however, can often maintain practices of worlding that allow them to attune to their environments, themselves, and their ancestral knowledges alongside the other-than-human aspects of territory that they actively protect. An Afro-Colombian elder, Don Porfirio, puts it this way: "Anybody can own land, but territory is something else altogether."[46] Here is an invocation of Marisol de la Cadena's pluriversal contact zone, where rivers, lakes, mountains, and territories are sentient beings and the communities that defend them are *one* with them.[47] National attunement and *convivencia*/coexistence already occur in these communities, which continue to offer models for coexistence in the era of the metacrisis. As Arturo Escobar et al. write, "Pluriversal contact zones interrupt, temporarily at least, the coloniality of practices that

makes the world one."[48] This book attempts to highlight the various practices by Afro-Colombian and Indigenous cultural producers that do just that, interrupt and displace coloniality. The centering of Afro-Colombian and Indigenous world-making and world-affirming practices after experiencing such "world-annihilating violence" remains.

I remember reading anthropologist Kathleen Stewart's writings on atmospheric attunements before the conceptualization of the grant project that informed this book. I conclude this introduction with that original prompt.

> Attending to atmospheric attunements means chronicling how incommensurate elements hang together in a scene that bodies labor to be in or to get through. In the expressivity of something coming into existence, bodies labor to literally fall into step with the pacing, the habits, the lines of attachment, the responsibilities shouldered, the sentience, the worlding.[49]

Bodies, specifically the living (Black) bodies of people in motion, remain at the center of this book. It attunes itself to the worlding of sentient beings and *sentipensante* bodies in Colombia: their labors of creativity, community, coexistence/*convivencia* while all the while demanding dignity and the right to exist in their self-created, complex *cotidiano*.

Some final caveats: Throughout the book, I use a variety of words and terms that lose some of their culturally specific and embodied meanings when translated literally into English: *vivir sabroso*, *destierro, ubuntu*, *muntu*, *el buen vivir*. I will present the word once with its definition and then I will use the word in its original form in Spanish, Akan, Swahili, or Gunadule. This allows for the original language's affective-epistemologic nuance to stand out; the intention is to privilege the cultures that live and embody the language and its culturally specific structures of feeling. It also attempts a pluriversal approach, with language mirroring my hope to construct and, more importantly, inhabit a pluriversality through corporealities—human and more than human—in movement.

1. *Vivir Sabroso*

An Afro-Colombian Movement Poetic

What are the processes that make Black life bearable, valuable, beautiful? What does it mean for Black life to be lived well? How does the valuation of Black life operate as a form of resistance and communal effort to combat death and displacement? For Afro-Colombians of the Chocó region near the Atrato River basin, the term *vivir sabroso*—to live well or to live joyously—extols a way of life that centers memory, family (beyond kin alive or dead), political activism, and defense of territory. In their experience of *vivir sabroso* they refer to themselves as "campesinos, gente de río y de monte"[1] farmers, people of the river and the woods (or marshes). An inextricable bond to the natural world shapes, if not defines, their identity. The rivers, streams, swamps, flora, and fauna that lusciously surround the Atrato River basin area create opportunities for subsistence farming, fishing, and mining. These are sustainable endeavors that capitalist, extractivist practices alongside the effects and aftereffects of the armed conflict continue to decimate. Many Afro-Colombians in this area descend from *libres*, former enslaved people who paid for their freedom and migrated around the Atrato to mine for gold, fish, and farm in environmentally sustainable ways.[2]

Movement and organizing around movement exist as crucial foundations of Afro-Colombian world-making. From the enslaved who ran from the mines and plantations in search of freedom to the daily movements of farmers tending to land, river, crops, and animals, the ability to engage in unrestricted movement helps define the ways of life in the Pacific regions of Colombia. The necessity for unfettered movement foments a particular poetic of life Afro-Colombians call *vivir sabroso*: to live well, deliciously, harmoniously (with one another, plants, animals, nature, and their ances-

tors). As Colombian anthropologist Natalia Quiceno Toro explains, "Vivir sabroso está asociado con la posibilidad de moverse" (*Vivir sabroso* is associated with the possibility of movement).[3] She elaborates: "La movilidad representa una de las características primordiales de las sociedades negras colombianas. Muchas de ellas han surgido de las dinámicas migratorias como resultado de cimarronaje. Otras, en cambio, como parte del proceso generado tras la abolición de la esclavitud" (Mobility represents one of the main characteristics of Colombian Black societies. Many of them have emerged from migratory dynamics as a result of marronage. Others, on the other hand, as part of the process generated after the abolition of slavery).[4]

As a dance and performance studies scholar, I take movement seriously—in this instance, as an extension beyond the ability of a body to be in motion, to the ways that people organize politically through movements that literally utilize movement. I ask the following questions to help ground my analysis here: How is the ability to move and mobilize integral to living well and joyously? Are there particular movements or daily gestures that materialize *vivir sabroso*? How is *vivir sabroso* a poetics for political mobility and communal resistance? What does a quotidian Afro-Colombian politics of *vivir sabroso* look like? Feel like? What are the everyday activities by Afro-Colombians along the river that inform such a poetic? And, last, how is the river a major protagonist in these poetics? This chapter will flow from ideas about the significance of rivers from Amerindian Indigenous and Black perspectives to the reconfiguration of nationhood beyond borders. Thereafter it will turn back to how *vivir sabroso*, as a poetics, a philosophy, and a political tool, combats the aftereffects of coloniality and state violences through an emphasis on what Jamaican philosopher Sylvia Wynter would call "radical practice[s] of black humanization."[5] The rivers of the Pacific region play a significant role as active more-than-human participants in the politics of *vivir sabroso*. Together, Afro-Colombians and their varied relationships with the rivers facilitate Black diasporic affects that create a poetics of Afro-Colombian living.

Vivir sabroso, as a philosophy and a politics, functions as a poetics for a Black sense of being in Colombia. It is yet another rich assertion—in its geographic and cultural specificity—of Black life within the hemispheric diaspora. Its territorial underpinnings require a thinking-feeling alongside rivers, swamps, jungles, ancestors, and the earth; a confluence of body-land-spirit moving together to make life livable and sustainable

at any given moment. The ways in which it attempts to approximate what it means to be Black—in a Black Pacific contact zone—bears elaboration. *Vivir sabroso* is one Black way of seeing and being in the world because there are so many Black ways to see and be. My contention with this flow of thought is to contribute to ongoing hemispheric discourses about how Afro-descended people in Latin America continue to bear the wounds of coloniality while fighting against extractivist logics through embodied knowledge production. *Vivir sabroso* offers an alternative to these logics through practices of relationality centered around family, ancestors, political activism, and emotional-intellectual regulation. But first, I must attend to the Atrato River, which "invites looking, dipping a toe, diving in, and pulling one's body through bright currents to the dim center of its whorls."[6]

The Atrato River

Fifteen tributary rivers and three hundred streams make up the Atrato, the largest river in Colombia. The Atrato flows for 750 kilometers (466 miles) from southern to northern Colombia, where it spills out into the Gulf of Urabá and then further out toward and into the Caribbean Sea. There, sweet and saltwaters bleed into one another in colors ranging from blue to green and brown. About two-thirds of the river is navigable. The highest rainfall levels in the northern hemisphere produce abundant biodiversity along the river. Capitalist extraction (e.g., mining, timber) contributes to the growing contamination and deforestation in the area. Continual disruption of movement along the river due to army, paramilitary, and guerrilla activities also affects the daily life of the predominantly Afro-Colombian and Indigenous populations that use the river, both its "surface flows and the flows underneath,"[7] as a means for everyday living.[8]

Rivers are major protagonists in the poetics of *vivir sabroso*, the Atrato River specifically. By focusing on the river, I am reimagining how we might conceive of the idea of nation beyond political borders, or the idea of a Colombian culture aligned with a daily natural order: river time. What if the borders were fluid and enacted this fluidity in tandem with more fluid ideas about time, connection, movement, and mobility? I turn to the writing of Abenaki scholar and writer Lisa Brooks, who offers a different kind of nationalism "not based on the theoretical and physical models of the nation-state; a nationalism that is not based on notions of nativism or binary oppositions between insider and outsider, self and other

[but instead] relies on multi-faceted lived experience"[9] "and is sustained by acts of gathering 'in particular places.'"[10] Already we read about the turn away from the logics of the state to a more capacious rendering of what it might mean to be river citizens, citizens of flora and fauna, agential beings alongside fish, amphibians, and land animals. Influenced by both Afro-Colombian and pan-Indigenous thought and spirituality concerning water, I seek to unsettle and disrupt an understanding of the violent borders of nation through the fluid unruliness of water and the undercurrents of a river. I am drawn to Cree-Cherokee scholar Craig Womack's description of nation as "an intermingling of politics, imagination, and spirituality."[11] Most certainly, Womack references North Amerindian conceptualizations of nation, and I wonder how these might facilitate a move by Colombia, as I argue in this book, to a more expansive rendering of nationhood that encompasses Black and Indigenous philosophies in peacebuilding and transitional justice measures. I shall return to these in a subsequent chapter. But rather than stop the flow of my writing with this new current of thought, I turn back to the original flow to follow the lead of queer trans feminist river scientist Cleo Wölfle Hazard, who writes about attuning to rivers' "unruly and hidden flows" and their "always improvisatory work of transfiguring."[12] By understanding the natural order of its improvisational work in order to elicit change, the river helps inform the flows of everyday life Afro-Colombians engage in, through movement, for the sake of *vivir sabroso*. Part of the poetics inherent in *vivir sabroso* involves moving on and with the river, to embark.

Pangas (skiffs), *champas*, or *hampás* facilitate movement on the Atrato.[13] They also function discursively as critical tools to cut through capitalist logics about nature's unpredictability and supposed domitable qualities. In an effort to look at the unruliness and hidden flows of the river and move it beyond its ostensible existence as a mere extractable resource, I turn to these canoes and their improvisational flows with and against the Atrato's currents. I watch the movements of the Afro and Emberá (or Gunadule) populations who ride these vessels daily as a manifestation of living well. For the Afro, Emberá, and Gunadule people of the Chocó region who navigate with and alongside the Atrato River, its tributaries, and other neighboring rivers, the flow of the water is predictably unpredictable. They understand its unruly movements while they inscribe their own alongside it. They engage in a relationality comprised of bones, muscles, thought, water, flows, and energy. Just like human inhalation and exhalation, the river evokes a rhythm of life through its ebbs, tides, flows,

and deltas, a "rhythmic materiality"[14] that branch out in spaces like our bodies' blood vessels and nervous systems. As Wölfle Hazard explains, "Rivers display the stochasticity and ungovernability that Native sciences have long recognized as the source of ecological diversity and abundance. Rivers inscribe the land with evidence of alternative histories and hint at latencies that their flows might awaken. Rivers also inspire their creatures with a sense of direction co-present with unruliness."[15] They help set up the mise-en-scène, thinking in performative terms, the space where the possibility of *vivir sabroso* springs forth and where play, production, and transit abound.

As a major more-than-human actor in the Colombian armed conflict, the Atrato River was declared a subject with rights by the Sentencia T-622 in 2016, the same year the Colombian peace accords were signed. This declaration of rights "recognizes the river as a living entity that sustains other forms of life and therefore is a subject of special protection and with a right to conservation, maintenance, and restoration. In this sense, repairing the damages of the river means to equally guarantee the rights of the communities that inhabit its basin."[16] This declaration asserts the significance of water in Afro and Indigenous worldviews. Within the larger framework of Afro-diasporic spirituality, water is "a palimpsestic, powerful, nonhuman actor that facilitates the circulation of geographically unbounded Latinx and Caribbean realities,"[17] writes literary and Latinx studies scholar Rebeca L. Hey-Colón. "It erodes chronological, epistemological, and geopolitical borders to (re)connect us to pasts, presents, and not-yet-imagined futures."[18] For the Emberá people, who inhabited the Atrato basin area before enslaved Africans were brought to mine the lands colonized by Spanish settlers searching for gold, the Atrato is their ancestral river that carries the histories of their forefathers and foremothers who fought to defend their territories against colonial onslaught. Their legacy remains in the maps of Colombia, where names of rivers and towns that end with *-dó*, which means "river" in Emberá, abound. Living alongside the multiple rivers in Chocó, the Emberá sensibility of a riverine cosmos[19] alongside the Afro-Colombian need for movement helps us to understand the nefarious effects of the armed conflict, particularly its power in stopping the flow of both the rivers and the people's movements with and alongside it. The maintenance of the health of the river becomes a political imperative for those that share in its gifts.

Human and nonhuman actors make the Atrato River basin a vibrant place full of sensibilities that help mitigate the violences of the armed con-

flict and its aftereffects. Relationality between human, other-than-human actors, *and* the river(s) in Colombia sets up moments for practices and modes of generating what geographer Philip Oslender calls an "aquatic space."[20] In Oslender's detailed and vibrant ethnography of the rivers, streams, and swamps that surround Guapi (a small town along the Guapi River in the Cauca department, south of Chocó), the aquatic space emerges as a localized epistemology that affects the politics and politicization of these *ribereño* communities. Colombian anthropologist Daniel Ruiz-Serna expands on these ethnographies of place and aquatic universes by focusing on "the instances of coproduction between rivers and people and how war affects, in accretive and incremental ways, the practices through which people's and rivers' lives are mutually nurtured."[21] In these spaces of situated knowledges, people and environments are co-constitutive.

Rivers function as sites for ceremonies, parties, song, dance, and other artistic expressions that arise from Afro and Indigenous knowledges.[22] They also center quotidian practices of bathing, washing laundry, playing, swimming, and both polluting and cleaning the river. These celebrations allow for social and sometimes even environmental reparations. Ruiz-Serna addresses the role that working together to clear out *palizadas* (tree debris, which blocks flow and movement) plays to maintain both the social and the environmental health of the region. "Rivers are produced and enacted: they are brought into particular mode of being through a specific set of practices,"[23] writes Ruiz-Serna. As such, rivers facilitate quotidian, embodied activities based on "flow, movement, connection, social and riparian networks."[24] They set up, or activate, the social space that offers many opportunities for movement: up and down the river, across the river, floating and swimming in the river. The armed conflict blocked the ability to freely move in and through the river. This in turn affected the sociality of Afro-Colombians and Indigenous communities, whose ability to visit family and friends, attend *fiestas patronales* and sporting events, look for healers, fish, play, or run simple errands was curtailed by the armed presence in their territories.

The affective ties between human forms of sociality, partnered with the river as contingent of this sociality, forge spaces where, per dance and performance scholar Catherine M. Cole, "unresolved histories [of state-perpetrated violences] exert their own performative force."[25] Performance analysis, according to Cole, must "reckon with [the] excess" of "a lack of restitution, acknowledgment, reparations, redress, and atonement in the wake of massive state-perpetrated atrocity [that] produces a toxic surfeit

that has a potent performative force."[26] While she examines contemporary dance and live art in postapartheid South Africa to develop her argument, I am interested in how the everyday spaces of gathering in the rural Colombian Pacific—whether floating on a panga on the Atrato, swimming on its shores, or dancing by the Quibdó cathedral, which looks out over the Atrato—move these communities toward something akin to peace or at least a consistently supportive environment to express and embody the poetics of *vivir sabroso*. The quotidian poetic of *vivir sabroso* is that potent performative force which has the potential to inform different, more inclusive forms of politics and peacebuilding for Colombia. It functions as an analytical model in service of what Cole advocates. She calls for new analytical models in theater and performance studies that "are strong enough to grapple with the cultural encounters that occur in the context of the afterlives of massive injustices such as apartheid, slavery and genocide."[27] She suggests rubrics that focus on surface and depth rather than on a linear, teleological model of time. The tenets of *vivir sabroso* are such rubrics. The reliance on the river to live harmoniously with it and with others is the outcome.

I offer the river as an example of a physical and theoretical container that models relationships between surfaces and depths, life and death. Its reconfiguration of time and flow and its ability to lull and offer a space for both lament and laughter models the complexity necessary to be "*dwelling in* the palimpsest that constitutes the contradictions of the present, a resistance to impulses to simply *move on* from colonialism [or armed conflict]."[28] I want to replace the word "dwelling" with "floating," a more apt riverain activity. To be buoyed by the river, supported by its flows, depths, yet still aware of how death flows beneath and alongside it, acknowledges the entanglements of Afro and Indigenous lives in the Atrato River basin. These entanglements, like the *trasmallos*, or gill nets, handcrafted by local fishing households, weave the daily realities of living in a rich ecosystem marred by armed conflict, violence, fatal accidents, or natural disasters. The entwinement of life and death marks the reality of living along the Atrato River, and death only makes the processes associated with *vivir sabroso* more significant.

Embarking on the river stands out as the mode that begins these processes. As Ruiz-Serna summarizes so poetically:

> When embarking [on the river], people are not just traveling around their territories; they are bringing them into existence, cul-

> tivating a mode of being in which mobility, flow, and connection are indispensable to the creation of strong social, economic, symbolic, and riparian networks. . . . There is so much life happening in the river—bathing, working, playing, resting—that even if people do not travel, a river does not cease its embodiment of movement: flowing, changing its current and form, flooding over lands, carrying things.[29]

I turn back to Wölfle Hazard's writings about the underflows of the river to consider how *vivir sabroso* is contingent on river epistemologies, their "rhythmic materiality" and sentience. Wölfle Hazard explains that attention to underflows, as a method, "is not a unitary discipline or a strategy. Rather, it is a practice, an orientation, and an invitation to attend to hidden flows and their movements, excesses, and relations. The underflows method is of and for movements that protect and strengthen well-being in the face of settler state violence, which attempts to erase ways of living otherwise."[30] They further elaborate that "an underflows approach understands these sites [industrialized rivers and their human/nature binaries] to always be embodied, political, personal, and relational."[31] *Vivir sabroso* thus emerges as a type of underflows philosophy, one that attends to bodies, territories, rivers, animals, and the dead and calls for the care and preservation of life. The daily interactions with rivers reminds Afro-Colombians about how to live in harmony with different species and nature in the maintenance and preservation of sustainable habitats. This harmonious understanding of relationality also incorporates reconciliation with humans and nonhuman actors, cultural memory or emplaced memory, and collective modes of healing from the aftereffects of the armed conflict. The goal of *vivir sabroso* can best be described as a production of vitality in everyday life that provides examples for political activism and resistance among its practitioners. How, then, do these Afro-Colombian communities sustain such a political quotidian vitality?

Vivir Sabroso and Black Diasporic Affects

Consider what *vivir sabroso* entails per the work of Colombian anthropologist Natalia Quiceno Toro, who spent many years living and studying among the Afro-Colombians in the Atrato River region of Chocó. *Vivir sabroso* requires these five things:

- Make family (beyond kin), town, and/or community.
- Form a family across struggle, organizations, and social movement[s].
- Balance temperatures, *afinar botellas*, cure, protect, fortify bodies and personhood.
- Manage the strength of the dead and the saints.
- Resist and defend life from the armed forces.

Vivir sabroso incorporates processes among the living, the present moment, and the dead; between community protection and building; between social support and defense of territory, family, and dignity. *Vivir sabroso* exists as a practice of pluralistic politics that does not eschew difficulty or conflict. It does not attempt to reconcile the conflicting forces acting upon Afro-Colombians as they strive daily to *vivir sabroso*. It does not assume pat conviviality or tension-free interpersonal or interspecies relationships. Instead, it welcomes difference across struggle, and requires a constant doing and making of kinship, social care, and political consciousness. It exists as a dialogic relational practice that bears many similarities to how bodies interact on the dance floor, watching, sharing, thinking, activating, acting, reacting, and moving in the present. As Quiceno Toro elaborates,

> El vivir sabroso de los afro atrateños no se traduce en una manera de vivir preexistente. Se trata, por el contrario, *de un modo que necesita ser creado en la activación de fuerzas y relaciones* . . . no hay un trazo ni un momento fundacional ni una huella que definan la cultura. Y en ese sentido, es en los modos de relacionarse donde se crea la diferencia.
>
> The *vivir sabroso* of the Afro-Atrato people does not translate into a preexisting way of living. On the contrary, *it is a way that needs to be created in the activation of forces and relations*. . . . [my emphasis] There is no trace or foundational moment or footprint that defines the culture. And in that sense, it is in the ways of being in relation/relationality where difference is created.[32]

Relationality emerges as a significant concept in the practice of *vivir sabroso*. Living is always already in relation, a substantial mode of articulating existence in the world by and about Afro and Indigenous ways of making sense beyond the epistemological and material violences of global, racialized capitalism. Martinican philosopher Édouard Glissant's

beautiful propositions about relationality seem apt here to help enrich the poetics of *vivir sabroso*. Glissant uses the idea of a poem as a metaphor for what is waiting to emerge beyond the constraints of coloniality, something like "a relation between people, places, animate and inanimate objects, visible and invisible forces, the air, the water, the fire, the vegetation, animals and humans."[33] *Vivir sabroso* already activates the forces of difference and plurality, of human and other-than-human into a force field of existential protection and guidance. It is the doing, in the integration of the body, will, and spirit, always in relation to one another, that moves corporealities to care and be cared for.[34] This is the livingness that *vivir sabroso* manifests.

The relationality developed through the community practices of *vivir sabroso* facilitate the capacity for Black political demands in Colombia. It was through the already extant modes of prioritizing and valuing their relationships to ancestors, land, and one another that Afro-Colombians were able to mobilize toward political exigencies aimed at the state. Blackness as a political category in Colombia did not enter legal discourse until the 1980s, and it was only in 1993 with Ley 70 that Black Colombians were even recognized as an identitarian category in the new constitution.[35] Despite juridical discourse's incapacity to recognize their lived presence, Afro-Colombians (one could argue since colonialism and their systems of *cimarronaje*) established an affective undercommons. These traditions of caring for one another through their daily practices of living influence how they make demands for access to education, clean water, or the titling of collective lands.

Vivir sabroso sits within a greater hemispheric and Black diasporic undercommons where "the colonial world and the slave world were just that: populated by those who simultaneously had to care for and improve that world while being nothing in it."[36] Everyday practices to build a world that could be endured and enduring despite the atrocities of colonialism influence this philosophy of *vivir sabroso* with its focus on the present. *Vivir sabroso* espouses presence, the ordinary, and aliveness. It privileges the mundane as a powerful ontological weapon that counters the material and lasting effects of colonialism, capitalism, and civil war. By focusing on the now and the ordinary to make sense of "interhuman and interecological and intercelestial worlds,"[37] and then utilize these understandings for crucial political purposes, we can see how Black (and Indigenous) ways of knowing have already mapped out strategies for living better in the world, especially as we continue to barrel toward imminent collapse

of our psyches, climates, and social worlds. These choreographies of existence and re-existence have multiple variations across Black worlds, where blackness is more than just an identity marker based on skin, but also a set of practices and relations that resist ontological closure.

Time, beingness, and the quotidian conceptually ground and align *vivir sabroso* to other notable Black diasporic affects. As a poetics of Black aliveness, *vivir sabroso* partners productively with literary scholar Kevin Quashie's ideas of Black livingness. In attending to Black social life, Quashie shares that he is "interested in conceptualizing an aesthetic imaginary founded on black worldness."[38] He goes on to explain that he is "trying to articulate the aesthetics of aliveness . . . the freeness of a black world where blackness can be of being, where there is no argument to be made, where there is no speaking to or against an audience because we are all the audience there is."[39] Ultimately, Quashie searches for a capacious and fruitful conceptualization of "aliveness, a quality of being, a term of habitat, a manner and aesthetic, a feeling—or many of them, circuits in an atmosphere. Like breath."[40] While Quashie beautifully renders Black aliveness through his analyses of texts, namely poetry, essays, and the philosophical-grammatical function of pronouns and verbs, *vivir sabroso* and the Afro-Colombians practice of it corporealize one of the ways that Black aliveness manifests in the heterogeneous diaspora.

Vivir sabroso is already a practice of Black aliveness, a world-making practice that is a lived experience, an epistemology based on territory, tradition, and notions of river time. *Vivir sabroso* relies on visceral, quotidian human bodies and bodies of water, the river Atrato and its many tributaries, to reconstitute worlds and relations violently pulled apart because of the history of violence in the area. Quiceno Toro and anthropologist Pilar Riaño-Alcalá write about life in and around the Atrato and its interrelatedness with the philosophy of *vivir sabroso*; it is an everyday politics of inhabiting. It recreates

> modos de habitar en entornos destruidos para que la vida florezca poco a poco, en la creatividad cotidiana y en la negociación de motivaciones, tensiones y deseos que acompañan las intervenciones institucionales en los territorios y su defensa. *Centrarse en lo cotidiano es resaltar la relevancia de estas tensiones*, así como los espacios en los que se revivifican lo interpersonal, lo social y la relación entre multiespecies a través de diversas prácticas cotidianas y de memoria.

> ways of inhabiting destroyed environments so that life can flourish little by little, in everyday creativity and in the negotiation of motivations, tensions, and desires that accompany institutional interventions in the territories and their defense. *Focusing on the everyday highlights the relevance of these tensions* [my emphasis], as well as the spaces in which the interpersonal, the social, and the multispecies relationship are revived through various daily practices and memory.[41]

Vivir sabroso is inextricably tied to the Atrato River, and, as I have been detailing so far, it is a practice that requires daily physical, mental, and spiritual commitment; a praxis for being, living, surviving, and attempting to thrive at the same time. As Afro-Colombian anthropologist Rogerio Velásquez explains, the concept of life in the Atrato region is "moviemiento, acción, oportunidad de hacer" (movement, action, and opportunity to do),[42] movement, of corporealities up and down the river, across towns and territories that belong to Afro-Colombians, Emberá, or Gunadule people. To live. This philosophy of life, *vivir sabroso*, offers an elixir that all aim to drink and thereby thrive beyond the collective traumas instituted by the state. An important caveat to consider is that it does not necessarily erase or remove tension. Rather, it demonstrates a way to relate and move beyond tension, or to work with tension productively toward greater goals of civic engagement and political efficacy. At the time of this writing, *vivir sabroso* occupies a place in Colombia's executive branch insofar as its current vice president, Francia Márquez, has engaged with this philosophy in her activist and political roles. While it can challenge hegemonic voices through Afro-Colombian community organization and civic demands, its role in policymaking and shaping via Márquez remains to be seen.

As a poetic, a philosophy, and a Black method, *vivir sabroso* is an example of the emergent alternatives necessary to continue to live life in an "extractive zone," a term performance scholar Macarena Gomez-Barris might use to describe the situation. It becomes a way of "life that cannot be easily reduced, divided, or representationally conquered or evacuated."[43] *Vivir sabroso* does not immediately emerge from the desire to live. Nuance is key here, for nuance adds the complexity that makes *vivir sabroso* so precious yet real . . . corpo-real.[44] It emphasizes process over a final result. Rather, as Quiceno Toro elaborates,

> La idea de vivir sabroso es potente en muchos sentidos. No es una meta ni una finalidad, *sino un proceso, un hacer, un existir día a día*. Vivir sabroso es algo que se realiza, pero que se agota, y por tanto, no deja de buscarse. En este proceso están implicados varios agentes: los santos, los muertos, las plantas, los parientes, el monte y el río.
>
> The idea of *vivir sabroso* is powerful in many ways. *It is not a goal or an end, but a process, a doing, a daily existence* [my emphasis]. *Vivir sabroso* is something that is realized yet exhausted, and, therefore, it does not cease to be sought. Several agents are involved in this process: the saints, the dead, plants, relatives, the countryside, and the river.[45]

To live harmoniously among plants, mountains, and rivers reminds me of how cultural geographer Katherine McKittrick describes Black method as something beyond a presumed self and instead a way of enacting a relational identity based on collectivity, creativity, wonder, and care. She explains, "Thinking beyond identity-self moves us toward other, more interesting questions, which attend to how freedom is imagined and enacted through our extra-human worlds. For me this is also about what songs, environment, ecology, water, poems, and theoretical leaps tell us about exploding coloniality and race thinking."[46] Notice we are back to the mention of the poem, an opportune moment now to evoke the poetic waterway space of the Atrato in Colombia.

Vivir Sabroso: A Black Pacific Poetic

Long, thin boats traverse the Atrato River daily. These pangas spill forth with bananas, fish, nets, and, of course, passengers with bright umbrellas on busy days. The sun, when it appears, radiates light and unforgivable heat. Even on cloudy days the thick, tropical humidity accosts your body as it longs for a quick caress of wind to alleviate the sticky, uncomfortable heat. From inside the narrow panga, you feel enclosed yet protected by the natural landscape. It darts alongside the lush green leaves, palm fronds, and extended branches that contrast with the brown of the river. The magisterial landscape envelops you no matter if you cross it via bus, automobile, or boat. Roads are scarce

Image 1.1: Aerial view of Quibdó and Atrato River, November 2018. Photo by the author.

(and not worth investing in in that part of Colombia, per the economic logic of the state), so your experience of the flora and fauna usually comes from the perspective of the river.[47] It is easier to move from town to town along the Atrato River than by land. Despite the practical difficulties of moving around the Chocó region, the ability to move exists as an inalienable right for these communities. This explains why a local woman from the town of Bellavista commented to Quiceno Toro that the armed forces are "those who close up the river." With a blocked river it becomes difficult to move and to practice *vivir sabroso*.

To consider *vivir sabroso* as a poetic for living, without the river as a

Image 1.2: View across the Quibdó with the Atrato River, November 2018. Photo by the author.

cocreator of the embodied experience, and without access to movement across the land, the experience of living (the structured and unstructured processes of life) cannot function as necessary. Life literally becomes unlivable without the river. The flow of life cannot be accomplished without this major contributor to its quotidian poetic. Quiceno Toro irrefutably claims that "el movimiento aparece como un mediador clave en la posibilidad de establecer el balance requerido por la vida" (movement appears as a key mediator in the possibility of establishing the balance required for life),[48] and this fundamental idea leads me to consider a relationship between improvisation, *cimarronaje*, land, body, body-lands, and spirit. Together they constitute the movement[s] necessary for *vivir sabroso*.

Per Quiceno Toro, the key component of *vivir sabroso* is the possibility to

> embarcarse de poner en movimiento, activar y equilibrar la vida de manera autónoma, sin la militarización de los territorios, sin miedo y sin la imposición de formas de vida que lleven a estar enmontado.

> embark, to set in motion, activate, and balance life in an autonomous way, without the militarization of the territories, without fear, and without the imposition of ways of life that lead to being enclosed.[49]

This necessity for movement stems from the history of enslavement in the Pacific region. Mining for gold, emeralds, platinum, and silver allowed some enslaved to eventually buy their freedom, while others escaped and established practices of *cimarronaje* (marronage) in *palenques* (maroon communities).[50] This relationship between maroons and land, body-land, sets up a significant context for *vivir sabroso*.

Cimarronaje functions as the progenitor of Dominican American poet, novelist, and Black feminist scholar Ana-Maurine Lara's concept of body-land. She writes, "Body-lands 'bring into focus a gathering of social realities' that are incommensurate with Occidental conceptualizations of the subject as body, sovereign and boundaried, and corporeal agency as an expression of that sovereign subject—the body."[51] She further explains that "body-lands are not separate from nature; we are co-constituted bodies and, subsequently, beings."[52] Body-land seems a creative extension of critical dance studies' configuration of the term "corporeality," that is, the social and material forces that make a body real. In this geographically specific yet Black diasporic instance, it is these Black Pacific bodies whose subjectivities extend beyond viscera and skin to soil, rocks, and mud. I offer another significant citation from Lara's resplendent thinking that ties multiple Black diasporic thinkers to this concept of *cimarronaje*, as both a philosophy and a way of life. By doing so, I want to present what I am calling the main improvisational score for *vivir sabroso*: a way of life contingent on the present, movement, relationality with people, plants, water, and spirits/ancestors. *Vivir sabroso* is not just an improvisation for good living, it is *the* structured improvisation of thinking-feeling body-lands to materialize and dignify their everyday existence despite the onslaught of coloniality and its aftereffects. Put simply, it is Black people going about their business, avoiding "the brain rhythms [the psychological effects of colonialism] that very quickly obliterate [them] and wreck [them]."[53] And, I would argue, it is inextricably contingent on this broad definition and understanding of *cimarronaje*. Lara's Black feminist citational strategy blooms in this capacious explanation. Let it seep into your own thinking-feeling presence as it did to me when I first read it. She writes,

> *Cimarronaje* includes the construction of "communities with self-organized economic, political, social, and cultural structures. Some maroons stage armed struggles against white colonial authorities [including] sabotage or [the depletion of] their master's workforce(s) through unauthorized temporary absences . . . stole for the runways . . . murdered their masters." *Cimarronaje also includes walking and the unwillingness to be restrained*. It exists in relationship to what some would call fugitivity. Fugitivity can also encompass escape and the geographies of escape; it also indexes refusal, like the refusal of liberal subjectivity and colonial logics. Fugitivity can "end with love, exchange, fellowship . . . [ending] as it begins, in motion, in between various odes of being and belonging, and on the way to new economies of giving, taking, being with and for." Fugitivity "include[s] cross-gendered modes of escape," passing, "the conjoined matters of imagination and theft" and the making/breaking of linear narratives and temporalities. *Cimarronaje* includes, but is not just, fugitivity.[54]

Cimarronaje cannot exist without the possibility and possession of movement. The political struggle for Black freedom requires movement: moving to escape enslavement, moving to a new place to start a different life, moving to cultivate and tend to the land, moving to hide from potential danger or captivity, moving to be in community and establish social support networks across kin and territories. The arrival of the armed conflict in the Pacific region exacerbated conditions. Communities no longer felt safe, which meant they had to remain still, hide, or foreclose their movement trajectories. Their ability to move was restricted, or they were forced to move and become displaced.[55] Yet dismissing them as victims without looking to the emergent strategies, autonomy, and tactics they use to survive, thrive, and materialize *vivir sabroso* pays these communities a disservice and, most importantly, removes any mode of sovereignty they may experience. Quiceno Toro explains that victimhood in the context of Afro-Atrateños is not about universalized ideas of trauma, emotions, and bodily injury but instead about the "changes in the relationships between territory and life, where bodies, plants, the dead, and family members (*parientes*) are all involved." The damage and afterlives of war "should be understood from the relationships that are broken and reconfigured and not necessarily from the language of the individual and the collective."[56] If

vivir sabroso functions as a tactic for survival, and movement is crucial for its existence, then an engagement with how Afro-Colombians organize and structure movement around their everyday routines becomes crucial: Black livingness "*as* the rebellious impulse."[57]

Vivir Sabroso as Quotidian Practice

How might one express or document what movements for *vivir sabroso* look like? How do Afro-Colombians build broad camaraderie during daily activities that involve movement across territory and rivers and to/from another? What would it mean to bring together a collection of words, movements, and feelings shared with our research group during the field trips to Guapi, Unguia, Bojayá, and Buenaventura? In this section, I place them in relation to one another—human and other than human—based around what they say, what they talk about, what they do and feel. In a way, I am following Cherokee scholar Joseph M. Pierce's idea that "a relation is also a story, an act of narration."[58] Although I am exercising a curatorial or perhaps even authorial organization here out of necessity and efficacy to put their words, feelings, and actions onto this written page, they are the rightful architects of this story about *vivir sabroso* based on their daily practices.

I am drawn to the form of a structured improvisation (from dance studies and choreographic practice) where the dance piece emerges from embodied choice-making in the present. Each time a dancer performs the structured improvisation it comes out a little differently, but an overarching structure frames it through compositional choices such as repetition, variation, or organization around the space. Shifting the context to *vivir sabroso* (as a type of "structured improvisation"), this Black practice of livingness relies on the everyday gestures, movement vocabularies of activities related to living and working in the Pacific, the rhythmic inheritances of the music and dances, and the tempo of nature. These elements affect how Afro-Colombians move and keep time in their present to share co-constitutive presence(s). This is part of the objective of *vivir sabroso*: improvising toward togetherness, improvisation as an embodied tactic of dance-making and, by extension, sociality—Black sociality in this instance. The political potential of Afro-Colombians in movement, whether improvising their daily physical routines or practicing them with intentionality, evokes the methods espoused by critical dance stud-

ies, namely to analyze, discuss, and imagine "how bodies in motion offer alternative meanings and ways of being."[59] Yet Black life exceeds any type of disciplinary formation that tries to describe, categorize or impose specific taxonomical registers for meaning. While I am not convinced that critical dance studies should or can be the only disciplinary framework at this moment to unpack what Afro-Colombian life does when it manifests its practices of *vivir sabroso*, I do want to engage with the ways in which the form and structures of improvisation (as a Black creative practice-praxis) function within the embodied poetics of *vivir sabroso*.[60]

Dance scholar Maura Keefe asserts that "improvisation happens everywhere. Applying concepts about improvisation that have been theorized about dance can be expanded to examine other physical practices to broaden our definitions of both dance and improvisation."[61] In her case, she examines how baseball functions as a type of improvisation. In the case of Afro-Colombians striving to engage fully with the tenets of *vivir sabroso*, I look to their social practices of community where their gestures, enactments, and movements make *vivir sabroso* a lived possibility through a reliance on repetition, repositions, recall, and (re)activations. Katharine McKittrick suggests adamantly that "improvisation demands practice and structure—it is not a natural process, it is practiced creative labor that is physiologically enacted."[62] The significance of improvisation for Black life is further elaborated by Thomas F. DeFrantz. He writes that "improvisation . . . as a foundational ideology of black social dance practice . . . demonstrates an unimpeachable centrality of the physical practice of improvisation: 'creating while doing,' or consistently asking questions while moving."[63] For DeFrantz, improvisation "becomes foundational to the emergence of a social black self in communion with others."[64] It is *in* the community-building (despite or beyond difference) and communion *with* others that improvisation offers possibilities for freedom. And, most important, the goal of that freedom, in the Afro-Colombian context, is the ability to freely espouse the core principles of *vivir sabroso*.

Freedom is not without its limits, especially in resistance to war and armed conflict. Dance scholar Danielle Goldman pairs improvisation and freedom to complicate the understanding of both. Goldman insists that "improvisation does not reflect or exemplify the understanding of freedom as a desired endpoint devoid of constraint."[65] She problematizes what she calls "freedom-as-achievement" and turns to the work of Black studies scholar Fred Moten, who analyzes "choreography in confinement" through a discussion of Harriet Jacobs.[66] This "tight space" of her confine-

ment becomes a theoretical term that scholars of Black studies have since used to think about conceptions of freedom and modes of Black cultural expression despite different forms of "confinement." Confinement and tight spaces function as metonyms for the social, political, and historical forces of systemic oppression that improvising bodies move and mobilize against. In the Black Pacific of Colombia, as we have seen, the idea of *vivir sabroso* offers these communities the improvisational potential to move beyond the strictures of the state and aftereffects of the armed conflict. By focusing on what they do and how they share and exchange embodied knowledges and improvised choreographies of their everyday, I offer a duet between ideology and corporeality instantiating Goldman's claim that "greater attention to 'tight places' is in no way to deny improvisation's political potential. If anything, it is the sped up, imaginative, expressive negotiation with *constraint* that defines improvisation."[67]

Let me remind us of the core principles of *vivir sabroso*: Make family beyond kin, town, and/or community; form a family across struggle organizations and social movements; balance temperatures, *afinar botellas*, cure, protect, fortify bodies and personhood; manage the strength of the dead and the saints; resist and defend life from the armed forces. Within these core principles of *vivir sabroso*, I immediately notice different directives (in italics):

family *beyond* kin
family *across* struggle
balance
manage strength
resist and defend

How do these directives open imaginative corporeal possibilities? What lies beyond? Or across? What does it mean to consider family beyond kin? By knowing what you *cannot* do (e.g., define family by bloodline alone), you become attuned to the potential of what you *can* do and how you can move with, against, away, toward, or beyond. Examining the grammatical function of these words in italics—beyond, across, balance, manage strength, and resist—also contributes to a flow, a flow of action, directionality, and intentionality in action.[68] Balance and the ability to manage strength, in the corporeal sense, require steadfastness, stability, and flexibility—a centeredness and readiness to respond, stay, or even recharge. "Beyond" and "across" can function as either adverbs or prepositions.

An adverb modifies other words: verbs, adjectives, or adverbs. It explains how, when, where, and to what extent an action has occurred. A preposition is a word or group of words that indicates the relationship between a noun, pronoun, noun phrase, or another word or phrase in a sentence. Prepositions show direction, time, place, location, or spatial relationships or introduce a subject.[69] The ability to modify action or descriptions offers capacious opportunities for improvisation or making do in the present. Similarly, prepositions as indicators of relationship between people, places, or things highlight the significance of relationality among these very same people (expansive kinship communities), places (the neighboring villages, towns, or *resguardos*/reservations), and things (such as a particular river or the canoe). The ways to relate across time, place, location, and space or with other objects are as individual or collective as those enacting these verbs, adverbs, and prepositions. In other words, these movement poetics already exist inherently within the quotidian sociality of Afro-Colombian communities. These tactics provide a compassionate compendium for living harmoniously, in deep relation and care with one another, the earth and its flora, fauna, and waterscapes. While it is *not* a magical recipe that alleviates problems for them, these movement poetics offer an alternative to the toxic world of capitalist extraction and individualism that prioritizes the self instead of the collective, white supremacy instead of plurality, and consumption over eco-subsistence.

Vivir Sabroso: An Improvisation Score Through Corpografías

What follows is a performative writing exercise comprising quotations, photographs, and information shared with the research team of Corpografías. All the cited material can be found in the web archive Corpografías (http://www.corpografias.com), which was the impetus for this entire book project. In this writing I move between the ethnographic experience and the digital archive's materials, filled with activities, flows, images, gestures, movements, words, and thoughts of the people who shared their everyday with us. This improvisational score based on the core principles of *vivir sabroso* does not intend to function as an immediate or complete response to war or the armed conflict in Colombia. Instead, I present it here as a form of doing that continues to inform and support a "black social self,"[70] a politically attuned "concept in motion,"[71] an informed Afro-Colombian self who, in living deliciously and knowing, sensing, feeling

what that means and feels like for them, can make decisions informed by and with their community to continue to safeguard their way of life as the alternative to state-sanctioned violence. It does not erase the reminders of death they experience or have experienced. Instead, *vivir sabroso* functions as yet another Black hemispheric example of strategies for living that Black people practice daily.

We begin:

(Directions to consider: *beyond*, *across*, *balance*, *manage strength*, *resist*)
Stand still and breathe.
Acknowledge the other in front of you, near you, next to you.
Activation of force and relations. *How does that feel on your body? Do you need another to activate this? Is the other human or nonhuman? How does that change this activation?*
Create difference.

beyond, *across*, *balance*, *manage strength*, *resist*.

Focus on the everyday, every breath, the now. Be present. Breathe again.
A process. A doing. A daily existence.
Embark!
Sing while thinking of your grandmother (or close kin blood or not related).[72] *What song do you hear? What song do you sing?*
Sing while imagining your grandfather.
Make a bridge with your body and mind to connect to the past to push toward the future.

Si yo entono una juga, que cantaba mi abuela, yo entono pensando en ella, si yo entono un bunde que cantaba mi abuelo, lo entono pensando en mi abuelo, lo hago presente, lo resucito. Entonces esto es algo más allá . . . es un puente que nos une con el pasado, nos conecta con el presente y que nos empuja al future, en un future en el que ya no vamos a estar, en que no nos van a ver más, pero que otros van a cantar nuestras canciones y se van a acordar de nosotros. (Elver)

Image 1.3: Elver speaking about the significance of the marimba, March 2020. Screenshot from a recorded interview by the Corpografías research team.

If I sing a *juga* that my grandmother sang, I sing it thinking of her, if I sing a *bunde* that my grandfather sang, I sing it thinking of my grandfather, I make him present, I bring him back to life. So, this is something beyond . . . it is a bridge that connects us with the past, connects us with the present and pushes us to the future, in a future in which we will no longer be, in which we will no longer be seen, but others will sing our songs and will remember us.

Listen.

beyond, *across*, *balance*, *manage strength*, *resist*.

Follow the rhythms.
Dance to the rhythms of the rain on the tin roofs.
Follow the rhythms of the rain.
Let go of your hands. Loosen them.
You learn by sound and imitation.[73]

Se enseña con los oídos y los ojos, "oyendo," "siguiendo el ritmo," "soltando las manos" insiste Pacho Torres, para poder tocar. A punta de sonidos e imitación se aprende. Siguiendo el ritmo, oyendo, repitiendo.

Image 1.4: Two children play and practice the Afro-Colombian *cununo*, a drum specific to the Colombian Pacific coast, Weaving Knowledge School, March 2020. Photo by Artistic and Corporeal Practices Research, accessed through Corpografías.

> Uno observa unos gestos, unas formas, que ellas [las entonadoras] hacen unas expresiones tanto en la boca, faciales, como en la forma de tocar los guasas, que es lo que les da digamos la contextualización para hacer bajón, chureo, entonación. (Boris)

> It is taught with the ears and the eyes, "hearing," "following the rhythm," "letting go of the hands," insists Pacho Torres, to be able to play. You learn by sounds and imitation. Following the rhythm, listening, repeating.

> One observes some gestures, some forms, that they [the singers] make some expressions with their mouths, facial expressions, as well as in the way they play the *guasa*, which is what gives them the contextualization to play *bajón*, *chureo*, intonation.

Image 1.5: A fishing boat in Guapi, March 2020. Photo by the Corpografías research team.

Make some expressions with your mouth.
Make some more facial expressions. *What does that feel like? Dance that feeling.*

beyond, *across*, *balance*, *manage strength*, *resist*.

Weave.
Weave with your hands. Work with your hands.
Weave with your limbs . . . work your entire body.
Weaving gestures. Weave nets, weave straw, weave connections between yourselves. . . . What can you prepare together?[74]

Hay una forma específica y muy particular en el Pacífico de preparar los alimentos y llevarlos a la mesa; de tejer las atarrayas o de construir las casas de madera.

Image 1.6: Two Afro-Colombian boys weave a net together, March 2020. Photo by the Corpografías research team.

> There is a specific and very particular way in the Pacific of preparing food and bringing it to the table; of weaving the casting nets or building the wooden houses.
>
> Cast a net out onto the river. Reach up, swing your torso, and release your arm and shoulder.[75]
> Think of the sound of wood against water. Move to that . . . then consider a duet between ancestral wisdom and the wood; the moon; with the coming and going of the tide.[76]
>
> Las tablas como elemento escenográfico surgen de un proceso de observación, vivencia y experiencia, en el barrio Lleras en Buenaventura, en las zonas que están de cara al mar, tierras que fueron ganadas al mar y que hacen parte de la actividad económica, social y cultural de las comunidades, no solo de esta ciudad sino de todo el Pacífico colombiano. Son esas casas palafíticas, una reunión de la sabiduría ancestral con la madera, con la luna, con la ida y la vuelta de la marea.

Image 1.7: *Fisherman* by Leo Matiz, Magdalena, Colombia, 1939. Copyright by Leo Matiz Foundation.

> The wooden slats as a scenographic element arise from a process of observation, living, and experience in the Lleras neighborhood in Buenaventura, in the areas that face the sea, lands that were won from the sea and that are part of the economic, social, and cultural activity of the communities, not only of this city but of the entire Colombian Pacific. They are those palafitic [over water] houses, a meeting of ancestral wisdom with the wood, with the moon, with the coming and going of the tide.
>
> Walk with feet that know more about the touch of water than the support of land.[77]
>
> Las personas que habitan estas casas dicen que sus pies, la mayoría del tiempo, han tenido más contacto con el agua que con la tierra. El concepto de territorio engloba esta modalidad de habitar la

Image 1.8: Rehearsal of the play *Tocando la Marea* (*Touching the Tide*), Buenaventura, Valle del Cauca, August 2020. Photo by Fundescodes Archive, accessed through Corpografías.

> vida y es por eso que la madera, los tablones, hacen una síntesis de ese concepto ampliado de territorio: las casas del Pacífico.

> The people who inhabit these houses say that their feet, most of the time, have had more contact with the water than with the land. The concept of territory encompasses this way of inhabiting life and that is why the wood, the planks, make a synthesis of this expanded concept of territory: the houses of the Pacific.

Image 1.9: Guapireña houses, or *casas de madera*, Guapi, March 2020. Photo by Artistic and Corporeal Practices Research, accessed through Corpografías.

Balance on the wooden slats.[78]

La madera es un elemento identitario que se conjuga con el clima, la alimentación, la vivienda, con la economía, con el mar y con las manos (la carpintería).

Wood is an identity element that combines with the climate, food, housing, economy, the sea, and the hands (carpentry).

Balance on the panga.
Balance between here and there; between coming and going; between then and now.
Balance [pause . . . breathe].

beyond, *across*, *balance*, *manage strength*, *resist*

Move (again) to the rhythm of the rain on the tin roof.
Move alongside the young girl returning home from school.

Image 1.10: Pathway between Guapireña houses, or *casas de madera*, Guapi, March 2020. Photo by Artistic and Corporeal Practices Research, accessed through Corpografías.

Image 1.11: People on a panga for La Entrega Final, Atrato River, November 2019. Photo by the Corpografías research team.

Walk alongside her.
Travel with the river as your companion. Duet with her/him/it.[79]

Vivir en el Atrato, nos permite aprender la agricultura de subsistencia, la pesca artesanal, la cocina y las bebidas tradicionales afro, el tratamiento del cabello como símbolo de resistencia, la solidaridad, el respeto por el otro y el medio ambiente, medicina tradicional, tradición oral, ritmos y ritmos autóctonos. (José Luís Murillo, actor from the Bojayá theater group)

Living in the Atrato allows us to learn subsistence agriculture, artisanal fishing, traditional Afro cuisine and drinks, the treatment of hair as a symbol of resistance, solidarity, respect for others and the environment, traditional medicine, oral tradition, rhythms and native rhythms.

Walk.
Gather.
Sing.
Dance the joy of living. Now.

River Kinship, Necroscapes, and Living with the Dead

Afro-Colombians in the Pacific, riddled with the aftereffects of the armed conflict, learn how to adapt alone and/or with others; they adopt new patterns of moving, being, feeling, thinking; they move with and against flows, currents, desires, and power; they find alternatives or develop emergent tactics to do or make something, often out of nothing. I am reminded of Stefano Harney's recollection of a conversation he had with Fred Moten, his writing and thinking partner in the undercommons. Harney writes, "I remember Fred's great phrase, 'improvisation is making nothing out of something.' We have to do it this way—improvisationally—because we never left practice. Because practice is where you can be with everyone, where you can be with your friends."[80] Afro-Colombian bodies practice and improvise these tactics daily alongside one another and the rivers that accompany their lives. One way they find satisfaction among friends is through what Quiceno Toro labels the *familia aciatica*, a descriptive term linked to the social organization, Asociación Campesina Integral del

Atrato (Integral Peasant Association of the Atrato), that was instrumental in drafting legislation that would later be incorporated into Ley 70 of 1993, which constitutionally authorized collective ownership and titling of land by Afro-Colombians.[81] As Quiceno Toro writes, this *familia aciatica* does not specifically address issues concerning identity. Rather, it creates "possibility, connects rivers and people, activates power and connections for the defense, protection, and care for life."[82] Just as blood connects people through genealogical kinship, rivers and tributaries connect the Afro and Indigenous populations across land and political conviction.[83] Quiceno Toro explains, "Fue importante traducir ese estar conectado entre rios para lograr convertir la movilidad y la territorialidad afro en una potencialidad política" (It was important to translate this being connected between rivers in order to convert Afro mobility and territoriality into a political potentiality).[84] This establishment of human and other-than-human connection reconfigures liberal democratic understandings of what constitutes a citizen. The ontological idea of citizenship extends beyond the human upending toward something else: a relational entity of human-river-body-land moving harmoniously. This complex formation thus requires new modes of jurisprudence, of ways to conceptualize and then implement or enact what it means to coexist in a rich, plural nation-state where rivers are victims of war as much as the populations who depend on them for sustenance and movement.

Kinship across the waters enacts *vivir sabroso* and its association with the ability to move. Like an improvisational score that relies on repetition, yet differs slightly each time, *vivir sabroso* requires embarkation at *different* locations that require *different* ways to embark. What matters is the act of embarking, not how one does it or for what reason. As Quiceno Toro concludes, "Embarcarse en un bote no es solo una cuestión de necesidad o economía" (To embark on a boat is not only a question of necessity or economics).[85] In deference to the verb *vivir* (to live), I have chosen to highlight the everyday acts of living. Yet death looms in and around the rivers in Colombia, and I need to acknowledge the natural causes of death but also the violent enactments of death that the armed conflict has wrought in the area.

As necessary as rivers are for the maintenance and flourishing of life, they also foreground the very real threats to life. The Atrato River can become "a field of small, pointy, but persistent waves that complicate navigation."[86] The currents can drag people down if boats capsize, and cadavers are only later discovered downriver, swollen and unrecognizable.

Sometimes Afro-Colombians speak of the river's sentience and its need to be appeased before it can calm down again. They also acknowledge the sadness of the river when so many cadavers inundate it. The armed conflict displaced so many people (especially from 1996 to 2005) that the lack of people who used to clear the river from logjams literally stopped the river from flowing, thereby preventing mobility, navigation, and the ever-necessary ability to embark. As anthropologist Ruiz-Serna explains, "Navigability is not always an intrinsic feature of rivers, but is, at least in this region, the result of people's work and their engagement with their waterscapes."[87]

Waterscapes become "necroscapes" in Colombia spaces where cadavers and mutilated bodies appear days or weeks later, where fishermen and local people discover body parts and live in fear of armed guerrillas or paramilitaries patrolling the area and threatening more violence. Anthropologist Ana Guglielmucci explains that the term "necroscape" highlights "the relationship between necropower and landscape, that is, the ways in which making die and letting live cross the political geography of Colombia by configuring spatialities, sovereignties, and corporalities [*sic*]."[88] Territories around rivers in Colombia are necroscapes where the mutilated, contaminated, and decomposing bodies that float down the rivers interrupt the flow of daily life. Guglielmucci addresses the published narratives as well as the unpublished stories and testimonies of those affected by their riverain encounters with unidentified cadavers or mutilated body parts. With death as a constant, I return to the questions that began this chapter: What are the processes that make life bearable, valuable, beautiful? What does it mean for life to be lived well? How is it possible to live surrounded by death and destruction? I have identified and, as a type of dutiful, caring dramaturg, have mapped out a poetics of *vivir sabroso* that Afro-Colombians create and remake daily. Thinking of the philosophy of *vivir sabroso* as a political aesthetic that models citizenship beyond the dualities of political affiliations and hierarchies of power predicated on class, race, and geographical location, a focus on thinking-moving alongside and in consideration of the other (human and beyond human) might move the nation toward a more resolute post-conflict societal structure. Yet, in order to effectively move there, the necroscape requires processing of its heavy grief.

Choreographies of rituals, grief, and mourning also exist in these necroscapes. They cannot *not* exist. They require attention to the dead bodies—when there is a body to bury—and souls of the dead. They cen-

ter ancestral ties to the land and the continued struggle to defend their territories from armed actors and the disregard of the state in deference to capitalist extraction and development. And last, they turn toward the importance of commemorative practices that help move the communities through unresolved grief and trauma due to the often-tragic inability to bury their dead. In the following chapter, I move us toward a space and place of memory, where the dead speak in epistolary exchanges across time and space and where the souls of dead babies dance toward heaven. How far can grief travel? Where does it manifest? And how does grief's incorporation into the right to *vivir sabroso* offer spaces of consolation that are politically exigent?

2. Staging Displacement

Consider two moments on two distinct "stages." Here is the first:

A group of actors enter the space wearing black. In their hands they hold white flowers. Standing in silence, each actor begins to call out someone they lost:

Perdí amigos.	I lost friends.
Perdí a mis companeros.	I lost my companions.
Perdí a mi madre.	I lost my mother.
Perdí a mi tio.	I lost my uncle.
Perdí a mi primo.	I lost my cousin.
Perdí hermanos.	I lost brothers.
. .]	
. . . *¡Perdímos a nuestro pueblo!*	We lost our town!

Scene shift.

They disburse around the space and mimic gestures of their everyday life in rural Chocó, Colombia: fishing, selling fruit, farming. An actor, representing death (he wears black and carries a scythe), looms and circles around them, reminding the audience about the impending evil of the paramilitaries and FARC's arrival on that fateful day in May 2002. Suddenly, he slices through the beautiful ordinariness of their quotidian activity with one dramatic sweeping gesture. Now they all lie dead.

After this violent act, another group of actors emerge. They have the quiet, somber task of collecting the dead and gathering them in

the center. Their slow and steady movements attune the audience to watch with care, concern, and most of all patience. Finally, Elvia Mosquera, one of the actors, stands erect behind the pile of the dead and proclaims:

> Entre los maizales sembraremos nuestros sueños índigenas y negros,
> nuestro amor a la tierra y la fecundidad de nuestros cuerpos.
> Entre los maizales enterraremos los cadáveres de los héroes
> Para que les den el color dorado a las mazorcas que nos alimentan.
>
> Among the cornfields we will plant our Indigenous and Black dreams,
> our love for the earth and the fecundity of our bodies.
> Among the cornfields we will bury the corpses of the heroes
> To give the golden color to the corncobs that nourish us.

During one of the rehearsals of this play, Elvia's voice cracked and held back sobs as she uttered the word "héroes." Her pain remains palpably present after losing her grandmother in the Bojayá massacre of 2002.

And now, consider the second "stage":

Picture an urban landscape close to the ocean where buildings are in varying stages of disrepair, piles of uncollected trash litter corners and intersections, and colorful street murals feature faces of murdered social activist leaders. Now imagine you hear this narration describing events that took place on May 21, 2017, the day of Afro-Colombianidad, which commemorates the abolition of slavery in Colombia:

> Ciento sesenta mil personas salimos a las calles a celebrar nuestro paro cívico. Y los que no nos reunimos, bailamos y danzamos igual en nuestros barrios y puntos de concentración . . . la música hizo vibrar el territorio entero. Los parlantes retumbaron con música del Pacífico y no importó el origen ni las condiciones sociales a la hora de soltar el cuerpo. El paro cívico

> se hizo presente a través de la celebración para romper los miedos y restaurar la confianza. Las vías se llenaron de manifestantes. A lo largo de cinco kilómetros, gritábamos y arengábamos, y cantábamos y bailábamos: "El pueblo resiste, ¡carajo! El pueblo no se vende, ¡carajo! El pueblo no se rinde, ¡carajo!" Éramos Pacífico. Éramos pacíficos. Comenzamos a cantar "Los buenos somos más."
>
> One hundred and sixty thousand people took to the streets to celebrate our civic strike. And those of us who did not gather danced, and danced just as much in our neighborhoods and concentration points. . . . The music made the whole territory vibrate. The loudspeakers boomed with music from the Pacific, and the origin or social conditions at the time of letting our bodies go [letting loose to dance] did not matter. The civic strike was present throughout the celebration to break fears and restore confidence. The roads were filled with demonstrators. For five kilometers, we shouted and chanted and chanted and danced: "The people resist, *¡carajo!* The people are not for sale, *¡carajo*! The people don't surrender, *¡carajo!*" We were the Pacific. We were peaceful. We began to sing, "The good ones are more."

Anger, sadness, corporeal expression, and political conviction tie these events together. One is a play performed for a community still mourning tremendous loss. Another is a twenty-one-day civic protest that mobilized artists all over the city. Both events usher forth a determination about living, a zeal for life while still holding dear and near the memories of the dead. Amid pain, suffering, and frustration Afro-Colombians in Bojayá (the play) and in Buenaventura (the protest) focus on coming together to move through the multiple affective registers they encounter daily while enduring the aftereffects of the armed conflict on their lives. Lives that they remember as being fruitful: "a past of abundance, happiness and fraternity."[1] I am not trying to establish a nostalgic past for these communities or situate joyful expressions of blackness as the *only* way for Black folks to make do in an anti-Black world. Instead, I am considering how Afro-Colombians work through these aftereffects of the armed conflict through their own meanings of peace, collectivity, memory, embodied artistic practices, and life. I am concerned about what a good life means for them amid this turmoil. I wonder what staging trauma and civic dis-

satisfaction enables for them as citizens of a country that marginalizes them. I think about how staging memories, sadness, and resilience displaces the aftereffects of violence directed to their communities. Overall, I consider how collective theater-making allows them the ability to process the multiple levels of trauma they have endured. What are the ways that they counter and displace death, deterritorialization, and disenfranchisement through everyday processes of living?

This chapter examines the ways in which these multiple stagings of community grievances against the state function as a way for specific communities in Bojayá and Buenaventura to assert their right to *vivir sabroso*. The respective performances of a play and the civic protests featuring performance are examples of localized forms of resistance akin to what philosopher José Medina calls "testimonial protests." He contends that these protests can engage "the embodied sensibility of audiences" so that they "can be more effective in . . . having an impact in their receptivity and motivational structure."[2] These testimonial protests belong to a greater mode of resistance he calls epistemic activism. I would like to include *vivir sabroso* as a manifestation of epistemic activism, particularly how *vivir sabroso* informs the public, civic protests and theatrical representations and rituals that I focus on in this chapter.

Epistemic activism refers to active resistance against epistemic injustices—systemic forms of harm that occur when individuals or groups are wronged in their capacity as knowers and knowledge producers. Medina argues that epistemic activism involves challenging and transforming the structures, practices, and norms that perpetuate ignorance, silencing, and marginalization in knowledge production and dissemination. Epistemic activism is not merely about correcting individual instances of ignorance or bias but about addressing the systemic and structural dimensions of epistemic oppression. Epistemic activism primarily focuses on *epistemic responsibility*. Medina argues that individuals and communities have a responsibility to resist epistemic injustices by actively engaging in practices of listening, learning, and solidarity. This involves not only recognizing the epistemic agency of marginalized knowers but also dismantling the structural barriers that prevent their full participation in knowledge practices.[3]

Vivir sabroso, as a form of epistemic activism, embodies resistances and addresses the systemic and epistemic oppression of Afro-Colombians from the Pacific region. Through their own knowledges and practices of listening, learning, and solidarity Afro-Colombians model and poten-

tially motivate structural change. Their collective grievances against the state appear in the cultural forms used to stage protests, rituals, and plays. Medina would call these forms "aesthetic resistances" that generate "epistemic friction" with dominant sensibilities to effect change.[4] In other words, in their convergence, aesthetic and affective-epistemic forms function as embodied political tools that might move Colombian civil society toward epistemic or even reparative justice. In the case of Bojayá, massacre victims' remains were finally returned to the communities after many years of demands; in the case of the Buenaventura protests, Afro-Colombians achieved certain political successes through these protests, as I will detail later in the chapter.

Afro-Colombians continue to insist on their right to *vivir sabroso* and to *dignidad*, dignity, as multinational corporations, government, paramilitaries, and Colombian oligarchic interests vie for the resource-rich waterways of the Pacific. This chapter ultimately examines how collective theater-making, ritual enactments, and civic protests are practices of epistemic activism rooted in the tenets of *vivir sabroso*: kinship, community, and defense of life. By staging aspects of *vivir sabroso*, whether in plays that commemorate the brutal 2002 Bojayá massacre, in danced funeral rituals for dead babies and children, or in the 2017 civic protests of Buenaventura, Afro-Colombians corporealize and make visible a poetics of the Black everyday that aligns them with larger Black diasporic global struggles for dignity and the ever-elusive but necessary dream of Black liberation. Assertions of life, community, and ritual effectively counter the necropolitics of anti-blackness.

Bad Deaths

> Hasta el río sintió dolor.
> Even the river felt pain.[5]

In the Chocó region there is such a thing as a bad death. A bad death consists of a violent death away from your land and family. A bad death means your cadaver lacked attention; it was abandoned, dismembered, brutalized, and, most important, never received the funeral rites necessary to allow your spirit to proceed onto a peaceful afterlife.[6] A bad death is often singular. However, the massacre at Bellavista, Bojayá, in 2002 introduced the collectivity of bad deaths and foregrounded discourses about

collective trauma, healing, justice, and memory at the national and international levels. Those most affected by the massacre, the Afro-Colombian communities of Bellavista and elsewhere in Bojayá, turned to collective theater-making to sustain a collective grieving process without the human remains of their family and friends. Before I move to the commemorative theater pieces, their rehearsals and performances, danced mourning rituals, and the protests, I will briefly guide us through Afro-Atrateños ideas about death, mourning, and spirits. Thinking alongside the "afterlife of injustice" and state, I highlight why theater became a useful method to address their experiences of the armed conflict, trauma, mourning, and desire to *vivir sabroso* despite the horrific events of May 2002. For them, theater does not merely reaffirm historical narratives about the massacre. Instead, it becomes an embodied opportunity to be in community, to collectively remember and grieve through *creación colectiva* while bringing local, national, and international audiences into the longer processes of restorative justice and restitution of bodily remains that the Bojayá community effected. The ability to end their play with a bow toward the victims' remains enacts the political ends of their struggles: to honor their dead through their particular rituals and practices.

As I mentioned in the introduction, the mass violence of the Bojayá massacre of May 2, 2002, functions as a framing compass for considering the aftereffects of conflict, embodied peacebuilding processes, and the right to a good life: *vivir sabroso*. To briefly summarize the catastrophic events of that day: Afro-Colombian civilians were caught between FARC guerrillas and paramilitaries in combat and sought refuge in a church in Bellavista. A cylinder-bomb shot by the guerrillas exploded in that church sheltering adults and children, killing 119 civilians (79 died in the explosion). After the massacre, more than six thousand peasants from the mid-Atrato region abandoned their land for fear of further violence. Movement and displacement became means for survival. They had no time to attend to the collective emotional trauma that the experience of such violence created. Because of the heat, humidity, and lack of government involvement or presence, the bodies of the victims had to be buried immediately in mass graves. The elaborate funerary rites and rituals of mourning that comprise Afro-Colombian traditions did not happen. This caused further grief, desperation, and frustration because family members had no access to the human remains of their loved ones. Bad death lingered without these remains.

Afro-Colombians participate in extensive rites and rituals of death and mourning. Among them are *acompañamiento*, *la novena*, *el velorio*, singing *alabaos* or *alabados*, rituals of *gualí* or *chigualo* for deceased children, and finally the most important in terms of social relations, *sentir el dolor del otro* (to feel the pain of the other). These rituals belong to the overall philosophy of *vivir sabroso*, particularly its tenet to make and maintain kinship. Accompanying friends and family through the death of a loved one solidifies these ties. Death is a natural part of life, yet in Chocó during the height of the armed conflict (1996–2005), instances of violence, not natural causes, increased the need for these ritualistic practices.

The violences often involve the disappearing or the dismemberment of a body.

To disappear a body.

To make it mean nothing.

To break it apart, mutilate it, spread its parts over the verdant land, into the flowing rivers.

This is the repetitive score of the necroscape.

In Bojayá's case, the bodies were not disappeared, but the necessity to bury them quickly without proper funerary rituals created a sensation of disappearance. This affected Afro-Colombian sociality, particularly related to collective mourning rituals. As the practices I highlight here show, mourning requires others. Mourning should not be experienced alone. These practices belong to the repertoire of *vivir sabroso*; they are an acknowledgment and celebration of the circularity of life alongside the inevitability of death. They exist as elaborate poetics of mourning, integral to the ways of Afro-Colombian life in Chocó. Movement, specifically creating spaces for the movement of spirit and transition from life to death, with and through community, makes the quotidian tolerable, inhabitable, endurable during an armed conflict.

Below are four embodied practices that center collectivity within processes of mourning because, as Quiceno Toro identified, "El dolor debe ser compartido y resulta fundamental en la articulación de parientes, pueblos y ríos" (Grief must be shared and is fundamental in the articulation of relatives, towns, and rivers):[7]

Acompañamiento, to be present during the last moments of the dying individual; to help to feel;[8] to be present and to accompany the mourners.

Sentir el dolor del otro, to feel the pain of the other.
Alabaos, intergenerational songs for the dead. Voice, breath, and stamina are needed to keep this practice going overnight or for the several days of the wake, or *velorio*. Singing together allows the community of mourners to feel the pain of the other.
Chigualos and *gualíes*, songs and dances for dead children who are considered innocent and free from grievous sin.[9] They automatically become little angels. These songs and dances are festive one-night occurrences.[10]

Each instance of the *gualí*, the play and even the protest, instantiates a poetics of *vivir sabroso* and models possibilities for eventual peacebuilding. Here I dialogue with the work of peace and conflict scholar Tarja Väyrynen, anthropologist Sandra Milena Rios Oyola, and dance movement therapist Thania Acarón Rios, who look toward dance and choreography as modes of resistance and peacebuilding in societies affected by war and conflict. As a critical dance scholar, I value their commitment to embodied practices that model ways of engaging with one another in the world through our corporealities to imagine and ultimately materialize peace, or at least something that I consider a type of conviviality across differences. The resilience and fortitude required to materialize peace in the face of ongoing violence that rests outside of the community's control (due to government, landowners, paramilitary control, and/or drug cartels) mean that they must build "peace" within a larger structure of violence. Thus "peace" is a committed, actively embodied response to the violences that the communities are not responsible for. In these instances, peace does not indicate the end of violence.

Väyrynen argues that "peacebuilding and peace are dynamic corporeal events"[11] and that "peacebuilding, and consequently peace, is an event becomes [*sic*] into being in mundane and corporeal encounters."[12] *Vivir sabroso* is a way to live heartily and harmoniously through the mundane everyday. As I argue in the previous chapter, it is this Afro-Colombian philosophy of life that already presents a poetics for peacebuilding. The gestures and movement phrases that stem from everyday movements, improvisationally or purposefully organized for corporeal efficiency, joy, pleasure, collectivity, and even mourning, are mundane yet powerful in their transformative potential. In the instance of the *gualí*, a dance funerary ritual for dead children, the gestural phrase of cradling and rocking a child in one's arms becomes a unifying modality for the Afro-Colombian

community. Whether they are dancing and singing along or witnessing from afar, they are collectively engaging in emotional solidarity and transmission of cultural memory—activities often stunted within the context of the Colombian armed conflict. While the idea of dancing and singing with a dead child in one's arms seems like an atrocity unto itself, the greater atrocity in the Afro-Colombian context is preclusion from engaging in funerary rituals, and the moral consequences this prohibition brings to these communities. Acarón Rios argues that dance becomes "the vehicle to cope with the cultural and psychological damages caused by the conflict."[13] It also fulfills a function of mediation, helping communities negotiate the atrocity of the events that continue to plague the community.[14] Through this embodied, affective witnessing or wit(h)nessing,[15] the community of Bojayá can continue to move toward healing.

Gualíes: Dancing with the Dead

The Bojayá massacre killed forty-six children. These bodies received no funerary rites or rituals to ease their transition to the spirit world and were buried soon after the catastrophe in 2002. Their remains were later exhumed and returned to their families in November 2019 as part of an event entitled La Entrega Final. At this event, part of the Colombian research team I worked with attended and filmed various ceremonies, which included the performance of the play *Honrar a los Sagrados Espíritus* (*Honor the Holy Spirits*) and the *gualí* ceremony one night.[16] Oyola and Rios write about the *gualí* they encountered in 2012 on the tenth anniversary of the massacre. I shall refer to their writings on the ceremony alongside footage of the 2019 *gualí*. In both instances, the *cantadoras* of Pogue lead the ceremony with their traditional call-and-response singing.

Oyola and Rios describe the dance of the *gualí* like this:

> The dance consisted of a circle of women moving their hips and feet rhythmically, while a woman at the center of the circle performed gestures symbolizing the rocking of a baby in her arms. They then proceeded to throw the figure of the baby, usually represented by a doll, or a piece of cloth or a bag, to other women in the circle. The women were at the center of the arena while a couple of hundred people watched from the chairs of the local stadium. Religious missionary women also accompanied them in the dance.[17]

Tears are forbidden at a *gualí*. The child's soul will either drown in them or want to stay and console the grieving family members, thereby eschewing their automatic movement toward heaven. Celebration at a child's funeral stems from the history of enslavement in Colombia. A child's death meant an escape from a life of slavery.[18] Children's souls only need guidance to go to heaven, not mediation. The guidance comes in the form of the call-and-response aural environment, which creates a familiar and familial atmosphere. Voices of family and extended family call out and create a vibrational energy that allows spirit to move toward transcendence, from the material realm to (an)other one(s). The rhythm and its flowing predictability (you always know where the downbeat will come in) moves around and through the bodies in the space. It becomes a central axis within and beyond the main circle and lead singer's space. When I watch our research team's footage from the 2019 *gualí*, I see the white box moving from singer/dancer to singer/dancer. They rock the small white coffin and pass it around. In the background is a mandala and the display of the 119 white caskets with the remains of the victims' bodies. The performance is also for them. I call it a performance because, while steeped in ritual, it is a reenactment of the funeral rites that would have been performed had they received the bodies back in 2002.

Performance studies scholar Rebecca Schneider's important work on performance and reenactment helps unpack the amalgam of trauma, grief, performance, repetition, and reenactment happening here. She writes, "Reenactment troubles linear temporality by offering at least the suggestion of recurrence, or return, even if the practice is peppered with its own ongoing incompletion."[19] The seventeen-year gap in the funerary rite of the *gualí* does not necessarily affect the presencing of it or understanding/feeling its relationship to the trauma and death that brought upon the need for the *gualí*. It is as "real" and significant in this 2019 iteration as it would have been in 2002, the initial moment to process and move through their grief and trauma.[20] In each subsequent iteration the collective, affective experience matters most for healing. As another performance studies scholar, Diana Taylor, explains, "Reenactment is central both to trauma and performance. Trauma, like performance, is known by the nature of its repeats, 'never for the first time.' We speak of trauma only when the event cannot be processed and produces the characteristic aftershocks. Trauma, like performance, is always experienced in the present. Here. Now."[21] Each time the women rock, dance, and sing the babies toward heaven, the community members who lost the child(ren) *and* the community who witness

and engage in *acompañamiento* (accompaniment) to *sentir el dolor del otro* actively remember how to engage in affective, embodied synchronicity with one another. The *gualí's* corresponding dance models this effectively as well.

The rocking and passing around of the child's symbolic body is a gestural phrase that demonstrates the interconnectedness of grief: holding it, being with it, then sharing it, passing it on. Grief is heavy. Different bodies feel it differently, but it resides everywhere in your viscera with nowhere to go. The exchange of the child's effigy (whether as a doll or in a white casket, as occurred in 2019) lightens the load. Your body weighs less after you pass it on. Your burden is lighter, if only for a small moment. You watch others take on that burden, shifting their hips and torsos side to side as they contend with the weight, to make it more comfortable to carry; to prepare one's body to hold it, carry it without knowing the extent of time it will take to either get used to carrying it or pass it on because the burden is unbearable. Since *gualíes* are not supposed to be "sad," grief does not fester, although it plays a significant role in the affective environment of these Bojayá massacre commemoration ceremonies. The symbolic weight transfer between the singers/dancers in the presence of the community demonstrates how grief transforms to joy for the *angelito*'s body in the coffin.

The experience of the *gualí* is fundamentally a corporeal one: carrying, rocking, breathing, sustaining, balancing, and getting out of breath as you rock and sing and move at the same time. It is a type of corporeal training regimen for the sustenance of grief; to learn how to carry it while simultaneously finding an efficacious way to pass it on. Surely these *cantadoras* have experience and training in this, so their breath catches up with them. I did not hear breathlessness. I saw full-bodied singing and swaying. To maintain the rhythmic meter, to rock and sway, to sing forcibly requires skill and practice. The steps and the songs belong to the greater repertoire of Afro-Colombian ritual practices, but each singer and dancer's understanding and embodiment of it leans into improvisational skill and knowledges. While dancing the *gualí*, each performers might be asking themselves the following questions: *How do I maintain an accurate distance within the circle, so I don't disturb the flow? Where do I turn away from one of my fellow ritual performers so I don't crash into her? How do I ensure that those around us, watching, are still actively participating? How do I keep my energy up even though it is way past midnight? Let me concentrate so I don't drop the coffin.*

I take some liberties here to imagine what they might be thinking given their physical labor and their own corporeal understanding of what muscles, body parts, and weight shifts must be fired to maintain the flow of the *gualí*. I imagine that while they may not be thinking these exact questions, their respective bodies' intelligences and technical understanding of the *gualí* have already created the muscle memory and improvisational virtuosity for these performances. Somehow, I feel like an intruder watching even though I am not physically present. I believe that their mourning and joy in response to the violences they have endured belong to them and should be wit(h)nessed by themselves.

Many national agencies attended La Entrega Final from November 11–19, 2019. These included La Unidad para las Víctimas (Victim's Unit), the Oficina en Colombia del Alto Comisionado de Naciones Unidas para los Derechos Humanos (Colombian Office of the UN High Commission for Human Rights), the Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (National Center for Historical Memory), the Fiscalía General de la Nación (Attorney General's Office) and the Instituto de Medicina Legal (Institute of Legal Medicine).[22] As we present in our digital archive Corpografías under the topic "Resignificación de Ritos Funebres / Resignification of Funeral Rites":

> Con la masacre del 2 de mayo, todas las prácticas mortuorias se vieron trastocadas, y sin embargo, en medio de la confrontación entre guerrilla y paramilitares, los habitantes de Bellavista hicieron lo posible por asegurar que sus víctimas pudieran ser enterradas según la tradición. Aunque no se pudo hacer un velorio, las más de 80 víctimas fueron cuidadosamente ubicadas en una fosa, a pocos kilómetros río arriba, para que los cuerpos no fueran quemados por los grupos armados. Diecisiete años después, se logra cumplir con las ritualidades que permiten despedir a los muertos según las costumbres de esta región. Para lograrlo, los sabedores y sabedoras debieron reunirse para proponer la manera más adecuada de proceder. A las autoridades indígenas de Bellavista se les pidió realizar un ritual de armonización en el mausoleo, el velorio colectivo incluyó alabaos y gualíes, algo poco común ya que rara vez mueren tantos adultos y niños al mismo tiempo. Debido a que los cuerpos habían sido exhumados dos veces, una en la fosa y nuevamente en el cementerio de Bellavista, para su adecuada identificación, la tierra recogida por los forenses fue retornada, con el fin de emplearla

para una siembra de árboles, en un acto simbólico, que no hacía parte de los ritos fúnebres tradicionales. En Pogue, donde también se realizaron los ritos fúnebres de las víctimas de la masacre que pertenecían a la comunidad, se realizó el tradicional recorrido de despedida, con todos los habitantes, en una peregrinación donde cada casa se convirtió en una estación para recordar y honrar a los seres queridos. La Entrega Final representa no solamente el cierre colectivo de un duelo de 17 años, sino también la lucha del pueblo bojayaceño por una reparación en sus propios términos, de acuerdo a sus saberes y creencias.

With the May 2 massacre, all mortuary practices were disrupted, and yet, in the midst of the confrontation between guerrillas and paramilitaries, the inhabitants of Bellavista did their best to ensure that their victims could be buried according to tradition. Although a wake could not be held, the more than eighty victims were carefully placed in a grave a few kilometers upriver so that the bodies would not be burned by the armed groups. Seventeen years later, the rituals that allow saying goodbye to the dead according to the customs of this region have been fulfilled. To achieve this, the wise men and women had to meet to propose the most appropriate way to proceed. The Indigenous authorities of Bellavista were asked to perform a ritual of harmonization in the mausoleum; the collective wake included *alabaos* and *gualíes*, something unusual since rarely do so many adults and children die at the same time. Since the bodies had been exhumed twice, once in the grave and again in the Bellavista cemetery, for proper identification, the soil collected by the forensic experts was returned to the mausoleum to be used for planting trees, a symbolic act, which was not part of the traditional funeral rites. In Pogue, where the funeral rites of the victims of the massacre who belonged to the community were also carried out, the traditional farewell procession was held, with all the inhabitants, in a traditional pilgrimage. La Entrega Final represents not only the collective closure of a seventeen-year period of mourning, but also the struggle of the Bojayaceño people for a reparation on their own terms, according to their knowledge and beliefs.

Watching the footage from the ceremony helps me realize that *vivir sabroso*'s characteristic of *estar en movimiento* (to be in movement) is also

part of funeral rituals. The grief-stricken living must move through that same grief through ritualistic practices so that the spirit of their beloved kin (blood or otherwise) can move toward higher forms of being; with ancestors in eternal peace and harmony with the Godhead of Christianity, but also, and more important, in union with spirit, territory, and the totality of existence. Movement at this ceremony enables mourning, community, and commemoration. The significance of movement and bodies in motion remains visible on the commemorative plaque set up outside the rebuilt church in Bellavista Viejo.

It reads:

Cuando *viajamos* por nuestro río,
Cuando *caminamos* por nuestro pueblo,
Cuando nos *congregamos* en este templo
Y *recordamos* el 2 de mayo de 2002
Entonamos un canto de esperanza
Para que estos hechos no se repitan
Y podamos *danzar con la alegria de vivir*
En un mundo sin violencia
En memoria de nuestros hermanos
Martirizados en este templo.

When *we travel* along our river,
When *we walk* through our town,
When *we gather* in this temple
And remember May 2, 2002
We sing a song of hope
So that these events will not be repeated
And that *we may dance with the joy of living*
In a world without violence
In memory of our brothers
Martyred in this temple.[23]

We travel, we walk, we gather, we sing . . . so that we may dance with the joy of living. I extract the action verbs from this plaque and consider it a foundational score for living with atrocities. The verbs literally map out the edicts of *vivir sabroso*, where the present incorporates *movimiento* (movement) from quotidian practices and histories of sadness and violence. They continue to be in movement, to make joy, to move their bodies, put forth their breath and voices out into that delicious warm, damp

air nursed by the clouds. It is in commemoration of their family and community members that the two plays *Los Muertos Hablan* (*The Dead Speak*, 2003) and *Honrar a los Sagrados Espíritus* (2019) were created; plays that contribute to that "joy of living" while honoring the dead. As they act, move, sing, dance, and gesture on the ruins of Bellavista Viejo, these bodies *en movimiento* are activating the energies of *vivir sabroso* to experience something akin to peace in their lived present.

As Värynen asserts, "Peace is not a property or structure of a given society, but rather something that becomes expressed, takes place, through acts and points of contact between variously situated bodies, namely in corporeal events where accountability, recognition and acknowledgement unavoidably emerge."[24] The work of coming together to write, devise, rehearse, then ultimately perform these plays of commemoration provides opportunities to make these corporeal interactions meaningful for them in processes of resilience, construction of memory, and reconciliation. While they may not be reconciling with their perpetrators or even the state, they are collectively engaging in processes that help them reconcile the violent events (and concomitant disappointments about the absence of protection from the state or the imposition of punitive measures for the perpetrators) with their desires to grieve and move toward endurance and the affordances that *vivir sabroso* offers. They are modeling for their multiple audiences (community members, family members of the dead, political dignitaries, and representatives from the various state agencies in attendance at La Entrega) ways of living despite the specter of death and dispossession that haunts them. In the next section, I focus on the processes involved in developing and presenting *Honrar a los Sagrados Espíritus* (2019) at La Entrega Final.

Staging Memories: *Honrar a los Sagrados Espíritus* (2019)

> Los muertos siguen vivos, y puedes hacer muchas cosas con ellos (The dead are still alive, and you can do many things with them).[25]
>
> Poco a poco, la gente ha vuelto a mirar el río (Little by little, people have gone back to looking at the river).[26]

I began this chapter with a brief description of the opening moments of *Honrar a los Sagrados Espíritus*, a play performed in Bojayá in 2019 at the event called La Entrega Final, when the human remains of the 119 victims

of the May 2, 2002, massacre were returned to their families. This play exists as a type of sequel to another play, *Los Muertos Hablan* (2003), produced and performed to commemorate the one-year anniversary of the massacre. In *Los Muertos*, the survivors/actors read individual letters out loud to their dead loved ones. Within the parameters of the staged event, the act of writing, then speaking the letters in front of an audience, presented an opportunity for the survivors of that event (on stage and off) to mourn and process their grief over massacred friends and family. Using the *creación colectiva* method of devising theater, the twenty-six-minute play features vignettes of daily life executed through corporeal imagery and gestural vocabularies. They act, sing, dance and collectively create living memories on the ruins of the bombed church, revitalizing and resignifying a space of violence and death with their breath, sweat, memories, and grief.

Seventeen years after *Los Muertos Hablan* premiered, the bodies of the dead finally returned. In 2019, our research team was not supposed to attend La Entrega Final. It was not in the original research plan, but our Colombian co-investigator, Marta Domínguez, felt it was a unique opportunity to document the event from the analytical perspective of our project: processes of memory construction and reconciliation in embodied performance practices of the Colombian Pacific. I had not originally intended to write about the play or La Entrega Final, but once I began gathering and reading scholarship about theatrical representations of the Bojayá massacre, I became interested in the role of theater in this region of Colombia. The work of theater scholar Lisa Jackson-Schebetta examines the role of *testimonio* in the play *Kilelé* (Teatro Varasanta) to consider how theater is an effective tool for post-truth politics, while Sandra Milena Oyola Ríos's respective scholarship demonstrates the role that religion has had in the construction of social memory through collective theater-making. In fact, the history of community theater in the Atrato River region of Colombia emerges from a relationship with the Catholic Church, particularly the diocese of Quibdó.[27] It was the diocese's initiative that invited German theater director Inge Kleutgens to work with a theater youth group in Bellavista to make this first play about the massacre.[28] Religiosity, ancestrality, and dignified modes of honoring the dead are themes that *Los Muertos Hablan* (2003) touches upon implicitly and, as a result, sets up as thematic material for *Honrar* seventeen years later.

Los Muertos Hablan enacts the ways of life in Bellavista Viejo before the massacre of 2002. The actors, dressed in black, offer vignettes of every-

day activities through gestural phrases and blocked staging around the performance space, the ruined church: fishing, cooking, spending time with friends and family. They perform *novenas* and *alabaos*, and many of the actors read letters they have written to their dead. The play provided an opportunity to stage performances of their culturally specific funerary rites.[29] For my purposes, I want to focus on the final monologue of *Los Muertos* as the inspiration for *Honrar*.

Los Muertos finishes with the following monologue:

> Somos los cimarrones, los campesinos, las mujeres, los ancianos, los líderes del pueblo, los padres y hermanos. Los que nos masacraron por defender nuestros derechos. Somos los niños y jóvenes negros e indígenas. Somos la selva. Somos la fuerza de la naturaleza. Somos de la tierra madre. Somos los muertos que hablan.
>
> We are the maroons, the peasants, the women, the elders, the leaders of the people, the fathers and brothers. We are those who were massacred for defending our rights. We are Black and Indigenous children and youth. We are the jungle. We are the strength of nature. We are mother earth. We are the dead who speak.

The entire cast proclaims the last sentence as a powerful conclusion to an even more powerful process of healing. These words resonate over the ruins of Bellavista Viejo, over the space where the dead bodies lay and were then transported to a mass grave. The actors activate affective sensibilities about the dead and memories about family and kin beyond family. Thus, the play manifests aspects of *vivir sabroso*: to help feel, to share pain, to be in communication with one's ancestors, and to be in movement. Again, to be in movement, *estar en movimiento*, is both a physical process on stage and an affective process that moves the cast and their audience. The dramaturgical device of the letter continues from *Los Muertos* to *Honrar*, but, in its new iteration, the dead reply and offer words of support, encouragement, and gratitude to their living friends and family. This movement, corporeal and sensorial, in *Honrar* makes visible and palpable the construction and transmission of memory. Quiceno Toro's exchange with a parish priest at the tenth commemoration of the massacre makes this idea clear. The priest stated that it was important to understand memory as a creed, "como una forma que solo puede ser transmitida por la palabra de generación en generación" (as a form that can only be trans-

mitted by word of mouth from generation to generation).[30] Even memory must be in movement / *estar en movimiento*.

In contrast to the survivors' individual letters to the dead in *Los Muertos*, *Honrar*'s letter comes from the collective of the dead to the collective of the living, marshaling unity across time and space. Grief, resilience, and memorialization play significant affective roles in *Honrar*'s creation and reception. *Honrar* allowed its 2019 audience, predominantly consisting of victims' families and friends, to remember the harrowing events of 2002 and reflect on the subsequent juridical and governmental processes. I am not so much interested in the successes or failures of the juridical or governmental processes as I am in *how* the communities use theater-making to process their own relationships with one another and their embodied experiences related to armed conflict.

Many of the community actors speak about a "spark" (*se me prendió una chispa*) they felt when the initial opportunity came to do theater about their experiences. They also stress the significance of theater and *creación colectiva* as processes that allow them to have control over the narratives disseminated about their own communities and the afterlife of the massacre. Furthermore, the participation in and/or witnessing of *Honrar* allows the younger members of the community to understand what happened to them, since some of them were not alive when the massacre occurred. Héctor stated, "We have learned many things. . . . I had never been told that those bodies had been buried in one place. I did not know that, and it was in the play [*Honrar*] that I realized how the whole process was." He later stated that "through theater you express things that have happened. You practically show the reality of things so that people can understand it, but in a silent way."[31] Perhaps this silent way he describes is how the creation, production, and spectatorship of the play offer an opportunity for re-existence. As Arturo Escobar explains, "Re-existence takes both old and new practices of livelihood, politics, and culture of subaltern communities as the living archive from which to 'reinvent and dignify life in order to continue being while changing'; it is an answer to the question of 'what are we going to invent today in order to go on living?'"[32] Theater-making as a mode of collective memory, healing, restaging history, and self-representation allows these communities to navigate trauma, to experience and move through it together while simultaneously finding reparations beyond those offered through legal measures. *Honrar*'s letters from the dead become an effective and affective conduit for this to occur.

The 2019 response to the letters begins with a rallying cry from actor and activist Boris that unites the cast's attention. He declares:

> ¡Carta! ¡carta! ¡carta! de los difuntos a los sobrevivientes, ¡vengan! ¡vengan! escuchen este mensaje, ¿quieren escuchar el mensaje de los difuntos a los sobrevivientes? dice así: Carta de los difuntos a los sobrevivientes . . .
>
> Letter! letter! letter! letter! from the deceased to the survivors, come! come! listen to this message, you want to listen to the message from the deceased to the survivors? it goes like this: Letter from the deceased to the survivors . . .

And then proceeds to read the letter:

> Queridos sobrevivientes,
>
> Queremos agradecerles por la valentía que han tenido durante estos diecisiete años de lucha, desde el cielo hemos estado con ustedes en cada una de ellas, apoyándolos y acompañándolos con la firme convicción de que juntos forjaremos un mañana mejor para nuestros niños y niñas. Sabemos que aún falta mucho para lograr una vida digna, falta la verdad, la justicia, la reparación y las garantías de no repetición. Nos hubiera gustado seguir compartiendo con ustedes, correr bajo la lluvia, contar historias a la luz de una fogata y caminar por los campos. A nuestros familiares que nunca nos hemos ido, estamos con ellos en cada uno de sus pasos, cuidándolos y amando con todo nuestro corazón. por eso desde la distancia los abrazamos, con el alma, solo queda decirles que no desfallezcan en la lucha por nuestro territorio y así conseguir la paz que tanto anhelamos.
>
> Sin más, se despiden,
>
> Los difuntos hacia los sobrevivientes
>
> Dear survivors,
>
> We want to thank you for the courage you have had during these seventeen years of struggle. From heaven we have been with you in each of them, supporting and accompanying you with the firm conviction that together we will forge a better tomorrow for our children. We know that there is still a long way to go to achieve a

> dignified life, truth, justice, reparation, and guarantees of non-repetition. We would have liked to continue sharing with you, running in the rain, telling stories by the light of a campfire, and walking through the fields. To our relatives we have never left, we are with them in each of their steps, taking care of them and loving them with all our heart, so from a distance we embrace them, with our soul. We can only tell them not to lose heart in the struggle for our territory and thus achieve the peace that we long for.
>
> Without further ado, we bid farewell,
>
> the deceased, to the survivors

One of the participants in the play, José Luis, explains that doing theater "allows us to pay homage to our dead and to denounce the things that continue to happen in our territory: displacement, [restricted] free transit through the river, state abandonment, confinement, and abuse of the state forces directed toward the civilian population."[33] Theater and protesting through theater allow the daily occurrences of their desire to and engagement of *vivir sabroso* to be made visible, tangible, and real. Bojayá's appearances in national political discourse renders the town and its inhabitants as victims, a place that tragically had no significance before the armed conflict, one that remains in perpetual mourning. The plays shift the discourse around, from Bojayá as a place of tragedy to Bojayá as a thriving site where *vivir sabroso* has always been a goal.

The determination to showcase a Bojayá where community and territory share the same political entanglements and demands informs what they choose to represent in their plays. The two plays, and especially *Honrar*, offer a quotidian spectacular. They focus on the actions and movements of the living even in relation to the dead. This dance between death and the quotidian is what facilitates *vivir sabroso*. José Luis elaborates,

> Se habla de Bojayá antes y después de la masacre. Y que antes de eso esté lo de la cotidianidad quiere mostrar también lo que Bojayá era antes de la masacre . . . , mostrar lo de la cotidianidad antes, quiere decir que nosotros como municipio hemos tenido una vida antes de la masacre, es así como vivíamos, y que la masacre fue una consecuencia de algo que nosotros no quisimos sino que nos lo tra-

> jeron, una consecuencia del abandono estatal, una consecuencia de todo lo que el estado ha dejado de hacer por nosotros, que tienen la obligación, y no porque nosotros nos lo hayamos buscado.
>
> We talk about Bojayá before and after the massacre. And the fact that before the massacre there is the everyday life that shows what Bojayá was before the massacre. . . . To show the everyday life before, it means that we as a municipality have had a life before the massacre, that is how we lived, and that the massacre was a consequence of something that we did not want but that was brought to us, a consequence of state abandonment, a consequence of everything that the state has failed to do for us, that they have had the obligation [to do], and not because we have brought it on ourselves.[34]

To make memories is to activate forces, *to help die, to help feel*.[35] Thus, the plays allow the communities to activate memories, to be both in the present making history and re-presenting history while simultaneously thinking-feeling-remembering. And in the thinking-feeling-remembering they activate and manifest the poetics of *vivir sabroso* while simultaneously complicating the ways in which the aftereffects of the armed conflict become discursively rendered throughout the country. As Quiceno Toro explains, "The idea of *vivir sabroso* 'complicates'—in the positive sense of the word—the controversies over war and peace in the region. It invites us, therefore, to populate politics with uncertainties and, based on them, to activate movement."[36] Is there a certainty to healing after the world-annihilating violence that so many of these rural Afro-Colombian and Indigenous communities face? Fear of retaliation and revenge sometimes clouds discussions about what can happen after such disasters. It seems ludicrous to expect retaliation from marginalized populations who hold limited amounts of resources and political power in a country that aspires to (and often enacts) Europeanist ideals of political liberalism and democracy. I find helpful here anthropologist Veena Das's thoughtful renderings of the ways in which violence seeps into the everyday lives of those most affected by it. She writes, "Recovery did not lie in enacting a revenge against the world, but in inhabiting it in a gesture of mourning for it."[37] Collective theater-making and the space it creates to remember lives before the armed conflict might enact this gesture of recovery through mourning.

Within a broader genealogy of collective theater-making in Latin America, the plays staged in Bojayá could be considered part of the New Colombian Theater. This *nuevo teatro* brought together popular and marginalized cultures to

> reveal historical, political, and social processes that contributed to strengthening the cultural heritage of the country. Themes emerged from the very real social environment of each community. . . . Folklore and historical characters have been incorporated into Colombian theatre, and at the same time, the national life-style and *events from everyday life* are analyzed within dramatic works. . . . In *creative collections*, in collective montages.[38]

I highlight above the specific mention of representations of everyday life through collective creation to demonstrate how these processes are part of this national genealogy. It is beyond the scope of this book to articulate the history of New Theater in Colombia (1960s onward), but I do want to position these Black theater-makers in Bojayá as not unique or examples of a type of exceptionalism, but rather as valuable participants in the development of theater practices in Colombia that rely heavily on local and historical events that intersect with community-building, political demands, memorialization, grief, and healing. These plays contend with real affective registers through both making and witnessing them. Theater scholar Paola S. Hernández writes about the real and how performers bring "stories, objects and personal artifacts" to the stage. They "tell their own stories of the past, using their bodies as documents or mediums through which other stories get retold and reenacted," thereby allowing audiences to "discover new perspectives or interpretations of the past."[39] She goes on to claim that "the affective hold of the real, orchestrated through site specificity, autobiography, the innovative use of people with no formal acting training, personal documents, video and photographs, may affect spectatorship, transform private and public memories, modes of participation, and the kinds of truth claims theater can make."[40] In *Honrar*, the actors come together to complete a mandala that takes up the center portion of the performance space in the final scene. It is an elaborate circular formation that they decorate with the flowers they held at the beginning of the play, candles, and small chests that resemble the containers of the remains of the victims. Their mandala becomes part of the larger ritual process occurring around them: honoring the dead whose remains have finally

been returned to their families and territory. *Honrar* begins as a play yet ends with a mourning ritual and a reverence for the dead. It offers a sense of resolution to seventeen years of grief.

Honrar's letter belongs to a greater archive of grief. The act of reading the letter, a letter that connects to the letters written and read in 2003, instantiates Hernández's claim that "material archives recodified by live performance in the present help generate an affective relationship between actor and the audience."[41] These letters shared between the dead and the living that span across time and space function as archives. They are living testimonies to the grief and sadness this community has endured, while also containing inspiring words for the maintenance of the community's political convictions in defense of their territories. The embodied archive of the actors on the stage, some whom were either present for the first play in 2003 or participated in it (like Boris, José Luis, and Elvia), enables a "reshaped and reenacted" archive in the present through symbolic movements: the affect captured in the letters moving across space and time and from the expression of individual grief of the victims' family members to the collective grief and struggle of the community seventeen years later. This ability to be in movement—whether physically on a river or psychically through the theatrical convention of the letters—creates an opportunity for *vivir sabroso* to materialize.

Those watching (and performing in) *Honrar a los Sagrados Espíritus* are surrounded in a sensory threshold that powerfully transmits a type of truth-telling, a *testimonio* to the authorities, communities, and state about the effects of the armed conflict on their daily lives. While the plays rely on *testimonio*, memory, and objects from the past, *Los Muertos* and *Honrar* are not necessarily documentary theater. They do, however, maintain some of its purposes as defined by Hernández. She explains, "In documentary theatre, artists and playwrights borrow the objects from the past to bring new understandings to present life and expose the ways in which testimony, reenactments, and embodiment onstage transform the archive, which in turn might lead to new rules or conditions in the present."[42] By being in this ontological space of experiencing their world, they can align what they see, think, and feel with their desire for and materialization of a *vivir sabroso* that can lead to new political possibilities for them. The "joy and solidarity" they experience by working together in *creación colectiva* are modes of "learning, being, and co-existing in the Colombian Pacific."[43] It is a type of peacebuilding and peace-feeling exercise that is affective and, most important, fully embodied.

When *Honrar* was performed at La Entrega Final, it was the actors' bodies, standing between the living audience and the remains of the dead, that made a lasting impact. As members of the community most impacted by the 2002 massacre, they were bearing witness while simultaneously offering affective or psychic opportunities for healing. Hernández explains that in *testimonio* theater, "the embodiment of the actor's own story, the physicality of his or her body combined with first-person narration serves as a powerful mechanism for truth-telling."[44] I draw on Latin American theater scholars to situate these plays between *testimonio* and documentary theater, but I argue that these plays in Bojayá remain distinct from these forms given the content, cultural context, and methods of creation. Most important, these plays are not for circulation or for wider audience engagement. They function as possible cathartic healing processes for the affected communities who move through their memories and experiences as they engage in spectatorship. This claim is specifically evident in the moment when José Luis Murillo performs a monologue in the character of an Elder from Bojayá. This character waxes poetically about the beauty and joy of what it was like to live in Bellavista/Bojayá before the armed conflict.

> Yo lo que les quiero contar es esto acá no todo el tiempo fue así. ¿Qué guerra, qué plomo? Cuando yo estaba muchacho en mi niñez nosotros corríamos por todas estas calles . . . vamos para allá para los ríos a cazar y a pescar. Teníamos unos pescados así de grande. Cuando veníamos de allí ya entraba la noche, llegábamos a la casa, nos sentábamos y nos poníamos a contar historias, pero un día llegaron, ya ustedes saben quién, y todo cambió.
>
> I want to tell you that it wasn't always like this. What war? When I was young growing up, we would run around these streets . . . just go to the rivers to hunt and fish. We would have fish this big [he gestures]. When we returned, night would be falling, we got home, we used to sit down, and we would start telling stories, but one day, you know who came, and everything changed.[45]

The act of writing a monologue based on embodied memories, then performing it for his own community exemplifies the joys and solidarities of daily life, of *vivir sabroso*. It also sets up a different historical narrative about their environment, one where life persisted before the influx of

paramilitaries and guerrillas. In an interview with José Luis, participant in the theater processes and member of the Comité de Víctimas de Bojayá, he shared his understanding about the significance of using his embodied knowledge and memories as a mode of truth-telling and, more important, as a political tool for protest. The significance of movement is made evident in his commentary as well:

> El cuerpo como herramienta, y como toda herramienta *necesita movimiento*, y ese *movimiento* debe estar ligado al pensamiento. Entonces nosotros utilizamos el cuerpo para mostrar lo que estamos pensando también a nivel individual y a nivel colectivo. Lo que están pasando los demás y que no tienen la oportunidad de decirlo como nosotros si la tenemos, porque no tienen la posibilidad a nivel de acceso a las artes o al espacio como tal, donde realmente se pueda mostrar eso . . . por eso es importante nuestros cuerpos como herramienta para denunciar y *para exigir una vida digna.*
>
> The body as a tool, and like any tool, *needs movement*, and that *movement* must be linked to thought. So we use the body to show what we are thinking also on an individual level and a collective level, what others are going through and do not have the opportunity to say it as we do, because they do not have the possibility to access the arts or the space, as such, where they can really show it. . . . That is why our bodies are important as a tool to denounce and *to demand a dignified life*.[46]

And yet this question remains: How is it possible to have a dignified life when the humanity of those desiring dignity remains historically and politically undermined? The collective creation processes to produce *Honrar* (and *Los Muertos*) demonstrate how the movement of collective bodies offers models for joy, protest, solidarity, dignity, and peacebuilding in the Colombian Pacific. These commemorative performances make clear how memory is both a "tool and a political project."[47] They must pass through the memories of the massacre together, daily, monthly, yearly while simultaneously re-membering and making visible the absence of the state in preventing the massacre in the first place. The right to dignity continues to confound, and the next section examines how the exigent demand for a dignified life led to the massive civic protests in Buenaventura.

Buenaventura: The Civic Protest of 2017 and Urban Stagings of *Vivir Sabroso*

In 1993 the Proceso de Comunidades Negras (PCN) was cofounded by Libia Grueso, an Afro-Colombian social worker, political activist, and environmental activist from Buenaventura. PCN is guided by such principles as the reaffirmation of the cultural identity of Black communities; the defense of the ancestral territories of Black communities and sustainable use of their natural resources; the autonomous participation of Black communities and their organizations in decision-making processes that affect them; and the defense of an approach to development that aligns with the cultural aspirations of Black communities and is culturally and environmentally sustainable.[48] PCN's first organizing principle is "El derecho de SER" (The right TO BE). It includes over 120 organizations (at first there were 480, but the armed conflict has impacted those numbers) that come together to define themselves as Black. As they articulate,

> Entendemos el SER NEGR@S, desde el punto de vista de nuestra lógica cultural, de nuestra manera particular de ver el mundo, de nuestra visión de la vida en todas sus expresiones ecológicas, sociales, económicas y políticas. Una lógica que está en contradicción y lucha con la ideología dominante que nos explota, avasalla y anula y que nos coloca en una situación de subordinación y discriminación como personas y como grupo étnico [. . . y] en confrontación con un modelo de sociedad al que no le conviene la diversidad de visiones porque necesita la uniformidad para seguir imponiéndose. . . . Reafirmarnos como NEGR@S, nos convoca a adelantar un trabajo profundo hacia nuestro propio interior, hacia nuestras propias conciencias de tal manera que logremos transformar todas aquellas creencias, estereotipos e imaginarios que la cultura dominante nos ha inculcado y que ha tergiversado. Desde este punto de vista debemos partir como primer principio del hecho que SOMOS NEGR@S y somos fieles a los que somos y al orden social que concebimos desde nuestra cultura. (Líela Arroyo, Documento PCN Coordinación Nacional, Buenaventura-Colombia, 2000.)
>
> We understand BEING NEGR@S, from the point of view of our cultural logic, of our particular way of seeing the world, of our vision of life in all its ecological, social, economic and political

> expressions. A logic that is in contradiction and struggle with the dominant ideology that exploits, subjugates, and annuls us and that places us in a situation of subordination and discrimination as persons and as an ethnic group [. . . and] in confrontation with a model of society that does not want diversity of visions because it needs uniformity to continue imposing itself. . . . Reaffirming ourselves as NEGR@S summons us to advance a deep work toward our own interior, toward our own consciences in such a way that we manage to transform all those beliefs, stereotypes, and imaginaries that the dominant culture has instilled in us and that it has distorted. From this point of view, we must start, as a first principle, from the fact that we ARE NEGR@S and are faithful to who we are and to the social order that we conceive from our culture.[49]

Part of being NEGR@S involves defending life and territory from threats such as governmental capitalist greed, armed forces, FARC, paramilitaries, and other exploitative agents determined to take control of this resource-rich (and rich in ease of transportation) area.

PCN belongs to a larger umbrella organization in the Pacific region entitled Minga por la Memoria.[50] Under this umbrella organization, many religious, cultural, and educational organizations engage in artistic and performance practices to materialize their rage, frustrations, demands, and ultimately their ways of life amid the chaos that rains upon them through dispossession, social and economic marginalization, and forced displacement. *Minga*, an Indigenous word, approximates the idea of working collectively. It comes from the Quechua *mink'a* and concerns community work where partnerships come together around a particular task.[51] It has been mobilized within Afro and Indigenous communities in Colombia to conceptualize how communities come together to enact political change. *Mingas*, as we explain in our digital archive Corpografías, are events, sites, spaces where "elders, adults, youth and children participate, because everyone contributes what they have to be a community and to protect what they are: the territory."[52] *Mingas* respond to extant social ills and political situations, but what remains constant is that self and community coexist; they are one. Other notable Africanist philosophies of community-making and community-building include *uramba* (union) and *ubuntu* (*Yo soy porque nosotros somos*, I am because we are). Activated through the processes of working together in a variety of organizations to defend human sovereignty and territorial and environmental well-being,

these philosophies of relation offer models of coexistence with our natural world to avoid our voracious civilizational crisis.

Many of these organizations take the traditional music, songs, and dances from the Pacific and re-signify them for political purposes. They use them to call out the injustices, impunity, lack of resources, and violence they experience daily. Most importantly, they re-signify their cultural traditions to demand peace. Due to the inability of many of them to gather during the extreme violences of the armed conflict, many of these traditional forms began to disappear or lose significance. Fortunately, many local community leaders maintained the cultural heritages, particularly through church-sponsored activities (such as the theater practices described in the first half of this chapter). It was these cultural traditions, such as folkloric dances, songs, and rituals, that became part of the Buenaventura protests and that I want to highlight in this section. As I share the story of the Buenaventura civic protests, I dwell on the embodied stagings of the protesting citizens of Buenaventura, their cultural and geographically informed traditions, and their enactment of one of the tenets of *vivir sabroso*: to form a family across struggle, organizations, and social movement(s). The entire city participated in the protests. Colombian (gold, blue, and red) and Buenaventura (green and gold) flags colored the streets. In the video and photographic footage I have seen, protesters often wore white. Colombian *fútbol* jerseys came a close second as preferred attire. Marchers crossed arms, walked side by side, hugged one another, sang along in call-and-response fashion, and held signs that ranged in message from the desire for peace to solidarity among themselves and a demand for no abandonment by government authorities.

The urgency of political organizing and the insistence that the government fulfill its promises about the restitution of land, retitling of land, and more social and economic investment in the Cauca area led to the mobilizations and strike on May 16, 2017. The strike, made up of 90 percent Afro-Colombians, was a twenty-two-day event that insisted on the end of poverty and violence in an area neglected by the state for over twenty years. Such neglect was still palpable when I went to Buenaventura in 2019. I stared wide-eyed at one of our informants when he told us they still don't have a local hospital in the city. *What happens when you get gravely ill? Where do you go?* I wondered. As we moved about the city in taxis, I noticed the overflow of garbage on almost every corner. Coming from New York City, I am never surprised when I see heaps of garbage in a densely populated area, but this was extreme evidence of the lack of a

sanitation infrastructure in the city. Another notable absence was potable water for the communities even though they live alongside a bay, rivers, and the Pacific Ocean.

Buenaventura is victim of exploitative measures by the state to maintain the population in precarious daily conditions. Amid such squalor, I noticed that the only infrastructurally developed area was around the port: a huge supermarket, a park, well-stocked and well-decorated restaurants, and a city square with a 4- or 5-star hotel nearby (Hotel Cosmos) where government and foreign travelers stay. I remembered the plaza from protest footage where protesters took over the space in front of the hotel and yelled up toward the glass structure while government officials and foreign venture capitalists looked down. This staging of the hierarchy between the masses below and the economic and political elites above, looking down and protected by glass, could not have been more explicitly clear about who and what matters there. Nevertheless, the protesters had the upper hand. They outnumbered the others; they were louder; they were clear in their demands: enough with exploitation.

Buenaventura functions as a quintessential example of how multinational, extractive, and colonialist policies dispossess historically marginalized populations at the expense of their ways of life, namely *vivir sabroso*. The priority of the Colombian government was the development of the port, "while devaluing bodies and spaces."[53] However, these governmental impositions failed to derail regular protests in the area, with the 2017 strike being the largest and longest one in the area. It was a "humanitarian, economic, social and ecological" emergency that protested decried, and in defense of life and territory, almost four hundred thousand took to the streets, many of them members of the seventy-one organizations that convened the protest. These organizations included "communal councils (representatives of rural Black communities), Indigenous groups, unions, grassroots organizations, neighborhood associations, the Catholic Church and local business coalitions."[54] I think about how antithetical these mobilizations are with respect to performance studies scholar André Lepecki's claim that we do not know yet how to move politically.[55] By paraphrasing Hannah Arendt, Lepecki clearly posits his statement within a Western context. Yet Buenaventura protests exist as quite the contrary. They belong to the larger mass mobilizations in Latin America that are at the forefront of imagining, then politically articulating, the direction our current capitalist, racist, patriarchal, and extractive world needs to move toward in order to prevent climate catastrophe, vast economic inequalities, and

extinction. Performance studies scholar Marcela Fuentes writes about demonstrations in Latin America as "networks of protests" or, more specifically, as "performance constellations where activists, artists and protestors interweave on- and offline modalities of cooperative action in order to challenge the status quo and effect social change."[56] In Colombia, and particularly in Buenaventura, activists, artists, protesters, and community leaders all gathered to enact change beyond neoliberal parameters and ideals of freedom and accessibility. I align my analysis of the protests in Buenaventura with what cultural studies scholar Olga Lucía Sorzano claims in her analysis of the 28A protests in Colombia.[57] Sorzano contends that "Colombian and Latin American protests reveal and demand alternative forms to exist in the world. Instead of analyzing social protests as 'linear and chronological events in response to hegemonic powers' for example, or identifying 'a before and an after, or what is novel or distinctive,' in the protest, [28A is] an epistemological-existential and pedagogical struggle that 'questions the epistemic [ontological and pedagogical] structures that tend to normalize the order of oppression' making visible 'the plurality of alternatives through which social life is organized and experienced.'"[58] The demands of the protesting Bonaverenses made evident the solidarities across the plurality of alternatives. The demands included structural solutions in the form of greater control over local finances, decision-making power over natural resources, and changes in the legal system that marginalizes and criminalizes them.[59] For twenty-two days they protested in a variety of ways, but predominantly through marches, cultural and religious activities, music, song, and embodied collectivity.

Buenaventura has only one major road to enter and exit the city. This limitation of access and movement facilitated a major goal of the strike: to interrupt business. During the protests, Bonaverenses reclaimed the road, blocking it from commerce and capitalist activity:

> El comercio cerró. Nuestros líderes nos dijeron que sería indefinido y duraría lo que el Gobierno tardara en responder. Nuestra ciudad, por donde se mueve el 50 por ciento del comercio exterior del país y cada día entran y salen 2,600 tractomulas, fue bloqueada en once puntos.
>
> Trade was closed. Our leaders told us it would be indefinite and would last as long as it took the government to respond. Our city, through which 50 percent of the country's foreign trade moves

> and 2,600 tractor-trailers enter and leave every day, was blocked at eleven points.[60]

Instead of commercial activity, they occupied it with their bodies engaged in performance practices and, most important, political chants such as this one: "Porque la tierra es nuestra, completamente nuestra, ¡el pueblo no se rinde, carajo!" (Because the land is ours, completely ours, the people don't give up, dammit!").

As one protester explained,

> Los tres primeros fueron días de música, canto y oración. Nos habíamos dispuesto a orar en los espacios de concentración popular y allí nos unimos alrededor de los bombos y guasás, de los cununos y marimbas. No hubo proclamas políticas ni llamamos a guardar la disciplina. Tampoco tuvimos enfrentamientos con la fuerza pública. Bailamos currulao. Cantamos. Jugamos dominó. Conversamos entre nosotros en calma y con los pocos medios que nos preguntaban qué sucedía. "Mi Buenaventura" se convirtió en nuestro himno y lo bailamos sin tregua.
>
> The first three days were days of music, singing, and prayer. We had prepared ourselves to pray in the spaces of popular concentration, and there we united around the drums and *guasás*, the *cununos* and marimbas.[61] There were no political proclamations, nor did we call for discipline. Nor did we have confrontations with the public forces. We danced *currulao*.[62] We sang. We played dominoes. We talked calmly among ourselves and with the few media that asked us what was going on. "Mi Buenaventura"[63] became our hymn, and we danced to it relentlessly.[64]

They danced, they sang, and they played dominoes. They articulated their rights to live and express themselves freely. The movement vocabulary of the *currulao* best represents how the rhythm, tempo, and relationship between bodies articulate the poetics of *vivir sabroso*. Let me explain. *Currulao* showcases the drum and the marimba in a 3/4 or 6/8 pattern. These instruments sound out the steady undulating rhythm, a to-and-from that almost hypnotizes in its repetition. The steps that coincide with these rhythms are quite simple. They resemble a waltz step: step right, ball left, step right; step left, ball right, step left; and so on. Women hold out their

big wide skirt (usually with the right hand/arm) and sway it back and forth, like a slow-motion pendulum. Men hold a handkerchief and slightly circle it around in their hand. Women can also hold the *pañuelo* along with the ends of the skirt. The beauty and virtuosity of the *currulao* comes from the restrained elegance and rhythmic precision with which one dances it. Additionally, in more formal presentations, the couple (or couples in a large group) engage in patterns and formations around the dance floor: circles, lines, waves. The *currulao* is as if the Colombian Pacific Ocean were softly breathing and lulling you. The marimba sounds can continue for five . . . ten . . . fifteen minutes, and the songs' call-and-response structure also affects you sensorially: a call to collectivity through the voice, but also through the time signature. Each measure feels like it lasts as long as one human inhalation and exhalation.

Notions of time and bodies' movements through space adapt to the rhythm of the ocean, swamps, and rivers. They dance what geographer Ulrich Oslender, in his ethnographic work in Guapi, Colombia, calls *the aquatic space*. Oslender explains that the aquatic space is "the particular assemblage of spatial relations that results from human entanglements with an aquatic environment characterized by intricate river networks, significant tidal ranges, labyrinthine mangrove swamps, and frequent inundations."[65] Buenaventura lies in and around such an aquatic space, and this *ecosofía*, ecological philosophy, affects the community's experiences of time, space, and how they move through that space. As Colombian anthropologist Jaime Arocha Rodríguez also articulates, Afro-Colombians have a relation they "created with their rivers, their streams and forests [as] not only one of respect, but of sisterhood [. . . A]mongst Afro-Colombians neither plants nor animals exist per se, but further complemented and qualified through the word, through people's minds."[66] It is this poetics of relationality with water, plant, and animal, I argue, that manifests in how they dance, how they walk, and even how they occupy space when they protest. Not to essentialize their corporeality, as Antonio Benitez Rojo assigned "a certain kind of way"[67] to Black women in the Caribbean, or worse, to establish a "noble savage" mythology about an unfettered interconnectedness between Black people and nature, but instead I want to show how our bodies are products and living, breathing processes of the environments and philosophies we espouse. The Afro-Colombian and Indigenous ways of being with plant and animal influenced the ways they staged their confrontation against the government. This is why the strike was seemingly peaceful (despite some outbursts of

state-sanctioned violence) and full of joy.[68] As one protester described it, "Mientras tanto, seguimos bailando y celebrando. La cultura era nuestro vehículo de cohesion" (Meanwhile, we continue to dance and celebrate. Culture was our way of coming together).[69]

The first day of the protest at around 7:00 a.m. they began to close all the ways into the city by using their bodies: "Los manifestantes realizaron una cadena humana obstaculizando el paso vehicular" (The demonstrators made a human chain, blocking the passage of vehicles).[70] And it was embodied practices that surged when the Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica researched and subsequently produced a document of more than 430 pages entitled *Buenaventura, un puerto sin comunidad*.[71] Minga por la Memoria requested this study. The tome examines the period between 2000 and 2013 and constructs a history of the contributing factors that have led to the dispossession and erosion of peace, tranquility, and social well-being, namely the ability to engage *vivir sabroso*, in Buenaventura due to the armed conflict and its relationship with multinational capitalism and environmental exploitation. Among the atrocities experienced are forced displacement/deracination, homicides, forced recruitment of boys and girls, sexual assault and abuse of women, false positives,[72] armed confrontations, assassinations of social justice leaders, creation of torture sites (*casas de pique*),[73] and clandestine cemeteries for the disappeared. This document, narrates the history by the Bonaverense victims. In it, they speak about how artistic and embodied practices allowed them to navigate around the horrific violences and maintain social support networks. It was significant for them to have opportunity to be together, *juntarse, hacer mingas y urambas*, to create together and move through the affective roller-coaster that they experienced as a result of the armed conflict: rage, grief, fear, sadness, and hope. This then enables them to engage in affective community-building to help process their traumas and effect political change when they can.

We relied on the CNMH's report when we began our research in Buenaventura for the grant Embodied Performance Practices. Through our two-and-a-half-year project we witnessed and studied how artistic practices through bodies in motion allowed the processing of grief while also corporealizing memory and possibilities for reconciliation. In the Pacific context we studied what embodied performance practices allow:

- The ability to be together, laugh, and embrace
- Preservation and transmission of ancestral knowledges

- Joy
- Imagining and creating new worlds
- Unburdening oneself emotionally with the possibility of forgiveness and reconciliation[74]

I include these here because they are not necessarily unique to the role that embodied performance practices have in conflict and post-conflict societies, where victims, bystanders, and perpetrators must interact with one another daily, or when the state is both the perpetrator of violence and the grantor of measures for symbolic or material restitutions. Instead, I stress the importance of relationality and being together in community as the most significant factor to move through in mitigating the aftereffects of an armed conflict. If, as Quiceno Toro insists, *vivir sabroso* relies on movement, then these ways of bonding through embodied performance practices and using said practices as part of mass mobilizations during the Buenaventura civic strike visibly demonstrated what that poetics entails.

Another important document is the Manos Visibles–sponsored publication entitled *¡Carajo! Una narración de las movilizaciones sociales paros cívicos: Chocó y Buenaventura 2017*, which narrates the history of civic protests in the region between 1967 and 2017. The document is notable for its use of first-person narrative. It contains a formalized rationale, identifying eight themes that the protests focused on: health, environment, education, culture and sports, public services, security and victims, territory and citizenship, enterprise, and employment.[75] The second half of the publication creates a diary-like report of each day of the *paro cívico*. Within each day's account, moving and often harrowing descriptions of that day's event appear. The Bonaverenses risked putting their bodies on the line in defense of basic rights and dignity.

In this next section, I offer an abridged report and my own translations of *¡Carajo!* As a dance and performance studies scholar, I specifically focus on instances where embodied performance practices are used *in order to* protest. My intention is not to minimize the important details of the negotiations, the violences, and the variety of accounts and organizations involved. Instead, I hope to tell the story of the protest from an embodied perspective where coming together foments collective political purpose in order to bring about social change. I echo the work of dance scholar Susan Leigh Foster, who focuses on the choices that bodies make. She explains that "by showing how bodies make articulate choices based upon their intelligent reading of other bodies, I will endeavor to frame a

new perspective on individual agency and collective action, one that casts the body in a central role as enabling human beings to work together to create social betterment."[76] While I attend to how the Bonaverenses themselves report the events of the protests in chronological fashion, I dwell on how the protests make visible the epistemic and ontological struggles that are part of greater liberation movements globally. While they themselves utilize the linearity of time to narrate the strike, the timelessness of their embodiments each day, living in their present moments, only heightens the hegemonic coloniality that they are contesting through epistemic activism, solidarity, *minga*, and *uramba*. I evoke the thinking of literary and performance studies scholar Julius Fleming, who offers the concept of "afro-presentism" as a mode that "imagines, crafts, and accounts for the aesthetic, experiential, and political strategies that black people use to embrace the possibilities of the present while continuing to engage in the necessary practice of black freedom dreaming."[77] The patience, solidarity, determination, and activism Bonaverenses demonstrated for twenty-two days made 2017 a notable year in Colombia. The first half not only featured the mass civic strikes but also the granting of legal rights to the Atrato River. Successful referenda were also passed against large-scale mining, hydrocarbon exploration, and drilling in rural communities.[78] Embodied political mobilizations led to important policy changes that open the possibility to fully live the tenets of *vivir sabroso*.

The Buenaventura Protests: A Timeline

After the first successful day of protests where the main road was blocked by Afro-Colombians making music and dancing, the protest continued with vigor.

DAY 2: MAY 17

> La fiesta continuó en las calles y las oraciones también. No había proclamas políticas allí ni llamados al orden. Celebrábamos y parábamos. Eso era.
>
> No hubo proclamas políticas ni llamados a conservar el orden. La genta bailaba. Había música de marimba, sonaban los tambores por doquier, el cununo y el guasá se adueñaron de las calles. Se bailó y canto, se entonaron canciones y sonó currulao y salsa. . . .

> Se trataba de parar y de gozar mientras presionábamos la llegada de soluciones. . . . Así que cantamos y celebramos. Estábamos Unidos como Pacífico.
>
> The party continued in the streets and so did the prayers. There were no political proclamations there and no calls to order. We celebrated and stopped. That was it.
>
> There were no political proclamations or calls to preserve order. People were dancing. There was marimba music, drums were beating everywhere, *cununo* and *guasá* took over the streets. There was dancing and singing, songs were sung and *currulao* and salsa were played. . . . It was all about stopping and enjoying while we pressed for solutions . . . So we sang and celebrated. We were united as the Pacific.

DAY 4: MAY 19

The fourth day of the civic protest brought in the Escuadrón Móvil Antidisturbios (ESMAD), the demonstration and riot control police. Confrontations ensued. Violence, theft, and vandalism occurred.

> Hasta ese momento solo habíamos celebrado. La idea de la iglesia, de hacer los puntos de concentración lugares de solidaridad y encuentro había funcionado. Comíamos, bailábamos, contábamos cuentos en la madrugada. ¿Cómo podia todo terminar en esto? . . . La noche terminó en medio de gases lacrimógenos y balas, capturas y zozobra. . . . El paro pacífico ya no podría ser. . . . Llorábamos de espanto y de dolor. Y de rabia e indignación.
>
> Up to that point we had only celebrated. The idea of the church, of making the concentration points places of solidarity and encounter, had worked. We ate, we danced, we told stories at dawn. How could it all end in this? . . . The night ended in the midst of tear gas and bullets, arrests, and anxiety. . . . The peaceful protest could no longer be. . . . We cried with horror and pain. And with rage and indignation.

DAY 5: MAY 20

Vímos un río de gente que venía por los cuatro carriles de la calle Sexta gritando: "¡El pueblo no se rinde, carajo!" "Pasó por encima de nosotros y nos llevó como una ola de tsunami," recuerdan nuestros líderes.

Éramos los miles de bonavarenses que no habíamos participado en los desmanes ni en los saqueos, indignados por la violencia de la noche anterior.

Salímos a las calles con consignas de paz y reinvidación social, dispuestos a enfrentarnos a las autoridades y a los violentos. Desde diferentes lugares del país y del mundo, se unió, organizaron marchas, plantones y dijeron: "Yo soy Buenaventura y la injusticia me duele."

Una organización de jóvenes, Rostros Urbanos, apostamos por el arte y trajimos la alegría de nuestras voces, la identidad, el folclor, el bombo, los cununos, la poesía y la resistencia.

We saw a river of people coming down the four lanes of Sixth Street shouting: "The people won't give up, dammit!" "It passed over us and carried us away like a tsunami wave," our leaders recall.

We were the thousands of Bonaverenses who had not participated in the rioting and looting, outraged by the violence of the previous night.

We took to the streets with slogans of peace and social reinvigoration, ready to confront the authorities and the violence. From different parts of the country and the world, we united, organized marches and sit-ins, and said, "I am Buenaventura and injustice hurts me."

A youth organization, Rostros Urbanos, we bet on art and brought the joy of our voices, identity, folklore, the bass drum, the *cununos*, poetry, and resistance.

DAY 6: MAY 21

May 21 is the national day of the Afro-Colombian. It marks the abolition of slavery in Colombia on that day in 1851 and was first celebrated in 2001. That day one hundred and sixty thousand people took to the streets to celebrate but were met with violence from the state.

> No podíamos aceptar la brutalidad con que el Estado respondía. Ni siquiera usaban agua, sino gases lacrimógenos que disparaban directamente hacia las personas. "Maten a esos negros," también usaban las tanquetas contra las personas.
>
> . . . [G]ritábamos y cantábamos, acompañados por la voz de los principales cantantes de salsa de Buenaventura, que habían tomado la decisión de apoyarnos.

> We could not accept the brutality with which the state responded. They didn't even use water, but tear gas fired directly at people. "Kill those Blacks." They also used the tanks against people.
>
> We yelled and sang, accompanied by the voice of the main salsa singers of Buenaventura, who had made the decision to support us.

DAYS 12, 13, 14: MAY 27–29

> El lunes 29 fue festivo. Pero no desaprovechamos la oportunidad para celebrar. Realizamos el evento de Salsa al parque, con artistas invitados. Junto a ellos, artistas mostraron su solidaridad con nuestro proceso y animaron a los diez mil tureños que estuvimos allí. . . . De alguna forma, la música reconectaba a nuestra comunidad con el paro cívico. . . . Si bailábamos y celebrábamos era para reactivarnos como pueblo unido. Para conectarnos de nuevo y no olvidar.

> Monday the twenty-ninth was a public holiday. But we did not miss the opportunity to celebrate. We held the Salsa al Parque event, with invited artists. Along with them, artists showed their solidarity with our process and encouraged the ten thousand Tureños [Buenaventurans] who were there. . . . Somehow, the music reconnected our community with the civic strike. . . . If we danced and celebrated, it was to reactivate us as a united people. To reconnect and not forget.

DAYS 18 AND 19: JUNE 2–3

ESMAD, police, and armed forces presence by this time numbered three thousand. Meanwhile the strike leaders continued negotiations, and some began reaching agreements.

No era fácil, sin embargo, estar reunido en el Hotel Cosmos. Pedimos hacer las reuniones en un colegio, pero el Gobierno adujo falta de seguridad y no logramos movilizarlos. El Cosmos era un lugar cómodo para el gobierno, y eso indica hasta dónde podían ceder porque estaban en su ambiente, y no en realidad nuestra de cada día: No sentían el calor ni la zozobra de las calles. Para nosotros no fue sencillo: En el hotel todo se cobraba, y en las madrugadas era imposible acceder a algo simple como un café. La comunidad se sintió presionada por eso.

It was not easy, however, to meet at the Hotel Cosmos. We asked to hold the meetings in a school, but the government claimed that there was a lack of security, and we were unable to mobilize them [our followers]. The Cosmos was a comfortable place for the government, and that indicates how far they could yield because they were in their environment, and not in our everyday reality: They did not feel the heat or the anxiety of the streets. For us it was not easy: In the hotel everything was charged, and in the early morning it was impossible to access something simple like a coffee. The community felt pressured by this.

DAY 20: JUNE 4

La gente en las calles sentía que el paro estaba por terminar y se unieron en otro día de celebración: Se realizó una caminata con artistas reconocidos de Buenaventura, a las que se unieron personalidades como Willy García, Junior Jein y el futbolista Freddy Rincón, entre muchos otros, y en la que se realizaron actividades culturales, se bailó salsa y música del Pacífico, y se realizó una marcha que fue desde el Sena hasta el centro de la ciudad.

The people in the streets felt that the strike was about to end and joined in another day of celebration: A walk was held with well-known artists from Buenaventura, joined by personalities such as Willy García, Junior Jein, and soccer player Freddy Rincón,[79] among many others, and included cultural activities, salsa dancing and music from the Pacific, and a march from the Sena to the center of the city.

DAY 22: JUNE 6

At 6:00 a.m. sirens from the Meritorio Cuerpo de Bomberos, the volunteer fire department, echoed through the city, announcing that the strike had ended. Both sides had come to an agreement.

> Ese día, todos sentimos que habíamos logrado el mejor acuerdo posible. El pacto iniciaría con un presupuesto de $76 millones de dólares con crédito externo equivalenta a 220 mil 400 millones de pesos, más los 873 mil millones de pesos por parte de todos los ministerios como también de los impuestos por obras, para un total de 1.5 billones de pesos, una vez fuera aprobado por el Congreso de la República la creación del Fondo de Patrimonio Autónomo para Buenaventura.
>
> A las 9 de la mañana se leyeron los acuerdos. Hubo aplausos y abrazos.
>
> El Pacífico, unido, celebró. . . .
>
> Habíamos desafiado al Gobierno nacional y obtenido a cambiar lo que era nuestro. Nos habíamos unido. Y a través de la cultura nos cohesionamos: los artistas usamos nuestro talento para replantear la narrativa de la región. Las líricas invitaron a la lucha. No fueron vacías, sino llenas de contenido que enfatizaba nuestra dignidad y fuerza.

> On that day, we all felt that we had reached the best possible agreement. The pact would start with a budget of $76 million with external credit equivalent to 220,400 million pesos, plus 873 billion pesos from all the ministries, as well as taxes for works, for a total of 1.5 trillion pesos, once the creation of the Autonomous Patrimony Fund for Buenaventura was approved by the Congress of the Republic.
>
> At nine in the morning the agreements were read. There was applause and hugs.
>
> The Pacific, united, celebrated. . . .
>
> We had defied the national government and were able to change what was ours. We had united. And we united through cultural practices: We artists used our talent to rethink the narrative of the region. The lyrics invited us to the struggle. They were not empty, but full of content that emphasized our dignity and strength.

The Relationality of Protests

Dance and performance studies scholars such as Susan Leigh Foster, Anusha Kedhar, André Lepecki, and Rebecca Schneider have written about protests as choreographic and highlighted the gestural vocabularies protesting bodies utilize.[80] Foster stresses the importance of the body during protests as a meaning-making physicality ("an articulate signifying agent")[81] that interrupts and agitates the space. For Foster, it is the "collective connectivity" of bodies protesting together against the status quo that brings about the possibility for social change. Bodies read, watch, and make choices as they move together in protest. They mimic, improvise, and innovate. They occupy space together and they move out of the way if harm looks imminent. They protect one another and form barriers, blockades, standing shoulder to shoulder, hand in hand, fists raised. Without intelligent bodies in motion working together, protests would lack efficacy. Protesting bodies, and in this case majority-Black Bonaverense protesting bodies laid the groundwork for significant change in Colombia in 2017. Further asserting the power of protesting bodies, André Lepecki writes that "moving politically is predicated on the need to be constantly reminded, daily, that whatever this moving accomplishes and brings into the world at any given moment will be always provisional and incomplete. Thus, the necessity to start again, to insist, no matter what, on the urgent challenge posed by that endless not yet."[82] The protesters started again every day. Disheartened by the violence and treatment from armed forces, they maintained their resolve through music, song, the ability to be in community together and to display solidarity within their territory and about their blackness. They danced together, held hands, or bumped shoulders through the streets. It was a practice of being adjacent rather than singularly standing up or standing out. They swayed to the lulling rhythm of the *currulao*, the soft plangent sounds of the marimba, the steadiness of the *cununos*, shifting weight with their legs, making sure to keep marching, to keep moving and being one with one another. Their protesting bodies, polyrhythms of community, articulated what Mexican sociologist Raquel Gutiérrez Aguilar describes as "permanently reconfigur[ing] the instituted order on several levels and through contrasting tempos . . . in an expansive and permanent yet discontinuous way; that is: laying down rhythms, generating cadences."[83] Thus, to move in rhythm, in sync with others establishing and reestablishing relationality, makes rhythm an organizing factor. It also functions as a container for

rage, grief, joy, frustration, and hope. It allows for these affective distinctions to fall into time or out of time with others so that what emerges is the sense of being in "time" with others even if that "time" does not promise liberation right away.

The Buenaventura strike articulated a choreopolitics of *vivir sabroso*, of displacing economic, social, and territorial disenfranchisement onto demands for said economic, social, and territorial restitutions through song, dance, and collective movement. Artistic expression—whether it be music (rap, hip-hop), art (graffiti and protest art), dance (folk dances such as the *currulao*), or theater—serves as a re-territorializating and resistive function for these communities who have been adamantly fighting for their rights since the 1990s. Peace communities, social organizations, and artistic communities emerged from the Buenaventura area not merely to celebrate their culture but to become spaces where community comes together with particular political goals in mind. As Colombian anthropologist Arturo Escobar asserts, "[The Colombian] Pacific potentially emerges as a cutting-edge territory for transitioning to models of life in which humans and the Earth can at last coexist in mutually enriching ways."[84] In other words, these Afro-Colombian and Indigenous communities' *mingas* already model a viable future, yet governmental ambivalence and capitalist priorities often prevent such a future from materializing. This is why the 2017 strike remains a significant event in the struggle for rights and dignity in the Pacific region of Colombia. It demonstrated the power, resolve, and creative zeal of these communities to articulate their demands for the defense of life and territory.

After twenty-two days of protesting, protesters reached an agreement via a strike committee and the national government. The Colombian government promised 1.5 billion pesos ($490,000) toward housing, healthcare, employment and productivity, water and sewage systems, education, electricity, and justice.[85] Upon examination of the protests, the protesters appropriated and mobilized legal language to achieve something akin to results. I say "something akin to" because the Colombian government still has not provided all of the provisions listed above.[86] Nevertheless, Colombian law professor Johanna del Pilar Cortes-Nieto argues that the collective nature of the protests' territorial relationships challenged the capitalist grammar inherent in the government's view of Buenaventura.[87] By using dance and music and creating an environment of *viviendo sabroso* (living *sabroso*—engaging the gerund here as further demonstration of the

continued evoking of present-ness), the protesters re-signified how they have been considered by national (let alone global) anti-blackness: as violent criminals lacking self-control. Instead, protesters showcased their political eloquence, artistic capacities, relational sophistication with one another in community, and ultimately what it means to stage a large-scale demonstration of *vivir sabroso* to resist the logics of capital and to demand a better way of life. By reinhabiting the urban spaces of Buenaventura, exploited for the profit of a few and none of the Bonaverenses, the protesters reminded themselves and showed the world that, when they come together in defense of life and territory, *vivir sabroso* is not just a fever/freedom dream but a required reality that reminds them to be resilient and to demand political change.

I invite Veena Das back into this discursive space, particularly her scholarly preoccupation with violence, to finish contextualizing the ways in which Afro-Colombians assert themselves through the experiences of violence, marginalization, and dehumanization at the hands of the state. As Das writes in her ethnography of violence, she is not so much "bearing an objective witness to the events as much as trying to locate the subject through the experience of such limits."[88] Here, then, is where the poetics of *vivir sabroso* facilitate my ability to locate them within and beyond struggle and especially within the everyday. It is through Afro-Colombians' everyday practices of "making a community beyond kin and across struggle" that they can recover from the physical toll of marching, protesting, and feeling anger, resentment, sadness, and hopelessness. As Das asserts,

> Life was not recovered through some grand gestures in the realm of the transcendent but through a descent into the ordinary. There was . . . a mutual absorption of the violent and the ordinary so that . . . the event [is] always attached to the ordinary as if there were tentacles that reach out from the everyday and anchor the event to it in some specific ways.[89]

The play, as it recounts life before, during, and after the massacre, and the mobilizations of the protest showcase the quotidian modes that materialize dignity as an everyday practice. The daily struggles and political commitments to dignity affirm a right to life and territory in community. This affirmation is not a given. In a similar fashion, *vivir sabroso* must be enacted and practiced so much and so regularly that it becomes habitual.

Hasta que la dignidad se haga costumbre (Until dignity becomes customary)

Colombian vice president Francia Márquez is the first Afro-Colombian to hold that position. An environmental and human rights activist since her teens, Márquez received the prestigious Goldman Environmental Prize in 2018 for her work to prevent illegal gold mining in her community. Her party, Soy Porque Somos, takes its name and political praxis from *ubuntu*, the South African word for collectivity that echoes throughout the Pacific region of Colombia under other names previously mentioned within this chapter: *minga* and *uramba*.

Togetherness. Unity. Relationality. Community.

These pluralistic modes of existence resonate all over the territory. Marilyn Machado of the PCN calls for "resistance, re-existence, which are only possible *in community, in collective*, by being a people!"[90] Individuality merely exists as a reminder of the onslaught of Western rationality. Collectivity, in the rural and aquatic spaces of Afro-Colombians and Indigenous peoples of the Colombian Pacific, offers the only answer to a sustainable and fulfilling life where an ethics of care, inter-existence, and *sentipensamiento* rule. The protests in Buenaventura were not a singular occurrence. They signaled a previous and continued insistence on the dignity of life and territory, two inseparable entities in the Pacific worldview. Márquez's ethics and social justice history stem from such political and philosophical reimaginings of the world outside of capitalist frameworks. Márquez's political motivations center the restoration of "*conditions for the continuous self-creation of life*, which in turn requires restoring, re/constructing, and revitalizing territory for the re/production of life in the face of the avalanche of violence and destruction caused by conflict, modernization, and development."[91] This self-creation of life requires a rethinking of what the self is in these circumstances: a *sentipensante* being connected with rivers, territories, and animals. One that cannot exist without others: *Soy porque somos*. One that—like many of the protesters in Buenaventura who stepped out each and every day of those twenty-two days—moves in defense of life, territory, and dignity.

It is not without coincidence that the 2022 slogan for the Colombian elections declared by Francia Márquez was *Hasta que la dignidad se haga costumbre*. It remains an urgent appeal, not a pithy electoral slogan

doomed to death by overuse or cynical dismissals of political platitudes. For something to be made customary, it must become a mundane, ordinary experience, something almost taken for granted. Thus, in the Colombian context, I linger on the following questions: How has a lack of dignity infiltrated the way of life and the ways in which Colombians react and reach out to, connect with, avoid, and ultimately experience one another? What would it mean for dignity, in such a class-stratified, racialized, and geographically divided country, with all of its flaws in implementation, to become ordinary and allow everyone to practice *vivir sabroso*? The complexities of *vivir sabroso*, "where danger, risk, tension and conflict are present, but are managed in a unique way, and not necessarily through violence and the extermination of the other,"[92] offer the potential to create and nurture multiple solidarities in Colombia. Dignity is already implied in its tenets.

The 1991 constitution establishes dignity as such:

- Human dignity is understood as autonomy or as the possibility of designing a life plan (living as one wishes to live);
- Human dignity is understood as certain material conditions (living well);
- Human dignity is understood as intangible goods, i.e., physical and moral integrity (living without humiliation).[93]

Autonomy, well-being, and integrity as components of a dignified life become urgent after six decades of armed conflict. Although peace accords were signed in 2016 and the government has moved to dignify victims of the conflict through various committees and precedents, such as Mesas de Participación Efectivas de Víctimas, the Ley de Víctimas, and the Comisión para el Esclarecimiento de la Verdad, la Convivencia y No Repetición, many victims do not trust the government because it has been both perpetrator of violence and facilitator of restitution. Many victims of the armed conflict continue to wait for material reparation such as restitution of lands or money, while others receive symbolic reparation such as the Entrega Final. Sandra Milena Rios Oyola identified three pathways to dignity in Colombia: dignity as a collective struggle; dignity as being an outsider, rejecting the political system; dignity as the psychosocial accompaniment provided by governmental institutions.[94] I will focus primarily on dignity as a collective struggle as I bring this chapter to a close.

The ways in which collective organizations work together to demand

dignity on their own terms complicates the path toward dignity's becoming an everyday occurrence, that is, a part of the ordinary event matrix in Colombia. These organizations resolutely demand contextually accurate and productive means of receiving reparations that will benefit the entire community, not just what the state thinks they need. Here is where agency and autonomy over the right to dignity complicate Márquez's cry. While we were in Bogotá in 2019 during the new appointment of the head of the Centro Hístorico de Memoria, we were told that several victims organizations had removed their archives because they did not agree with how the new director was historicizing the conflict. In other words, their victimhood status was put into question, thereby removing their dignity to own and tell their own narratives about the conflict.

Such is the concern of transitional justice measures that attempt to restore victims' human dignity in the Colombian context. Most of the work of transitional justice in Colombia centers around the perspective of the victims. Of course, this discourse is heated and polarized since during the Iván Duque presidency (2018–2022) the definition of victims (beyond the poor, rural, Afro and Indigenous, peasant populations) began to incorporate the landowners, whose ability to farm and make profit was stagnated. The administration's narrative of victimhood shifted to include army, police, and business owners as victims of the armed conflict. This overt delegitimization of Black, Indigenous, and poor rural Colombians' experiences explains why these communities continue to "move together, in time with nothing other than the energy of a moment, or an invisible affect, [as] a way of communicating beyond capture."[95] Through this moving together, whether on stages that exist over the rubble of the ruined and abandoned Bellavista Viejo, or through the urban environment of a beloved yet neglected city, they articulate their dignity as they strive toward *vivir sabroso* in all of its plenitude.

3. Choreographing Displacement

Every time I see a new work by Sankofa Danzafro I think of movement(s): literal, political, diasporic, and aesthetic. Their 2024 international tour *Narrativas negras en movimiento* (Black narratives in motion) showcased how integral movement is—to move physically and geographically—for Black subjectivities. The embodied histories of Rafael Palacios Callejas, the founder and artistic director of Sankofa Danzafro, set in motion this premise. Palacios traveled from Colombia to France, Burkina Faso, and Senegal to train with Germaine Acogny and Iréne Tassembedo in the early 1990s. Palacios subsequently founded Sankofa Danzafro in 1997 after moving back to Colombia from Paris. He lives in Medellín, but some of his family is from the department of Chocó, where many displaced Afro and Indigenous people live due to the armed conflict and its aftereffects. Many of the dancers in the company have similar connections to Chocó or other regions in the Pacific, such as Tumaco. These embodied knowledges linked to Afro-Colombian Pacific political, historical, and aesthetic sensibilities become intentional in that they "renounce, demand, ask and respond" through the choreographies.[1] While Sankofa's choreographic work does not claim to explicitly cite the philosophy of *vivir sabroso* as a grounding axis of its work, its political, pedagogical, and performance work *does* strive to affirm "family," or solidarities across struggle, organizations, and social movements. By centering blackness and its particular Colombian expressions, Sankofa displaces the governing mestizo/mestizo-as-white frame of reference within Colombia, thereby making visible its contentious racialized history. How, then, does its movement vocabulary facilitate this process of displacement?

The company's corporeal aesthetic lies within the broad field of Africanist contemporary dance theater, and it commingles diasporic Black popular dances with social activism and community work.[2] Sankofa,

which is a Ghanaian Akan word meaning "to return to the root," moves politically between art, activism, and opposition to anti-Black racism in its choreographic rationale. The company's mission is to "bridge the gaps between the many African diaspora communities in Colombia along with other populations whose human rights have been violated. Through its programs, the company nurtures community mentorship, social awareness, personal growth, and supports sustainability of local cultures inside of the national dynamics of Colombia."[3] Palacios enunciates his political and pedagogical commitments through the choreographic. He is a specialist with the Epistemologies of the South project of the Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales (Latin American Council of Social Sciences) and completed his master's degree in education and human rights at the Latin American Autonomous University. He creates a multilayered critical discourse about anti-racism, blackness, and diaspora that he sets into motion choreographically.

In this chapter, I examine three pieces by Sankofa Danzafro that articulate diasporic movement(s) in a variety of ways: as eloquent vocabularies of Black dance, as citational practice, and as modes of reclaiming identity and belonging through decolonial, sensorial reimaginings. The company's mission statement, *Bailamos, más que para ser vistos, ¡para ser escuchados!* (More than to be seen, we dance to be heard!) proposes a different encounter with Black dance and Black dancing corporealities in Colombia. Sankofa's exclamatory sentence sets into motion a potential response to poet and scholar fahima ife's question, "What if our sense of inherited subjectivity is sound?"[4] What if blackness were an aural register? The register of sight limits and circumscribes blackness as something fungible, inherently dispensable. By shifting registers to aurality, Sankofa challenges the primacy of the visual as the determining factor in representation. This displacement of the senses is one of the many displacements that the work of Sankofa Danzafro offers.

I position Palacios's work as a practice whereby his choreography and its affective capacities transform the impact of forced displacement (due to the armed conflict) into a strategy for Black political identity in contemporary Colombia. This choreography functions as an aesthetic tactic. His displacement of European standards and expectations in Colombian contemporary dance also functions as an epistemological and aesthetic displacement of colonialist worldviews that continue to plague Colombia (and Latin America at large) as it reckons with the urgency of its need to decolonize its politics, history, and aesthetics. Palacios's dance aesthetic, in

the Colombian context, demands a reevaluation of Colombian history and the inherited colonialist structures that affect all aspects of the Colombian everyday, especially what is considered valuable within a Colombian dance aesthetic. Palacios's work thus functions as artistic and epistemic activism through aesthetics of blackness. It calls for a redirection and marginalization of the racialized gaze in Colombia, and it requires collective responsibility from its audiences to hold themselves accountable for the colonialist state structures that have forcibly marginalized Afro-Colombian populations.[5] Palacios wants to revindicate the Afro-Colombian body and show it as one to be valued, admired, and respected, one that produces knowledge through and about its embodied experiences in a Colombia that continues to endure the aftermath of armed conflict.[6] His choreographies assert the agential subjectivity of Afro-Colombians within Black epistemologies specific to Colombia yet aligned to the greater diaspora. How might these multiple displacements, then, offer an entry point to think about how Palacios and Sankofa center the Black dancing body as an orienting compass for anti-racist work in Colombia?

La Ciudad de los Otros (2010)

There is a moment in the first half of Sankofa Danzafro's *La Ciudad de los Otros* where the dance company sits in a straight line across the stage. Purple lighting encircles them as they wait, bodies almost still except for the rhythmic pulsing of their legs: up, down, up, down, up, down. A gesture of impatience, this vibrating stillness is interrupted when the collective bends forward and subsequently crouches behind and beneath the chairs. They begin to rise, speaking; they look up. One dancer remains in that row of chairs. She appears distressed. Their chatter bothers her. She cannot sit still. She covers her ears. She walks across the chairs. She covers their mouths. In desperation, she crouches and places another dancer's hands over her own ears. Finally, the noise subsides. Quiet descends; it is temporary.

Rafael Palacios says he still becomes emotional when he watches what he calls "the waiting chair" segment in *La Ciudad de los Otros*. He explains that the inspiration came from those moments when the dancers in the company have had to wait for a job interview, an appointment, a school enrollment, or other opportunities. It also highlights the difficulties they face in those situations as Afro-Colombians. He reads the culmination of that waiting as the dancers being "valued for what they have accomplished

up until this moment."[7] He specifically wanted dancers dressed in ties and "presentable" clothing because he wanted to show that, despite their professional appearance, they can still be disregarded, judged unworthy, or invisibilized. The performance of respectability still belies the overt forms of racism Afro-Colombians face. That Palacios turns to his dancers' personal stories to inspire choreographic material is common practice in contemporary dance theater and performance-making.[8] However, their particular embodied knowledges, stemming from Afro-Colombian social and popular dances, also offer choreographic materials to help elicit the effects and affects of Sankofa. What is of interest for this chapter is how Palacios fuses pedagogy, politics, and performance in his work with the company of Sankofa Danzafro. This fusion functions as a mode through which Palacios and the dancers assert Afro-Colombian embodied experiences on and off stage, for themselves and their audiences.

The music of Philip Glass and Foday Musa Suso shifts the sonic atmosphere, and a transition from "the waiting chair" to a duet begins. Is it a fight? A negotiation? An assertion of space and belonging? With metered precision, two dancers propel an arm, legs, and even their heads into one another. Contact is often made, but it never lingers. In perpetual motion, they physicalize confrontational displacement. Soon thereafter, they begin to dance in unison. The lighting shifts so that we can see the same gesture of the arm raised and the circular motion around the head repeated in contrapuntal fashion, whirlwinds around their heads. A quartet appears, each dancer stepping into the white squares of light illuminated on the stage floor. Their unison choreography of undulating spine and large steps in place gives way to solo displays of the African contemporary movement that identifies the Sankofa corporeal aesthetic: high angular kicks, pulsing knees, shoulders, or sternum, until they take up the whirlwind movement motif and sit together on the floor in a group. They are now a collective of flowing, undulating bodies, listening to one another's breathing to be able to flow in unison, as if on a boat, as if they *are* the boat or the waves (Image 3.1). The arms and hands take inspiration from Afro-Colombian *currulao* vocabulary: soft, flowy, inward- and outward-spiraling movements of the wrists and forearms. Suddenly, the whirlwind motif returns and removes them from this reverie. They begin to disperse, their bodies displaced throughout the stage while repeating the motif that started this unison section.

In these moments when the dance company unites as a collective, swaying and breathing together, I am reminded of Black studies scholar

Image 3.1: Members of Sankofa Danzafro in *La Ciudad de los Otros*. Photo by Jeison Riascos / El Murcy.

Christina Sharpe's words: "The past, that is not past reappears, always, to rupture the present."[9] Sankofa's corporeal poetics displaces the here and now of its performance with images of the slave ship hold and the subsequent relationships forged amid inexpressible trauma across time and diasporic geographies. An awareness of Black politics and solidarity informs this aesthetic vision. It is both a local and a global materialization of blackness.

Displacement and Diaspora

How does displacement function as both a historical reality and an attending strategy that connects hemispheric Black aesthetics with the greater

African diaspora? What is being displaced? Because Sankofa Danzafro specifically locates its aesthetic practices within a broader framework of Africanist diasporic expressive cultures, the boundaries between the different performance modes it uses are often commingled. This aesthetic displacement and commingling in *La Ciudad de los Otros* relies on a "total theater" paradigm visible in many Africanist diasporic performance practices where movement, speech, song, poetry, gesture, games, and improvisation cohere to present a more capacious understanding of both theater *and* dance. Within a hemispheric context, the total-theater paradigm is often relegated to practices from the northern hemisphere and is US-centric. In contrast, Sankofa's dance theater productions often rely on local Afro-Colombian dance practices that are intertwined corporeally with a variety of Africanist dance practices from other diasporic locations. For example, in any one dance piece audiences might witness Colombian Black popular dances such as the *currulao*, *bullerengue*, and *requintilla* alongside North American krumping, South African *gwara*, and Senegalese-inflected African contemporary dance. The corporeal eloquence the dancers demonstrate allows for "the lovely actuality of blackness"[10] to assert its presence. They evidence a larger practice of Black life that draws meaning and value for itself from the multiple locations from which Black people were forcefully dispersed.

La Ciudad de los Otros uses references culled from what VèVè Clark labels diasporic literacy: "recognized references sharing a wealth of connotations."[11] As an example, I began this chapter with one of those references, the transatlantic slave trade and my reading of the dancers seated on the floor as if on a boat. If, as Katharine McKittrick writes, "diasporic literacy signals ways of being that we know and share in order to collectively struggle against suffocating racial logics,"[12] then Sankofa's *La Ciudad* addresses multiple histories of violence—the transatlantic slave trade, armed conflict/displacement, racism in Colombia, and anti-blackness—while simultaneously displacing that violence in lieu of a more capacious rendering of the Black experience in Colombia. This experience may contain socioeconomic struggles and frustrations (like the waiting chair), but it also provides options for how to move through, beyond, and away from fixed notions of blackness as that which must be historically ignored, surveilled, or erased. Instead, *La Ciudad* celebrates Afro-Colombianidad and, on a broader scale, the capacity for Black life to persist and thrive.

At the micro level, *La Ciudad* offers ways to consider and experience Afro-Colombian local and national identities. At the macro level, it spiders outward, broadening creative Black diasporic responses to coloni-

ality, anti-blackness, memory, and fugitivity.[13] In analyzing *La Ciudad*, I refer to how Black diaspora scholars Robin D. G. Kelley and Tiffany Patterson think about diaspora, as both a "process and a condition" and, more important, as something that does not, or should not, automatically cohere for its own sake. They explain, "The linkages, therefore, that tie the diaspora together must be articulated and are not inevitable. These linkages are always historically constituted. Furthermore, diaspora is both *a process and a condition*. As a process it is constantly being remade through movement, migration, and travel, as well as imagined through thought, cultural production, and political struggle. Yet, as a condition, it is directly tied to the process by which it is being made and remade."[14] In a similar vein, literary scholar Samantha Pinto articulates how the "'things' of diaspora . . . are impossible to fully reconcile within a singular order. [It is] this very incommensurability [that] is the central tenet and driving force of our work across and around difference."[15] Finally, as US anthropologist and cultural theorist James Clifford points out, "The transnational connections linking diasporas need not be articulated primarily through a real or symbolic homeland. Decentered, lateral connections may be as important as those formed around a teleology of origin/return. And a shared, ongoing history of displacement, suffering, adaptation, or resistance may be as important as the projection of a specific origin."[16] I refer to these different ways of conceptualizing and complicating the notion of a Black diaspora to allow Sankofa's work to go beyond a proverbial "return to the root" paradigm (as the Akan word *sankofa* means), and to think about Black identities from a specific Colombian sociohistorical perspective. Displacement in this case is not *only* about the laments of a diasporic displacement but empowerment through that very displacement: a fertile space of meaning-making from which to act and react.

Displacement: to be out of place. Displacement: to be *forcibly* out of place. Displacement: to move out of place or never be in place. Displacement while still maintaining a "black sense of place."[17] Displacement and its physical and psychic effects echo in these configurations of the colonial condition that uproots and destroys local knowledges and value systems. Frantz Fanon explicitly detailed the "rhythm of work" imposed by the European model to steal both the land and the psyche of the colonized, displacing (if not destroying) their sense of self. In response, cognitive, aesthetic, and affective labors in the form of choreographing and dancing (as is the case for Sankofa) offer resistive and resilient strategies to denounce these historical (yet ongoing) violences and offer new "militant arrhythmias."[18] Thus, *La Ciudad* commingles these multiple displacements

that occur because of the *longue durée* of anti-blackness that plagues the logics of Eurocentric modernity. At the same time, *La Ciudad* offers its own displacement of what blackness has been historically perceived to be in Colombia. Afro-Colombian living-ness, its particular Black sense of being, knowing, and place, becomes capaciously complex and requires new sensorial, epistemological, and affective literacies. While "the waiting chair" section shows the frustrated patience and disillusionment that comes from having to wait for opportunities or even freedom, *La Ciudad* offers other moments of joy, rage, levity, camaraderie, and resilience. It expands the representation of a singular Afro-Colombian experience. As a result, Colombian audiences, especially, must displace themselves, dare I say decolonize themselves, and reconsider how they are listening to, knowing, and understanding Sankofa's Black dancers in motion. Sankofa displaces Colombia's own understandings of blackness itself.[19]

Palacios and many of the dancers in his company come from or have family origins in the Pacific region. The dance company is based in Medellín, a city with many migrants from the Pacific region who have had to relocate due to forced displacement, paramilitary violence, or economic necessity. This move from the rural to the urban, from the predominantly Black to the predominantly "mestizo/mestizo-as-white" cities, exacerbates class and racial discrimination for many Afro-Colombians. If we are to take this sociopolitical context as an influential factor for how to situate the aesthetic, pedagogical, and political work of Sankofa Danzafro, then the types of questions *La Ciudad de los Otros* proposes facilitate a much larger and necessary discussion among Colombians (and the world) about how to come to terms with the wider historical context that led to the emergence of such racial, economic, ideological, and national conflicts in the first place. How do dance and conflict commingle to produce new considerations of racial identity in Colombia and new aesthetic paradigms for dance theater? And, more important, what does dance theater offer communities still experiencing the repercussions of conflicts, particularly within frameworks of coloniality, extractivist capital, deterritorialization, and displacement?

(De)Coloniality and Displacement(s)

La Ciudad de los Otros was commissioned by the mayor's office of Medellín—Casa de Integración Afrocolombiana in 2010 to commemorate

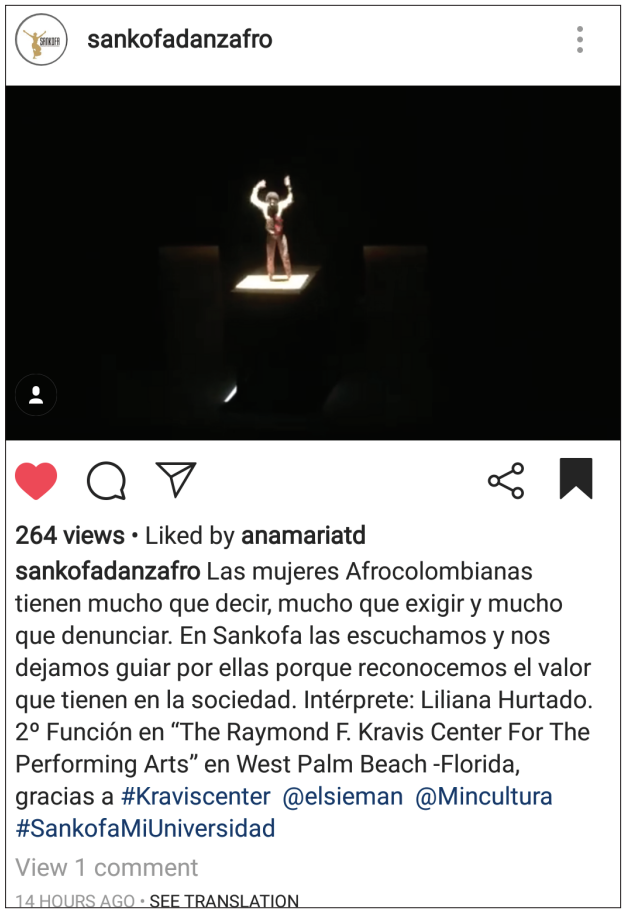

Image 3.2: Instagram post from @sankofadanzafro, October 28, 2018. The caption reads, "Las mujeres Afrocolombianas tienen mucho que decir, mucho que exigir, y mucho que denunciar. En Sankofa las escuchamos y nos dejamos guiar por ellas porque reconocemos el valor que tienen en la sociedad. Interpréte: Liliana Hurtado. 2° Función en "The Raymond F. Kravis Center for the Performing Arts" en West Palm Beach–Florida, gracias a #KravisCenter @elsieman @Mincultura #SankofaMiUniversidad / Afro-Colombian women have a lot to say, a lot to demand, and a lot to denounce. At Sankofa, we listen to them and let ourselves be guided by them because we recognize the value they have in society. Performer: Liliana Hurtado."

the 159th anniversary of the abolition of slavery in Colombia. On social media, Palacios and the company use a hashtag that clearly articulates his ongoing decolonial project of "agency, action, reflection and praxis of the otherwise":[20] #SankofamiUniversidad, Sankofa my university.

In Instagram posts, Palacios explains that Sankofa "es un movimiento no solo corporal, es un movimiento espiritual, es un movimiento de protesta, de liberación, es la manera en que construímos cultura" (is not just a corporeal movement but is also spiritual, a protest movement of liberation, and it is the way in which we construct culture). He also asserts that thought relating to the African diaspora must be expressed in movement, thereby placing knowledge production within the Black dancing body, whether it is actively dancing or reacting.[21] Eschewing the institutional monolith of higher education in the form of the university, Sankofa's artistic activist work becomes a mobile site where unlearning to relearn occurs through dance theater, music, and other embodied practices. The fact that the multiple artistic practices become sites of knowledge opens new ways to think about dance as a meaning-making practice in Colombia and, in Sankofa's case, as a practice of Black epistemologies and aesthetics. The dancers often speak about working through their own references, in other words, working from a Black sense of place. It becomes an imperative for Palacios to create spaces of dialogue and knowledge exchange with the dancers about their Black lived experiences. He also focuses his pedagogical practices with them on discussions about Afro-Colombian writers, authors, artists, and thinkers who have been marginalized by the Colombian educational system.[22] To do this, Palacios organizes regular seminars where he invites speakers, artists, and educators to share their knowledge with members of his dance company and other dancers from a variety of Black dance companies in the Medellín area. He also travels to the African communities on the Pacific coast (most recently in Tumaco before and during Covid-19 travel restrictions) to do workshops. Additionally, he works with a youth dance company in Quibdó, Jóvenes Creadores del Chocó, and does dramaturgical and choreographic work with them.[23]

Palacios constantly asserts the embodied dignity and humanity of the Black Colombian. Yet Sylvia Wynter insists that the question of humanness must be rethought. She writes, "Humanness is, then, both Man made and human made, pivoting on the *displacement of difference* and alternative forms of life, which can be articulated through a new poetics."[24] In a similar vein, Afro-Brazilian critical race scholar Denise Ferreira da Silva goes on to ask, "Would Blackness emancipated from science and

history wonder about *another praxis and wander in the World*, with the ethical mandate of opening up other ways of knowing and doing?"[25] This "displacement of difference" and this "wander[ing] in the World" might appear through the metaphor of the *remolino*, or whirlwind, in the song performed by singer and dancer Juan José Luna Coha in *La Ciudad*'s first half, or even in the mimetic arm-circling gestures around the dancers' individual head. Dance studies examines how choreographic language evidences lived reality, and, in this context, understanding why these choreographic choices are being made helps to show how *La Ciudad de los Otros* offers these new poetics by and about Afro-Colombian identities.

I offer the concept of *casa adentro*, or inside house, as theorized by African Ecuadorian activist Juan García Salazar as a useful poetic that aligns with Palacios's work in *La Ciudad*. To arrive at the concept of *casa adentro*, García Salazar first conceptualizes it within *cimarronaje* (fugitivity) as "a tool to rethink ourselves, an attitude of resistance and disobedience, and a teaching and pedagogy for the new generations, particularly in urban areas."[26] Under these conditions, *cimarronaje* is understood as that which "makes present collective memory, legacies of knowledge and thought, and the ever present struggle for existence and freedom." García Salazar extends his fugitive epistemology toward the idea of *casa adentro* as a way to learn from elders. It "references collective memory, philosophies and knowledges inherited from the ancestors, histories of acts of resistance, and other elements that mark and permit our difference, our forms of life in community."[27] By placing García Salazar's proposals alongside the choreographic proposals in *La Ciudad*, it becomes clear that Palacios wants a different type of city, a city of others for each other, regardless of difference. Instead of attempting to "dismantle the master's house," Rafael Palacios envisions many houses, or many *casas adentro* (inside houses).[28] This term, alongside *cimarronaje* and "displacement," offers a way to localize fugitive epistemologies while still acknowledging their relationship to the greater Black diaspora. Palacios's aesthetics and choreographic strategies thus stage a particular Afro-Colombian form of fugitivity that is both historical yet innovative. There is no forced displacement here, but something akin to *convivencia* (coexistence),[29] where difference is not reconciled or moved aside but rather accepted and experienced alongside one's own (Black sense of) place in the world.

Medellín, the city referenced in *La Ciudad de los Otros*, may be a hostile city for African descendants, yet Sankofa's dancers literally dance their ways of denouncing, protesting, enduring, taking up space, and making

this city about them. They include themselves in the city by marking it with their Black sense of place. Palacios's concept of "others" necessarily engages with difference and alternative modes of understanding coexistence in that city. And, most important, it centers Black experience and world-making resolutely. For the (Colombian) city to be inclusive requires the epistemological displacement of the elitist *criollista* mestizo worldview, which identifies blackness as something threatening, distant, or unrefined. Palacios's choreography offers a new perception of Black dance in Colombia. It is a politically engaged, versatile, and resilient physicality that defies capture while, at the same time, implicating its audience in the entrenched racialization and histories of oppression the country continues to experience. Yndira Perea Cuesta, cofounder of Sankofa and a dancer who has performed with the company since its inception, shares this about their dancing and its affective power: "Tenemos que desahogarnos de esa furia que tenemos, de esa rabia, de esa tristeza por no tener esas grandes oportunidades que esperamos [como afrodescendientes]" (We have to unburden ourselves from that fury we have, that anger, that sadness for not having those great opportunities we hope for [as African-descended people]).[30] Palacios explains further that "it is a strong anger, but there is an elegance in that anger. Anger need not be something vulgar; it is something that can be very profound, very spiritual, and very elegant in how we say things."[31] Afro-Colombians can see themselves represented in the choreographic vignettes *La Ciudad* offers, such as in the waiting chair moment or in the energetic, confrontational solos in front of the wooden boards toward the end where everyday gestures are connected quickly, one after the other, to demonstrate the anger, disdain, and frustration Afro-Colombians experience on a daily basis. Simultaneously, the dancers' technical fluidity and precision, particularly as they move through a fusion of Afro-Colombian dances alongside dances from the greater Black diaspora, such as hip-hop, reggaeton, krumping, or Senegalese *sabar*, confront the audience with a blackness that is both local and global. It is a blackness that is wed to histories of Black diaspora and displacement in Colombia and around the world. The solos in front of the boards are a corporealized onslaught of demands and denouncements. I have heard Palacios tell dancers that the piece is a protest, full stop, and that these solos are an opportunity to have their anger "be heard" by the audience.[32] Remember their artistic statement: "More than to be seen, we dance to be heard."

Sankofa complicates a Colombian blackness in motion that is beyond

the simplistic and pat hegemonic nationalist representations that are often circulated. The company commandeers blackness toward the local embodied experiences of its dancers; it is a lived experience not reducible to the white/criollo/mestizo supremacist logics of the nation-state. In this way, both choreographer and dancers demonstrate corporeally how they claim space, make reclamations, and demand social significance, thus "becoming black political subjects," as sociologist Tianna Paschel articulates.[33] Paschel examines how Black activism in Colombia and Brazil led to the institutionalization of Black citizenship in the 1990s that ironically limited the potential for significant material change on behalf of the state. If we are to read Palacios's choreographies as staged tactics of Afro-Colombian activism, then we can begin to think alongside Paschel, who asks, "How have Black people in Latin America articulated their own versions of a politics against their dehumanization, not only recently but for centuries?"[34] The answer is through dance and the corpo/aural aesthetics of Sankofa's choreographic strategies.

Palacios's politics rely on a strategy of displacement that operates both kinesthetically and metaphorically. Per the program notes for the *La Ciudad de los Otros* performance at the Joyce Theatre in New York City (October 2018), the city is a "defined environment, where [its inhabitants] have their own view of a common reality. In many countries, far from being a source of progress, cities can be places of hostility, loneliness, and discrimination. For life in a metropolis to be a positive space for constructive living and collective communities, I feel it is necessary to embrace the extended family concept prevalent in rural communities: what I own is for everyone; under my roof, there is room for someone else; if you need me, I am here; I am not the exclusive owner of what surrounds me."[35] And it is in these formations of social support networks that the violence of displacements becomes less insistent and can be reversed as a source of strength and empowerment. Palacios's choreography offers a different, perhaps even "liberatory," take on Colombian displacement. The paths can be collective; they can lead to surprising partnering or individual discovery and/or experimentation with rhythm and corporeal exigence. The collective, embodied by the dancers, is there, on the side, witnessing, acting as witnesses to the embodied testimony of displacement and rage about that displacement. They wait to offer sited-ness, location, a place to return to even if it is not the emplaced location of home. Instead, they offer a new way to chart future paths and mark and map out territory. Some lead and demonstrate so that, later, others can follow.[36] It is about community

Image 3.3: *La Ciudad de los Otros / The City of Others*, as performed by students and faculty at Northwestern University alongside members of Sankofa Danzafro (William Camilo Perlaza Micolta, Piter Alexander Angulo Moreno, Yndira Perea Cuesta), March 2025. Photography by Justin Barbin.

Image 3.4: María Elena Murillo in *La Ciudad de los Otros*. Photo by Sergio Gonzalez Alvarez, courtesy of Elsie Management.

Image 3.5: Yndira Perea Cuesta in *La Ciudad de los Otros*. Photo by Jeison Riascos / El Murcy.

support and care while at the same time it marks out a territory, rhythm, space/place where you can be in community for a moment and show your skills (dancing solos) (Image 3.3).

The demarcation of space, the qualities of movement across the stage, and the props utilized in *La Ciudad de los Otros* evidence the multiple displacements of the dancers-as-physicality-momentum-choreography and dancers-as-Afro-Colombians more broadly. Each dancer-political subject must negotiate between positive and negative spaces, barriers, and walls (Image 3.4); they must support or give weight. They must individually or collectively assert all the tensions inherent in their claims for power and equality.

Yndira Perea Cuesta performs a vibrant, visceral solo (Image 3.5) in which her elegant limbs pulse and devour space. Her solo is bookended by unison or group movement motifs where one dancer runs away from the group, performs an energetic solo, and returns to the attentively watching group, demonstrating forcibly *how* displacement and fugitivity operate. These multiple displacements[37] exist in the movement from the company's home base in Medellín to the predominantly (white) queer affluent Chelsea

area of New York City, where the Joyce Theatre sits; from the rural areas of the Medio Pacífico and Chocó, where many of the Afro-Colombian dancers in the company are from, to the urban environment of Medellín working-class neighborhoods, which are often in the peripheral hills of the city and accessible only via cable cars; ancestrally, from multiple African tribes and traditions to Nueva Granada (the colonial name of Colombia before its independence from Spain in 1821); and then, finally, from Colombia to the United States with their visas on their Colombian passports to perform *La Ciudad de los Otros* in a tour organized by Elsie Management in places like New York, Texas, California, Massachusetts, Florida, and North Carolina (2018–2019). The company has further displaced its stage work onto the screen owing to Covid-19. George Mason University screened a performance of *La Ciudad* and hosted a talkback with Palacios. Additionally, Sankofa has been making dance on screen as part of a research project with Manchester University called Cultures of Anti-Racism in Latin America. The 2024 tour moved the company from Canada to the United States to Spain, France, and South Africa, with a penultimate stop in Brazil. In 2025, Sankofa was in residence at my institution, Northwestern University, teaching a dance of the African diaspora class and restaging an abridged version of *La Ciudad de los Otros* with undergraduate and graduate dance students. The company has a forthcoming tour again in Spain where they will perform *La Ciudad*, in Canada with *Fecha Límite*, and they are premiering two pieces in Colombia: *Geografías Líquidas* (2025) at the dance biennale in Cali, and a new piece some time in 2026 based on the life of Afro-Colombian dancer, choreographer, and folklorist Delia Zapata Olivella.

The tentacular nature of diasporic blackness unites all of these locations, something explicitly evident in the videos the dancers and Palacios posted on their respective social media pages. Blackness spreads out and moves between and betwixt spaces. As fahima ife wonders, "What if the reality we think we inhabit is nothing more than an oscillation?"[38] The very real excitement the dancers felt as they traveled was visible in their Instagram and Facebook posts. I follow many of them in addition to the official Sankofa Instagram page. In those posts, they shared videos of themselves dancing in front of the Eiffel Tower in Paris, on a busy intersection in São Paolo, in front of a statue of Nelson Mandela in Johannesburg and a clock tower in Montreal. These embodied citations claim these cities as ones where blackness belongs; a diasporic "black sense of place"[39] taking up

space and thriving through rich, fully executed rhythmic phrases in unison: grounded, Black dancers listening to while moving with one another, oscillating between listening and moving to make their histories and connections tangible and corpo-real through the logics of social media even though these connections run deeper than what our eyes can see.

Black cultural practices continually practice displacement as an aesthetic strategy of survival and (re)invention. Clearly, many of us had to reorganize our lives to endure the pandemic, but in Sankofa Danzafro's case, restructuring has always been part of its quotidian existence in a country that, despite proclaiming its recognition of Black communities and their ancestral territories in the Pacific, continues to neglect the socioeconomic needs of its mostly marginalized Black population.

As cultural theorist Lauren Berlant writes, citizenship needs the cultivation of strategies of intimacy and estrangement, proximity, and distance, between individuals, groups, or collectives. It is "an abstract idea on behalf of which people engage in personal and political acts."[40] She elaborates that the nation and the state effect a "training in politicized intimacy [that] has served as a way of turning political boundaries into visceral, emotional and seemingly hardwired responses to 'insiders and outsiders.'"[41] Afro-Colombians suffer from historical invisibilization in their own country, which now is trying to determine the best possible outcomes after the 2016 peace accord and move toward reconciliation. I turn to legal scholar Andrew Schapp's incisive work on reconciliation and politics, where he explains that "a politically adequate conception of reconciliation would be conditioned by an awareness of the risk of politics; that community is not inevitable and that conflict may turn out to be irreconcilable . . . the 'we' must be reconceived as a horizon of possibility that enables reconciliatory politics in the present."[42] This community of citizens must be seen as "a contingent, historical possibility."[43] Thus, when Rafael Palacios narrates that "it doesn't matter where in the world Sankofa perform, there will always be some people who have to reflect on [the intersecting identities of Sankofa], and others who are affected by discrimination or that way of being undervalued," he challenges us to think about the complicated histories of citizenship, displacements, and racialized oppression.[44]

In a review of *La Ciudad de los Otros* published in *See Chicago Dance* after its performance as part of Northwestern's Danceworks 2025 program, Palacios addressed what it meant for him to showcase this important work in a city like Chicago. He explained that "the city of Chicago has a deep history connecting with anti-racism movements, civil rights and racial

justice thanks to the courage and the resistance of the Black community and minorities in this country, who have constructed emancipatory strategies for themselves and for future generations. I thought that joining these histories of fighting and resistance between the global South and this part of North America would represent an invaluable opportunity to mutually reflect on each other through a human narrative that should be recognized entirely, without overshadowing the diversity that encompasses us."[45] Palacios and the dancers interpreting *La Ciudad* present their ideas through their Afro-Colombian dancing bodies, instantiating what Saidiya Hartman notices in the Black cabaret of an Oscar Micheaux film, the "rendering of black life in motion in contrast to the arrested and fixed images that produce and document black life as a problem."[46] *La Ciudad de los Otros* shows how Black life in Colombia is about individuals charting paths on which to walk, despite the *remolinos* (whirlwinds) of coloniality and its repercussions. The song "Remolinos," by Alcídez Díaz, performed a cappella by Sankofa composer and musician Juan José Luna Coha, concludes with the following lyrics:

> Remolinos, ¿por qué me impiden?
> Si yo quiero mis caminos libres.
>
> Whirlwinds, why do you impede me
> If all I want is a free path?

Whirlwinds are forces of nature caused by atmospheric instability in the air. Often, they can be quite violent. The metaphorical whirlwinds of Díaz's song and Palacios's choreographies represent the violent precariousness created by an inability to move and stabilize oneself, psychically and physically, due to the legacies of coloniality and anti-blackness in Colombia. In response, the dancers walk, they are in motion, they displace themselves as much as they must, because "solo quieren caminos libres"[47]—they only want that unencumbered access to a free path.

La Mentira Complaciente (2019)

The first time I watched *La Mentira Complaciente* I could not stop thinking about Yndira Perea Cuesta's dynamic solo in the first third of the hourlong piece. She wears a tailored white suit and white crochet bra. Her

buoyant natural hair balloons behind her and bounces to the downbeat of her steps and the accompanying drum. Skilled, extended limbs execute precise rhythmic articulations, yet she seems to be holding back ever so slightly. Her restraint becomes even more evident when she refuses to listen to the commands of the song, "El Mapalé," and to dance it for the audience. The song implores:

> Ven mi negrita y baile el mapalé.
>
> Come my little Black woman and dance the *mapalé*.

Yet Perea Cuesta refuses to dance it. Instead, she regales us with her corporeal dexterity as she plays with the drum's rhythms, the proscenium space, and her deep knowledge of making rhythm visible. Surely (I think), Perea Cuesta knows *how* to dance *mapalé*, but she denies us the opportunity to see her do it. This denial alongside the choreographic alternatives compelled me. While *La Ciudad de los Otros* unabashedly confronts its audiences with the obstacles Afro-Colombians face yet manage to resiliently and elegantly endure, *La Mentira* suggests that the issue is, and will always be, one of representation. If Afro-Colombians cannot maintain control over how and when they make themselves legible, then strategic refusals must coexist alongside the representational logics of modernity's ideas of blackness. *La Mentira* functions as a strategic refusal couched in the embodied language of the Colombian *mapalé*. It is this dance form that becomes the method(ology) through which *La Mentira* contests the registers of sight and representation. Historically, Western occularcentrism has co-opted the dance form into a primitivist colonial fantasy of Black sexual unruliness. *La Mentira* offers a different narrative, one that rests in the assertion of Black living, presence, and, most important, the right of refusal (Image 3.6).

Mapalé is a song and dance in Afro-Colombian folkloric presentations that features high-energy, repetitive body isolations that bounce, pulse, and make visible its incessant drumbeat. It is associated with the Caribbean/Atlantic coast of Colombia. Usually, the darker-skinned women put forth to dance it wear minimal clothing and short raffia skirts. Using the cultural referent of the raffia as inspiration, the set design of *La Mentira* features long strips of raffia hanging upstage, creating a curtain in the background. Other than the raffia and a group of singers/drummers seated upstage right, the stage lies bare. Palacios addresses the visual

Image 3.6: Yndira Parea Cuesta in *La Mentira Complaciente*. Photo by Paulina Pérez.

design elements of the piece, particularly the raffia, by explaining how raffia has often been misused in Colombian dance representations of Afrodescendant bodies. It becomes an accessory to simplistic eroticizations of said bodies, although raffia necessarily signifies *mapalé* and by extension blackness in the Colombian context. The dance form relies on costumes made from raffia when performed at both tourist and stage venues that feature folk dance traditions of Colombia. *Mapalé* is significant in that it circulates in Colombia as the quintessential "Black" dance. As stated earlier, it features incessant, exuberant percussion that requires consistent corporeal isolations and pulses of shoulders, arms, and torso while the hips either pulse back and forth or circle around.

Several origin stories exist about *mapalé*. One story suggests that the dance emerged from enslaved Africans in Colombia watching fish that jumped and pulsed, desperate for air, being taken out of the water; another story attests to a Bantu origin of the word, which literally means the (hetero)sexual act; and finally, a third origin story claims that the movements are inspired by the sounds of the whips used "on the ground" in Carta-

gena, Colombia, in the 1600s to get the enslaved to move, walk, and work faster.[48] Regardless of these origin stories, what is clear is that the dance emerged from conditions of Afro-Colombian embodied sociality and experience. As Afro-Colombian doctor, writer, and anthropologist Manuel Zapata Olivella wrote, "En tales circunstancias, el negro esclavizado debió reaccionar instintivamente ante el terror, el dolor, la flagelación y la prisión, pero también encontrar respuestas creadoras que le permitieran preservar su propia cultura" (In such circumstances, the enslaved African must have reacted instinctively to the terror, pain, flagellation, and imprisonment, but also must have found creative responses that allowed them to preserve their own culture).[49]

Such creative responses abound in Afro-Colombian music and dance forms. These cultural productions circulate as crucial referents of Colombian-ness within a larger political economy of transnational commodity culture. Music and dances such as the *cumbia*, the *bullerengue* (Afro-Colombian women's fertility dance), the *bambuco* (a 3/4-time partner dance from the *llanos*/plains), the *champeta* (black dance from Cartagena and Barranquilla made popular recently through Shakira's solo at the 2021 Super Bowl), and even the famous frenetic Cali version of salsa all emerge from localized Afro-diasporic practices. For the Barranquilla (Colombia) carnival (one of the larger carnivals in Latin America after Rio and Trinidad) its reigning carnival queen must dance and perform not just a *mapalé*, but other dance forms of Black Colombian provenance, to prove she is worthy of her crown. Costumes for the *mapalé* utilize raffia, but the length of the raffia and the parts of the bodies it covers depend on the level of eroticism required by the producers and/or choreographers of the carnival. In other words, the raffia moves from a utilitarian, culturally specific object to one in service of erotic imaginaries. Usually, the carnival queen is a white-passing or light-skinned mestiza Colombiana (in 2021 she was of Lebanese origin), which further distances the cultural specificity of the form from the corporeality dancing it. Another tactic used in performances catering to the tourist economy (e.g., in hotels) is to allow a darker-skinned dancer to perform it, but often the required skill level is based on skin color and not the dancer's technical ability to execute the *mapalé* correctly. These details lead to a particular conclusion: A dancer dressed in raffia moving to the *mapalé* constructs an erotic-exotic spectacle evacuated of its cultural specificity. As Palacios explains about *La Mentira*:

> Este performance pone de manifiesto los estereotipos corporales que han surgido alrededor de la cultura afrodescendiente. Desde el vestuario, se muestra un cuerpo sexualizado, maximizando las caderas, las nalgas y el enorme pene que cuelga. A su vez, los bailarines construyen desde el empoderamiento a través de la danza afrocolombiana en bailes como el mapalé o la requintilla y afirman sus saberes y expresiones tradicionales. Ésta acción escénica parodia los clichés que desconocen el sentido de las manifestaciones artísticas y espirituales de la comunidad afro.
>
> This performance lays bare the corporeal stereotypes that have emerged about Afro-descendant culture. Costumes showcase sexualized bodies, maximizing the hips, the buttocks, and the enormous hanging penis. At the same time, from a space of empowerment, the dancers build through Afro-Colombian dance such as the *mapalé* and the *requintilla* and they affirm their knowledges and traditional [cultural] expressions. This scenic action [choreography] parodies the clichés that ignore the meaning of the artistic and spiritual manifestations of the Afro community.[50]

For Afro-Colombians, *mapalé* is a Black dance of vitality, spirituality, sensuality, and survival amid the violences of coloniality and slavery. This is what Palacios seeks to reclaim in his use of the raffia as decoration and *mapalé* as movement vocabulary and dramaturgical device in *La Mentira*.

In this analysis of Sankofa's work, I want to demonstrate how raffia in *La Mentira* functions as what historian Robin Bernstein would call a "scriptive thing," that is, an object (material culture) that compels a particular human action or (re)action. She argues that "agency, intention, and racial subjectivation co-emerge through everyday physical encounters with the material world,"[51] thereby making sure to allow for the agency of said person who chooses to follow these culturally prescribed "scripts." She goes on to write:

> A thing demands that people confront it on its own terms; thus, a thing forces a person into an awareness of the self in material relation to the thing. When a thing makes a human body "a thing among things," it upsets the boundary between person and object. The thing and person are *unmoored* from fixed positions of differ-

> ence and twirl in sudden mutual orbit, each subject to the other's gravity. Thus, the thing "names less an object than a particular subject-object relation." . . . An object becomes a thing when it invites a person to dance. . . . Dances with things, too, are performative in that they constitute actions: They *think*, or, more accurately, they *are the act of thinking*. Things script meaningful bodily movements, and these citational movements think the otherwise unthinkable.[52]

It is movement that makes what we cannot think about or imagine noticeable. In other words, without corporealities these ways of thinking would not emerge. Black dance is thought in action, and sometimes this action requires things to dance along with it, not just to make blackness tangible and real, but also to trouble it, confound it and even displace it, or more specifically in the case of *La Mentira*, displace audience expectations of it. As Bernstein questions, "How do [Black] people dance with things to construct race?"[53] I further ask, how do Black choreographers and dancers dance with things to confound the witnessing or scripting of race? What are the ways in which choreographic thinking expands the possibilities for blackness as a thing, a lived experience, and an aesthetic strategy? And finally, how does Palacios's choreography offer answers to these types of questions, which are crucial in our world today, where movement and the right to move are a foundation for liberatory possibility?

Palacios's choreographic skills lies in his ability to create episodic variations based on the *mapalé* that demonstrate the ways in which "thing and [dancer are] *unmoored* from fixed positions of difference and twirl in sudden mutual orbit, each subject to the other's gravity."[54] I see each episode functioning in a twofold way. First, each episode poses a choreographic inquiry into what is aesthetically possible when experimenting with the vocabularies of *mapalé* (among other Afro-Colombian forms such as the Pacific region's *requintilla*, which is like the *mapalé*) and Afro-contemporary dance styles. Palacios trained with Germaine Acogny and Irène Tassembedo in France and Senegal in the 1990s and traveled to eighteen other African countries to learn and dance, so his aesthetic tool kit explores the range these different embodied practices offer. Second, each episode represents the capacity for Afro-Colombian dancers and by extension Black subjects to innovate and create corporeal possibilities for how to occupy space beyond the limiting social scripts of a world rife with

anti-blackness. The raffia, along with the aesthetic and choreographic, establishes new modes of signification for Colombian blackness. This is how I read the aesthetic displacements in the piece.

La Mentira's aesthetic unmooring of Afro-Colombian bodies from the erotic/exotic imaginary they have been consistently locked into still insists on the representation of the dancers, and by extension, the piece as something aesthetically pleasing. Although the raffia curtain, costumes, and other design elements in *La Mentira* operate within a visual economy of aesthetics, Palacios rejects beauty for beauty's sake. He says about *La Mentira*: "It is a political dance. It is a dance that is not interested in the beauty of movement but in the actual lives of the people dancing."[55] I have seen the piece twice live and several times via video. It becomes more beautiful the more I watch it. Nothing necessarily has changed in each experience for me to make this assessment. However, I think about the ways in which Palacios and the dancers make legible their choreographic undermining of the colonized mestizo/mestizo-as-white/*criollo* (Colombian) gaze with their evocative and thoughtful engagements in Afro-diasporic choreographies, and I am hopeful about the decolonial anti-racist agenda inherent in all Sankofa Danzafro's work. It asks us to pause, reflect, and rethink what we expect Black dancers and choreographic thinking to do. The dances with things in *La Mentira* demonstrate how the dancers (and by extension Black people) showcase agency and autonomous self-making. Objects don't script them. They determine the scripts through which they move or refuse to do so.

In *La Mentira*, dancers, musicians, and the raffia dance around one another, destabilizing the cultural scripts in which Colombian blackness married to raffia results in exotic imaginaries of primitivist fantasy. Instead, the piece constructs a Colombian blackness from the perspective of these same Afro-Colombians: their feelings, situated knowledges, artistic training, thoughts, and lived experiences while Black. Palacios renders the raffia a foil; it is expected to function within a specific realm of signification that never materializes. Instead, the Black experience as danced/expressed in *La Mentira* becomes the centerpiece.

When *La Mentira* hints at the *mapalé* song during Perea Cuesta's solo, for example, a Colombian audience member watching the performance recognizes its significance as part of their cultural script. What they cannot anticipate is Perea's refusal to dance (it). She stops and instead struts around the stage, focusing her gaze on the audience. She scoffs and smirks. Her bodily communication asserts, "I know you expect me to dance the

mapalé now," yet she takes her time; she meanders around and refuses. She purposely disappoints, derails, and displaces audience desire for a Black dancing femme. Instead, we watch her take pleasure in her denial of (some of) the audience's anticipation. Disappointment becomes a productive affective device to in-corpo-rate into the choreography. After disappointment, other possibilities emerge. The audience is faced with the decision to reframe what they are seeing and call into question their respective disappointment. One may notice that she does not wear raffia or engage with it at all. In fact, this solo follows a short trio where two other dancers try to encircle her with the raffia, literally bind her to it and, as a result, all its significations (let alone the idea of binding a Black body period). This only makes her solo more powerful because she dances the liberatory potential of breaking free from the scriptive thing. The singer calls her to dance, but this time she dances under her own terms.

Her solo and subsequent reiteration of that solo appear long after the actual *mapalé* performance that starts off the piece. Divorced from its erotic-exotic commodified entrapments, La Mentira's *mapalé* functions as a duet that showcases complementarity between the masculine and feminine energies of its dancers. Put simply, it is a reclamation of Black lives mattering, that is, materializing knowledge, experience, and significance within their own fields of reference.

Mapalé Duet Episode

Two dancers (William Camilo Perlaza Micolta and Sandra Vanesa Murillo Mosquera) enter the space from stage left. They walk slowly in a single file behind the raffia curtain until they both emerge from it and position themselves center stage. They stand equidistantly, holding hands. In place, they shift weight slightly and move side to side, rocking their hips. They look like two metronomes or pendulums, marking the beats of the drum, marimba, and clave sounds that accompany them. The hips recall gears warming up. Circular movements appear in the form of a rotation of the torso as arms are extended wide or insistent hip revolutions. Suddenly, an explosion of unison movement surprises us. Maintaining a forward-facing direction, they leap, turn, pulse their torsos and arms while the legs bend, straighten, and ground them to the rhythm even though they are propelled upward as they spin, jump, and bounce (Image 3.7). Powerful yet powerfully subdued, Perlaza and Murillo dance with a sophisticated

Image 3.7: Sandra Vanessa Murillo Mosquera with William Camilo Perlaza Micolta dancing a *mapalé* in *La Mentira Complaciente*. Photo by Paulina Pérez

virtuosic restraint, no heavy pounding each time they land, a weightlessness to their pulsing limbs as they float ever so briefly above the marley floor.

This *mapalé* bears no resemblance whatsoever to those I have witnessed at hotels or folkloric shows. In fact, its subtlety and precise execution draws you further into the elegant quality of the movement vocabulary. Each pulse or gyration has a beginning, middle, and end. It is as if each repetition of the isolation is a different part of a greater (Black) story. We bear witness to corporeal clarity and care for the *mapalé* presented here at the beginning of *La Mentira*. While the exact movement phrases are not repeated from this section, movement vocabularies of the *mapalé* are evident in each of the choreographic episodes that follow. When I spoke to Camilo about this section, he told me that they are actually dancing *requintilla*, which is the Pacific region's version of the more popularly recognized *mapalé*. The *requintilla* offers no flamboyant eroticism; there is a delicacy to the precision of polyrhythmic articulations, which then serve as the choreographic grounding for the rest of the piece.

The Raffia Skirt Episode

It is heavy, itchy, uncomfortable. She moves with slow, uneasy steps, coming closer downstage, where we can see her grimace. Similar to Yndira's solo, Marieris Mosquera Batista's solo displays restraint. But in her case, the raffia skirt—its discursive and literal weight—is restraining her. Her movements seem inverted. She turns inward, unable to fully execute gestures and phrases we recognize given the choreographic structure of the piece. She stays mostly in the center of the stage, expressing her frustration, discomfort, and disorientation.

Why must I wear this heavy thing?
What do they expect from me when I wear it?
How can I move comfortably and articulate my sense of self despite this "scriptive thing"?
Can I even show you who I am when I dance when I wear this heavy "thing?"
What weighs your corporeality down?

I imagine the solo(ist) asking these questions as she / the episode progresses. In this episode there are no extended phrases. Instead, the weight of the raffia and her visible facial and corporeal disdain for it prevent their execution (Image 3.8). Ultimately, she manages to make peace with the skirt by refusing it. With the simple gesture of waving the finger back and forth she powerfully proclaims "No!" as she retreats behind the raffia curtain. She has just forcefully rejected the raffia, instantiating how "a thing forces a person into an awareness of the self in material relation to the thing."[56] In this instance, Marieris emerges as a subject beyond the association her body and the raffia have with one another. Marieris's simple, strong, and effective gesture of "no" summarizes the ways in which *La Mentira* thwarts spectatorship and forces its audience to consider anew not only what it is they are watching, but the connections they are making between the dancers, the musicians, the music, and the raffia. Bodies and things do different things in *La Mentira* if we are willing to displace our spectatorship as well.

Image 3.8: Marieris Mosquera Batista in *La Mentira Complaciente*. Photo by Paulina Pérez.

The Episode "About" Black Masculinity and Tenderness

While the raffia haunts this entire piece, the dancers always find ways to interrupt said haunting. For example, another instance in *La Mentira* features Yeison Moreno Córdoba dressed in a raffia skirt and a tan-colored blazer. Like Perea, his solo features repetitive gestures that fail to fully deliver on their technical prowess. Extensions do not fully extend. Rhythmic pulsations of his chest fall into spasmodic decentered articulations. He spins in place, aimless, and eventually exhausts himself . . . or is he just dizzy? He wobbles from left to right, angling his head upward, gazing beyond the ceiling, trying to find a center or perhaps even a purpose (Image 3.9). The music shifts from the drumming accompanied by the *flauta de millo* (Atlantic coast instrument made from bamboo, the sound of resembles a higher-pitched clarinet) to a lullaby that asks for *el negro*, the Black boy, to sleep because *te quiero silenciar* (I want to silence you). The song texts used in *La Mentira* require submission by the hailed "negro or morena," depending on who commands and how they command. The desire to silence blackness—*te quiero silenciar*—is met with obstinate

Image 3.9: Yeison Moreno Córdoba in *La Mentira Complaciente*. Photo by Paulina Pérez.

resistance as Yeison refuses to stand still. Silencing here is not just about rendering the body motionless; it also alludes to the silencing of collective Black voices within the macropolitical sphere of Colombia. Yet again, through the aesthetic displacement of the "scriptive thing," that is, the song, its call for silence transforms into an offering of respite from the brunt of coloniality and anti-blackness.

Yeison continually fights against the soothing melody, flailing his arms here and there as his breathing returns to normal. He looks up, head cocked back, his chest visibly agitated by his breathing until he slows down and acquiesces. Behind him another dancer (Luis Armando Viveros) emerges. He is crying while he walks over to Yeison. Lifting him, he cradles him in his arms like the infant of the lullaby. Luis gently lays him down on the floor, where Yeison assumes a fetal position. This choreography of gentle caretaking as a practice of camaraderie among Afro-Colombian men displaces said pain with simple support and care at this moment. The intimacy and care shared between Luis and Yeison asks us to reconsider Black masculinity. In what ways are Luis's tears healing for him and calming for Yeison, who rests within "a sovereignty of quiet?" Luis's

tears transform into frenetic corporeal pulses. He begins to windmill his arms slowly, then faster and faster. The drumming follows with precision. He pulses his chest and shoulders, shifting the tears of sadness to anger, energy, and power.

Sankofa's mission statement, "More than to be seen, we dance to be heard," helps us to understand how Sankofa's dancers express their interiority and their affective states through their bodies. What is the significance of choreographing sadness, anger, frustration, and rage for Palacios and his dancers? What types of affective displacements and transformations in spectatorship are they offering those who sit, watch, and, most important, *listen*? What is potentially transformative in this exchange between expressing Black affect and witnessing Black affect by listening? This invitation to privilege another sense to better understand the world emerges from the philosophy of *senti pensante*, thinking-feeling subject, advanced by Orlando Fals Borda, a Colombian sociologist who turned to Colombian Indigenous epistemologies to expand the ways to think about lived experience. Palacios uses choreography to make visible and try to translate Black and Indigenous epistemologies. His choreographies invite us to look beyond those clichés he forcefully denounces in his program notes and to use our sensorium to think differently about Black people, Black dance, Black feeling, and Black thought in action.[57] At the time of this writing and viewing, Colombia was preparing to inaugurate its first Black woman vice president, human rights and environmental activist Francia Márquez. Palacios's choreography seems crucial given its ability to offer alternative ways of seeing and listening to blackness.

Penultimate Episode: Maria Elena Murillo Laughs

The set lies practically bare. Only long strips of raffia decorate it ,creating a curtain in the background. From this curtain dancer María Elena Murillo emerges. Murillo wears a raffia skirt that appears connected to the raffia dangling around her. She bends forward, undulating, playing with the raffia. It intertwines with her lithe brown limbs, making a sharp contrast. Raffia also decorates her hair. She bows down to and with the raffia; she makes ritualistic gestures, cupping it in her hands and offering it up. Her body moves to and against the drum and marimba soundscape (Colombian xylophone, or the piano of the jungle, as Afro-Colombians refer to it) that slowly marks out a rhythm lulling us (and transporting some of us)

Image 3.10: María Elena Murillo in *La Mentira Complaciente*. Photo by Paulina Pérez

into a Black space-time. She covers her face with it and begins to smile and laugh, to literally be tickled by the raffia (Image 3.10). Is it a laugh of joy? Might she be laughing at the raffia and its historically silly or violent uses? What thoughts and intentions lie behind her smile and laughter?

I am reminded of South African dancer/choreographer Nelisiwe Xaba's piece *They Look at Me and That's All They Think* (2006). In this compelling one-woman show, Xaba uses a white dress made of parachute material as multiple objects: dress, screen, tent, even a chandelier. Like the raffia, this white material goes beyond its initial signification and evolves dramaturgically throughout the piece. At one point, Xaba uses the skirt to allude to the waves of the ocean; she constructs a paper boat, places it on top of her head, and smiles at the audience. As performance studies scholar Mlondolozi Zondi surmises, "This is the smile of Black performance, which inaugurates debates about coercion, will, desire, and ambivalence."[58] Referencing Black studies scholar Hershini Bhana Young's important work *Illegible Will*, Zondi reads the effect of Xaba's smile as not necessarily producing joy or access to her interiority: "It conceals as much as it reveals,"[59] he writes. When Murillo plays with her raffia costume and the curtains, almost mak-

ing the connection between the two disappear, she similarly plays with the structures of looking/feeling that *La Mentira* aims to complicate. It is a continuation of the theme set from the beginning of the piece with Perea's solo, where she, like Nelisiwe Xaba, is also dressed in white.

As Murillo continues to hold our attention, other dancers slowly begin to enter the space, marching slowly behind the raffia curtain before they emerge onto the lit stage. They wear suits of different colors: white, tan, blue. Two other dancers wear tops and pants of contrasting colors. Meanwhile, raffia-clad Murillo continues to laugh and undulate. Raffia transforms into a thing of pleasure beyond its decorative signification. In contrast to her laughter, the other dancers have serious expressions, offering no access to their interiority. They simply and measuredly walk to the pulse of the marimba and circle in place until they are back facing the audience. There they begin a short choreographic sequence of shoulder and torso pulses, accompanied by a bent leg accentuation of the drum to the side. When they bend forward, they make circular arm gestures around their lifted bent leg, all the while keeping a slow and steady pulse to the tick-tock of the marimba and drum. Again, Palacios demonstrates his choreographic skill by constructing long, elegant phrases that seamlessly tie Afro-Colombian inflected movement vocabularies (shoulder pulses, hip rotations) to Euro-American contemporary dance conceits such as situating the dancers in a straight line downstage where they stand still and gaze (back) at the audience. Pina Bausch's *Kontakthof* immediately comes to my mind, since it features dancers facing forward and standing still downstage. These connections I am making allow for the piece to sit within a broader genealogy of contemporary dance that helps to expand the choreographic significance of Palacios's work beyond the local, where contemporary dance, let alone Afro-contemporary dance, is not necessarily considered something autochthonous to Colombia, especially when helmed by Afro-Colombian movement thinkers-dancers-choreographers themselves.

La Mentira Complaciente offers alternatives to Black Colombian sociality. It expresses the ways in which Afro-Colombian representation shifts once it is in the hands (and thinking bodies) of the Afro-Colombians themselves. Utilizing the trope of an auction toward the beginning, the piece concludes with the same trope after a dynamic unison section. All dancers stop, catch their breath, then walk slowly downstage to stare directly at the audience. They also appear to look beyond us as the singer begins to auction off "el *taparrabo* show." A *taparrabo*, or "loincloth show," is Palacios's and Sankofa's way of critically commenting on the widespread dance

spectacles at hotels and stage productions that feature Afro-Colombians wearing small amounts of clothing and dancing unsophisticated versions of *mapalé*, *requintilla*, or other Afro-Colombian dances. The auction, a familiar and familiarly painful event in Black diasporic history, allows Palacios to both disturb and displace its significance through irony. Instead of auctioning off bodies, the company is now auctioning off a *taparrabo* show (that, they specifically qualify, is not part of "their tradition").

Contemporary ballet choreographer William Forsythe's *Impressing the Czar* (1988) uses the trope of an auction in its third section *La Maison de Mezzo Prezzo*. Characters dressed fabulously in gold are auctioned off to make commentary about the commoditization of the arts. I turn to this example to continue to place Palacios within a greater genealogy of contemporary dance that both questions form/technique and the economic systems that undermine people, the arts, and Black people making art. While Forsythe's premise in *Impressing the Czar* is to question the role and toll of ballet in Western concert dance, Palacios problematizes the histories of Afro-Colombian dance performances and offers a different opportunity to experience them. Each choreographer makes use of the technique to question its form, significance, and representation while simultaneously innovating within their specific aesthetic circles.

Palacios uses the auction, not specifically to signal the history of the transatlantic slave trade, but to comment on racialized capitalism and the structures of power it wields, which financializes, extracts, and exploits us all, but especially Black and other marginalized people. The auction occurs in Spanish and no text is translated.[60] The pricing begins extremely low (at the time of this writing 4,400 Colombian pesos is one US dollar) on purpose. 2000 pesos . . . 2500, 2600, 2900 for the *taparrabo* show as the dancers finish their unison dance sequence and start to stand still slowly and assuredly, daring the audience, if you will, to locate themselves in the "accommodating lie" that is the title of the piece. The drummer calls out, "¿Cúanto por el show de taparrabo que no es parte de nuestra tradición?" (How much for the *taparrabo* show that is not part of our tradition?). The fact that the auction starts so low helps us to understand the value of the *taparrabo* show (or travesty) for Palacios, the dancers, and more specifically Afro-Colombians.

La Mentira Complaciente alludes to a shared complicity in rendering Afro-Colombians (and by extension blackness, Black people, and marginalized people) one-dimensional caricatures of cultural imaginaries. Who is lying? Who is being lied to? What is the lie? What are the investments

in that lie? Who benefits from it? How and why? And finally, why bother to lie? These questions offer entry points into experiencing the piece, but they do not determine its overall meaning. The idea or concept of the lie is not the central focus of *La Mentira*. Instead, it is the Black choreographies and corporealities working through the different ways in which the lie is experienced and rejected that draws my attention.

I contend that the power of the piece lies in its ability to avoid didacticism about how Black life is valuable (thereby only appealing to white liberal fantasies of absolution from racism) by focusing on *how* the act of dancing and the scripting of choreography render multiple possibilities for Black lives to matter and exist. By reframing how audiences, specifically Colombian ones at first, gaze upon Afro-Colombian dancing bodies, Palacios offers new forms of spectatorship for contemporary dance in Colombia and, by extension, internationally. When I saw *La Mentira* at the Joyce Theatre in New York City, I noticed the diversity of the audience and especially noted how many Black audience members stood up to applaud the piece at the end. In fact, dance scholar Nadine George-Graves, who attended one night with me, was one of the first audience members to stand and applaud that night. I had not said anything about Sankofa other than that they were a Black dance company to experience. Clearly, she was moved.

I use the word "experience" rather than "see" to echo the senses and sensibilities Palacios and Sankofa activate in their work. I repeat the company's mission statement here—"More than to be seen, we dance to be heard"—to showcase how it allows Black dance to serve as a powerful communicator for anti-racist work. In this sense, dance, particularly for Afro-Colombians, becomes an activity of elocution and a radical political assertion of their rights and significance as citizens even if the Colombian nation-state relies on multiple "accommodating lies" that continue to deny these facts. Choreographic examples of corporeal strategies to resist the gaze of coloniality abound in this piece, showcasing how Black dance serves as a fertile activity of innovation, imagination, and refusal.

Detrás del Sur: Danzas Para Manuel (2020)

I found myself back again at the Joyce in February 2024, a mixture of relief and excitement flooding over me. I had been waiting to see *Detrás del Sur* for quite some time, since I had been following its creation and sub-

sequent performances since 2020. Video images from their social media pages kept highlighting Yndira Perea Cuesta dressed in white and performing Afro-Cuban dances for Yemayá. Of course, I was intrigued wondering how this Yoruba/Afro-Cuban orisha/deity was to be entangled in a Colombian context. Recognizing the Manuel of the title as the Afro-Colombian writer, doctor, and anthropologist Manuel Zapata Olivella, a prominent figure of the Black modernist intelligentsia, I also wondered how his prolific writing would be translated choreographically.

Detrás del Sur uses Zapata Olivella's novel *Changó, El gran putas* (1983) as its inspiration. *Changó* is an ambitious tale. It recounts the story of the Black diaspora from enslavement to liberation struggles through the experience of Changó, the Yoruba god of fire, war, and thunder. Changó inhabits different (Black) historical figures such as Benkos Biohó,[61] Henri Christophe,[62] Simón Bolivar,[63] José Maria Morelos,[64] Marcus Garvey, and Malcolm X. It sweeps across time and geographies to map out a shared history of diasporic Black life and its intransigent refusal to wait, manifesting "black patience," as Julius Fleming has aptly explained.[65] Waiting does not feel so onerous when couched within the ability to move, to be in movement, and to engage in radical movements toward emancipation: marches, sit-ins, drumming, rallies among so many other forms of Black embodied protests. *Detrás* presents this experience of "waiting" through perpetual movement(s). It offers a way to experience a swath of Black diasporic histories in ancestor time, the flow of time as an ever-present negotiation with ancestors who surround, protect, and offer guidance. The ancestors within the flow of the piece (Black diasporic histories) propel the dancers (and the audiences) toward a future where revolution must happen regardless of the outcome. The piece ends in slow-motion gestural vocabularies of resistance as the lights fade to black. How then does *Detrás* arrive at this "unfinished project of emancipation"?[66] As I cited earlier in the chapter, Palacios and his dancers choreographically materialize the idea of the Black diaspora as a *process and a condition* where the process of diaspora requires making and remaking through "movement, migration and travel as well as [being] imagined through thought, cultural production, and political struggle."[67] The diasporic affect emerging from this piece demonstrates the urgency of blackness and Black aliveness to be *in movement* to persist, contest, and ultimately survive. I use the term "diasporic affect" to approximate how the choreography mobilizes signifiers of blackness across time and space. This subsequently creates diasporic structures of feeling among the dancers and audiences who possess

diasporic literacy. Through these gestural and codified mobilizations, an embodied citational practice emerges.

Dance scholar Charmian Wells offers the term "diasporic citation" as a choreographic strategy that African American choreographers use to create diasporic belonging on the concert stage.[68] She elaborates on this term by explaining that "the practice of diaspora citation articulates, or joins, choreographic intertexts to cite source and affirm cultural connections—across diasporic contexts, between individual and collective authorship, and across everyday movement, concert, ritual, and social dance—proposing an alternative, diasporic paradigm for belonging on distinct terms."[69] While she specifically focuses on the African American context to develop her ideas, she explicitly invites those of us working in Black performance to engage and adapt the idea of diasporic citation to our different contexts. I take up this invitation by examining specifically how *Detrás*, out of all Sankofa's pieces, creates a Black diasporic sense of place that spreads out from the Mandinka tribe of Guinea-Bissau (where Benkos Biohó was born before being enslaved and brought to Colombia, where he then became a maroon), to Colombia, to Cuba and then sweeps back over the vastness of the transatlantic Black diaspora. A capacious work, *Detrás* makes visible the connections across the diaspora through the specific movement vocabularies that flow in and out of Black social, ritual, and concert dances. This diasporic citation contends with the afterlives of displacement, the literal act of being removed or uprooted, the *destierro*, from one's land or place of origin and having to refer to it as a way to understand oneself, community, history, and memory in the present moment of the citation. This concept of *destierro*, which I discussed in the introduction of the book, implicitly grounds the piece.

Detrás offers vignettes of Black life: birth, ancestral worship and protection, spiritual intervention, community sustenance, and collective revolution. Perpetual movement characterizes these vignettes, as choreographed entrances and exits from upstage, stage right, and stage left abound. The piece, like the novel, is broken up in five acts. The novel's five sections are as follows: "Origins," "The American Muntu," "The Vodou Rebellion," "Rediscovered Bloodlines," and "Ancestral Combatants." Palacios takes creative license with his acts, entitled "Rebel Blood," "Song of Yemayá," "Muntu," "Diáspora," and "Unction." He also includes a prelude and a closing called "Epic."

The piece starts like a ritual, with slow, processional walking upstage of dancers clad in white. Ancestors wearing red, their brown skins adorned

Image 3.11: Marieris Mosquera Batista and William Camilo Perlaza Micolta in *Detrás del Sur*. Photo by Marcela Gómez.

with white markings, usher in a pregnant woman dressed in white. Who is this woman? Whom will she give birth to? Great ancestral figures, namely Benkos Biohó and (presumably his) pregnant mother, also appear wearing white clothing. A male figure stands behind her, tethered to her by an umbilical cord represented as white clothes tied together. After she mimetically represents the twists, turns, discomforts and contortions of childbirth, the cord is cut, which allows the newborn Benkos to move, dance, and literally be free(d). I read this moment as the generative and nurturing connection between birthing diaspora and cementing blackness in the world. William Camilo Perlaza Micolta represents Benkos,

but he also functions as a surrogate for male Black revolutionary figures. Without the pain of his mother, the labor of a Black woman, Black revolution (full stop) would never occur. Once free, dancer Perlaza signifies the ontological formation of blackness and the inevitability of resistance through Afro-Cuban movements of the orishas Ogún, the warrior who promotes progress, and Elegua, the owner of the crossroads and the orisha who opens and closes paths or opportunities. In other words, spiritual guidance and invocation to spirit are key to the development of a Black revolutionary conscience. Paths must be opened so that battles for progress can continue. In an earlier version of *Detrás*, "Benkos" collapses after his solo, only to be carried up and away by the ancestors dressed in red. Later versions have him march offstage in the company of ancestors. Small choreographic changes often make the piece more powerful. Either way, whether carried or walking away, Benkos and the ancestors cross paths with Yemayá, danced by Yndira Perea, as they exit the stage.

Perea/Yemayá's regal entrance, in a ceremonial, white, billowing skirt with ribbons of blue braided into her hair, sets up the next vignette as one of spiritual grounding or blessing. It also permits Perea to showcase her skill in Afro-Cuban folkloric dance. As I watched her dance, I was impressed with her performance. She has always stood out to me as the "star" of Sankofa (whether this is intentionally set up by Palacios is not important for my analysis overall), so, of course, I expected an exuberant and memorable solo. Her dancing solidified for me the ability for diasporic movements to move between bodies across geographies and still be clearly read as such. They in-sinew-ate themselves onto brown and Black bodies who feel a twinge or touch of a connection to Black embodiments and their histories—whether through ancestry, cultural engagement, or dedicated time to learn. In her performance, she demonstrated a choreography of care and reverence for Yemayá (as a spirit/orisha/energy, as a set of codified dance steps, as a character in *Detrás*) that I contend extends toward the Afro-Cuban folkloric dancers with whom she spent tireless (and most likely) hot afternoons dancing, learning those very moves I was watching. Dancer and anthropologist Maya J. Berry would call this a "Black feminist choreographic aptitude," wherein Black women transmit dance knowledges to one another in a didactic setting to "equip the dancer to perform with virtuosity, and experience pleasure from their movements in a particular sociopolitical and economic context."[70] Multiple pleasures emerge for both the dancer/performer and me, as spectator/dancer during this segment. My layered spectatorship mirrors what dance scholar

Priya Srinivasan calls the "unruly spectator," that is, a dance spectator "who takes pleasure from critically looking at what is not supposed to be seen in an 'ideal' performance."[71]

Sankofa avoids spectacularity. It does not cater to the spectacle of a Black dancing body, so I was not looking for or expecting an idealized version of Yemayá. My spectatorial unruliness understands the absence of the "ideal" in deference to the citational and corporeally cognized. I knew they were Afro-Cuban dance moves because I have learned and performed them, yet in this iterative instance I felt privy to an Afro-Colombian choreographic sensibility, a sensibility that cares about its relationship to diaspora by listening, connecting to, and learning through new embodiments, in other words, choreographic care. Perea knows the steps to Yemayá: the swaying arms making waves with the skirt; the forceful slap of the alternating feet patterns; the rhythmic undulation of the torso bending forward and back to upright; the many spins and turns with a tucked back foot to lift the skirt in mimicry of the whirlpools and ocean currents. As I mentioned earlier, once a dancer knows the steps to Afro-Cuban orishas' respective dances, the dancer can improvise with them depending on the call of the drum. Because she does not dance to the specific sacred calls of Yemayá played by *batá* drums (the drummers in *Detrás* play on congas), she has more freedom in her improvisational choices. This freedom is what I read as the diasporic citational work *Detrás* accomplishes. It also permits my own unruly engagement.

The diasporic literacy required to move away from the search for idealization and spectacle allows Sankofa's work to enact the political and pedagogical valences Palacios espouses. In other words, passive spectatorship does not suffice. Something beyond one's ability to understand through the visual must come into play. I feel smug as I write this because I could watch my favorite parts of *Detrás*, "Diáspora" and "Unction" over and over. They have a hypnotic, ritualistic, and affective quality that rivets me in multisensorial ways, perhaps the way that Edward Said describes the worlds of texts and cultural productions possessing "sensuous particularity."[72] What is this world, then, that *Detrás* creates?

Detrás makes visible Sankofa's concept of *narrativas negras en movimiento*: Black narratives in movement. Movement appears as a vital, catalyzing force for Black identity and survival. "Diáspora" features María Elena Murillo representing movement as the divine, life-giving force of the *muntu* (Image 3.12). She stands in for spirit that guides, protects, and maintains cohesion amid the dispersal, forced or otherwise, of the Black

Image 3.12: María Elena Murillo as Muntu in *Detrás del Sur*. Photo by Marcela Gómez.

diaspora. She enters the stage, her face covered in a woven mask of tan-colored fabric. It looks like netting that falls in dancing ribbons down her torso. She wears a leotard, the same color as her skin, underneath this simple costume. Her deep-brown, muscular skin looks resplendent. She simply executes an alternating foot pattern of small marching steps to get around the stage. Her hips sway slightly, hypnotically. She maintains a forward-facing gaze, while her arms are positioned on either side of her torso. She weaves through the stage, marking out paths, lines, semicircles with this slow, steady, yet purposeful marching. Sometimes she will raise her arms and make gestures, swiping through the air in circular, sweeping

motions. Other times she will leap with high knees in almost Senegalese *sabar* fashion, only to return to the melancholic marching step: a stepping, swaying, rhythmic pace. Overall, she never stays still; she is *muntu*.

Muntu is described as "una concepción totalizadora. Es la visión integral del universo, proveniente de varias culturas africanas (especialmente la bantú), que incluye los seres humanos, naturales, astrales y divinos compenetrados en el río que fluye uniendo pasado, presente y futuro" (a totalizing concept. It is the integral vision of the universe, coming from several African cultures [especially the Bantu], which includes human, natural, astral, and divine beings interpenetrated in the flowing river that unites past, present, and future).[73] *Muntu*'s presence as corporealized through Murillo's slow and steady pace and choreographic flourishes functions as the steadying force for the piece. She is and moves in Black spirit time. Soon the dancers begin to enter from both sides of the stage.

They enter in two groups of three on either side at first. They wear the same netting masks over their faces as Murillo without the dangling fabric. The colors of their simple costumes evoke the earth: sand, red clay, ocher. In those same marching-step patterns, they circle one another in their small group of three. Meanwhile, Murillo remains in the middle . . . marching, stepping, maintaining the rhythm, the life force, the beat. In those same groups of three, they begin to move in front and behind her across the stage. Once they reach the side opposite where they entered from, another group of three dancers joins them on each side. Now they have become two groups of six. They all mark out that rhythmic marching pattern in synchronicity. Murillo remains in the middle . . . marching, stepping, maintaining the rhythm, the life force, the beat. It resembles a physicalization of the term "multidirectional flow" cultural studies scholar Ella Shohat uses to describe how aesthetic ideas circulate within diasporas.[74] The two groups repeat the initial choreography: They circle one another and then begin to move en masse toward the center, where they slowly etch out a circle around Murillo. The marley has four large spotlights imprinted on it, creating four (or six) intertwined circles that they dance in and around. Circles of life.

After encircling Murillo several times, they move out of the circular formation and exit the stage only to return, forming lines in front and behind her. These geometric patterns and formations demonstrate the process of diaspora, one that shifts, regroups, and, most important, keeps shifting through space and time. In those lines and semicircles that subtly transform into one big circle around her, dancers have solo moments

Image 3.13: Diaspora in *Detrás del Sur*. Photo by Marcela Gómez.

of explosive, gestural alacrity where they engage in a short phrase from different choreographic moments of the piece specifically performed by Murillo-as-*muntu*. In other words, these are citational moments comprising not just Black diasporic movement vocabularies, but movement from the *muntu* / life force of the piece itself. "Diáspora" invites this relationship as we slowly fall into the lull of the marching steps "going, coming, shuttling, circling," leading somewhere, perhaps leading nowhere given the reality of deferred (Black) liberation we live through right now.[75] The entangled nets the dancers wear over their faces mirror the entanglements of diaspora, of a diasporic personhood. As Wells writes, "Black citational choreographic practice understands personhood as entangled rather than sovereign, and movement as a source of connection rather than property."[76] Similarly, the weaving in, out, and around one another marks the collective interconnectedness necessary for diaspora to survive and thrive . . . all under the guidance and care of *muntu*/spirit (Image 3.13).

As someone who attends to Black cultural practices, Black practices of embodiment, and Black dance practices, I am constantly working to find a language for those very embodied practices that exceed and go beyond language. I return to explanations of diaspora as a malleable, ongoing practice. Shana L. Redmond explains that the Black diaspora "as performance and practice is contested and (re)made over and over

again, revealing its complexity and dynamism, which stems from the constant agitation among its subjects as well as the movements that disperse those persons around the globe. As such, the African diaspora is a people, process, encounter, ambition, and project."[77] Thus, the use of the term "Black diaspora" requires attention to the forms, poetics (both written and embodied), and (movement) vocabularies set in motion to understand those very same diasporic "performances and practices." The meaning is in the practice. Its existence relies on a constant moving and doing complex enough to allow for aporias or not-yet-translatable poetics, vocabularies, or forms. Brent Edwards would respond that the untranslatability of the gaps in the African diaspora, or *décalage*, is part of this challenge to define or unify diaspora neatly.[78] For him, the relationships between the connections offer something akin to language—"the connection speaks"—but not quite language per se. Those very (affective) connections in *Detrás* speak, making clear, yet again, Sankofa's mission to be heard more than to be seen. I remind us again of what fahima ife wonders: "What if our inherited subjectivity is sound?"[79] Black diasporic literacy would require a shift from seeing to hearing, feeling, sensing.

Once the "Diáspora" section finishes, Murillo remains alone in the center again, relentlessly in motion. She bows, reaches to the side, then to the other side, seemingly blessing the space for what follows. "Unction" begins. The music changes to a sound score where electronic chord progressions duet alongside the marimba and a chorus of Afro-Colombian sonorous voices ululate "oh oh oh," repeatedly interspersed with "De lejos vengo yo" (I come from far away). Sometimes the three drummers on stage contribute live beats to this recorded soundtrack. The pulsing sounds along with the repetitive call-and-response continue creating Black spirit-space time, with the grounding, rhythmic meter for the varied entrances and exits the dancers execute. They bound onto the stage in alternating duets, executing unison phrases either next to or in front of one another, with mirroring movement. A simple movement vocabulary allows them to travel on, across, and off the stage: large, forward-bounding hop-steps with alternating arms swinging upward and down. It is quite propulsive and energetic while still "holding back in plain sight."[80] In other words, the energy does not build up toward a catharsis or a big, vivacious ending (Image 3.14).[81] Instead, it keeps them present, ever moving under the protection of the divinity and under the care and camaraderie of one another. They feel one another's rhythm and stay in it. No one goes faster or slower,

Image 3.14: Sandra Vanessa Murillo Mosquera in the foreground with other members of Sankofa Danzafro for a performance of *Detrás del Sur*. Photo by Marcela Gómez.

a collective inhabitation of rhythm dependent on listening and feeling the other. This is how I am able to describe what it looks like while trying to remain attuned to what it feels like as I experience it multisensorially.

I find "Unction" to be compositionally and affectively nourishing for mind-body-spirit, given my attunement to diasporic citation. Its varied use of repetition references both ritual practices, where higher states of consciousness or simple acts of prayer require repetition for complete engagement (and spirit possession), and compositional strategies a choreographer uses to play and make (un)predictable patterns with repetitive movements and gestures. It also effectively represents the multiple Africanist dance vocabularies that rely on repetition for the attendant aesthetics of the cool: high-affect juxtaposition, polycentrism/polyrhythm, and the detached look of coolness despite physical effort.[82] I draw on dance artist-scholar Layla Zami's preference for repetition in her artistic scholarship to understand how Sankofa engages with it and why I respond to it in the ways I do. She explains that repetition "can be(come) motion, and can (trans)form meaning. Just as coloniality works by repeating scenarios

of dispossession, extraction, and oppression, people from the global South have historically used repetition to create memory discourses and practices, and to plant seeds of knowledge at home and beyond."[83] The ways in which I can connect back across the mo(ve)ments engages my diasporic sense-memory. I find myself moving alongside and taking pleasure in the sudden apparition of familiar Afro-Cuban *Changó* steps, and the deep, grounded quality of the lower part of their bodies so that they can execute the flawless and elastic torso rotations in place. Various entrances and exits by duets eventually lead to the entire company (twelve dancers) forward-bounding onto the stage. They form lines, following one another and creating a powerful diagonal that moves from upstage right toward downstage left. The repetitive forward-bounding step references the ways that Black diasporic subjects walk, run, and move across the earth. Community remains vital throughout; nobody ever dances alone. They have a partner, or they dance collectively. The divinity joins them in the last moments of the section, where they forward-bound together, pivoting forward then backward, looking backward to look and move forward just like the meaning of the company's name, Sankofa.

As I was deciding what sections to focus on from *Detrás*, I was rewatching an early performance Sankofa's management company shared with me via Vimeo and became confused. *Was that "Muntu" or "Diáspora"? Wait, is that when "Epic" begins?* I quickly wrote to Rafael via WhatsApp and asked for clarification. Always so gracious, he replied almost immediately and explained, "Los esclavizados rodean a la divinidad que no los abandona durante la tragedia del destierro, secuestro, trata transatlántica" (The enslaved surround the divinity that does not abandon them during the tragedy of exile, kidnapping, [and the] transatlantic slave trade). There was no appeal to sadness or melancholy in his description of the Black diasporic condition, although he used the word *destierro* (violent uprooting), instead of the word *desplazamiento* (displacement). Yet "Unction" does feel melancholic to me, but not in the form of easy or manipulative sentimentality for sentimentality's sake. The melancholia I suggest leans into performance studies scholar José Esteban Muñoz's rendering of it as

> "a structure of feeling" that is necessary and not always counterproductive and negative . . . melancholia for blacks, queers, or any queers of color is not a pathology but an integral part of everyday lives . . . a process of dealing with all the catastrophes that occur in the lives of people of color, lesbians, and gay men. [It is] not a self-

> absorbed mood that inhibits activism. Rather, it is a mechanism that helps us (re)construct identity.[84]

While *Detrás* does not explicitly marshal Black diasporic melancholia, it proposes how movement amid *destierro* and displacement, and subsequently finding then joining a community, become tactics for survival. After Rafael texted me his commentary, I replied that his description was very clear to me from the first time I watched *Detrás* live. I added that I read the section as the choreographed insistence of Black diaspora's reliance on motion to live and survive. He replied with a heart emoji.

Detrás begins and ends similarly: in the middle of an uprising. While the opening of the piece shows this in real time, the ending transitions from "real time" to slow motion. The entire dance company appears on stage in slow, purposeful gestures of struggle and revolt: One dancer cocks her arm backward ready to launch an object toward an invisible oppressor; others crouch as if hiding from surveillance or shield themselves from a projectile object or blow coming their way. These slow, carefully executed gestures of self-protection, struggle, and liberation highlight the visible and visceral ways in which Black corporealities need to engage their muscles. Thought is in motion, engaging one's muscles in a spatial temporal moment that requires self-protection while *also* being in a collective with others, moving toward achieving a particular revolutionary goal. That the piece ends in media res of a struggle only highlights that the struggle for Black liberation continues.

4. Displacing Archives

> The authority of the witness consists in his capacity to speak solely in the name of an incapacity to speak. . . . Testimony thus guarantees not the factual truth of the statement safeguarded in the archive, *but rather its unarchivability*, its exteriority with respect to the archive—that is, the necessity by which . . . , it escapes both memory and forgetting . . . there is testimony only where there is an impossibility of speaking, because there is a witness only where there has been desubjectification.[1]
>
> —Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*

Intellectual and personal preoccupations with the ontology of the archive led me to coedit a special issue of the journal *Contemporary Theatre Review* entitled "Outing Archives, Archives Outing" with theater scholar Bryce Lease and dance scholar Royona Mitra where we questioned the role, materiality, and power of the imperial archive. The issue demonstrated how those of us within theater, dance, and performance studies are "alert to the critical slippages between objects and actions in our embodied fields of knowledge-making. The archive, even in its inception, is inherently doomed to failure for it can never contain all that it sets up to archive. Yet its impact on civic spaces, nationalism, and collective imaginaries requires critical interrogation."[2] French Algerian poststructuralist philosopher Jacques Derrida alludes to this impact by claiming that the archive "is only a notion, an impression" and that it possesses the "unknowable weight" of the past.[3] Theater scholar Paola S. Hernández wonders, "How does the theatre, in presenting an archive of the past, grapple with this 'unknowable weight'? How do witnesses of atrocity contend with the political and traumatic past? . . . How do artists find new

ways to revive and energize the past in the present?"[4] Embodied practices offer ways to vivify the archive, something that Diana Taylor set up with her field-defining concept of the repertoire: knowledges that stem from embodied, shared, and unwritten modes of practice and transmission. But what if these repertoires are archives unto themselves? What if these minoritarian archives are always already in motion? These knowledges choreograph methods of valuing interactions across multiple sensorial dimensions: thought, feeling, sweating, touching, hearing, relating, and wondering. I position wondering as the last element not because it lacks significance. The act of not knowing—sitting and reflecting on a question, a feeling, a concern in a space of unknowing—refuses the positivist need to catalog and collect. Thoughts, feelings, and wonderment remain fugitive, mobile, incapable of repeating the rules of cataloging that stem from other more stringent rules of subordination and domination. In fact, "Wonder is study" because it can "demand openness and is unsatisfied with questions that result in descriptive-data-induced answers."[5] The Eurocentric method of knowledge-gathering, curating, and archive construction struggles to contain embodied thoughts and practices always already in movement. Its confines fall short; they act as prison houses for anticolonial thought, action, and movement.

This chapter is not about a Eurocentrically modeled conceptualization of the archive, but to get that possibility out of the way I had to make this admission here so that (methodological) displacement of it matters. In so doing, I am affirming a different way of archiving memories and historical events in Colombia. It moves us from archives and archiving as extractive practice to a more ethnographic and collaborative one. Rather than present this chapter's objects of study as part of a dominant History (with a capital H) of Colombia, I am looking to position them somewhere more distinct. I am reminded of what anthropologist Ann Laura Stoler writes about "minor" histories. They are not trivial, she contends. Instead, they "mark a differential political temper and a critical space. [Minor history] attends to structures of feelings and force that in 'major' history might be otherwise displaced."[6] Another significant displacement that occurs in reconceptualizing the archive is privileging of a witness's testimony over official records of the same historical event. In *The Witness and the Archive* Giorgio Agamben explores the figure of the witness: those who speak not only for themselves but for those who can no longer speak, particularly after state-induced terror.[7] He distinguishes between the archive (official records) and testimony (personal memory), arguing that testimony is

essential precisely because it reveals the limits of language and representation. The gaps and silences in testimony do not discredit it, but rather make it ethically significant. Agamben ultimately calls for a new ethics grounded in the responsibility to bear witness to what resists full representation, the human remnants left after catastrophe and the responsibility to listen and respond to what *cannot be fully said*. He challenges traditional notions of subjectivity, memory, and history. Because the witness essentially exceeds the contents of the archive, the archiving of embodied memory challenges the ontological idea of the archive, that of a fixed repository of knowledge. For cultural theorist Stuart Hall, "archiving" is a critical, historical, and contestatory activity. He writes that archives "are in part constituted within the lines of force of cultural power and authority; always open to the futurity and contingency—the relative autonomy—of artistic practices."[8] In other words, artistic practices have the power to determine the constitution of archives.

In this chapter, I present a curatorial experiment informed by artistic practices as embodied forms of archives. I examine a photography exhibit, animated and live-action documentary shorts, and a digital archive alongside one another to highlight how processes of memory, history, and documentation rely on the affective specificities of those witnessing, remembering, and constructing those very memories and, more specifically, how these three "archives" function as alternatives to conventional understandings of "the archive." Continuing with the significance of movement as an analytic, I am interested in the shifts (i.e., literal movements) involved in the political, aesthetic, and historical processes of archiving that construct a "living archive" (as Stuart Hall calls it), one "whose construction must be seen as an on-going, never-completed project."[9] I consider the ways that affect, embodied memory, and performance practices set parameters for the collection and maintenance of knowledges. I specifically reconsider what an archive consists of and how its concomitant practice of archiving generates significant minor histories beyond scopic knowledge. I am interested in how one might archive minoritarian affect and allow those remnants—testimony, memories, cultural practices, ancestral knowledges—to materialize a type of archive, incomplete but historically significant. I recognize what American photographer and writer Alan Sekula describes as the "shadowy presence of the archive,"[10] that is, the ways in which "the archive" informs how photography, for example, becomes cataloged, historicized, and collected. I want to think and move alongside archives differently, paying attention to what it means to archive

and produce an archive beyond the objectivist modes modernity imposed on the acquisition and storage of knowledge. This chapter wrestles with methodological questions concerning the organization and presentation of an(y) archive and the ethical-political ramifications of said aesthetic of the archive. Stoler has suggested "an emergent methodological shift: to move away from treating the archives as an *extractive* exercise to an ethnographic one."[11] This is my attempt to heed her methodological clarion call.

Movement continues to be a preoccupation in these next pages. In what follows I trace movements between the aesthetic and the political, between history and memory, and between witnessing and archiving in three instances: the photography exhibit *El Testigo / The Witness* (2018) by Jesús Abad Colorado, which functioned as a particular photographic archive of the armed conflict in Colombia; the documentary work of Olowaili Green Santacruz, a young Gunadule woman who co-leads the artistic collective Sentarte, which records and shares Gunadule traditions through innovative animated shorts and films, thereby establishing a creative-critical archival practice for her people; and the conceptualization and creation of a digital archive, Corpografías, as a repository for embodied performance practices in Colombia that emerged, continued, or changed due to the armed conflict. Each case study attempts to approximate what it feels like to read and feel alongside these archives: photographic, installatory, digital, and animated. As shared earlier, the chapter is not technically about "the (imperial) archive," but about the feelings, thoughts, and synesthetic, corporeal attentiveness that these types of archives require and cannot completely contain or sustain. It also makes a case for how minoritarian artistic practices in Colombia offer testimonies and opportunities to witness incomplete histories of *destierro*, coloniality, and the armed conflict.

Performance studies scholars Dwight Conquergood and D. Soyini Madison offer the term "co-performative witnessing" as a way to complicate the activity of witnessing. They explain that witnessing is a "shared temporality, bodies on the line, soundscapes of power, dialogic inter-animation, political action, and matters of the heart. Each of these domains is infinitely charged with meaning and possibility."[12] As a dance and performance studies scholar I am trained to integrate my corporeality in how I experience other people, places, things, and events. Privileging sight feels unproductive for the ensuing analyses, yet these three examples do begin with visual data to consider and "witness." I find the work of French artist and psychoanalyst Breta Ettinger useful for the analytical methods in this chapter as she sets up the term "aesthetic wit(h)

nessing" to engage with trauma, memory, and aesthetics. Wit(h)nessing goes beyond the idea of bearing witness. It implies a "being with, but not assimilated to, and to being beside the other in a gesture that is much more than mere ethical solidarity."[13] Aesthetic wit(h)nessing is "a means of being with and remembering for the other through the artistic act and through an aesthetic encounter. Art becomes a keeper of historical memory for the injured other by creating the site for a novel trans-subjective and transhistorical process that is simultaneously witness and wit(h)ness."[14] The embodied oscillation between the practices of witness and wit(h)ness thus becomes the focal point. Moving between these practices further instantiates the requirement of *estar en movimiento* to consider and capture what the stakes are with these different archives in the chapter. I am literally moving from three distinct aesthetic forms to help expand how to think about the methods, forms, and modes of minoritarian archival practices.

The analytics of co-performative witnessing and wit(h)nessing allow me to attend to my own pleasure and conflicting thoughts of experiencing these photographs, embodied practices, and animations. I hope to practice a type of decolonial method about the archive, one that must take into consideration the persons who wit(h)ness with whatever form of memorialization they encounter; a way for wit(h)nessing to function "as a waymaker that enriches and extends the work of witnessing by embracing the teachings of affect and more-than-visual sensing and mattering."[15]

Wit(h)nessing *El Testigo*

The Colombian exhibit *El Testigo: Memorias del Conflicto Armado Colombiano en el Lente y la Voz de Jesús Abad Colorado* (2018) took place inside a repurposed Catholic monastery, the Claustro de San Agustín, that sits diagonally across from the Presidential Palace, Casa de Nariño. Coloniality and governmentality face one another, mirroring their respective historical and systemic oppressions. I attended the exhibit twice: once in November 2018 and a subsequent time in April 2019. *El Testigo* offers an extensive archive of more than 550 photographs of the armed conflict that, through embodied and affective response to the imagery, asks important questions about the future of citizenship, reparations, reconciliation, and healing in Colombia. It does not follow a linear pattern; its organizational structure resembles a constellation, where time, events, and places converge. Faces, places, acts and aftereffects of displacements, sites of violence, environ-

mental destruction, objects, close-ups of people and their things, animals, and community events coalesce as you move through the different rooms. The compassionate lens of Abad Colorado's perspective unifies these disparate images about the armed conflict and its effects on the people in the photographs. Four rooms contain the photographs, which are thematically organized: Room 1, *Tierra callada* (silenced land) visibilizes the forms and aftereffects of displacement endured by human and nonhuman actors; Room 2, *No hay tinieblas que la luz no venza* (There is no darkness that light will not defeat), focuses on forced disappearance and the murder of humanitarian, environmental, and social leaders; Room 3, *Aún así me levantaré* (I too will rise [inspired by Maya Angelou's poem of the same name, featured on a gallery wall]), showcases the violences experienced by civilians at the hands of the state, the paramilitaries, and the guerrillas; and Room 4, *Pongo mis manos en las tuyas* (I place my hands in yours), details the multiple activisms that led to the peace process.

While time, events, and places frame the organization of the exhibit, my interest lies in the embodied effects and affects the exhibit generates. I bring the critical lens of dance and performance studies to the discourses about empathy, memory, witnessing, and reparative justice the exhibit proposes, considering the ways an emphasis on corporeal synesthesia generates discussions and enactments of civil discourse. Perhaps I am proposing a way to engage with photography beyond the visual without trying to be clever or innovative. Instead, I am thinking about how these photographs materialized and then *how* the experience of their witnessing materializes synesthetic responses—tears, stillness, refusal, and contemplation. To put it simply, I wonder, *What do these photographs do*? The exhibit ran for five years, from October 2018 to October 2023 and had over a million visitors. I wonder what contemplation over and about these images offers. Can it incite and move people emotionally and politically from feelings to action? What are the political ramifications, if any, for Colombians who experience the exhibit? I am not sure I can answer these questions, as I do not consider myself a stakeholder in the aftereffects of the exhibit's impact. Frankly, my feelings do not matter here. However, if Abad Colorado's role as "witness" to the horrors of (and political mobilizations against) the armed conflict highlights the other "witnesses" photographed by him, then perhaps the unspeakable affects of those very "witnesses" leave room for new "grammars" to understand not just the testimony curated and represented through the aestheticization of their unspeakable experiences in photographs, but also the limits to making

sense of and representing the trauma of its witnesses writ large. Philosophers María del Rosario Acosta López and José Medina's work on the power of aesthetic experience for social repair has been crucial in helping me understand what the potential of *El Testigo* might have been. As Acosta López writes, "It is our responsibility to guarantee conditions for audibility so that testimony can be told *on its own terms* and without having to reach a demand for translation into already available meanings."[16] In other words, the visual and logocentric fields can no longer serve us when we try to understand such events. Yet the exhibit became an attempt to show the country the faces of people often ignored in, misrepresented by, or erased from national discourses.

Although the photographs in the exhibit are still images, they demonstrate what curator María Belén Sáez de Ibarra explains as Abad Colorado's "lifetime dedicated to walking alongside the dispossessed and those who have been expelled from their land, sharing their refuge, their water, and their thirst, and hiking through the mud: journalism by foot."[17] Decidedly embodied, these image-testimonies made my body "feel" the heat, toil, and desperation of some of the human subjects photographed. I also felt the breeze, the smell of mud; I could hear the ruckus of the jungle, the stirring of branches and leaves as either displaced people or paramilitaries walked over them. I see images with broken branches, cracked concrete, scorched earth, crumbling buildings with bullet holes, felled trees. I hear insects, dogs yelping after owners fleeing quickly, the sound of the rivers and streams. I felt an uncomfortable tension as I moved through the rooms, caught between the critical scholar trying to describe the experience of the exhibit, taking many photographs of the photographs and their arrangement on the walls, and wondering why I was drawn to some more than others. I also felt like an outsider being affected by some of the imagery and associated texts of the exhibition. As I said before, my feelings did not really matter. Most of all, I asked then and reiterate here, what do these photographs *do*?

Abad Colorado's embodied labor as photographer, friend, and ally to his subjects alongside his caring relationship to the nonhuman victims of the armed conflict arrests you. The images

> illustrate the story of a crime, of *fleeing in search of refuge*, and *of returning to look for their land* and their dead, *to bury them with their own loving hands*, that is, if they were able to find their loved ones, as the search can be endless grief without closure. . . . Many

> portraits capture *the wrinkles and eyes that express so many feelings and thoughts*; we see the *bare hands and feet*, the *wounded landscape* of the territories, *the resistance and the efforts of its leaders*, as well as the *cultural rituals of mourning* and commemorations for peace that sustain them as communities *and allow them to survive*.[18]

I use this extensive quotation from the exhibition catalog's book on *Tierra callada* to highlight how my scholarly attunement searches for and focuses on bodies, affects, social choreographies, and literal movement. In the following analysis, I specifically focus on images that convey movement: protesting bodies; pangas on the river moving people up- or downstream; Colombian farmers walking through the jungle carrying cadavers; photos that show the before, during, and after of the labor of digging and exhumation. Although the exhibit functions as a cultural archive that captures the material, affective, and political effects of the Colombian armed conflict, I consider how it can also exist as an archive of movement, that is, the movement necessary to create the photographs, the movements by humans and nonhumans, the stunted ability to move through acts of displacement, encapsulation, and destruction of the flow of rivers through pollution from oil and cadavers, and, overall, movement for the sake of survival, mourning, and solidarity across the ability to move and be moved. Movement begets more movement and movements for different possibilities of existence, movement from witnessing the photograph to being moved by the performative wit(h)nessing of it.

Curator Saéz de Ibarra writes that the exhibit is influenced by "not only one creator but by another presence beyond the I, that surpasses and exceeds the individual."[19] I read the positing of a considered relationality between the photographer, the person-place-other-than-human photographed, the apparatus of the camera, and the viewer(s). Thus, while Abad Colorado is the photographer, the exhibit establishes a visual-corporeal-synesthetic relationship between him, the people, places, and things photographed, and those who are witnesses to the conflict. Witnessing moves toward wit(h)nessing, so that those who reflect on the images can choose to be in the position of the titular witness that encapsulates the exhibit. The exhibit offers an opportunity to experience and be in relation to one another through difference, dismay, and discomfort. To gaze and wit(h)ness across social class, blackness, indigeneity, victimhood, and/or perpetrator requires Colombians to *sentipensar* anew. Answers are not

requested; levels of contemplation beyond the visual are.

Abad Colorado's photography is indeed beautiful: Light seeps through thick branches, weaving stunning patterns on the jungle floor, gnarled tree-trunks resemble intertwined human limbs, rocks glisten as if covered in satin, stars sparkle as if purposefully painted into the sky. Photographic aesthetics belies the horror that many of these photos hide. Rather than depict the actual civil war's atrocities, Abad Colorado turns his lens toward its immediate aftereffects: bullet-encrusted walls, cadavers wrapped in white, *pangas* carrying desperate groups of people fleeing the aftermath of the Bojayá bombing. Susan Sontag writes that "photographs of the victims of war are themselves a species of rhetoric. They reiterate. They simplify. They agitate. They create the illusion of consensus."[20] A collective we of Colombian citizenship is imagined in the exhibit, so much so that the exhibit was only in Spanish. No translation to another language existed. It was only after I sought and purchased the four-volume set of the exhibit (sponsored by the Universidad Nacional de Colombia with financing from the Norwegian Embassy in Colombia) did I see English text and translations of the curator's statement and the poems, texts, and catalog of the images that decorated the walls of the Claustro.

The exhibit seemed to function, at least to me, as a way for Colombians to come together and experience the civil war through a visible and visceral angle. When I attended the first time, I went with the Colombian co-researchers of our grant project. Often one of us had to step out into the corridors of a particular exhibition room to process the images, sit in silence, or even cry: "Look, the photographs, say, *this* is what it's like. This is what war *does*. And *that*, that is what it does, too. War tears, rends. War rips open, eviscerates. War scorches. War dismembers. War *ruins*."[21] Again, Sontag articulating an unspoken thesis of the exhibit. Without relying too much on Sontag's trenchant critiques of the exploitative nature of looking at "harrowing photographs of other people's pain in an art gallery,"[22] *Testigo* also offers an opportunity to move from immobile affective states of feeling while witnessing, to wit(h)nessing as a form of symbolic reparations and perhaps even healing. Wit(h)nessing photographs allows spectators "to see and to imagine . . . [yet] imagining is not a free and boundless form of creative work but rather is disciplined by the rules and habits of photographs, their discursive formation."[23] The acts of imagining that these photographs offer to their witnesses "routinely obscure the presence and responsibility of witness itself."[24] In other words, are photo-

graphs useful materials to witness human suffering? What does witnessing the armed conflict through photographs do to civil society in Colombia? What does the "dispassionate neutrality of the camera"[25] implement in terms of a civil discourse for and about symbolic (and maybe even reparative) justice in Colombia?

Visual culture theorist Ariella Azoulay explains that regime-made disasters should not be identified with the victims of those very regime-made disasters.[26] Instead, a civil discourse must emerge that refuses to see the disaster as the defining feature of the population. In other words, the rural, poor, Afro, and Indigenous communities of Colombia are not mere victims. The exhibit seems clear in its intent to offer its spectators the opportunity to construct a civil discourse in Azoulay's formulation of the term, or at least this is how I would like to think about its rationale beyond easy sentiment and static affect. Azoulay writes that in a "civil discourse under conditions of regime-made disaster . . . citizenship is restricted to a series of privileges that only a portion of the governed population enjoys and, even then, to an unequal degree. The central right pertaining to the privilege segment of the population consists in the right to view disaster—to be its spectator."[27] Visitors to the exhibit can "observe the disaster from comparative safety" and can witness "people who have disaster inflicted upon them and who can then be viewed subsisting in their state of disaster."[28] By moving the discourse from narratives of victimhood to the potential for political discourses that address the effects of a conflict that Uribismo, elites, and paramilitaries want to erase, *El Testigo* functions as a catalyst of not *just* a civil discourse but the civil imagination necessary to make that discourse happen.

Azoulay explains that a civil discourse "is thus one that suspends the point of view of governmental power and the nationalist characteristics that enable it to divide the governed from one another and to set its factions against one another. . . . Civil discourse insists on delineating the full field of vision in which the disaster unfolds so as to lay bare the blueprint of the regime."[29] In contrast, the (elitist and paramilitary groups) discourses in Colombia—from 2016's signing of the peace treaty with FARC to the 2018 Iván Duque presidency and its continuation of Uribismo's denial of the state's responsibility in the war, to the denial of the existence of the armed conflict by historian and director of the Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica Darío Acevedo Carmona—evoke a reliance on governmental and nationalistic narratives that continue to reify the multiple binaries that hinder the development of a civil discourse in Azoulay's con-

figuration of the term. Abad Colorado's archive of thirty years of conflict makes visible the "blueprint of the regime" by forcing the discourse to consider the victims, both human and nonhuman. How is it possible *not* to admit the existence of an armed conflict when wit(h)nessing the myriad of images that feature examples of human suffering amid war?

Read through the lenses of wit(h)nessing and political ontologies of photography, Abad Colorado's photographs ask Colombians to begin to formulate civil discourses around notions of citizenship and reconciliation and, most important, to implement what Azoulay calls a "civil imagination." A civil imagination requires the removal of an uncritical relationship to photography and consideration of its effects within the political space. Yet this political space must also commit to an engagement in political imagination rather than a facile continuation of the regime in place, that is, photographed, and its regime-made disasters. Azoulay insists that "the civil must be separated from the political and defined in its own right as the interest that citizens display in themselves, in others, in their shared forms of coexistence, as well as in the world that they create and nurture."[30]

It goes without saying that the colonial inheritances of the Colombian regime offer a dearth of political imagination. However, the adaptation and adoption of Afro and Indigenous ways of knowing, seeing, and understanding the world beyond visuality and individuality offer multiple possible guidelines toward the civil discourse Azoulay proposes. Sometimes I look to Abad's images for reminders of *vivir sabroso* as an orienting compass before the paramilitaries and FARC infiltrated these rural enclaves of Colombia. While I do not want to infringe upon the fluid definitions of what a good life means for the group of individuals photographed in Abad Colorado's work, I see an attunement to *vivir sabroso* through the aesthetic framing and choices he makes in his photographic composition. He attends to the collective and its relationship to individuals for sustenance, survival, and support. He focuses on modes of kinship beyond family to moments of solidarity amid suffering. He provides detailed close-ups of objects—semi-buried rosaries, identification cards, faces in grief, wrinkled hands holding photographs, protest posters—and wide-angle vistas of the landscape to demonstrate the multiple scales of the armed conflict, from the minute to the grandiose. While spectators are initially drawn into the exhibition space for its aesthetics, the affective outcome of the exhibit's effects differs among its audiences within Colombia.

The exhibit prompted debates about its significance. Laudatory criticism thought it successfully promoted the re-dignification of the victims

of the armed conflict given Abad Colorado's methods for taking the photographs.[31] Much has been written (and filmed in Kate Horne's documentary on Netflix) about how Abad Colorado traveled to the affected territories and established deep, intimate relationships with those he photographed. His embodied, ethnographic photo-journalistic methods and commitment to his subjects have been commended for the ways he has humanized the conflict for Colombians. Other scholars consider the exhibit as excessive to the point of epidemic, and that such visual excess prevents spectators from truly engaging and interrogating the images.[32] This seems to be a question of breadth versus depth. Juanita Bernal Benavides critiques the exhibit for its epidemic scale and asks:

> How do we bear witness without falling for these excesses? Is testimony possible if not centered on the victim? Can photographic testimony escape both the representational ideal of humanism, that is, the transparent image of historical preservation . . . , and the legacy of contemporary human rights discourse? Is there a testimony that might interrupt this epidemic that halts the work of imagination?[33]

She turns to three specific photographs of the exhibit that feature no humans (victims), but vestiges of paramilitary presence (Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia letters scrawled on a tree trunk); the temporality of nature (an abandoned building used to incinerate and disappear people taken over by foliage); and material belongings of a disappeared person (a solitary, laceless shoe covered in moss). These photographs allow Bernal Benavides to argue her case for the significance of testimony beyond the human rights-focused narrative that centers a human victim. She explains that the three images lacking a visible human victim, yet communicating their immanent presence, designate Abad Colorado's work as "a political reactivation: a political reactivation for he resists displacement, dispossession, and annihilation when he tours the expropriated land (the land those bricks used to disappear people are made of); a political reactivation for he carves up space for the encounter with the victims and their words."[34] Per Bernal Benavides, the images require some spectatorial labor to politicize and imagine beyond the mere aesthetic excess of the exhibit. Through this spectatorial labor Bernal Benavides might be signaling to what I am as well: a civil imagination.

The scale of the exhibit never bothered me both times I saw it, but I realized the exhibit was not meant for someone like me: an outsider to the

experience of living in a country with an armed conflict. Instead, it only highlighted for me how little I knew about this devastating civil war in Colombia. Now, after many reflective moments of reexamining the photographs in the four-volume set I own, I would argue vehemently how *vivir sabroso* seeps through this photographic archive and models relational politics. I am hesitant to see the excess as a limiting factor for those who engage(d) with the exhibit. Here again, I invite Azoulay to support my thoughts on the matter. She writes,

> The photographic image produced in an encounter, then, invariably contains *more* and *less* than that which anybody intends to inscribe within it; more and less than that which one of the parties to the encounter at the moment of photography is capable of framing. The photograph maintains its position of excess and lack regarding each of the protagonists [the camera, the photographer, the subject(s) in the photo, the spectator of the photo], but excess and lack are not evenly distributed among the participants in the photographic encounter and cannot be subordinated to the point of view of any single participant.[35]

The removal of the singular in deference to a dialogic four-part discursive formation models the kind of collective kinship these communities (rural, peasant, mestizo, Black, and Indigenous) already materialize in their everyday practices. I adopt Azoulay's propositions to insist on alternatives to the neoliberal politics tinged with coloniality that led to the regime-made disasters, namely, the armed conflict and its aftereffects, photographed by Abad Colorado. Abad Colorado, whose family comes from the rural farmer class, presents his insider status gaze and allegiances to the marginalized in his photographs. The alternatives sought already exist in the epistemologies of the everyday Colombians who instantiate collectivity or *convivencia*, coexistence: a way to live together across difference, or more broadly, a relational politics. It might be too simplistic to suggest that the impact of his photographs mobilized some Colombians to lean left and elect Petro and Márquez after the crises of 2021 and 2022. However, the need for Colombia to implement a more pluralistic politics remains urgent and necessary as demonstrated in the 2023 election results. As a scholar of the arts, I like to believe that artistic interventions enact some kind of political change, but I am not naive enough to believe that these changes do not require emotional, intellectual, and physical

labor as well as sacrifices. And, as a proponent of Black feminist method, I assert that these changes most definitely require a destruction of everything coloniality has made us come to know.

Alan Sekula steadfastly adheres to the political realm when thinking about the uses of photography. What he describes is not necessarily about maintaining a status quo through aesthetic appreciations of photography; rather, as he explains, "Photography promises an enhanced mastery of nature, but photography also threatens conflagration and anarchy, an incendiary leveling of the existing cultural order."[36] Thus, photography is discursive, political, and capable of shifting the rules and social contracts of aesthetic appreciation, visibility, representation, and power. These considerations undergird the discussion of what *El Testigo*, as an exhibit *and* as a political tool, mobilizes. The spectator or, more accurately in my analysis, the wit(h)ness must move toward feeling, thinking, and imagining alongside or even *as* the photograph's subject(s). In this way, memories of the armed conflict as archived in these photographs create multiple discursive and affective movements of their own: from photographer and his documented objectives, the subjects of the photographs, the spectators of the curated photographs, and the narrative of the victim, to a narrative that focuses on the regime and its role as perpetrator and the victims of the photography archive. In other words, the photographs of *El Testigo* move its wit(h)nesses beyond the human rights narratives that single out human victimhood. Instead, a purposeful interrogation of the institutionalized and governmental disavowal of these "victims" must be foregrounded amid the patina of photography's supposedly singular aesthetic value.

Beauty and humanity can exist among atrocities, a glaring contradiction and facile platitude I repeat to myself when I (re)encounter these images. As Jay Prosser writes in *Photographing Atrocity*, "Aesthetics are part of picturing atrocity. Style and form and the idea of the beautiful, and what appeals to our eye are not add-ons. In the image they are a way of understanding and conveying atrocity."[37] As I wit(h)ness the people, places, and other-than-human subjects in Abad Colorado's photographic archive *El Testigo*, the pervasive, discursive nature of the body stands out. Perhaps this is where the beauty lies, the beauty of corporealities in movement helping, caring for, and grieving with one another: Black, brown, and poor people carrying their belongings, holding in their feelings while riding a donkey to help them move away from danger. They move their sweaty, aching, fearful, grief-stricken bodies to find other ways of sur-

viving amid the violence and displacement. Tears or prayers are held in reserve for later moments of self-reflection, emotional re-regulation, or solace-seeking in the company of others. Hands clasp, gripping a sullied rosary that, in another picture, lies forgotten on the ground. Hands touch shoulders offering comfort, a young Afro-Colombian girl holds a creepy-looking white doll, and a toddler mestiza girl hugs her pet chicken. Saddened gazes watch the exhumations of loved ones. Multitudes come together in protest, waving flags, holding photos, demanding acknowledgment of their affective, material, and territorial losses, demanding that the state do something. Ultimately, these photographs remain a testament and an archive of what the Colombian state has refused to completely wit(h)ness.

Perhaps an important contribution of this photographic archive is how it potentially displaces the grief captured in the images and moves it toward all those who chose to wit(h)ness collectively and take a moment to live with the grief alone and with one another. Perhaps this is how the movement of grief transits toward collective mourning and then further beyond to restorative, symbolic, or even transitional justice. Yet Colombian anthropologist Alejandro Castillejo Cuéllar has described the project of transitional justice "as a mirage, like a horizon we keep looking for but fail to reach"[38]—a consistent deferral yet one with a goal that must be kept in sight. I employ the hypothetical adverb "perhaps" purposefully in closing this section to wonder about the unresolved as generative practice. The not quite there but almost. The possible as something that requires more work, thought, process, and practice. The unresolved as a generative practice does not require things to be left unattended, but instead points toward a working-toward, the practice of being together and thinking-feeling presence with others who, in those instances, help materialize a fleeting form of justice. Perhaps I hold no faith in states, institutions, or laws and prefer to turn to embodied artistic practices as models for restorative justice. Perhaps.

Mugan Boe and *Galu Dugbis*: *Oralitura* as Archival Practice

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Nos preocupa, nos duele, pero las enseñanzas de nuestras abuelas y abuelos nunca las olvidaremos.

> It worries us, it hurts us, but we will never forget the teachings of our grandmothers and grandfathers. (Corpografías Archive)
>
> Somos diversidad / We are diversity
> Somos identitad / We are identity
> Somos paz / We are peace
> Somos miradas propias / We are our own views
> Somos el buen vivir. / We are the good life.[39] (Sentarte publicity video)

The above statements of affirmation come at the end of a short video introduction to the work that Sentarte, *arte con sentido*, does in Colombia. Sentarte's mission statement articulates its intentional practice to increase visibility about diverse plurality in Colombia. It purposely joins the word *arte* with *sentido*, to demonstrate how this unification shifts both the process of engaging with and creation of artistry. For diversity they turn to inclusivity, ranging from ability, sexuality, gender, and, of course, race. Sentarte focuses on *las miradas propias* (their own views) or their situated knowledges to expand the representation of difference in Colombia. Their work includes co-creative methodologies, cultural management, and the safeguarding of cultural practices. I learned about Sentarte through the grant project I worked on from 2018 to 2021. The team was establishing contacts with Gunadule communities in Unguía, one of our sites for research, but once Covid-19 forced us to cancel our research visits, we had to devise new ways to include Indigenous knowledges and practices in our archive, Corpografías. This is how we met Olowaili Green Santacruz, one of the members of the Sentarte team.

Olowaili Green Santacruz is a Gunadule woman from the Caíman Nuevo Gunadule community in the Urabá region of the department of Antioquia. She lives in Medellín. With her team (Laura Rivas, JuanEs Díaz, and most recently Emberá Chamí woman Kipara Niaza) she makes documentaries, engages in workshops on audiovisual storytelling in different communities whether urban mestizo, Afro, or Indigenous, and takes on projects whose mission is to share knowledges from both Indigenous (Gunadule, Emberá) and Afro communities. When Olga Lucía Sorzano, the postdoctoral research assistant for the grant project, and I realized we could no longer travel, we thought about what could be added to the Corpografías Archive that would represent Gunadule culture in a way that was not exploitative or derivative of surface-level understandings

of Indigenous cosmologies. When we spoke with Olowaili and JuanEs, we didn't really give much direction on how to engage. We wanted the creativity to come from their own understandings of the themes of our research project: memory, embodied performance, history, practices of reconciliation. They shared that Sentarte had been working on animation to narrate the histories, epistemologies, and cosmologies of Gunadule communities. One story, *Mugan Boe, el llanto de las abuelas* (*Mugan boe*, the cry of the grandmothers), emerged as a potential one to represent through animation. As we share in the archive Corpografías (on the page about *Mugan Boe*),

> Muugan is what wise grandmothers are called among the Gunadule people. They are the ones who, through their cries, narrate the stories of their dead and prepare the bodies to return to the depths of mother earth. *Mugan Boe*, the cry of the grandmothers, is a dance through which the people remember the legacy of their ancestors. The wise ones of *Maggilagunddiwala*[40] share that this dance originated in the territories of Santa María la Antigua del Darién to heal and make memories of the grandmothers and grandfathers who died during the Spanish conquest. The movements of the men and women who dance while crying accompany the *gammu* (flute) and the maracas (*na sulbaabagga*).[41]

The sound of the *gammu* (flute) is said to inhabit the memory of the wails and cries of the ancestors during conquest. A Dule musician, Marden Paniza, recreated the music and played the flute for the short film's soundtrack. Sadly, he passed away from complications from Covid-19 in early 2021 before he could see the finished product we premiered virtually in April 2021.

The concept of *oralitura* guides the aesthetic of *Mugan Boe*. Green states that she came across the term when she was introduced to the work of Miguel Andrés Rocha Vivas, a professor of literature at the Universidad Javeriana in Bogotá. His significant work examines the role of orality in Indigenous cultures of Colombia. *Oralitura* explains systems of knowledge based on embodied practices: singing, dancing, weaving, craftsmanship, and other practices inherited and transmitted through oral traditions. As a guiding aesthetic in Green's work, *oralitura* utilizes the imagery of the *mola*, a reverse-appliqué textile practice among Gunadule women that involves sewing multiple layers of fabric and then cutting

out or superimposing imagery or shapes imagery that showcase Gunadule culture. For the Gunadule (or Kuna as they are known in Panama), their cosmovision revolves around pairs, a principle called *acala*.[42] This is why a *mola* is made in pairs for the front and back of the blouse, but these pairs are never identical. Most *molas* utilize between two to seven layers. Crafters can either draw their designs on the top layer or cut the top fabric and reveal colors beneath that enable a design. They can also cut loose pieces and sew them on the top piece. The designs range from geometric shapes to plants, animals, or scenes from the Gunadule everyday. The process of making *molas* is passed down matrilineally, where a girl learns stories not only about her grandmothers and grandmother's grandmothers, but about the Gunadule worldview.

Molas, as a practice, protect young Gunadule women and by extension, protect Mother Earth. Per Amelicia Santacruz, a Gunadule elder (and Olowaili's mother):

> Cada figura de la mola encierra una profunda historia de la cosmovisión de la relación del hombre y la mujer con la naturaleza y los diferentes momentos por los que la cultura Gunadule ha pasado. En ella, las mujeres representan la transformación que la cultura ha ido teniendo a lo largo de su existencia.
>
> Each figure of the *mola* carries a deep history of the cosmovision of man's and woman's relationship with nature and the different moments through which the Gunadule culture has passed. In it, the women represent the transformation that the culture has undergone throughout its existence.[43]

The *mola* is part of the "living archives" that constitute hemispheric Indigenous epistemologies. Bodies carry and hold memory and knowledges, but carefully constructed objects and artifacts function equally. Green is honoring the history of the *mola*, its creation and significance, while also demonstrating how new knowledge and practices of innovation help disseminate the knowledge not just to her own community, but to the greater pluralistic Colombian one. By centering performance and cultural artifacts in her audiovisual aesthetic, Green establishes a different relationship to the visual representation of Indigenous peoples, or *los pueblos originarios*, as they are referred to in Colombia. There is an aesthetic displacement from cultural artifact, the *mola*, to the *mola* as an organizing

aesthetic principle in her films. Additionally, the use of animation allows for experimentation with time, place, and representation.

Mugan Boe could be considered an animated documentary that documents the ancestral memories and practices as archives of the Gunadule. Animated documentary film scholar Annabelle Honess Roe defines an animated documentary as one that "(i) has been recorded or created frame by frame; (ii) is about *the* world rather than *a* world wholly imagined by its creator; and (iii) has been presented as a documentary by its producers and/or received as a documentary by audiences, festivals or critics."[44] For my purposes, I want to focus on how *Mugan Boe* is about *the* world and the historical event of encounter and conquest. While Sentarte turned to imagination to aestheticize the Spanish conquest of the Gunadule through animation and its artwork, what they depict indeed represents the historical fact of Spanish imperial violence, plunder for gold, and the resilience of the Gunadule who continue to dance and play music to commemorate their ancestors. As mentioned previously, the pandemic prevented Sentarte from conceptualizing this piece as a live-action contribution. Animation became the feasible medium. Honess Roe explains that animation "is a fruitful means of documentary representation in part because it creates a conflation of absence and excess. That is, the expected indexical imagery of documentary is absent, and in its place is animation, which can take multiple forms, all with a materiality, aesthetics, and style that goes above and beyond merely 'transcribing' reality."[45] The use of animation allows for the *mola* to become the indexical object that establishes time and space. Because of its already multilayered constitution (*molas* begin with several layers of fabric being placed one on top of the other), the *mola* paints a different relationship to time, inheritances of knowledge, and the layers of ancestrality that are fundamental to Gunadule cosmogeny. The opening of the three-minute film marries the sound of the *gammu*/flute and *na sulbaabagga* / maracas with a kinetic, kaleidoscopic arrangement of multicolored *molas* spinning, superimposed one over the other. This visual movement across time leads us to those moments right before encounter with the Spanish.

A Gunadule woman dressed in her *mola* walks across a landscape decorated with palm trees. She hunches over visibly saddened; blood falls from her nose. The men follow her, carrying bodies in hammocks. Gunadule women usually wear vibrantly colored blouses, *molas*, skirts, and beads on both their calves and forearms. In *Mugan Boe*, color disappears in favor of a desaturated palette of black, gray, and blue with only the gold

of their jewelry and the geometric abstract *mola* decorations standing out. This muted, almost monochromatic palette strikingly contrasts with the bright red used for the blood. Sometimes the sky looks white; other times it has yellow semicircles that move in a circular pattern in the background. Hues of purple and orange also appear as vestiges of a preconquest sky.

The imagery pans across Gunadule land, where we see their everyday activities of subsistence: Women chop bananas, men collect wood for fire and cooking, they cook bananas and seeds in clay pots, they sit around the fire and share food with one another. In the distance, the Spanish ships begin to arrive. The conquistadors are not given facial features, only red, beady eyes that widen at the sight of Gunadule gold. The Gunadule offer the conquistadors food and help mend their ships. Despite these acts of kindness, the conquistadors begin shooting them in cold blood one evening while the Gunadule sit by the fire. Blood begins to pour down like rain. Red squiggles and lines fill the screen as the massacre is frighteningly and vividly depicted. The sound score repeats the flute and maraca music, with overlaid voices wailing in a combination of fear and sorrow. Spanish is never spoken, but its intonation can be heard through use of open-ended vowel sounds in the soundtrack of colonizer voices. The language of colonization need not be heard to recognize its subsequent violences. The *gammu* and *na sulbaabagga* speak instead. Their sonorous utterances continue throughout the entirety of the animated short.

The conquistadors steal Gunadule gold; they literally rip it off Gunadule bodies, as shown when a conquistador takes a necklace off a woman's corpse. In his hands, it transforms into a large, heart-shaped golden amulet, alluding to the violent transformations coloniality does to the heart and soul of the colonized.

Might this be the representation of the "colonial wound" decolonial theorists so often describe? Another powerful image shows the sentience of land as it moves to cover a dead Gunadule and, in his place, a flower sprouts. It continues to grow and cover the closing image of the Gunadule men and women dancing and playing the *gammu* and *na sulbaabagga*. *Mugan Boe* concludes with a powerful message embedded in its aesthetics; despite everything, the "people have never stopped dancing."[46] Their songs and embodied memories live on as the short ends with fading imagery behind the kaleidoscopic *mola* pattern that also started the film.

Animation offers capacious opportunities for the representation of Gunadule cosmologies and belief systems. It literally animates the *mola*, moving it from a tactile handmade object to a visual representation of Gunadule space-time. The *mola* aesthetic in perpetual circular move-

ment constructs a notion of Gunadule time that persists, that continues to move, despite the interruption of modernity. Furthermore, the moment when the earth covers the dead Gunadule, transforming him into a flower, makes visible what dance scholar Maria Firmino-Castillo theorizes as the telluric ontology of the body beyond colonial understandings of the body.[47] For her, performance, especially Indigenous dance performances in the Americas, "constitutes a contestatory ontological praxis that creates connections between humans . . . and between humans and other beings—whether celestial or earthly."[48] *Mugan Boe* shows the continuity of their performance practices and relies on particular signifiers of Gunadule tradition—hammocks, song, flute, dance—to literally paint a portrait of Gunadule culture and wisdom and, most important, their ties to the land. As Dr. Abadio Green shared with us for Corpografías,

> Para comprender la historia de nuestros territorios es fundamental conocer y aprender los nombres de sus ríos, montañas, islas, caños, piedras, entre otros, que han guardado celosamente relatos de la vida de la región, de nuestros mayores y las abuelas que dejaron sus huellas en el transcurrir de sus largas jornadas de travesía, buscando mejores sitios para hacer sus casas o huyendo de las guerras que producían los invasores de nuestro continente. Muchos de estos sitios, ubicados a lo largo del Golfo de Urabá ya no están habitados hoy por los Dules, pero los nombres nos indican que por ahí pasaron nuestros ancestros dejando sus huellas en ríos, quebradas, montañas y playas.
>
> To understand the history of our territories it is essential to know and learn the names of its rivers, mountains, islands, streams, rocks, among others, which have jealously guarded stories of the life of the region, of our elders and grandmothers who left their footprints in the course of their long journeys of crossing, looking for better places to make their homes or fleeing from the wars that produced the invaders of our continent. Many of these sites, located along the Gulf of Urabá, are no longer inhabited today by the Dules, but the names indicate that our ancestors passed through these places, leaving their traces in rivers, streams, mountains, and beaches.

The Gunadule territories of Colombia and Panama were grouped between 1871 and 1903 in the Comarca Tulenega.[49] Throughout the twentieth century, the epistemic battle between nation-states and their predilection for

official borders and Gunadule relationships and understandings of territory led to a diminishing Gunadule population. Currently, there are two Gunadule reservations, one in Colombia and one in Panama, separated by the infamous Darién Gap. The Darién Gap delights in a harsh geography: mountains adorned by thick, impenetrable rainforest, and an inhospitable climate. No road connects Panama to Colombia across this swathe of land, yet it offers opportunities for the illicit drug trade to move through under the cloak of the rainforest despite the treacherous conditions. Notwithstanding the (ab)use of the land beyond the sacred and sustainable use by the original stewards, the Gunadule people insist on their connection and rightful governance of the land. They unite under this belief despite the border that separates them. Unfortunately, Panama will not grant them titleship since the land now "belongs" to a national park, and in Colombia the enforcement of land titles has never been a priority even though the government went through processes of titling land to both Indigenous and Afro communities through the Ley 70 and the 1991 constitution. As Dr. Abadio Green explains,

> Por esta razón nuestros hermanos y hermanas pueden ser expulsados de sus territorios ancestrales porque la mentalidad colonial de nuestros gobiernos piensa que solamente en los parques naturales pueden estar los animales, las plantas y el agua; no creen que las culturas milenarias pueden coexistir con la naturaleza, desconocen la capacidad de convivencia que el ser indígena ha tenido con ésta, pues han sido los únicos que han logrado cohabitar con el entorno desde que la humanidad comenzó a existir en esta tierra.
>
> For this reason our brothers and sisters can be expelled from their ancestral territories because the colonial mentality of our governments thinks that only in natural parks can animals, plants, and water exist; they do not believe that ancient cultures can coexist with nature, and they do not know the capacity of coexistence that Indigenous people have had with it, because they have been the only ones who have managed to coexist with the environment since humanity began to exist on this earth.[50]

The inextricable link between the Gunadule and their mountains, rivers, and flora and fauna remains regardless of the legacy of coloniality and usurpation of their lands. This is how *Mugan Boe* functions as an archive of

the community's relationship to land, its resilience through performance despite the bloodshed of colonialism. The dance, flute, and maracas come together as healing and necessary, thereby demonstrating what Firmino-Castillo calls "ontological regeneration, a simultaneously embodied and telluric process."[51] Green Santacruz and Sentarte's documentation of the grandmothers' cries show that amid sorrow community surrounds you in the past, present, and future.

The multilayered ontology of the *mola* aesthetic acts as the synecdoche for Gunadule time, cosmologies, matrilineally inherited, embodied practices, and these relational continuities. I imagine the kaleidoscopic *mola* effect representing the multiple eyes of the Gunadule ancestors, the grandmothers and grandfathers, watching over the contemporary Gunadule who support Green Santacruz's work when she makes visits to the *resguardo* in Urabá to engage in film workshops with the school-age children. The contemporary adaptation of the *mola* into/as/with kaleidoscope shows how movement is inherent in the ontology of the *mola*, and the kaleidoscope helps to represent it; it reflects, refracts, and rotates the movements of color, patterns, and light to be what it is. By using the kaleidoscope to represent the already-in-motion *mola* cosmologies, Green Santacruz shows how archives are already in movement. To be in movement, to continue relationality, or to have new encounters with relationality—this is the significance of the animated documentaries of Sentarte and Olowaili Green Santacruz. They displace notions of an archived and historical past as long forgotten or no longer relevant while highlighting instead the experiential processes and cosmologies of Gunadule life as they were, continue to be, and will continue to be. The cyclical rotations of the kaleidoscopic *mola* merely make this continuity intelligible to the younger brother or sister (the term Indigenous Colombians call the Spanish settlers and subsequent others who arrived on their lands during colonization). Kinship continues despite colonialism and the ongoing coloniality of the contemporary moment in Colombia.

Galu Dugbis, a Love Letter to the *Mola*

Galugan (plural) are sacred sites located within the layers of Mother Earth where nature spirits dwell and ancestral wisdom is kept.[52] In the Galu Dugbis (which literally translates to "sacred space"), Olonagegiryai kept the knowledge of Gunadule arts, and it was there that Nana Nagegiryai dis-

covered body painting, *molas* designs, and the various weavings of hammocks and baskets that she taught the Gunadule grandmothers.[53] Olowaili Green Santacruz and Sentarte's *Galu Dugbis* mixes animation techniques with drawings, fabrics, and documentary images to fashion this audiovisual *mola* that was part of a Colombian television series entitled *El Buen Vivir* (2020).[54] The series had three seasons, each dedicated to a tenet of the Amerindian philosophy of *el buen vivir* (the good life): healing with the spirits, taking care of the earth, thinking and acting well. *El Buen Vivir* was a project by the Comisión Nacional de Comunicación de los Pueblos Indígenas (National Commission for Communication of Indigenous Peoples) and funded by the Ministerio de Tecnologías de la Información y Comunicaciones. In it, Indigenous communities throughout Colombia were asked to produce short films that showcased Indigenous solutions to problems of modernity. The website associated with the initiative states that *el buen vivir* "is not a simple recipe book, but rather ideals and practices inspired by different approaches to solidarity economy, food sovereignty, rights of nature, protection of biodiversity, defense of territory, good governance, spiritual communication, conflict resolution and civil coexistence across cultural difference."[55] Uruguayan development and environmental scholar Eduardo Gudynas relies on the concept of *el buen vivir* to make a case for alternative models to development in Latin America.[56] *El buen vivir* relies on Indigenous and non-Indigenous environmentalist models that reject modernity's drive toward a unilateral mode of economic development. As with most Indigenous philosophies and the lack of care or specificity given them by hegemonic appropriative forces, *the concept of el buen vivir* can often collapse multiple Amerindian perspectives in its definition as well. The series provides its viewers an opportunity to see the differences within indigeneity in Colombia, a pluralistic view of these varied communities under the umbrella term of *el buen vivir*.

For the series' second season, Sentarte and Olowaili Green Santacruz were commissioned to represent the Gunadule. Their contribution, *Galu Dugbis*, portrays the process of transmission of knowledge that Olowaili Green Santacruz's grandmother Miguelina carries out with her new granddaughter through the lullabies she sings to her from the hammock. A hammock for the Gunadule represents a seat of knowledge production and exchange. Aesthetically, the film relies on the *mola* and utilizes the peripatetic as both a dramaturgical and visual device. Like *Mugan Boe*, the *molas* move in kaleidoscopic fashion, one on top of another, conjuring the layered ancestral knowledge and craftsmanship across time. Miguelina

and her female progeny also move and wander in the film, demonstrating how the physical act of walking generates storytelling. As the Gunadule believe, "When the women walk, it is said, 'We are walking stories.'"[57]

Galu Dugbis begins with narration over a time-lapse image of the Milky Way moving across the sky. A quick transition edit follows, and the kaleidoscopic *mola* effect takes over the screen with the sound of maracas overlaid. It circles momentarily before the narration returns, this time over an image and pan upward of an elder Gunadule woman. This is Miguelina, Olowaili's *abuela*, who stares at the camera/Olowaili/audience resolutely. Cut to Miguelina walking across the(ir) land, where in the distance two figures stand. She goes over and gives a basket to the younger woman. That younger woman will eventually walk over to the girl and hand over that same basket. Intercut between these moments of walking as symbolic of knowledge transference, Green Santacruz "introduces" the viewer to each woman with the same upward camera pan from their feet to their face: Miguelina, her daughter, her granddaughter. In between these segments of walking and visual introduction, we watch Miguelina's hands drawing on fabric as she starts to make a *mola*. Later her daughter's hands continue the process that finally the young girl's hands finish. The way that Green Santacruz edits these three events metaphorically acts as the layering of the *mola* fabric and the knowledge contained within each choice to layer, cut, sew, draw, and appliqué. Over this visual storytelling, the narrator continues to share the origin tale of how Nana Nagegiryai imparted *mola* knowledge and its significance to Gunadule women. The care for the process of making a *mola* requires the same care for Mother Earth. Each Gunadule represents a seed that will grow to continue the stewardship of their land. The young girl is the next seed who walks alongside her mother and grandmother as they traverse the land, a road, and return to their wooden house with the basket of *mola* knowledge that carries its raw materials: scissors, fabric, and brightly colored threads. Knowledge thus is an embodied practice.

In their home, Miguelina sits and rocks on a hammock with a maraca in her hand. Her granddaughter lies in the hammock, legs strewn across Miguelina while listening to Miguelina's wisdom. In voice-over, Miguelina speaks to her granddaughter, narrating how she will eventually grow to become an expert in her own *mola* making. As Miguelina's voice-over continues, footage of her granddaughter playing ball in a field, swimming with friends in the lake at sunset, and slowly drifting to sleep on the hammock appears. These shots depict the beauty in the mundane. As the girl

falls asleep, Green Santacruz creates a dreamscape montage that interrupts the space-time of Miguelina's voice-over: the maracas' rhythm changes to a steady pulse, and a bell (that sounds like the din of a triangle) sounds out the downbeat; over this soundscape, different *mola* patterns shift and spin to the steady rhythm, close-ups of the three subjects' faces appear and disappear, and the *mola* patterns are superimposed on the moving sky images that started the short film. This interruption ends with a close-up of the sleeping girl; Miguelina's voice-over sung narration returns. Miguelina tells her granddaughter that her understanding of the Gunadule cosmos will grow as she grows, allowing her to go from making a one-layered *mola* in girlhood to a six-layered one in adulthood.

Different kaleidoscopic *mola* patterns appear in the film symbolizing the distinctive quality of the individual *mola* maker/wearer. The orange-and-black *mola* that began the documentary short in the hands of Miguelina is eventually finished by her granddaughter's hands. The camera moves from a shot of her small hands sewing the geometric patterns onto the *mola* to a close-up of the finished *mola* she wears in the last tracking shot of the film. Grandmother, daughter, and granddaughter, each wearing her unique *mola*, walk along the shores of the large *ciénaga* (lake) of Unguía collecting wood. In deference to the *mola*'s multilayered composition, *Galu Dugbis* demonstrates those same layers as matrilineal ancestral knowledge. The *mola* has the capacity to depict multiple stories and realities at once, representing the multiverse of Gunadule knowledge in material and tactile form.

Beyond its function as an aesthetic practice, an archival practice or a catalyst for aesthetic innovation, the *mola* can be a political practice as well. As Dule poet-political scientist Sue Patricia Haglund writes in her dissertation, "Dule Poli-Aesthetic Movement Molas, Boxing, and Poetry," the term "poli-aesthetic" helps her define "the political and aesthetic practices in Dule society that are layered, fused and articulated as a single, collective unit."[58] While the film functions as a singular narrative, its layered imagery and repetition of the kaleidoscopic *mola* aesthetic enriches said narrative by literally showing the multiplicity inherent in the art object, the *mola*. Sue Patricia Hagland cites José Colman, a Dule artist who addresses the lack of separation between arts and politics in their culture. He says,

> La política real, lo que significa, es el arte del bien común, de hacer el bien común a la colectividad, eso es la política. Por la tanto, nada está separado del uno a otro porque como decía el sagla (chief

> Elder) "deben entender el universe que le rodea para poder tener sentimiento de servicio a la comunidad" el servicio de comunidad de esa sensibilidad y ver en los otros un hermano, y ese sentimiento nos prepara también en la colectiva, en la solidaridad.
>
> Real politics, what it means, is the art of the common good, of doing the common good for the collective, that is politics. Therefore, nothing is separated from each other because as the sagla (chief Elder) said "you must understand the universe that surrounds you to be able to have a feeling of service to the community" the community service of that sensibility and to see in the others a brother [or sister], and that feeling prepares us also in the collective, in solidarity.[59]

In making an accessible film that aired on Colombian television and can be streamed on YouTube, Green Santacruz anticipated a wider audience beyond her own Gunadule community. Her innovative visual interpretation also invites Gunadule to think deeper about their own traditions in a contemporary Colombia. Toward the end of *Galu Dugbis*, moments from the film are placed inside a *mola* pattern that overtakes the screen. Instead of colors or shapes in the squares of the *mola*, images of Miguelina, Olowaili's grandmother, and her aunt and little cousin are embedded within the *mola* itself. Here we see the transformation, or the "ontological regeneration," of *oralitura*, *mola* knowledge. From the hands of the woman who crafts the *mola*, to the actual materiality of the completed *mola*, to the figurative screen *mola* that contains and sustains the images of the multigenerational Gunadule women who craft *molas* and will teach others to do so, *Galu Dugbis* portrays the *mola* as an archival object contingent on transmission and movement. The film also becomes part of the growing archive of Gunadule cultural production, honored yet modified to address the ways in which Gunadule people, like Green Santacruz, embed their beliefs and practices within contemporary cultural production. This ensures the continuity of the traditions while also inviting new audiences to experience Gunadule worldviews that offer different modes of social relationality.

Gunadule kinship exists with the earth: the mountains, sacred plants, jungles, animals, bodies of water. The sun is a grandfather. The earth is a mother. Kinship is understood and experienced beyond blood and human relations. To know, see, and understand these different modes of relation-

ality, Olowaili's father, Dr. Abadio Green Stocel, directs us to see with our hearts. He explains,

> Ir al otro y volver del otro, no es un problema intelectual, es un problema del corazón, claro que uno puede estudiar al otro, es más, es su deber hacerlo, pero comprenderlo es algo distinto; conocer la vida de los pueblos, hacer la pregunta necesaria que conduzca al saber, no sale del conocimiento de los científicos sino del corazón del hermano o de la hermana. Solo así es posible que las personas puedan salir de su mundo y entrar en los otros mundos.
>
> To go and to return from the other is not an intellectual problem, it is a problem of the heart. Of course one can study the other, indeed, it is one's duty to do so, but to understand him or her is something different. To understand is something different; to know the life of [the Indigenous] people, to ask the necessary question that leads to knowledge, does not come from the knowledge of the scientists but from the heart of the brother or sister. Only in this way is it possible for people to leave their own world and enter other worlds.[60]

The ontological conundrum set up by the Western epistemological tradition posits the idea of one world, one reality where difference within that reality only sets up power-saturated practices: coloniality, racialized capitalism, patriarchy. Green Santacruz's work suggests a commitment to a kaleidoscopic view of the world, one where a Gunadule cosmovision allows for difference to exist as multiple patterns moving together, joining briefly, and then moving away from one another. In this movement of melting shapes, colors, and patterns Green Santacruz translates Gunadule epistemology, thereby offering Colombian audiences ways to consider the plurality of their world as an always-already contingent practice of histories, contexts, and locations. Green and Sentarte displace the static ways of archiving indigeneity in Colombia where *molas* are collected and displayed as mere objects (on walls, on throw pillows, on wallets and purses) and Gunadule traditions only belong in the past. Instead, Sentarte's visual offerings show vibrant, contemporary interpretations of embodied practices that require movement and transferal from person to person, constantly revivifying these same ancestral practices.

Olowaili Green Santacruz depicts how the women in her family archive their present Gunadule realities while maintaining a connection to the

oralitura (lived) embodied and oral archives of their past. As a contributor to the digital archive Corpografías, Green Santacruz's work helps to expand the conversations that the digital humanities engage in, specifically concerning the methods through which one might archive embodied practices of a supposed "past." We certainly would not have been satisfied with the curation of materials from the Gunadule people that only showcased static objects. Instead, Green Santacruz's films *Mugan Boe* and *Galu Dugbis* work toward a decolonial approach to the retention of Indigenous culture and knowledges. She displaces the imperial archive's desires for objects without their relationships to the people who created them by making her animated and live-action documentary films function as archives themselves. Her films might be considered what Bethany Nowviskie calls "speculative collections" or what Tom Schofield et al. call "archival liveness," a design-based concept wherein participants see the archive being created and maintained in the present.[61] In line with the methodological approach of Corpografías, a living digital archive of embodied performance practices, Green Santacruz's film work also "emphasiz[es] the archive's multiple temporalities."[62] She utilizes the medium of film to enact change in the discourses surrounding the postcolonial archive and the digital archives. This final section of the chapter examines how the conceptualization and materialization of a digital archive for and about Black and Indigenous Colombians sought to "identify the archive as the site of futurity, a place where resistance can happen through archival design and practice."[63] In our attempt to work toward a decolonial digital archive, we also learned about the pitfalls of decoloniality within the power-saturated inter- and intrapersonal relationships among both researchers and the communities with whom we worked.

Corpografías: Working Toward a "Decolonial" Digital Archive

The UK/Colombia collaborative grant project Embodied Performance Practices in Processes of Reconciliation, Construction of Memory and Peace in Choco and Medio Pacifico, Colombia specifically looked at performance, rituals, theater, music, and dance.[64] While much work about the Colombian armed conflict exists within frameworks from politics, human rights, sociology, and anthropology, our focus on the theoretical intervention of performance studies set this project apart from the other nine projects that were funded across this UK-Colombia initia-

tive. Marcela Fuentes's succinct explanations of what the field of performance studies does offers a summary of what helped inform the modes through which we conceptualized the digital archive. Fuentes writes that performance studies look at performance as an "object of study, an analytic lens, and a method of inquiry and intervention." Performance "not only reproduces what exists but it actualizes possibilities for worldmaking through consciousness-raising."[65] It exists as a "symbolic mode of action that connects physical and digital environments and situated/physical and virtual spaces"[66] while "mak[ing] it possible for people to understand the constructed, contingent, and unstable status of embodied meanings and hierarchies."[67] The analysis of body movements, corporeal interactions, and embodied practices can contribute to understanding and processing Colombia's long history of violence and conflict, and the possibilities offered by digital tools to document those processes guided our debates on how to imagine the archive. We worked closely with arts practitioners in four communities (Bojayá, Buenaventura, Guapi, and Unguía): exploring their creative processes and sources of inspiration; listening to their voices and experiences of the conflict; recording their memories and understanding how artistic practices play a role in the construction of memory and identity.

Methodologically, Corpografías combines dance, theater, and performance studies with the social sciences and the digital humanities. It also engages with Black studies and the (postcolonial) digital humanities to expand the growing field of digital humanities beyond the traditional understandings of the digital, the archive, and the humanities. The digital humanities claim to contribute not only to the "democratization" of knowledge but to the incorporation and acceptance of different epistemologies in academic knowledge. It is not merely concerned with the incorporation of digital resources, but the transformation of hegemonic Western systems supported by the written text, "expert knowledge," and individual and universal truths. Anne Burdick notes that knowledge transmission can be now recorded, distributed, and mutated into new and hybrid forms, allowing wider dissemination and the acceptance of embodied ways of knowledge. The digital humanities envisage the present era as one of "exceptional promise for the renewal of humanistic scholarship" and set out "to demonstrate the contributions of contemporary humanities scholarship to new modes of knowledge formation enabled by networked, digital environments," to "the resurgence of voice, of gesture, of extemporaneous speaking, of embodied performances of argument."[68]

Such resurgences are crucial in this particular project, which sought to highlight culturally specific modes of performance practices from a region heavily identified by its Black diasporic cultural production. By tying Black studies to the digital humanities, Corpografías and its conceptualization engaged with the important issues Safiya Umoja Noble identifies in her writings about race, information technologies, and the digital humanities. She explains that "by foregrounding a paradigm of critical engagement and activist scholarship that privileges the concerns of those living in the greatest conditions of precarity because of a combination of economic, racial, and environmental violence, we can think about the implications of DH work in a larger global context."[69]

In conversations with the research team, we realized we had to balance our roles as scholars funded by a global North institution and a global South governmental initiative in a public university. Working as what anthropologist Elizabeth Povinelli calls "postcolonial archivists," we prioritized our decolonial commitment to put Colombian Afro and Indigenous communities at the center as we developed the archive, bringing to the forefront their epistemologies and forms of existence; thinking, learning, and documenting in "noncolonial" terms; and allowing "for the existence of histories other than the universal history of the West"[70] and global elites. As Brazilian philosopher Sousa-Santos sustains, "The adequate recognition of injustice and the possible overcoming of oppression can only be achieved by means of an epistemological break"[71] that recognizes and includes diverse systems of knowledge. Povinelli illustrates what this epistemological break might be in the development of the archive. She writes that a postcolonial archivist's work is

> not merely to collect subaltern histories. It is also to investigate the compositional logics of the archive as such: the material conditions that allow something to be archived and archivable; the compulsions and desires that conjure the appearance and disappearance of objects, knowledges, and socialities within an archive; the cultures of circulation, manipulation, and management that allow an object to enter the archive and thus contribute to the endurance of specific social difference formations.[72]

Accordingly, this project and the theoretical reflection in this section highlight our attempt to reconfigure "the archive" as *an* archive particular to the needs of the communities: as a site of memory, re-existence, and epis-

temological justice. Corpografías addresses these issues and concerns by disseminating Afro and Indigenous knowledges, their claims and world-makings beyond the specificities of the armed conflict and the political consequences of the period known as *La violencia* and its aftermath. Corpografías offers a portrayal of these communities as citizens and creative beings whose agency, subjectivity, and dignity are continually marginalized by the Colombian state and civil society. It shares their sensing of the world and creative processes, their experiences of conflict and their meanings of peace, body, artistic practices, and memory. It also explores how they come together, how they engage in *convivencia*, a way of coexisting amid plurality that has been threatened not only by the armed conflict, but by colonialism and capitalism. Conflict, justice, peace, and reconciliation in Colombia transcend local disputes. Instead, they emerge out of global processes that have exploited Black and Indigenous peoples and their lands in the name of multinationals, capitalism, and Western epistemological models of being and knowing. This is especially relevant for ideas of justice. Without this recognition there can be no transitional or global justice that prevails. Corpografías was thus positioned to contribute toward such recognition by showing how these communities create and maintain their own epistemologies that support their specific processes of resilience and artistic production. Sadly, we missed an opportunity here given the end of the grant and the pressures of the neoliberal university (on my end) and the state-funded public university (on the Colombia side) to provide deliverables. We were unable to speak with the major stakeholders of the communities on a regular basis after the archive went live to determine how, why, and when they were using it. The pandemic exacerbated the inconsistent communication due to our inability to return to these rural areas of Colombia more frequently. We also had plans to teach some community members to administrate and continue populating the site, but the project took longer given the pandemic interruptions and the inability to meet with communities in person regularly to establish the intimacies needed for such a process to properly function. This, I would argue, was the failure of the project for the researchers—our inability to know (metrically establish or understand) the use, effect, and significance of the archive for its primary stakeholders. Yet postcolonial digital humanities discourses stress the ways that intersectional methods of gathering, presenting, and archiving materials by and about minoritized subjects give voice, space, and visibility to them.[73] Digital spaces thus function beyond being tools of representation; they are also acts of resis-

tance and reclamation. Part of the task of reclamation involves the actual materiality of the archive. What would it look like? How does it capture the structures of feelings of the communities featured? In what ways does the historical, political, or even environment of the communities affect the digital archive's (re)presentation?

The materiality of the archive depends on the conditions that house it; that is the case, at least, in the imperial conceptualization of an archive. With this project, we had to think about what a collection of an embodied archive would look like, where it would dwell, and who would manage it. In the Pacific region of Colombia, for example, physical archives in the forms of documents or photos deteriorate easily. The heat and persistent humidity cause damage. Photos lose their color, bleeding and morphing into moldy stains. Paper documents eventually turn to pulp. These descriptors and qualities of the archive strengthened the appeal of a digital archive that could exist beyond tangible materialities and across temporalities. Derrida insists that the archive functions as "the question of the future, the question of the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise and of responsibility for tomorrow."[74] In speculating about what this digital archive could do, we had to move into future possibility thinking. How would it be useful in five or ten years' time? Who would continue to populate it after our grant was over? How could we make it accessible for communities who often lack infrastructural support for internet access? What form could it take? What would it look like?

Conceptualizing Corpografías

This project was conceived in the aftermath of the signature of the peace agreement between the Colombian state and the FARC guerrillas in 2016.[75] Its purpose was to contribute to the discourses about memory and healing processes in a "post-conflict" context with the focus on the voices, presence, and artistic practices of vulnerable communities. A digital archive became an effective output because it serves as a space for documentation and dissemination of the communities' artistic practices to local, national, and international audiences, while contributing to current debates on digital archives and reconceptualizations of performance, archives, and their interrelationships from an Afro-Indigenous perspective.[76] Finally, the Colombian Pacific was chosen for two reasons: It is one of the regions most affected by the armed conflict; and we wanted to highlight the pres-

ence of Afro and Indigenous communities that have been traditionally erased from memory processes and testimonies of violence.

While Corpografías is not imagined as a totalizing space that generalizes or universalizes Afro or Indigenous communities, it does rely on forms of ethnic and/or territorial collectivity and the vital role these conceptualizations play for their respective communities. Within these identity markers (e.g., Afro, Pacífico, Indigenous, Gunadule, Guapireños), we initially aligned with the concept of "quiet" developed by literary scholar Kevin Quashie as a distinctive mode of existence for Black people. For Quashie, the aesthetic of quiet goes beyond preconceived ideas of blackness as hyperbolically expressive and always engaged in resistance, a common ground also used to represent Indigenous communities. Quiet "is a metaphor for the full range of one's inner life—one's desires, ambitions, hungers, vulnerabilities, fears . . . it is not apolitical or without social value."[77] Thinking about this alongside Afro-Colombian concepts of *vivir sabroso*[78] or Indigenous concepts of *buen vivir* (good living),[79] Corpografías highlights these aspects of Afro and Indigenous life as these offer fresh perspectives alongside the narrativization of the effects of the armed conflict in their everyday life.

By focusing on the embodied creative practices of these communities, Corpografías offers an alternative (and much-needed) discourse about the armed conflict in these territories. As performance studies scholar Kaitlin Murphy explains, "Visual works have the potential to speak outside of and in a different register than government narratives—and to render visible the ongoing impact of past violence and unreconciled injustices by working at the intersections of visually, memory, human rights, and place."[80] Yet the existence of a digital archive for Afro and Indigenous Colombian communities also posed several challenges for the research team: How to guarantee access to the digital archive for its major stakeholders? How would they engage in the production and validation of content? How to prioritize their existence as creative citizens beyond their marginalized position as victims of the conflict? And, perhaps the most important methodological question for me as I continue to think about the significance of digital humanities for minoritized communities: How to represent minoritarian affect within the greater digital humanities? Some of these questions had practical answers that we resolved through emails, WhatsApp exchanges of materials, and two closing events where several of the community members featured in the archive participated and offered their thoughts and reflections. The content of the archive was specifically

chosen by them in order to move them away the "victim narrative." But my main methodological question remains: How to represent minoritarian affect in a digital archive?

Lauren Berlant and her manifesto of sorts, *Cruel Optimism*, and philosopher María del Rosario Acosta López's interventions in restorative justice through her concept "grammars of the inaudible" help move me to a satisfactory landing place. Berlant frames minoritarian affect as the lived experience of people whose affective attachments fail to line up with dominant (neoliberal) narratives of success or happiness. Minoritarian affects are not necessarily attached to recognized identities but are ways of being and feeling that fall outside or resist the hegemonic scripts of what a "good life" looks like.[81] These affects expose the ways people live on or persist despite the failure or impossibility of these fantasies. Rather than simply being negative, minoritarian affect can offer insight into alternative forms of belonging, attachment, and survival that aren't captured by mainstream optimism. In the case of Colombia, as I have been arguing throughout this book, *vivir sabroso* (as a minoritarian affect) exceeds the affective logic of the state. It relies on different ways of living in relations, of knowing, moving, seeing, and being in the world. Its end goal is not a permanent condition of success or trite happiness, but the maintenance of the abilities, relations, and, most important, practices that allow *vivir sabroso* to exist and flourish in the constancy of the quotidian. As a practice of presence, it does not follow the logics of neoliberal futurity, which promises success and happiness if only one follows particular choreographies or scripts of capitalism. When these communities' capacities to engage and practice *vivir sabroso* were curtailed by the armed conflict, many of their embodied artistic practices suffered. By digitally archiving these very embodied artistic practices, a visual repository that relies on sight, the project may seem to have privileged the visual registers for meaning-making. However, engaging with Corpografías and the content within requires radical shifts in being with the materials. I have already delved into co-performative witnessing, wit(h)nessing, and even an aesthetics of the quiet as methodological markers through which to shift the act and practices of relating across difference. Here I bring in Acosta López and her powerful concept of "grammars of the inaudible" to further expand how the affect of these Black and Indigenous communities featured in Corpografías might be accessed, experienced, or, more important, listened to. This is urgent given that these communities' histories and memories attached to their cultural practices suffered, were silenced, or were discounted during the armed conflict.

Acosta López explains that "the question of how to approach memory and history after trauma, and of what sort of experience is required in order to listen to what has systematically been silenced, erased, and rendered inaudible (unbelievable, unintelligible), is a profoundly aesthetic question (and one related precisely to aesthetics as a form of critique)."[82] She wonders about what kinds of "grammars" need to be instituted to make audible what "otherwise remains unheard and unheard-of as a consequence of . . . 'traumatic forms of violence' and their capacity to silence, erase, hide, and deny their own shattering effects."[83] The Spanish term *gramáticas de lo inaudito* capaciously allows her theorization since the word *inaudito* signals "both to the unheard and the unheard-of, namely, what hasn't (yet) been rendered audible and what is ethically unacceptable." While the archive focuses on embodied artistic practices, these very aesthetic practices contain and maintain histories of violence (e.g., the colonization as depicted in *Mugan Boe* through its brutal imagery and layered sound score of wails, Gunadule flutes, and maracas) as well as histories of resistances to those violences (the maintenance of particular forms of kinship and community rituals). Corpografías visually and sonically renders these practices, but its ultimate goal is to contribute to this (philosophical and decolonial) practice of shifts, reconsiderations, and engagements with the senses. My experimental movement score based on Corpografías in chapter 1 is another example of these sensorial shifts. It does not remove the gravity of the effects of the armed conflict on these communities, but it wonders what it might feel like to relate sensorially to their experiences whether violent or mundane.

Corpografías functions as a contestation of the armed conflict and how it has been or continued to be archived given the current battle for memory going on in Colombia. Its foregrounding of the communities' affective relationships with one another, their creative processes, personal archives, quiet reflective moments and corporeal engagements with memory, ancestrality, and territory, provides a counternarrative to that history. Corpografías committed to collecting, exhibiting, and preserving those points of views through contextual information conveyed by displaying records and histories spoken directly by traditionally marginalized communities, embedded within the local experience, practice, and knowledge of those communities.[84] Browsing through Corpografías, one will encounter many sound files filled with voices of community members sharing their experiences and knowledges. The images chosen were directly informed by the communities' desires for what they wanted to make public. They also had

full autonomy over what to make public how and what they choose to remember or offer up as valuable to them to be memorialized.

Literature and memory studies scholar Michael Rothberg offers the useful term "multidirectional memory" to think about the dynamics of remembrance. Rothberg's framework of multidirectional memory complicates the relationship between memory and identity. For him, it is a performative relationship; it is not a given. Attention then shifts from the unproductive belief that memory and identity have a static relationship to one where both memory and identity operate as dialogic processes of making, unmaking, and remaking memories on "shared, but uneven terrain."[85] So while "oral histories, rituals, and gestures are all strategic for the transmission of knowledge"[86] and are particular to Afro and Indigenous cosmologies and systems of knowledge, they are not inherently without exchange or tensions. Here is where a performance studies analysis contributes to the ways that Corpografías engaged with memory studies and the overall narrativization of the Colombian armed conflict at the macro level of this project. As mentioned earlier, a performance studies lens turns to actions and enactments from multiple versions of a "text" (object of performance) to examine what performance does in the world. Aligning it to memory studies offers different methods to help answer questions emerging from memory studies that pertain to post-conflict communities. In our case, the performance studies "texts" are the embodied artistic practices related to memory and community-building from these Afro-Colombian and Indigenous communities.

In addition to the above-mentioned disciplinary framings, we considered other factors at the macro level. These included the new politics of memory in Colombia under the Duque presidency (2018–2022);[87] the ongoing conflict despite the signature of peace accords in 2016 during the Santos presidency; the consistent assassination of community leaders and the impunity surrounding these horrifying statistics;[88] the reduced presence of the state in protecting communities to guarantee their security and provide social services to the population; and Covid-19, which interrupted our fieldwork visits and plans for several face-to-face collaborative workshops (*encuentros*) where we would physically gather material produced by the communities for the archive, validate final outputs, and identify willing participants to maintain leadership over the archive's content and continuation. These sets of factors created challenges and necessitated modifications in the methodology while creating new ethical considerations.

A project like this requires deep self-reflexivity. I am still thinking about what it does and continues to do for the communities. During the process, our research team had to pay careful and ethical attention to how we understand and represent these communities affected by violence. Again, minoritarian affect became a focal point when we found that these communities face life and describe versions of the conflict with hints of humor, especially in the Afro-Colombian communities. Humor is rarely visible in testimonies of violence, perhaps in an attempt not to trivialize the violence, its impact on communities, or their histories. The erasure of laughter, comedy, and humor from memories of the conflict thus silences an important way of expression for these communities who, in their attempts to make their everyday more livable, turn to it for emotional support together with kinship, spirituality, ancestry, and social protest movements; they turn to *vivir sabroso*'s tenets as their sustenance.

I was never fully able to establish deep relationships with community members, but some in the research group developed regular communication and friendships with members. Sometimes these involved transactional friendship connections: bringing from Medellín materials that were scarce in Bojayá; regular communication via WhatsApp; visits beyond the scope of the research project. I remember being humbled by the generosity of one of our contacts in Unguía. He invited us to his home, made us a delicious *almuerzo* with meat he seasoned and barbecued for us, I played with his animals (his cat had had kittens, and they had ducklings in his yard), and he took us on a significantly long hike where he could speak to us honestly and openly about the paramilitary situation in Unguía. I later discovered that, when we first met him in town at a cafeteria, we were being surveilled. By inviting us to his home and then taking us on a long walk, he ensured our safety.[89]

Corpografías first and foremost was about collaboration: between researchers and communities, between university professors, postdoctoral researchers and graduate students, between UK and Colombian higher-education institutions. The power dynamic between the communities and our institutional affiliations brought up issues of ownership and how the communities are not only credited but will have future access and administration of the archive. Community members gave the material they wanted to store and uploaded to the archive. We recorded interviews (offering the choice to decide what to tell and how to tell it) and selected the main points participants wanted to highlight about their relationship with their territories, communities, and memories. For example, many

spoke about the need to represent these territories beyond the entrenched narratives of conflict and violence; many wanted to highlight their knowledge and traditions, their abilities as creative beings capable of imagining and world-making despite the scarcity of resources and opportunities; others wanted to show how peace exists or existed in their communities and what their life was like before the infiltration of violence. More importantly, videos, photo albums, and personal and institutional archives were collected during and after fieldwork visits in a continuous process of communication. Some material never arrived due to delays and the end of the grant timeline, and we had to learn how to make do with these small but significant disappointments. While crucial debates in digital humanities continue to foreground the importance of collective knowledge production over individual authorship, we anticipate contributing to these debates with the rich material of Corpografías and its goal to provide a path toward a decolonial way of historicizing the armed conflict (and constructing digital archives) in the Colombian Pacific: affect over arms, community over civic negligence.

The significant contributions to Corpografías include the production of *Mugan Boe*; the recuperated Afro and Gunadule materials from Unguía; the photo archive of the Torres brothers in Guapi, who are considered musical legends of Afro-Colombian marimba music; the digitization of *Ese Atrato Que Juega Teatro*, volumes 1 and 2; the production, performance, and documentation of the play *Honrar a los Sagrados Espíritus*, to commemorate the Bojayá massacre and the return of the human remains to their families seventeen years later; and the video workshop with arts community leaders in Buenaventura. While I did not focus on some of these for this chapter or book, I remember the conversations we had about the digital archive and how it might produce scholarship by others beyond the immediate research team. I remain hopeful that this will happen.

Knowledge Exchange and the Production of the Archive

In Unguía, one of the first fieldwork visits coincided with the opening of Santa María del Darién Memory Park, which featured performances of traditional local dances. Indigenous and Afro dances were performed in their diverse range of body movements and styles: slow and quiet steps marked by the sound of Gunadule *gammus* (flutes), contrasting with circular and rapid hip movements to the rhythms of African drums. The

event evidenced the coexistence of dispersed and distinct Indigenous and Afro-descendant groups, which demanded a much-needed perspective on cross-coastal and interethnic analysis. Strategically located between the Pacific and the Atlantic coasts and between Colombia and Panamá, Unguía served as a crossroads for the slave trade and current migrant movements.[90] It is also home of the Gunadule, some Emberá, and Santa María del Darién, the first Spanish settlement in Colombia's territory (1510), which was eventually burned down by Indigenous revolt. Informed by the experience of local dances and the memory park, Corpografías centers both Afro and Indigenous communities in this section of the archive. It further explores the complex cultural productions of the Gunadule reservation of Arquía and the Bocachico festival, an Afro-Colombian celebration of music, dance, and culture.

While Unguía showcased Afro-Indigenous connections, these were less evident in shaping the analysis in Guapi, Bojayá, and Buenaventura. Indigenous groups were less accessible or directly involved in the artistic practices analyzed. In Guapi, for example, the fieldwork was mainly conducted in the urban district as rural areas—where Indigenous groups mainly live—are difficult to access due to the presence of armed groups. Sometimes they require the permission of the cacique, the chief elder, to visit as well. Thus, Guapi's analysis focuses on marimba music, traditional chants, and dances due to their cultural representation and value in Guapi and the southern Pacific among Afro-descendant populations.[91] In 2015, these expressions were declared an intangible heritage by UNESCO. The government's investment in music and culture is minimal despite this recognition and the existence of a significant number of entrepreneurial efforts in the area. Our analysis found a constellation of traditions and *saberes ancestrales* (ancestral knowledges) that transcend the marimba, and includes healers and traditional medicine, weaving, beverages and cuisine, wooden houses, hunting, fishing, and countless practices that constitute their identity as *Guapireños*, "from the Pacific," as they reiterate. This territorial identity claim specifically addresses their particular location in the Cauca department, which is ruled by a mestizo class in conflict with the strong presence of Indigenous/Andean groups like Guambianos and Paeces that have resisted colonialism and violence. Our project worked with Tejiendo Saberes, Semblanzas del Rio Guapi, and Legado Pacífico, three music organizations that combine the teaching of traditional music and chanting with a holistic educational process centered around the cluster of traditions. We also included the Torres family, a dynasty of musicians and

instrument makers, *cantadoras* (traditional singers), female healers, and other embodied practices that reflect the interweaving of *saberes*.[92]

In Bojayá the research focused on the work of youth groups formed initially by the Diocese of Quibdó in the early 1990s. After the May 2002 massacre, German theater director Inge Kleutgens worked with the youth group to stage *Los Muertos Hablan* (2003) in commemoration of the first anniversary of the massacre. The group continued co-creating theater (both with and without Kleutgens), and in November 2019 they devised, staged, and performed *Honrar a los Sagrados Espíritus*, which I engage with in chapter 2. This devised theater piece was led by Boris, Elvia, and José Luis, who, as teenagers, participated in *Los Muertos Hablan* and were now introducing a new generation to their particular practices of devising theater based on memory and ancestral practices. As José Luis explained to us, the play upends the journalistic and bureaucratic view of Bojayá as a massacre of Black people, who then become numbers or mere statistics of the armed conflict. The play highlights their existence and their right to an Afro-Colombian funeral with its rituals of passage.[93] The dead provide support and strength to the survivors, animating them to re-exist and to keep going. As I articulate in chapter 2, the theater process provides a place to engage in activist work and to make claims about their rights to *vivir sabroso*, to denounce the ongoing conflict, to process the wounds of violence, and, ultimately, to redignify their lives *and* death.

Arts initiatives involving social activism and memory are more prevalent in Buenaventura, the main urban port in Colombia's Pacific. As Paschel (2016) notes, the aftermath of the 1991 constitution was marked by the rise of Black urban groups claiming their Black identity and the escalation of violence in their territories. Part of these movements are *Minga por la Memoria* (Minga for Memory), a platform constituted by social, artistic, ecclesiastical, and memory organizations asserting the dignity of life and the recognition of memory as a victim's right. We worked with two artistic initiatives from *Minga por la Memoria* in our project: Arambeé, a music, dance, and theater group that features Afro-Colombian social and identitarian issues in their performances, which are inspired by the vast cultural tradition of the Pacific; and Semillero Teatro por la Vida (Theatre for Life), which underline local, territorial, and cultural specificities in plays that facilitate spaces for both self-reflection and artistic enjoyment. Both groups, together with other artists, produced the CNMH's final report, *Buenaventura: A Port Without Community*, which emphasized the abandonment by the state and the breakdown of social networks as a conse-

quence of the violence. The meaning and relevance of *minga* and *uramba* as spaces of coming together, of teamwork, social relations, familiarity, and collective responsibility feature prominently in the artistic productions of Buenaventura.[94] One participant, Jhon Erick, noted:

> *Minga*, the [cooking] pot community, is that ancestral practice of subsistence. If one has bananas but does not have fish, and one has fish but does not have bananas, when we share it, we can both have everything, and that is Buenaventura's richness. If I do not have one thing, I have another, and when we share it, then we all have everything. We are not a poor territory; we are a territory that has been impoverished. We are a territory that has been deprived of its natural wealth, but we will recover little by little.[95]

Despite clear differences and distinctive identities as people from the Pacific, commonalities exist across the territories. In both Guapi and Unguía, a direct relationship between artistic practices and the construction of institutional memory was not necessarily observed, as it was in Buenaventura and Bojayá. Cultural production happens regardless of conflict and public denunciation, working, rather, as "quiet" and symbolic existential protest, perhaps with a goal of symbolic or restorative justice.[96] Rituals and creative processes are embedded in a network of ancestral knowledges that represent them. Oral tradition plays a significant role here in that it characterizes and reflects their beliefs, ways of doing and living. As I have explained in the previous section, Olowaili Green Santacruz's filmmaking becomes a form of *oralitura*, a way to archive ancestral knowledge and to guarantee its preservation and dissemination for younger generations.[97] A similar motivation was observed in Guapi, with music schools preserving the knowledges of *los maestros*, the elder musicians, even as they die in conditions of poverty and abandonment. This is also evident in Buenaventura and Bojayá, where contemporary theater, dance, and music maintain and reinforce their culture and traditions in their actual contexts. Contrary to Western dualities, tradition and contemporaneity coexist in the past, present, *and* future. Time and space are neither linear nor uniform. They constitute a "system of unity," as these communities cultural practices and traditions do.

This system of unity is embedded in the creative processes and reflected in the artistic production as they share various elements in common across the territories. First, the central role of *ancestors* is their point

of reference and inspiration. Their music, dances, songs, films, and plays are devoted to them; their ancestors motivate them and move them to create; their presence is embodied in their performances, while their legacies help them reinforce their identity as multifaceted peoples. Second, is their *spirituality* and the more-than-human that blends in a mix of Catholic, Indigenous, and Afro traditions, incorporating also other traditions like the Hindu mandala in the productions of Buenaventura (Marcela)[98] and Bojayá (Elvia).[99] They all sing, dance, and compose lyrics and scripts to their saints and patrons, like San Antonio or Indigenous deities like Baba and Nana, the creators of the universe in the Gunadule tradition. The centrality of death and life and the significance of funeral rites are common themes in their artistic endeavors. Finally, ideas of unity and peace center a harmonious coexistence between human and other-than-human, the material and immaterial, the rainforest and the environment, spirits and saints, life and death. This system of unity allows them to process conflict and histories of violence while enduring persistent forms of colonialism. These communities continually claim their cosmologies and world meanings as valid living forms, denouncing contemporary forms of colonization just as their ancestors experienced over five hundred years ago. An insistence on livingness, resilience, and continuity permeates their cultural productions.

These initial findings informed and guided the production of Corpografías. They were incorporated in the design, production, navigation, and content of the platform. As Claire Warwick et al. note, "Thinking about use before a [digital] resource is built means studying the users, not the resource." Corpografías attempted to reflect their worldviews and forms of expression, while attending to their interests in producing a digital archive. We had to spend time speaking with them and learning about how they use digital platforms and what the best forms of archiving for them would be. We found that despite low levels of digital infrastructure, connectivity, and reduced electricity in the four territories, social media, especially Facebook and WhatsApp, were the main way of sharing and storing information among adults and younger groups. This is not the case for the elderly, who still rely on face-to-face communications, printed material, or highly limited (sometimes nonexistent) phone access. Personal laptops are rare, and public computers with low bandwidth are available at schools, churches, other community organizations, and internet hubs. In Guapi, for example, electricity was only installed two years ago, while in Bojayá it is rationed per neighborhood at designated times.

The situation worsens with the presence of armed groups controlling the zone and restricting the access to electricity towers and internet poles, as happened in Guapi during the second fieldwork visit. Despite the high costs of internet packages, almost everyone, including some children and excluding the elderly, has a smartphone. A prerequisite for Corpografías became designing an easy and manageable navigation of the platform on smartphones with low levels of connection.

Communities were actively involved in the production and provision of audiovisual material, guiding us through sources of information, its contents, and the type of material to collect. They helped schedule fieldwork visits and were in permanent contact, via WhatsApp, with the team of researchers in Colombia. Through interviews and the sharing of their personal archives, they provided content. With full autonomy over what materials and stories to share, they become "the curators of their lives,"[100] the archivists. Long silences, omissions, expressions like "things that cannot be said," or simply a humble smile helped to maintain "an exquisite balance of what is public and what is intimate,"[101] an "aesthetic of quiet" that announces when certain information and knowledges are only for themselves. Or, in the words of Elver from Guapi, "El que lo dice todo se queda con nada" (He who says it all is left with nothing).[102] Their right to opacity, as Glissant would call it, determined the boundaries of what could be shared, said, or collected. These gaps and silences that come up in the production process are also a meaningful and constitutive part of Corpografías; it understands documentation as "a process—or a performance—in and of itself, whose methods of preservation, organization, and access might become as important as the documents themselves."[103]

When a group of community members met and examined the first mock-up of the archive, some spoke about how Corpografías had the potential to contribute to publicizing their creative processes, territories, and knowledges. It could also inform the public about their territory, "to tell them how beautiful Guapi is," encourage people "to visit our region" and experience "the delights of our coast,"[104] "to tell them that we exist."[105] They discussed how some of their self-curated material could also help promote their work and be used for lobbying with funders, public institutions, NGOs, and festivals. It could function as an archive of their memories, a place to record ancestral knowledge and practices that are at risk of disappearing with the death of the community elders. The significance of memory echoed in their comments. Corpografías could become a memory place that helps other members of the community conduct research

about themselves, to be inspired and represented by their own people, "where young people can admire their community members as they admire those who appear on TV,"[106] a place where researchers, journalists, and civil society can find information to conduct further research on the Pacific and the communities' artistic practices.[107] I cannot speak to what extent this has happened or is happening. Part of the reason involves the different needs and responsibilities of the research team and other work priorities, the pandemic, and the inevitable end of the grant. The qualitative nature of measuring research impact requires constant relationality with the stakeholders. This has proved difficult for a variety of reasons: lack of funding for travel to maintain these relationships and to equitably pay community members for their intellectual labor; researchers' institutional and personal responsibilities; new research interests; dissolution of research and friendship affinities. I remember paying GoDaddy, a well-known internet page and web-hosting provider, for the first five years of the project to register and maintain the domain name that hosts the archive. When I was writing the first draft of this chapter, the subscription expired and Corpografías temporarily disappeared. I thought about the violent erasure that disappearance symbolized after the long processes to put the archive together. Eventually, I realized what had happened and I used my research funds from my institution to register the site and page for another five years. I have made the personal decision to keep paying for this site as part of my ongoing research expenses. While I write this, I am not even sure that this type of research will receive funding again given the political landscape of the United States, but as long as I am employed by an institution in the global North, I plan on maintaining the site.

The work we did for Corpografías made it evident that for these communities, creating and collaborating through embodied practices opens up safe spaces to gather and to come together. It generates a place for the establishment and enforcement of unity and community ties. As Jhon Erick, coordinator of Semillero Teatro por la Vida, explains, one of the main characteristics of the conflict and its related violence is that it generates fear and distrust among people.[108] Art-making practices, according to him, allow the community to feel united and in solidarity with one another. Actors in Bojayá shared similar testimony when they referred to their theater group as a family,[109] and theater as the space where they can come together and collectively express themselves as a collective, as a community. This in turn informs their creative processes since they gather testimonies and stories told by different members of the community and

use them in their plays and performances.[110] They become their own historians, archivists, and restorative justice catalysts. They also gather the energy and support to become more vocal and political about their needs through consistent community practices.

Throughout this project, I learned that in Colombia, art and culture are usually addressed for either their anthropological or aesthetic value. Anthropology privileges the value of cultural differences and the need to guarantee these multiplicities for a peaceful coexistence, while aesthetics allows the art object to facilitate or express processes of trauma or reconciliation.[111] Less is said about the processes that contribute to the making of culture and art, what these may mean or even the roles they have. Our rationale, then, for this project was to analyze and document these processes to better understand the role of art in context of conflict, memory, and reconciliation from a wider outlook, from a specific arts-based, performance studies perspective in conjunction with memory studies and transitional justice, or what we prefer to call symbolic justice or "epistemological justice."[112] The turn to memory is crucial for communities to disseminate their voices, knowledges, existence, and reclamations. In their embodied practices, these communities were able to make and support their claims for their territory and its relationship to their identity, resources, and environment. Symbolic and epistemological justice seem as relevant as, or perhaps even more relevant than, legal and institutional justice. Our project makes this claim (without diminishing the relevance and centrality of legal and institutional justice) because throughout our research process we witnessed and listened to the experiences of the communities. Sometimes it was about their immediate moments of respite, leaning into approximations of *vivir sabroso*. They longed for safe spaces where they would not feel threatened, not feel fear. Affective ties with and beyond kin allow them to endure and continue despite trauma, memories of violence, and displacement. Practices of relationality stood out as they gathered to express their dissatisfaction with, and denouncement of, the government. They also gather to embrace, to connect through movement, song, or dance, and to center their customs, traditions, and beliefs. We met individuals who imagined new worlds and alternatives for economic sustainability and survival beyond formal education (or its absence), the guerrillas, the paramilitary, and the drug trade. They were also very imaginative in how they brought together elements from other cultures and traditions, merging the urban and the rural, the so-called contemporary and the traditional, and the blending of religious systems and beliefs.

If Corpografías is to contribute to discussions about the role of artistic processes in transitional justice, the suggestion of oral performance historian Luis Carlos Sotelo Castro, who advocates for more accountability in listening, bears mentioning here. Like Acosta López, Sotelo Castro turns to a sensorial reconfiguring to make sense of violence and its after-affects. He writes that "the performativity of listening . . . is left unaddressed by the assumption that circulating victims' testimonials is enough. There is not a mechanism to control the public's listening process, to check that they have heard correctly, to know if they refuse to listen, or to raise awareness about the effect that their mode of listening is having on those who speak."[113] Likewise, Corpografías warrants a careful engagement to notice how it moves away from, thereby displacing, modes of engagement with traditional archives. Corpografías literally moves you into different spatiotemporal perspective. On the home page, the map of Colombia is flipped sideways, making the Pacific coast move from left to right rather than from top to bottom. In other words, it centers the Pacific as an important site of inquiry and knowledge production about Colombia, which often privileges a central, Andean perspective. Each research site begins with a storytelling page—moving images and accompanying sounds from that particular site. Because, as Sylvia Wynter explains, we are a "storytelling species," these site-specific tellings demonstrate the capacity for the community members to narrate their own stories about themselves, their territories, and their embodied cultural practices. These are stories that "live with violence but cannot accurately describe violence."[114] Instead, these "imperfect and unfinished working through"[115] stories turn to livingness and strategies for living amid and despite epistemic and racial violence. Their affirmations of life are intrinsically tied to cultural production, as the links, images, videos, and sound files show. Corpografías becomes the conduit through which the witnesses of the armed conflict can "speak," but with a provision that in order to hear what they have to say, one requires those new grammars of listening still being imagined. The archive is divided into five categories: creative processes, embodied practices, profiles, objects, and places. How might one listen to place? What stories do objects tell? What does an embodied practice say about its practitioner that the visual documentation does not accurately represent? I leave these questions here, unable to completely answer them because I am still listening and searching for ways to tell their stories. This perhaps leads to the limitations of current understandings of testimony and memory by governments attempting to find modes of reparations after

such world-annihilating violences. Given that governmental and juridical systems of reparations, restitution, and justice do not appear to work on behalf of those our research project considered the actual victims of the conflict, the role of civil society (and this term is not without its issues), academics, and projects such as Corpografías become more relevant as the collaborative work with communities draws attention to the significance of symbolic versus institutional justice. Corpografías specifically archives the need to counteract the erasure of victim's memories by working closely with communities and disseminating their messages, interpretations of conflict, and, most important, their daily practices and ways of living that were peaceful to begin with: *Estaban viviendo sabroso, estaban viviendo sabroso hace tiempo* (They were living well, they were living well a long time ago). Many of them adamantly proclaim that the armed conflict has nothing to do with them and they were just in the "wrong" place (contested and resource-rich territory desired by multiple capitalist and government interests) at the wrong time.

Gabriella Giannachi points out that the archive "constitutes just the beginning not only of the re-evaluation of the identity and the rewriting of history of individuals . . . but also [of] the creation of a community and with this, the possibility that this community may use the transformational power of the archive to seek social and political change."[116] Corpografías aims to create an extended community within the Pacific, to connect the four territories virtually with one another and other victims of conflict elsewhere.[117] It makes an effort to prioritize symbolic and epistemological reparation at levels beyond institutions and the state, by addressing diverse audiences and perhaps even the "implicated subjects" inside and outside Colombia.

Concluding Thoughts

Decolonial archives are shapeshifters. They take on forms contingent on what they hold. What they hold exceeds the form that holds them. But they must be held somehow, even if by "holding" I mean being cared for, thought about, considered, and, most important, valued for their content and what it does for the communities who value it. In this chapter, the displacing archives herein have appeared as photographs that require a different type of "aesth-ethic" engagement, as contemporary short films—either live action or animated—that document and preserve Gunadule

knowledges, and finally, as a digital archive that presents the multiplicity of embodied performance practices that survived and shifted throughout the armed conflict. Each example engages with the movement from embodied experience and the documentation of that experience with its corresponding affects. Movement also appears in the shift from the material reality of a colonial archive (the dusty cabinets filled with deteriorating papers at its most conventional) to a digital archive about affect, relationality, memory, and histories of violence; from the passage of time within the cosmologies of the Gunadule people and Green Santacruz's representation of it via a rotating *mola*; and finally, from the static photograph to the effects that being moved by a photograph have. Like Sankofa Danzafro's appeal to hear what the dancers have to say through their dancing, Corpografías and these other examples require a move, a political-ethical, radical move away from colonialist structures of knowledge and making meaning about the world around us, to new, radical sensorial relationships with aesthetic practices by people still experiencing the *destierro* brought upon them by coloniality. While I am unable to offer suggestions or solutions for how to do this exactly, I hope that the community of Black and Indigenous cultural producers I have included in these pages provides glimmers of an ever-powerful present where they are working and wondering how to do this as well. The present. A moment where livingness belies the ontological nothingness of the future (the future can only ever exist as a possibility; thus it does not "really" exist) and the traumatic incidences and remnants of structural forms of historical violence. It is in the present that relationality and its difficult, yet necessary practice flourish and move us toward "better" relations. It is in the present that these communities can imagine movements of collaboration, mutual aid, and learning to move and be together. And it is in the present that we can move and mobilize our senses and attunements to experience the world differently in an effort to decolonize our politics.

Laura Pérez argues that a decolonizing politics "resides in an embodied practice rooted in lived and liveable worldviews or philosophies and is therefore in decolonizing relationship to our own bodies and to each other as well as to the natural world."[118] I have tried to make my decolonizing politics explicit as I draw this book to a close. While I did not want this book to be about my identity in relationship to the subject matter, I know the supercilious nature of this claim. In my encounters with a country where I have matrilineal ancestry, I have chosen to think about my relationship with some of its people, places, and things. I now think differ-

ently about waterways and their importance (even though they are often riddled with litter and unable to supply potable water) for certain communities after breathing in the Atrato and sitting in the lush expanse of the Gulf of Urabá as we crossed it on our way to Unguía. I still remember that young, dark-skinned mestizo boy in a red-and-white striped shirt lying dead by the side of the road on our way to Arquía. And most importantly, I acknowledge that even among those of us who live under the identitarian banner of a "Black and global majority," our relationships to land, language, social class, education, racialized hierarchies, friends, family, and kin remain complex, unruly, and sometimes crushingly disappointing, even when we make earnest attempts to live well or harmoniously with one another.

Conclusion

I think it is time to end this book, but I have no idea how to do it. In another book, I admitted to my aversion to endings. I still have not overcome that shortcoming. Thus, I give in to the need for a conventional conclusion to remind myself what I have attempted to do within these pages. But, because I dislike conventionality, I also present another way to end thereafter. Ideally, I would like for the Colombian armed conflict and its afterlives to have ended, but this naive postulation in the conditional tense serves no one. Instead, and yet again, I focus on how people choose to endure difficult situations with the help of community, embodied artistic practices, and political conviction about the dignity of life.

This book has been about Black and Indigenous life. I have primarily focused on expressive movements that rely on creative, world-making practices that assert livingness. I have brought together dance and performance, Afro and Indigenous cultural identities, digital humanities, and archival studies to map out where I see livingness and its array of sensibilities emerge. Colombia and its "histories of perplexity"[1] are the focal point, and methodologies ranging from Black studies, performance studies, Indigenous studies, decolonial studies, cultural anthropology, (auto) ethnography, and dance studies help me make sense of what I encountered, felt, thought, listened and wit(h)nessed as I developed this project. I have also centered practitioners of color as theorists and authorities in and of themselves.

Chapter 1 moved us through *vivir sabroso* and its tenets of kinship, political activism, dignity, and defense of life. The poetics of *vivir sabroso* partnered with the geographic landscape and the other-than-human presence of the rivers of the Colombian Pacific to paint a picture of the complexity of coexistence across lands literally maimed by coloniality. Despite the inheritances of displacement, diaspora, and *destierro*, Afro-Colombians

of the Chocó and Valle del Cauca regions find ways to unite across struggle. *Vivir sabroso* requires practice, commitment, and presence. Practice in choosing life, practice in committing to protest and demand action, dignity, and justice. Practice in presence and patience since justice, per Saidiya Hartman, is an anemic word.[2] Chapter 2 demonstrated how Afro-Colombians continue to strive for justice and healing, whether through a funeral ritual, a commemorative play, or a well-organized civic protest. In their enactments of *vivir sabroso* in plays and protests, they make visible and palpable the importance of collective community-building for affective experiences. They assert their rights to be and feel together. These affective ties, linked to political action, allow them to have the strength and conviction to make political demands about the return of their loved ones' human remains after the Bojayá massacre, or to organize effectively to ameliorate their daily living conditions in Buenaventura. Chapter 3 specifically looks at the political and pedagogical power of Afro-Colombian contemporary dance by examining three pieces by Sankofa Danzafro. Their choreographies—as embodied politics tied to the cognitive justice movements of the global Black diaspora, and as an aesthetic linked to Afro-contemporary structures, syntaxes, and styles—highlight the significance of Black bodies in motion. Sankofa asserts that its members dance to be heard. This shift in sensorial registers in order to engage with creative work by Black and Indigenous Colombians helps set up the final case studies of the book. Chapter 4 reframes the archive as something digital, ancestral, animated, and photographic. It privileges alternative modes of collecting and curating knowledge that rely on embodied repertoires. This chapter also wonders how to wit(h)ness trauma, legacies of coloniality, and *destierro* with our senses beyond our sight.

My focus on life and livingness never ceases to acknowledge the specter of death, trauma, and coloniality that haunts all the activities of living this book highlights. It will always be there. Yet my commitment to *vivir sabroso* populates these pages and leads me to the concept of *convivencia* as a practice of possibility and stability, not because *convivencia* wipes away conflict, but because *convivencia*, like *vivir sabroso*, is a committed, embodied practice that has political potential, a poetics of the body that relies on others to flourish.

As dance scholars, our disciplinary training asks us to consider the political potential of corporeality in motion. This book shows how a focus on people in motion committed to livingness offers new ways to think about post-conflict communities. Rather than echoing narratives about

victimhood, trauma, and disillusionment common in post-conflict discourses, I have tried to move my scholarly attention to embodied practices of living and the need for new ways of understanding beyond occularcentric colonial metrics. While I do not pretend to have answers about how to resolve the tensions and injustices that persist in post-conflict societies, I think that the practices, considerations and questions throughout might offer some possibilities. As philosopher José Medina wonders, "How can one protest an injustice when there are no words available to name it or describe it?"[3] If words fail or are anemic, then new sensibilities beyond words, sensibilities such as listening or feeling, require development, application, and, more important, practice. If anything, the urgency to practice, to practice with our bodies-minds-spirit what it means to live ethically with humans and other-than-humans, is with what I would like to end this book. Dance as a practice of training the body to be supple, mobile, alert, attentive, flexible, rhythmic, playful, responsive, or thoughtful models what a commitment to embodied practice of any kind entails. What if *convivencia* were a daily practice that we all committed to? How does *convivencia* look on stage and in daily life? I present the epilogue that follows as a potential answer.

Epilogue, in Two Parts

Part One

The Colombian Truth Commission, *La Comisión de la Verdad* (formed in 2016 after the signing of the peace accords) published a report on June 28, 2022. This report was a four-year research project that narrates the 65 years of internal armed conflict (1958–2016) and the exorbitant human rights violations with a goal towards "*la no repetición*/ Never again." The report features 30,000 interviews, over a thousand reports from social organizations with multiple gender, ethnic and racialized perspectives. Using an ethnographic approach to the gathering of materials, it aims for a pluralistic account of the effects of the conflict. It uses accessible language throughout the report aiming to reach a wide national (and possible international) audience. The figures within are staggering: 121,768 disappeared people; 55,770 kidnapped; 450,664 assassinated. And, as I mention in the introduction, the 6.4 million internally displaced persons.

Part of La Comisión's goal was to create multiple opportunities for the

nation to grieve together. One method was through performance. Nube Sandoval and Bernardo Rey, founding members of Centro de Investigaciónes Teatrales (CENIT), and music producer Iván Benavides collaborated to produce *Develaciones: un canto a los cuatro vientos* (2022)/*Unveilings: a song to the four winds*, a co-production with the Commission, the Teatro Mayor Julio Mario Santo Domingo, La Paz Querida and Caracol television. They invited Rafael Palacios to choreograph specific sections. It premiered April 22 with five live performances at the Teatro Mayor and then aired on Caracol television. CENIT was chosen due to their extensive international experience working with communities affected by violence. A year of travel, workshops and community engagements led to the artistic development of the piece in collaboration with many cultural producers throughout the country.

Among the performance groups (dance, theatre, community activists, music groups) were Colectivo Mafapo (Madres de Falsos Positivos); Corporación Jóvenes Creadores del Chocó;[4] Fundación Saüyee'pia Wayuu; la Guardia Indígena Nacional; Krump Colombia; Óscar González "Guache"; Sankofa Danzafro (see chapter three); Tambores de Cabildo; Tonada; and professional theatre actors from a variety of national companies.[5] The notes about the performance available on La Comisión's website explain that

> Develaciones es algo muy cercano a un ritual de duelo, de sanación colectiva, que logró incluso involucrar de esa manera al público espectador de la obra. . . . Develaciones también es un reconocimiento al arte y a los artistas. El arte ha sido siempre un lugar de enunciación, de conocimiento. A través del arte, los pueblos han levantado su voz para comunicar sus dolores y sus alegrías. El arte ha permitido nombrar lo que de otra manera no es posible; es un gesto que sale del alma, sin mediaciones. Desde allí, los jóvenes, las comunidades y los artistas que participaron en esta obra nos están hablando -de manera simbólica, pero siempre desde sus saberes- de realidades y acontecimientos que conviene escuchar. Apenas empezamos a entender el lugar del arte desde el que hemos iniciado el reconocimiento de los otros. Muchas veces solo sabemos de esos otros por su música: los alabaos, el bullerengue, el rap. Apostamos a que esa sea una puerta de entrada para reconocernos en la diferencia.
>
> *Develaciones* is something very close to a ritual of mourning, of collective healing, that even managed to involve the public spectator of

> the work [. . .] *Develaciones* is also a recognition of art and artists. Art has always been a place of enunciation, of knowledge. Through art, people have raised their voices to communicate their pains and their joys. Art has made it possible to name what is otherwise impossible; it is a gesture that comes from the soul, without mediation. From there, the young people, the communities and the artists who participated in this work speak to us—in a symbolic way, but always from their knowledge—of realities and events that are worth listening. We are just beginning to understand how art helps us recognize one another. Many times, we only know about those others through their music: *alabaos*, *bullerengue*, rap. We bet that this is a gateway to recognize ourselves in difference.[6]

In mobilizing an oversimplified discourse of artmaking as a healing practice (it can be, but it is more than that as well), it fails to fully register the complex inter-relational embodied processes involved in performance making practices. Additionally, it specifically registers the "others" in Colombia as Black by highlighting Black cultural practices: *alabaos, bullerengue* and rap. This reliance on difference through culturally specific practices structures *Develaciones* as a folkloric festival presentation: the Indigenous community activists La Guardia indígena; the theatre actors on a banquet table literally held up by the poor, rural, mestizo and Black Colombians; graffiti creation and krumping; a choreographed representation of the recruitment of young, Black Colombians to the guerrillas; a video installation that shows a high-rise and the Colombians who live in relative comfort; another video that features a cascade of cocaine falling on people as they stand; Wayuu dancers in red; the wise grandmother figure, La Abuela U-mma (mma means earth in Wayuu), and the singer, Lucía Pulido, who tie the vignettes together dramaturgically. The different groups have their own sections, and the transitions are often choreographed or staged via a framing device, video projections, a song (Pulido) or a central character (la Abuela U-mma). What is often missing is the confluence of these different practices and how they might operate, to a certain extent (or at least be compositionally or dramaturgically tied), interculturally.

When I first saw the entire piece, I was moved, especially since I know some of the performers and their political commitments. Upon multiple viewings as I determined whether I wanted to include a significant analysis of *Develaciones* in this book, my critical performance analysis training

began to take precedence. If its goal is to function as a symbolic form of restitution and healing for Colombians affected by the armed conflict, it is not up to me to determine how or if it has had that effect. Do I think that scene VI, *El Banquete*/The Banquet, featuring representatives of the government, military, oligarchy, and church enjoying a sumptuous meal together goes on for too long and much of the text is unnecessary? Yes. Does it matter that I think this? Not really. Sankofa Danzafro dancer and co-artistic director Yndira Perea Cuesta, in an Instagram text conversation we had after I saw it for the first time, said it was an important and powerful piece to both witness and perform. Heeding her thoughts, I prefer to remain in "faithful witnessing" of it.[7] So, I offer one short moment where I see the relationality of *convivencia* on the stage, where choreography shows the articulation of the pluriverse as "the result of the dance between autonomy and interdependence that living beings and many place/territory based communities perform to keep themselves and the pluriverse going. At its best, autonomy is a praxis of inter-existence."[8] At the end of the piece, the entire cast, in all their representative differences (Indigenous, rural, peasant farmer, Black, Catholic cardinals, politicians, oligarchy, army), stands to face the audience. Yet, this is not the moment despite its strong depiction of a diverse Colombia. Instead, it is a quiet moment where a Wayuu elder, from La Fundación Saüyee'pia Wayuu, enters the space and sits down to narrate about the importance of the earth and water.

He enters, sits upstage right and mimics the action of throwing seeds on the earth. As he narrates, he makes circles on the stage with a stick as if spreading and planting the seeds.

> *Nosotros somos la crianza de la tierra*/ We are the creations of the earth
> *Hay plantas*,/ There are plants
> *Hay animales*,/ There are animals
> *Hay aves y nosotros, los wayuu*./ There are birds and us, the Wayuu.

Flutes begin to sound. He continues.

> *El Lluvio agua es nuestro padre antiguo, y la tierra, nuestra Madre Antigua*.

Rain water is our ancient father, and the earth, our ancient mother.

At this moment from stage left, Wayuu women dressed in long blue gowns enter the stage carrying a canoe. Six of them hold the canoe above their heads while three others walk behind them. They step forward, rock back and take another step forward. It is a slow, hypnotic progression across the stage moving the canoe forward, as if they are the river current.

Si no hay lluvia o agua en la tierra, no hay plantas.

If there is no rain or water on the earth, there are no plants.

Suddenly, images of butterflies appear projected on the cyclorama wall. Similar in color to the blue of the gowns, they flitter and float harkening to the magical realism of Macondo, that well-known town of Colombian author Gabriel García Márquez's imagination. They almost dance in accompaniment to the flute sounds.

Si no hay lluvia o agua, no hay vida/ If there is no rain or water, there is no life
Nosotros no somos dueños de la Tierra/ We are not the owners of the Earth
No somos dueños del territorio/ We are not the owners of the territory.
La Tierra es dueña de nosotros/ The Earth owns us.
Y en el territorio hay principios, valores y manifestaciones; nuestra música, nuestra espiritualidad./ And in the territory there are principles, values and protests; our music, our spirituality.

When he finishes narrating, Yndira Perea enters stage left. She makes quick, incessant foot marches and circles in place. Her body vibrates as if stuck, fighting or feeling something unfamiliar. Her movement quality is urgent, expansive yet jittery. Trying to return to homeostasis, a comfortable, articulate stillness but unable. She opens her arms wide, but brings them back to encircle herself, protectively. I notice elements of the Afro-Cuban dance moves for Changó, the Yoruba god of fire, in her foot patterns. Lucía Pulido enters shortly thereafter and begins to sing in mournful melismas. The performers, Wayuu, Afro-Colombian, mestiza, rivers and butterflies, together endure the effects of the conflict, represented by flames and later a mudslide that overtake the cyclorama behind them. The inter-existence of humans and other-than-humans coalesces beautifully

yet briefly in this moment, before the real threats of environmental catastrophe enter space.

Part Two

In June 2019, a dance festival took place at the ruins of Dariena (now known as Santa María la Antigua del Darién), the first mainland settlement in the Americas in present-day Colombia. Conquistador Vasco Núñez de Balboa founded Dariena in 1501.[9] By 1524 Balboa was dead, Panamá City had become imperial Spain's main priority in that geographical location, and local Indigenous communities burned down what was left of Dariena. Eventually, one of the first *palenques* (Black fugitive communities) of Africans emerged nearby, and by the nineteenth century, these lands were settled by free Blacks and *cimarrones* (fugitives).[10] The dance festival, which enacted a historical trajectory of displacement as a result of colonialism, took place after lunchtime. Each community presented their dances: the Gunadule Indigenous community from Arquía presented their dance called *La Zeta* (the Zed); the Embera community from the Eyaquera territory presented the dances *La Paloma* (the dove) and *La Guacamaya* (the parrot); the Afro-Colombian community from Marriága danced the *mapalé*; the women and girls from the Citará Indigenous community danced *La Arriera*; the Afro-Colombian dance group from Unguía's Casa de Cultura performed the *Abozao del Pacífico*; and the women and girls from the Embera Cuti community presented their dances *El Pato* (the duck) and *La Rana* (the frog).

I want to highlight *how* the act of converging over the ground that bears the (im)material, yet still palpable, remnants of coloniality and state violence choreographs *convivencia* at this gathering. I see *convivencia*, the ability to coexist, in this case, through a dance performance, as a confluence of dance and political economy. The minimal institutional support via the Colombian state's renewed interest in the region enables the communities to re-member and re-choreograph themselves back into the(ir) space after histories of displacement. *Convivencia* becomes a mode by which these communities can respond to the colonial repertoires of the state and inscribe new meanings to a violent past and present. More importantly, *convivencia* demonstrates their ability to continually coexist despite the afterlives of colonialism and the Colombian armed conflict, a conflict that affects them but, ironically, has nothing do to with them.

All the dances were performed under a large open-air thatched roof hut or *palapa*. Bystanders could stand around the periphery of the space making room in the center for the dances. Some sat on plastic patio chairs common in these modest areas of Colombia, while children and agile adults sat on the concrete floor. Occasionally, a dog would wander in and gaze at the activity curiously. It scurried away at the gentle insistence of an audience member's sibilant sounds (sss—-sss—-sss). During the *abozao* an Afro-Colombian girl dancer pulsed her shoulders and torso, while a young Embera girl, seated on the ground by her, began to imitate the movements. The Afro-Colombian dances featured drumming and clapping, but there was a lack of audience participation or call-and-response. I also noticed many serious expressions watching the dances and dancers regardless of who was dancing. What if these expressions are actually a form of curious engagement? A way to experience difference despite a commonality based around shared territory?

The dances offered stark gendered contrast which heightened the cultural specificities of each community. Men wore pants, women wore skirts or dresses: flounces and ruffles adorned the Afro-Colombian ones, while bright patterns and colors played on the sarong skirts of all three Indigenous tribes. The Embera dances exclusively showcased girls and women. The Afro-Colombian dances offered equal gender participation but very gendered movements and division of labor. The Gunadule featured both boys and girls dancing and playing instruments. Choreographically, all of the dances relied on unison. Entrances and exits required each dancer to be attentive to the space in front or behind so that there would be enough room for each of them to execute their movements. It was important to watch and follow one another. Repetition of movement phrases abounded: forward weight shift hops, side skip sways, with diagonal turns and spiral like paths through the space (Gunadule dance *La Zeta*/The Zed); quick, bounded diagonal leaps side to side with legs pressed together (Embera Cuti dance *La Rana*); side to side lateral sways of hips and shoulder shimmies (Afro-Colombian *mapalé*). Afro-Colombian dancers featured folkloric choreographic strategies of lines and diagonals, while the Embera and Gunadule dances highlighted circular formations and the spiral that is part of their cosmology.[11]

Did it matter that some dancers were out of synch with the rhythm or with one another?

What if someone forgot part of the dance?

How did the young Embera dancer learn to fix her falling sarong while

still maintaining the downbeat and not fall out of sync with Maria's (an Embera elder we met and interviewed) singing or her group's hunched forward steps?

I wonder what those Gunadule and Colombian mestizo presenting boys over there are going to do with the video footage they are recording on their phones. Did it matter to them if they couldn't see all the dances properly depending on where they stood?

Where did the dog go?

What is that journalist with the fancy camera going to do with those photos?[12] Will they put them in the museum next to the objects unearthed from Dariena?

How can they sit on those uncomfortable plastic chairs for so long?

Where is that little boy running to while Gunadule women dance?

My ethnographic curiosities take hold and I share them here to model how I, at least, immerse myself in a moment. Relationality is always about a moment.

Staging a dance festival might be one way to generate a new post-conflict world in this area. Although the particular festival's dependence on funding by state-sanctioned organizations (Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia [ICANH] and Ministry of Culture involvement) affects the full autonomy of the festival (would it have taken place without the presence of ICANH?), it did not seem to affect the content of the festival itself. The communities had authority over what to represent to one another. It remains uncertain whether the wish of these communities to have three yearly festivals will come to fruition. When I originally wrote this essay in 2020, the armed conflict had escalated in the area. Perhaps this humble festival represents what Donna Haraway envisions in *Staying with the Trouble*: "new practices of imagination, resistance, revolt, repair, and mourning, and living and dying well."[13] She insists that these types of practices must be developed—through localized dance festivals in conflict zones for example—for a "common liveable world must be composed, bit by bit, or not at all."[14]

In her notes, Isabel, one of the members of the grant's research team from Universidad de Antioquia, wrote in her notes that once the event concluded, some of the community members who reside in the park gathered in a hut to watch the *fútbol* match between Colombia and Argentina. In the hut facing them, the final preparations were underway for a *quinceañera*. Pink and silver balloons bobbed in the air. This is what *convivencia* looks like here. A way of existing, literally, over the remains of a

lost colonial world (*Dariena*), while simultaneously constructing something new in the aftermath of destruction and displacement. This new world is one where its inhabitants, despite the afterlife of (the ongoing) violence, managed to find time to gather, if only briefly, and practice living harmoniously one summer afternoon.

These two examples of moments involve performances where learning how to be/being with others remains crucial. Each instance demonstrates how the choreographed and the quotidian model ways to engage in difference, not for a resolution or a finality of something, but instead, to model the practices of presence, *convivencia* and relationality to feel and remain alive.

Notes

Acknowledgments

1. Peloton running instructor Becs Gentry came up with this mantra. I find it useful for writing.

Introduction

1. Veena Das, *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 8.

2. An earlier version of this paragraph was published in Melissa Blanco Borelli and Olga Lucía Sorzano, "Performance Practices and the Conflict of Memory in Colombia: Working Towards a 'Decolonial' Digital Archive and Epistemological Justice," *Contemporary Theatre Review* 31, nos. 1–2 (2021): 172–90.

3. Sylvia Wynter, *Black Metamorphosis* (unpublished manuscript, 1970), 243–44.

4. Joseph M. Pierce, "A Manifesto for Speculative Relations," in Phoebe Boswell et al., *Five Manifestos for the Beautiful World* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2025), 25.

5. "Spotlight on Colombia," Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, https://www.internal-displacement.org/spotlights/colombia-changing-conflict-dynamics-still-disproportionately-affect-most-vulnerable/ (accessed December 16, 2024).

6. Pablo Cortés Ferrández, Calen Olesen, and Steven Kelly, "The Last Refuge," Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, https://story.internal-displacement.org/colombia-urban/index.html (accessed July 12, 2023). The only countries with more IDPs as of December 2024 are Syria, Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

7. Macarena Gómez-Barris, *The Extractive Zone* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 11.

8. Audre Lorde, "Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women Redefining Difference," in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Berkeley, CA: Crossing Press, 2012).

9. María Lugones, *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes: Theorizing Coalition Against Multiple Oppressions* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003).

10. Aurora Vergara-Figueroa, *Afrodescendant Resistance to Deracination in Colombia: Massacre at Bellavista-Bojayá-Chocó* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

11. Yomaira Figueroa, "After the Hurricane: Afro-Latina Decolonial Feminisms and Destierro," *Hypatia* 35, no. 1 (2020): 220–29. Thank you to my friend and academic *comadre* Jade Power-Sotomayor for directing me to this wonderful essay.

12. I am indebted to one of my peer reviewers for urging me to clarify and foreground these ideas about displacement.

13. Vergara-Figueroa, *Afrodescendant Resistance*, 220–29.

14. Deborah Thomas, "What the Caribbean Teaches Us: The Afterlives and New Lives of Coloniality," *Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* 27, no. 3 (2022): 235.

15. Vergara-Figueroa, *Afrodescendant Resistance*, 17.

16. Michael Taussig, *Palma Africana* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 22.

17. For more detailed information about the mestizo, mestizo-as-white social, racial, and political hegemony in Colombia, please consult the extensive work of anthropologist Peter Wade, who has studied race, *mestizaje*, and national identity in Colombia. Among his significant works is *Blackness and Race Mixture: The Dynamics of Racial Identity in Colombia* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).

18. Pilar Riaño-Alcalá, "Seeing the Past, Visions of the Future: Memory Workshops with Internally Displaced Persons in Colombia," in *Oral History and Public Memories*, ed. Paula Hamilton and Linda Shopes (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2008), 271.

19. Peter Wade, "La política cultural de la negritud en Latinoamérica y el Caribe," *Guaraguao: Revista de Cultural Latinoamericana* 9, no. 20 (2005): 10–11.

20. For more information about embodied artistic practices and the ways in which Afro-Colombian and Indigenous communities continue to survive despite state abandonment, see Blanco Borelli and Sorzano, "Performance Practices."

21. Marta Isabel Domínguez Mejía, "Los procesos de resistencia al conflicto armado y al desplazamiento forzado por parte de pobladores rurales afrocolombianos en el municipio de Buenaventura," in *Publicación: Informe final del concurso; Movimientos sociales y nuevos conflictos en América Latina y el Caribe* (Buenos Aires: Programa Regional de Becas CLACSO, 2003).

22. Ulrich Oslender, *The Geographies of Social Movements: Afro-Colombian Mobilization and the Aquatic Space* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 162.

23. Oslender, *Geographies of Social Movements*, 162.

24. Riaño-Alcalá, "Seeing the Past," 271.

25. Xhercis Méndez, "Decolonial Feminist Movidas: A Caribeña (Re)thinks 'Privilege,' the Wages of Gender, and Building Complex Coalitions," in *Theories of the Flesh: Latinx and Latin American Feminisms, Transformation, and Resistance*, ed. Andrea J. Pitts et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 74.

26. Savannah Shange quoted in Kemi Adeyemi, *Feels Right: Black Queer Women and the Politics of Partying in Chicago* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2022), 110.

27. Julius Fleming, *Black Patience* (New York: New York University Press, 2022), 26.

28. Fleming, *Black Patience*, 26.

29. Fleming, *Black Patience*, 26.

30. Fleming, *Black Patience*, 28.

31. Frank B. Wilderson III, *Afropessimism* (New York: Liveright, 2020).

32. Sylvia Wynter, "Rethinking Aesthetics: Notes to a Deciphering Practice," in *Exiles: Essays on Caribbean Cinema*, ed. Mbye B. Cham (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1992), 237–79.

33. Wynter, *Black Metamorphosis*, 83, cited in Katherine McKittrick, *Dear Science and Other Stories* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021).

34. McKittrick, *Dear Science*, 158.

35. Thomas F. DeFrantz and Anita Gonzalez, *Black Performance Theory* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 6.

36. Marisol de la Cadena, *A World of Many Worlds* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018).

37. Kevin Quashie, *Black Aliveness, or a Poetics of Being* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021), 58.

38. Analola Santana, *Freak Performances: Dissidence in Latin American Theatre* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018), 15.

39. Pilar Riaño-Alcalá and Natalia Quiceno Toro, "Presencias, sensibilidades y políticas cotidianas del habitar en el Atrato," *Revista Colombiana de Antropología* 56, no. 2 (2020): 8, https://doi.org/10.22380/2539472X.1212

40. Charmian Wells, "'Harlem Knows': Eleo Pomare's Choreographic Theory of Vitality and Diaspora Citation in Blues for the Jungle," *Dance Research Journal* 52, no. 3 (2020): 4–21.

41. Ananya Chatterjea, *Heat and Alterity in Contemporary Dance: South-South Choreographies* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 31.

42. "Embodied Performance Practices," UK Research and Innovation, Royal Holloway University of London, https://gtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=AH%2FR013748%2F1 (accessed December 20, 2024).

43. Blanco Borelli and Sorzano, "Performance Practices," 172–90.

44. Emphasis added. Andrew Schapp, *Political Reconciliation* (London: Routledge, 2005), 9.

45. Das, *Life and Words*, 9.

46. Arturo Escobar, *Territories of Difference: Place, Movements, Life, Redes* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 111.

47. De la Cadena, *World of Many Worlds*, 2018.

48. Arturo Escobar, Michal Osterweil, and Kriti Sharma, *Relationality: An Emergent Politics of Life Beyond the Human* (London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2024), 159.

49. Kathleen Stewart, "Atmospheric Attunements," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 29, no. 3 (2011): 452.

Chapter 1

1. Natalia Quiceno Toro, *Vivir sabroso: Luchas y movimientos afroatrateños en Bojayá,* Chocó, Colombia (Bogotá: Editorial de la Universidad del Rosario, 2016), 17.

2. Mining was the main objective for the importation of enslaved labor in the region in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. However, by 1778, 30 percent of the Black population in Colombia was free, a notable fact considering that slavery was abolished in Colombia in 1851. Anthropologist Daniel Ruiz-Serna, *When Forests Run Amok:*

War and Its Afterlives in Indigenous and Afro-Colombian Territories (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2023), states that the climate in the Pacific region was so unbearable for white settlers that many would not stay for long periods of time. Absentee Spanish proprietors owned major gold sites headed by Black "captains" who worked alongside enslaved labor to reach fixed quotas of raw gold. Once quotas were reached, enslaved people in Chocó enjoyed some level of autonomy. They could work and eventually purchase manumission with their own funds, and many would farm to supply food for workers (41). This "certain level of autonomy" led to the higher percentages of freedom in the area compared to other hemispheric plantation economies.

3. Quiceno Toro, *Vivir sabroso*, 49.

4. Quiceno Toro, *Vivir sabroso*, 49.

5. Sylvia Wynter, *Black Metamorphosis* (unpublished manuscript, 1970).

6. Cleo Wölfle Hazard, *Underflows: Queer Trans Ecologies and River Justice* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2022), 5.

7. Wölfle Hazard, *Underflows*, 7.

8. Pilar Riaño-Alcalá and Natalia Quiceno Toro, eds., "Pensar con el río: Acción política y trayectorias de vida y muerte en el Atrato," *Revista Colombiana de Antropología* 56, no. 2 (2020): 7–17.

9. Lisa Brooks, "Afterword: At the Gathering Place," in *American Indian Literary Nationalism*, ed. Jace Weaver et al. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005), 244.

10. Lisa Brooks, qtd. in Kristen Brown, "Queering the Waters: The Subversive Potential in E. Pauline Johnson's Canoe," *Western American Literature* 55, no. 2 (2020): 158.

11. Craig Womack, *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 60.

12. Wölfle Hazard, *Underflows*, xvii.

13. *Hampá* is the Emberá word for what can be translated as "canoe."

14. Ruiz-Serna, *When Forests Run Amok*, 50.

15. Wölfle Hazard, *Underflows*, 8.

16. Riaño-Alcalá and Quiceno Toro, "Pensar con el río," note 1.

17. Rebeca L. Hey-Colón, *Channeling Knowledges: Water and Afro-Diasporic Spirits in Latinx and Caribbean Worlds* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2023), 1.

18. Hey-Colón, *Channeling Knowledges*, 1.

19. Julie Velasquez Runk, "Social and River Networks for the Trees: Wounaan's Riverine Rhizomic Cosmos and Arboreal Conservation," *American Anthropologist* 111, no. 4 (2009): 456–57.

20. Philip Oslender, *The Geographies of Social Movements: Afro-Colombian Mobilization and the Aquatic Space* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016).

21. Ruiz-Serna, *When Forests Run Amok*, 30.

22. The Fiesta de San Pacho is a yearly celebration in honor of Saint Francis of Assisi that takes place from September 3 to October 5 in the twelve Franciscan districts of Quibdó, Colombia. It is a celebration of the community's Afro-descendant identity and religious beliefs. The UN's intangible heritage website explains San Pacho as such: "It begins with the Catholic 'Inaugural Mass' at the Cathedral blended with traditional dances and *chirimía* music performed by the San Francis of Assisi Band. This is followed by a parade of carnival groups featuring costumes, dances and *chirimía*. Each district

offers a morning mass and allegorical floats and carnival groups in the afternoon. On 3 October, the patron saint travels the Atrato River in boats, and on 4 October people celebrate the dawn with devotional hymns and perform the Grand Procession of the Saint in the afternoon. Local artists and artisans make the floats, district altars, costumes and street decorations with young people learning alongside the elders. Certain families per district act as custodians and work through the Franciscan Festival Foundation to organize events, preserve know-how and keep the tradition alive. The festival is the main symbolic space in the life of Quibdó. It strengthens Chocó identity and promotes social cohesion within the community, while promoting creativity and innovation through its revival and recreation of traditional knowledge and respect towards nature." "Festival of Saint Francis of Assisi, Quibdó," UNESCO: Intangible Cultural Site, https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/festival-of-saint-francis-of-assisi-quibdo-00640#:~:text=Every%20year%20from%203%20September,embedded%20in%20popular%2Drooted%20religion (accessed March 19, 2024).

The December flotillas that take place along the Atrato and other rivers celebrate the many saint days (Virgen of Guadalupe [December 12], San Juan de la Cruz [December 14], the Immaculate Conception [December 8] and the Día de los Inocentes [December 28]) alongside Nochebuena/Christmas. Again, as with San Pacho these are community events where everyone collaborates, celebrates, learns, and exchanges ritual traditions and artisanry.

Alaba(d)os, or funeral songs, are songs sung, mostly by women, with no musical accompaniment. They feature call-and-response modality, and they are based on religious hymns and prayers. Sometimes they are written in response to a local or national event and can also function as protest music or prayers for peace. The singers, *cantadoras*, follow the lead of the main *cantadora* (or *entonadora*), who prays (often improvising lyrically and sonically) to mediating figures such as the saints, the Holy Spirit, the Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ for mercy for the dead soul in its faithful wish to reach heaven. For more details on *alaba(d)os* and their significance please consult Michael Birenbaum Quintero, "Loudness and Excess, Sovereignty and Abjection in a Neoliberal Frontier Zone," in *Remapping Sound Studies*, ed. Gavin Steingo and Jim Sykes (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019); Anne Marie Losoczny, *La trama interétnica. Ritual, sociedad y figuras de intercambio entre los grupos negros y Emberá del Chocó* (Bogotá: Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia, 2006); Yeison Arcadio Meneses Copete, "Alabaos and Currulaos: Resignification of Afro-Pacific Cultural and Identity Practices in the Framework of the Armed Conflict," *Investig. desarro*. [online]. 2022, vol.30, n.1, pp.374–407. Epub June 07, 2022. https://doi.org/10.14482/indes.30.1.305.8; A.G. Ayala Santos, *El alabao en el Chocó. Un canto de liberación y de esperanza* (Mundo Libro, 2018).

23. Ruiz-Serna, *When Forests Run Amok*, 37.

24. Ruiz-Serna, *When Forests Run Amok*, 70.

25. Catherine M. Cole, *Performance and the Afterlives of Injustice: Dance and Live Art in Contemporary South Africa and Beyond* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2020), 27.

26. Cole, *Performance*, 28.

27. Cole, *Performance*, 28.

28. Cole, *Performance*, 29.

29. Ruiz-Serna, *When Forests Run Amok*, 52.

30. Wölfle Hazard, *Underflows*, 9.

31. Wölfle Hazard, *Underflows*, 20.

32. Emphasis added. Quiceno Toro, *Vivir sabroso*, 6.

33. This quotation is from Manthia Diawara in "Édouard Glissant's Worldmentality," *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art*, nos. 42–43 (2018): 20–27, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1215/10757163-7185713, where he dialogues with Glissant's ideas from *Poetics of Relation* (1997) that influenced Diawara's film *Édouard Glissant: One World in Relation*, K'a Yéléma Productions (2009). I originally encountered the quotation in Macarena Gómez-Barris, *The Extractive Zone: Social Ecologies and Decolonial Perspectives* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 2.

34. I am trying to be mindful to use the words "people" and "corporeality" instead of "body." A body seems emptied of the richness that the materiality of its experience as a person, subject, citizen (with racialized, gendered, national, and other identity markers) possesses. I am interested in how the body actually becomes corpo-real, that is, an embodied subjectivity that attends to the onslaught of social, historical, and cultural inscriptions while also negotiating with these very powerful signifying registers.

35. As Tiana Paschel asserts in *Becoming Black Political Subjects: Movements and Ethno-Racial Rights in Colombia and Brazil* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), "Not only did blackness become a legitimate category of political struggle in the eyes of the state, but the black movement in [Colombia] became increasingly incorporated into formal political institutions and state bureaucracies in unprecedented ways" (30).

36. Stefano Harvey, "Hapticality in the Undercommons." in *The Routledge Companion to Art and Politics*, ed. Randy Martin (New York: Routledge, 2015), 177.

37. Chanda Prescod-Weinstein and Katherine McKittrick, "Public Thinker: Katherine McKittrick on Black Methodologies and Other Ways of Being," *Public Books: A Magazine of Ideas, Art, and Scholarship*, February 1, 2021, https://www.publicbooks.org/public-thinker-katherine-mckittrick-on-black-methodologies-and-other-ways-of-being/

38. Kevin Quashie, *Black Aliveness, or a Poetics of Being* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021), 9.

39. Quashie, *Black Aliveness*, 10.

40. Quashie, *Black Aliveness*, 14.

41. Emphasis added. Riaño-Alcalá and Quiceno Toro, "Pensar con el río," 15–16.

42. Rogerio Velasquéz, *Fragmentos de historia, etnografía y narraciones del Pacífico co-lombiano negro* (Bogotá: ICANH, 2000), qtd in "Presencias, sensibilidades y políticas cotidianas del habitar en el Atrato," Riaño-Alcalá and Quiceno Toro.

43. Gómez-Barris, *The Extractive Zone*, 4.

44. In my book *She Is Cuba* I explain that "to corpo-realize means to make the body a real, living, meaning making entity" (30).

45. Emphasis added. Quiceno Toro, *Vivir sabroso*, 5.

46. Prescod-Weinstein and McKittrick, "Public Thinker," n.p.

47. On January 12, 2024, landslides (due to heavy rainfall) tumbled down onto the road that connects Quibdó to Medellín. There were thirty-four dead and dozens injured and displaced. A popular hashtag of social media during this time was #Chocódeluto.

Many blame the lack of government infrastructural economic support to improve the quality of roads leading to the Chocó department. Details about the accident can be found here: https://elpais.com/america-colombia/2024-01-13/al-menos-50-personas-quedan-atrapadas-en-la-via-medellin-quibdo-por-dos-derrumbes-de-tierra.html (accessed March 19, 2024).

48. Quiceno Toro, *Vivir sabroso*, 5.

49. Quiceno Toro, *Vivir sabroso*, 5.

50. In 1778 38 percent of the Black population in Colombia was free. Some bought their freedom, while others migrated and set up their own mining, fishing, and subsistence farming practices throughout the region. This data comes from Robert West, *Las tierras bajas del Pacífico colombiano*, trans. Claudia Leal (Bogotá: Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia, 2000), cited in Quiceno Toro, *Vivir sabroso*.

51. Ann-Maurine Lara, *Queer Freedom: Black Sovereignty* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2020), 62. Thank you N. Fadeke Castor for bringing this magical book to my attention.

52. Lara, *Queer Freedom*, 62.

53. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox (1963; New York: Grove Press, 2004).

54. Emphasis added. Lara, *Queer Freedom*, 69. The original citation contains cited work from the following: Milagros Ricourt; Frederick Douglass; Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*; Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*; Audra Simpson, "Mohawk Interruptus"; Moten and Harvey, *The Undercommons*; C. Riley Snorton, *Black on Both Sides*; and Alexis Pauline Gumbs, *Spill: Scenes of Black Feminist Fugitivity*.

55. There were 4.8 million people living in displacement because of conflict and violence at the end of 2022, down from 5.2 million in 2021. In Colombia, an IDP (internally displaced person) must register with the government. These figures may not be completely accurate, but they provide a parameter for the scale of displacement in the country despite the signing of the peace accords in 2016. These figures come from the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, https://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/colombia/ (accessed March 18, 2024).

56. Quiceno Toro, *Vivir sabroso*, 56.

57. Katherine McKittrick, "Rebellion/Invention/Groove," *Small Axe* 20, no. 1 (issue 49) (2016): 79–91.

58. Joseph M. Pierce, "A Manifesto for Speculative Relations," in Phoebe Boswell et al., *Five Manifestos for the Beautiful World* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2025), 15.

59. Clare Croft, *Queer Dance: Meanings and Makings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 2.

60. I want to thank Thomas F. DeFrantz for pushing my thinking about the limits of critical dance studies in relation to how I was trying to analyze *vivir sabroso*. Initially, I had thought to use a CDS framework to help "explain" what *vivir sabroso* is and does, but upon deeper reflection, it *is* its own method, its own Black method, and it does not need me as a CDS scholar to intervene and make it legible for others. It can just be on its own terms, and my challenge as a scholar (who relies on the poetics, politics, and ethics of decolonial / Black feminist method) is to move alongside it. I wound up revisiting Katherine McKittrick and Sylvia Wynter and remembered, as McKittrick pointedly states in *Dear Science and Other Stories* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021),

"Description is not liberation. Methodology that is relational, intertextual, interdisciplinary, interhuman, and multidisciplinary honors black studies" (44).

61. Maura Keefe, "What's the Score: Structured Improvisation as National Pastime," in *Taken by Surprise: A Dance Improvisation Reader*, ed. Ann Cooper Albright and David Gere (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2003), 234. Thank you to Raquel Monroe for pointing this essay out to me.

62. McKittrick, *Dear Science*, 56.

63. Thomas F. DeFrantz, "Improvising Social Exchange: African American Social Dance," in *The Oxford Handbook of Critical Improvisation Studie*s, vol. 1, ed. George E. Lewis and Benjamin Piekut (Oxford Handbooks, 2016), 330, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195370935.013.008

64. DeFrantz, "Improvising Social Exchange," 330.

65. Danielle Goldman, *I Want to Be Ready: Improvised Dance as a Practice of Freedom* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 3.

66. "Choreography in confinement" comes from Fred Moten: "[Jacobs's] is an amazing medley of shifts, choreography in confinement . . . in a space [Nathanial] Mackey would characterize as cramped *and* capacious, a spacing Jacques Derrida would recognize as a scene of writing, that Hortense Spillers has called a *scrawl* space." Moten quoted in Goldman, *I Want to Be Ready*, 11.

67. Goldman, *I Want to Be Ready*, 27.

68. I want to thank my colleague Tracy C. Davis for pointing this out to me during a Black Arts Consortium works-in-progress talk I gave at Northwestern in January 2024. She noted my love of language, grammar, and syntax and suggested I think about the function of the words I highlighted to further develop my ideas. This love of language most likely stems from my skill at acquiring new languages. I speak six in varying degrees of fluency, and I enjoy etymology. Susan Manning and Ivy Wilson also engaged generously during this talk.

69. Merriam-Webster, Britannica, and AI-generated definitions.

70. Dance scholar Thomas F. DeFrantz explains that "a black social self might be one that imagines itself in communion with other black selves, even as it distinguishes its capacities along lines of ability, interest, and desire. Black exists in relationship to other markers of identity, black and non-black, and the process of relationship determines possibilities of recognition that undergird its existence. In other words, black is not a thing, but rather, a gesture, an action, a sensibility made manifest. Thus, a black social self is literally a concept in motion, shifting and forming according to the terms of encounter that determine social relations" ("Improvising Social Exchange," 330).

71. DeFrantz, "Improvising Social Exchange," 330.

72. The following material comes from the Corpografías Archive (https://www.corpografias.com), where we feature a variety of artists and practitioners speaking about their embodied performance practices. In other words, they have already provided the language of the score through their own embodied wisdom. I have merely taken the liberty to reconfigure it discursively as a creative thought experiment. Elver Paz, from Guapi, offers this insight as he makes and tunes a marimba. The quotation is directly from him. Find the video of Elver speaking here: www.corpografias.com/guapi

73. "Cuerpo: Un conjunto de sentidos," Corpografías Archive, https://corpografias.com/cuerpo-un-conjunto-de-sentidos/

74. "Elver Paz," Corpografías Archive, https://corpografias.com/guapi/

75. Here I am imagining the movements necessary to do this with ease and without injury: *Leo Matiz: The Third Eye, Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera, Siquieros*, Westwood Gallery, https://www.westwoodgallery.com/exhibitions/retrospective-leo-matiz?pgid=jmjht323-6c0672c7-7d97-4d54-917b-6cbb2de584c2

76. "Tablas, elemento símbolico," Corpografías Archive, https://corpografias.com/tablas-un-elemento-simbolico-en-la-obra-tocando-la-marea/

77. "Tablas, elemento símbolico."

78. "Tablas, elemento símbolico."

79. José Luis Murillo quoted in "Rio Atrato," Corpografías Archive, https://corpografias.com/rio-atrato/

80. Fred Moten, Stefano Harney, and Stevphen Shukaitis, "Refusing Completion: A Conversation," *e-Flux Online Journal*, March 2021, https://www.e-flux.com/journal/116/379446/refusing-completion-a-conversation/

81. The Asociación Campesina Integral del Atrato was a grassroots organization that helped to write and include article 55 in the Asamblea Constituyente in 1991. This led to the inception of Ley 70 in 1993, which acknowledged the right to collective ownership of land by Afro-Colombians. On December 29, 1997, more than eight hundred thousand hectares were titled by 124 Black communities in the region. This idea of collective ownership of land influences how family and kin are understood in these communities, beyond genealogical ties to ties across and through landownership and stewardship. Again, this material comes from Quiceno Toro's excellent book *Vivir sabroso*. The ACIA, now known as COCOMACIA, continues the work for the defense of the right to territorial, social, and cultural autonomy in Chocó.

82. Quiceno Toro, *Vivir sabroso*, 58.

83. Important to note here is that when COCOMACIA appealed to the Colombian government for land titleship, it learned and received support from the Indigenous tribes who had engaged in this type of legislative work previously. Solidarity over landownership exists among the Afro and Indigenous populations in rural Colombia.

84. Quiceno Toro, *Vivir sabroso*, 64.

85. Quiceno Toro, *Vivir sabroso*, 32.

86. Ruiz-Serna, *When Forests Run Amok*, 47.

87. Ruiz-Serna, *When Forests Run Amok*, 60.

88. Ana Guglielmucci, "Necroscapes: The Political Life of Mutilated and Errant Bodies in the Rivers of Colombia," *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies* 29, no. 4 (2021): 555–80, https://doi.org/10.1080/13569325.2021.1885356

Chapter 2

1. Melissa Blanco Borelli and Olga Lucía Sorzano, "Performance Practices and the Conflict of Memory in Colombia: Working Towards a 'Decolonial' Digital Archive and Epistemological Justice," *Contemporary Theatre Review* 31, nos. 1–2 (2021): 172–90.

2. José Medina, *The Epistemology of Protest: Silencing, Epistemic Activism, and the Communicative Life of Resistance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2023), 239.

3. José Medina, *The Epistemology of Resistance: Gender and Racial Oppression, Epis-*

temic Injustice, and Resistant Imaginations (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); José Medina, "Epistemic Injustice and Epistemic Resistance," *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 55, no. S1 (2017): 15–38. Also see Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), from which Medina builds his ideas (and forms his critiques).

4. José Medina, "Complex Communication and Decolonial Struggles: The Forging of Deep Coalitions through Emotional Echoing and Resistant Imaginations," *Critical Philosophy of Race* 8, nos. 1–2 (2020): 212–36.

5. Mario Goldman, preface to Natalia Quiceno Toro, *Vivir sabroso: Luchas y movimientos afroatrateños en Bojayá, Chocó, Colombia* (Bogotá: Editorial de la Universidad del Rosario, 2016).

6. For more details about *la mala muerte* please see Daniel Ruiz-Serna, "La ecúmene de vivos y muertos: Mala muerte y reparaciones territoriales en el Bajo Atrato," *Revista Colombiana de Antropología* 56, no. 2 (2020): 21–50.

7. Quiceno Toro, *Vivir sabroso*, 171.

8. Quiceno Toro, *Vivir sabroso*, 168.

9. Quiceno Toro, *Vivir sabroso*, 166.

10. "Es el mismo desconocimiento que se hace del 'Chigualo' es vista como espectáculo cultural folklórico; esta práctica cultural de las comunidades negras tradicionales que tiene sus raíces en la esclavitud, en la cual se canta y se celebra la muerte de un niño. De acuerdo con los historiadores, durante esa etapa se celebraba el hecho de que el niño fuera salvado de una vida de opresión y negación, la muerte significaba literalmente 'pasar a mejor vida,' además de celebrar su condición de inocencia y de 'angelito' con un lugar seguro en el cielo. Así de la misma manera, también se juzga—a-históricamente—, cuando se califica como una 'atrocidad sin explicaciones' ese tipo de castigos, y se llega a conclusiones tales como que en las familias negras los castigos son mucho más graves que en otras familias" (It is the same ignorance that makes of the "chigualo" a folkloric cultural spectacle, this cultural practice of traditional Black communities that has its roots in slavery, in which the death of a child is sung and celebrated. According to historians, during this stage, the fact that the child was saved from a life of oppression and denial was celebrated; death literally meant "passing to a better life," in addition to celebrating his or her condition of innocence as a "little angel" with a safe place in heaven. In the same way, it is also judged—ahistorically—when such punishments are qualified as an "atrocity without explanations," and conclusions are reached such as that in Black families the punishments are much more severe than in other families) (Grueso, "Escenarios de colonialism," 149).

11. Tarja Väyrynen, *Corporeal Peacebuilding: Mundane Bodies and Temporal Transitions* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 3.

12. Väyrynen, *Corporeal Peacebuilding*, 1.

13. Sandra Milena Ríos Oyola and Thania Acarón Rios, "Peacebuilding and Dance in Afro-Colombian Funerary Ritual," in *Peacebuilding and the Arts: Rethinking Peace and Conflict Studies*, ed. Jolyon P. Mitchell et al. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 401.

14. Ríos Oyola and Acarón Rios, "Peacebuilding and Dance," 406.

15. "Wit(h)nessing" is a term developed by Israeli/French artist and psychoanalytic theorist Bracha Ettinger that implies being with someone else. Wit(h)ness does not

replace witness. Instead, the concept of the word expands beyond bearing witness to being with and beside. I delve further into this concept in chapter 4, where I analyze the effects and aftereffects of experiencing the *El Testigo* / *The Witness* exhibition in Bogotá in November 2018 and April 2019. Ettinger "expands the word's conceptual range from the legal and testimonial meaning of bearing witness to the crime against the other, to *being with*, but not assimilated to, and *to being beside* the other in a gesture that is much more than mere ethical solidarity there is risk; but there is also a sharing. Ettinger is proposing an aesthetic with missing: a means of *being with* and remembering for the other through the artistic act and through an aesthetic encounter art becomes a keeper of historical memory for the injured other by creating the site for a novel trans-subjective and trans historical process that is simultaneously witness and wit(h)ness." Griselda Pollock, "Aesthetic Wit(h)nessing in the Age of Trauma," EURAMERICA 40, no. 4 (December 2010), 831.

16. Sociologist Marta I. Domínguez and visual ethnographer María Fernanda Carrillo Sánchez.

17. Ríos Oyola and Acarón Ríos, "Peacebuilding and Dance," 404.

18. Ríos Oyola and Acarón Rios, "Peacebuilding and Dance," 402.

19. Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 30.

20. The 2019 *gualí* is not the first instance of this performance commemoration or reenactment. The first-year anniversary of the massacre in 2003 and other subsequent years and significant anniversaries (e.g., ten-year anniversary) have held *gualí* ceremonies for the communities.

21. Diana Taylor, *¡Presente! The Politics of Presence* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020), 187.

22. Unidad para las Víctimas (Victim's Unit, https://www.unidadvictimas.gov.co/) is a government agency responsible for supporting people who have been affected by the country's armed conflict. Its main tasks are helping victims access humanitarian assistance, providing reparations (both monetary and symbolic), and coordinating with other institutions to guarantee victims' rights to truth, justice, and nonrepetition. The agency also manages the official registry of victims (Registro Único de Víctimas) and works on programs that help victims rebuild their lives through psychological support, community strengthening, and economic initiatives. Overall, its work is crucial for Colombia's efforts at peacebuilding and transitional justice. La Oficina Colombia del Alto Comisionado de Naciones Unidas para los Derechos Humanos (Colombian Office of the UN High Commission for Human Rights, https://www.hchr.org.co/onu-ddhh-en-colombia/) works to promote and protect human rights throughout Colombia. It monitors the human rights situation, documents abuses, and provides technical support to the Colombian government, civil society, and victims. The office also makes recommendations to improve laws and policies, supports peace and transitional justice efforts, and helps strengthen protections for vulnerable groups like Indigenous communities, Afro-Colombians, and human rights defenders. Its presence is considered key for international oversight and support in Colombia's human rights challenges. The Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (Center for Historical Memory, https://centrodememoriahistorica.gov.co/) is a national public establishment, attached to the Department for Social Prosperity, whose purpose is the reception, recovery, preservation, compilation,

and analysis of all documentary material, oral testimonies, and evidence obtained by any other means related to the violations that occurred during the Colombian internal armed conflict, through research, museums, and educational activities, among others, that contribute to establishing and clarifying the causes of such phenomena, learning the truth, and avoiding their repetition in the future (my translation from its website). El Instituto de Medicina Legal (Institute of Legal Medicine) provides services in forensic medicine and forensic sciences to the administration of justice in Colombia. https://www.medicinalegal.gov.co/

23. Emphasis added.

24. Väyrynen, *Corporeal Peacebuilding*, 29.

25. Quiceno Toro, *Vivir sabroso*, 161.

26. Quiceno Toro, *Vivir sabroso*, 238.

27. As Cindy Gúzman, one of the student researchers for the grant project Embodied Performance Practices, narrates in her MA thesis, "Desde los años 80 la Pastoral Social de la Diócesis de Quibdó ha liderado la creación de grupos juveniles, comunicades eclesiales de Base (CEBs) y acciones de acompañamiento a las comunidades afrodescendientes, índigenas y mestizas de la cuenca del río Atrato. Como parte de este trabajo, la Diócesis impulsa en 2002 el proceso de teatro pedagogía vinculado a Inge Kleutgens, una mujer alemana que había implementado metodologías de creación teatral colectiva con víctimas en diversos países del África" (Since the 1980s, the Social Pastoral of the Diocese of Quibdó has led the creation of youth groups, Base Ecclesial Communities [CEBs], and actions to accompany the Afro-descendant, Indigenous, and mestizo communities of the Atrato River basin. As part of this work, the diocese promoted in 2002 the process of theater pedagogy linked to Inge Kleutgens, a German woman who had implemented methodologies of collective theater creation with victims in various African countries). Cindy Gúzman, "Teatro para navegar el Atrato: Archivo y memoria (2002–2019)" (MA thesis, Universidad de Antioquia, 2022). For more details about the role of theater in the Atrato region please consult the Corpografías Archive, especially *Ese Atrato que juega teatro I* and *II*; Sandra Milena Ríos Oyola, *Religion, Social Memory and Conflict: The Massacre at Bojayá* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Lisa Jackson-Schebetta, "Forms of Truth: *Testimonio* and Democracy in the Theatrical Lives of Bojayá," *Theatre Journal* 70, no. 4 (2018): 499–517; Barnaby King, "Acts of Violence: Theatre of Resistance and Relief in the Colombian War Zone," *TDR: The Drama Review* 52, no. 1 (2008): 88–109. We also explain in Corpografías that "in 1995, a dance and theater group emerged in Bellavista, Bojayá, with the support of Father Jorge Luis Mazo, who, together with one of the Augustinian missionaries, encouraged the participation of young people in youth groups in order to strengthen their sense of territorial belonging and their relationships among peers, at a time when the armed groups were beginning to have a strong presence in the region. With the assassination of Father Jorge Luiz Mazo by paramilitaries on November 18, 1999, the group pays homage to him by taking his name: Grupo de Danza y Teatro Jorge Luis Mazo [Jorge Luis Mazo Dance and Theater Group]. This group participated, between 2000 and 2005, in the cultural encounters supported by the Claretian missionaries and the Diocese of Quibdó, held in various municipalities along the Atrato River." See "Colectivo Teatral de Bojayá," Corpografías, https://corpografias.com/colectivo-teatral-bellavista

28. Inge Kleutgens was invited by the Diocese of Quibdó to engage with communi-

ties, given her experience doing theater as a healing practice. In her extensive interview with one of our grant project team investigators, she shared many personal details about her collaborations with Afro-Colombians during the period she worked in small villages up and down the Atrato River, teaching and making community theater.

29. Ríos Oyola, *Religion*, and Jackson-Schebatta, "Forms of Truth," do excellent work addressing the details of the performance and its significance theatrically and socially.

30. Quiceno Toro, *Vivir sabroso*, 183.

31. "Colectivo Teatral de Bojayá," Corpografías.

32. Arturo Escobar, Michal Osterweil, and Kriti Sharma, *Relationality: An Emergent Politics of Life Beyond the Human* (London: Bloomsbury, 2024), 165.

33. "Bojayá," Corpografías Archive, https://corpografias.com/bojaya/

34. "Bojayá," Corpografías Archive.

35. Quiceno Toro, *Vivir sabroso*, 238.

36. Quiceno Toro, *Vivir sabroso*, 234.

37. Veena Das, *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 77.

38. Emphasis added. María Mercedes Jaramillo, "Colombian Theatre," in *Colombian Theatre in the Vortex*, ed. Judith A. Weiss (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2004), 24–25.

39. Paola S. Hernández, *Staging Lives in Latin American Theatre: Bodies Objects Archives* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2021), 2.

40. Hernández, *Staging Lives*, 2.

41. Hernández, *Staging Lives*, 3.

42. Hernández, *Staging Lives*, 4.

43. Olga Lucía Sorzano, "Colombia's Cultural Explosion: Vivir Sabroso and Ollas Comunitarias as Pedagogies of Solidarity," *Educational Studies* 58, nos. 5–6 (2022): 663.

44. Hernández, *Staging Lives*, xx.

45. José Luis, excerpt from *Honrar a los Sagrados Espíritus*.

46. Emphasis added.

47. Taylor, *¡Presente!*, 188.

48. "People," Proceso de Comunidades Negras (Association for Progressive Communications), https://www.apc.org/en/users/proceso-de-comunidades-negras#:~ (accessed July 11, 2023).

49. Libia Grueso, "Escenarios de colonialismo y (de) colonialidad en la construcción del Ser Negro: Apuntes sobre las relaciones de género en comunidades negras del Pacífico colombiano," *Comentario Internacional: Revista del Centro Andino de Estudios Internacionales*, no. 7 (2005–6): 145.

50. Minga por la Memoria consists of the following organizations: Fundación Espacios de Convivencia y Desarrollo Social (Fundescodes), Servicio Jesuita de Refugiados, Proceso de Comunidades Negras, Centro de Pastoral Afrocolombiana, Comité del Agua por la Vida y Salvación de Buenaventura, Madres por la Vida, Palafitos, Capilla por la Memoria, Prodes, Parroquia San Francisco, Diócesis de Buenaventura, Pastoral Social, Comisión de Vida, Justicia, Solidaridad y Paz de la Diócesis, Transformando Mentes, Rostros y Huellas y Red Mariposas de Alas Nuevas Construyendo Futuro. "Mingas en el territorio," Corpografías, https://corpografias.com/minga-por-la-paz/ (accessed July 17, 2023).

51. Quiceno Toro, *Vivir sabroso*, 80.

52. "Mingas en el territorio," Corpografías.

53. Johanna del Pilar Cortes-Nieto, "Securing the Port Against the Black Poor in Buenaventura, Colombia," *City* 26, nos. 5–6 (2022): 1046.

54. Cortes-Nieto, "Securing the Port," 1047.

55. André Lepecki, "Choreopolice and Choreopolitics: or, The Task of the Dancer," *TDR: The Drama Review* 57, no. 4 (2013): 13–27.

56. Marcela Fuentes, *Performance Constellations: Networks of Protest and Activism in Latin America* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2019), 2.

57. Sorzano examines the national strike of April 28, 2021 (i.e., 28A), which protested against tax reform announced in the middle of the pandemic. She explains, "It was the largest social and political mobilization seen in Colombia, lasting over three months, and covering 75% of the country. Afro, Indigenous peoples, artists, LGBT activists, peasants, students, women, workers, and many other parties came together to protest Ivan Duque's government" ("Colombia's Cultural Explosion," 657). The majority of the protesters were from the informal economies of Colombia.

58. Sorzano, "Colombia's Cultural Explosion," 660.

59. Cortes-Nieto, "Securing the Port," 1048.

60. Enrique Patiño, *¡Carajo! Una narración de las movilizaciones sociales paros cívicos: Chocó y Buenaventura 2017* (Bogotá: Corporación Manos Visibles), 37.

61. *Guasá*, *cununo*, and marimba are three different musical instruments from the Pacific region of Colombia and northern Ecuador. The *guasá* is a wooden cylindrical instrument filled with seeds to create a sonorous rustling effect; the *cununo* is a thin drum, and the marimba is like a xylophone but with a lower tone. It features multiple wooden bars that you strike with mallets to create melodies. For more details on the history and the sociocultural significance of these instruments see Birenbaum Quintero, *Rites, Rights, and Rhythms: A Genealogy of Musical Meaning in Colombia's Black Pacific* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

62. The *currulao* is a music and dance complex in 6/8 time from the Colombian southern Pacific region. For information on its musical history, context, and politics please see Birenbaum Quintero's book-length study of *currulao* music *Rites, Rights, and Rhythm* (2018).

63. The lyrics of "Mi Buenaventura":

Bello puerto del mar, mi Buenaventura
Donde se aspira siempre la brisa pura
Bello puerto del mar, mi Buenaventura
Donde se aspira siempre la brisa pura
Bello puerto precioso circundado por el mar
Bello puerto precioso circundado por el mar
Sus mañanas son tan bellas
Y puras como el cristal
Sus mañanas son tan bellas
Y puras como el cristal
Siempre que siento penas, bello poblado
Miro tu lindo cielo y quedo aliviado
Siempre que siento penas, bello poblado

Miro tu lindo cielo y quedo aliviado
Las olas centelleantes vienen y te besan
Las olas centelleantes vienen y te besan
Y con un suave rumor vuelven y se alejan
Y con un suave rumor vuelven y se alejan
Lo mismo que por tus calles
Vi una morena pasar y una porteña querida
Cual otra no he de encontrar
Que en mis noches de tristeza
Mi pena me ha de aliviar
Mientras la luna está aseada
Nos alumbraba al pasar
Mientras la luna está aseada
Nos alumbraba al pasar
Las olas centelleantes vienen y te besan
Las olas centelleantes vienen y te besan
Y con un suave rumor vuelven y se alejan
Y con un suave rumor vuelven y se alejan

64. Patiño, *¡Carajo!*, 25.

65. Ulrich Oslender, *The Geographies of Social Movements: Afro-Colombian Mobilization and the Aquatic Space* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 47.

66. Jaime Arocha Rodríguez quoted in Oslender, *Geographies of Social Movements*, 49.

67. Antonio Benitez Rojo, *The Repeating Island* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992).

68. The ESMAD (Escuadrón Móvil Antidisturbios) is the anti-disturbance arm of the Colombian police force, known for extreme violence against protesters during strikes or other civilian acts of civil disobedience. In Buenaventura, there were clashes in malls with damages to property and injuries to civilians caused by ESMAD. More recently, ESMAD was called to help "control" the 2021 protests, where, again, extreme violence on its part occurred.

69. Patiño, *¡Carajo!*, 40.

70. Patiño, *¡Carajo!*, 37.

71. "Buenaventura: Un puerto sin comunidad," Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, https://www.centrodememoriahistorica.gov.co/micrositios/buenaventura/ (accessed July 17, 2023).

72. *Falsos positivos*, or false positives, were the 6,402 civilians (mostly poor young men) kidnapped and murdered by the army from 2002 to 2008. The military (and government) claimed that they were FARC guerrillas to justify their murder and prove to other governments (namely the United States, which was funding the "war against drugs") that their economic support and weapons were helping to ease the Colombian civil war.

73. *Casas de pique* are makeshift slaughterhouses for the disappeared where they are tortured and dismembered. Their remains are strewn throughout the territory, in rivers, swamps, or the jungle.

74. For more details on these processes as part of the grant project Embodied Performance Practices please refer to www.corpografias.com

75. Cortes-Nieto, "Securing the Port."

76. Susan Leigh Foster, "Choreographies of Protest," *Theatre Journal* 55, no. 3 (2003): 393.

77. Julius Fleming, *Black Patience: Performance, Civil Rights, and the Unfinished Project of Emancipation* (New York: New York University Press, 2022), 28.

78. Arturo Escobar, *Pluriversal Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020), xxxvi.

79. Willy García, Afro-Colombian salsa singer from the world-renowned Colombian salsa band El Grupo Niche; Freddy Rincón, Afro-Colombian football (soccer) midfielder originally from Buenaventura who died from injuries after a car crash in 2022; Junior Jein, rapper and Black rights activist from Buenaventura who was assassinated in 2021, one of the growing number of activists killed with impunity.

80. Rebecca Schneider, "That the Past May Yet Have Another Future: Gesture in the Times of Hands Up," *Theatre Journal* 70, no. 3 (2018): 285–306; Anusha Kedhar "Hands Up, Don't Shoot!," *Feminist Wire*, October 6, 2014, https://thefeministwire.com/2014/10/protest-in-ferguson/; Lepecki, "Choreopolice and Choreopolitics"; Foster, "Choreographies of Protest"; "The Popular as the Political," ed. Melissa Blanco Borelli and Anamaria Tamayo Duque, special issue, *Conversations Across the Field of Dance Studies* 38 (2018); "Talking Black Dance / Inside Out Outside In," ed. Thomas F. DeFrantz and Takiyah Nur Amin, special issue, *Conversations Across the Field of Dance Studies* 36 (2016), https://journals.publishing.umich.edu/conversations/issues/

81. Foster, "Choreographies of Protest," 396.

82. Lepecki, "Choreopolice and Choreopolitics," 27.

83. Raquel Gutierrez Aguilar, *Los ritmos del Pachakuti: Movilización y levantamiento indígena-popular en Bolivia (2000–2005)* (Buenos Aires: Tinta Limón, 2008). Quoted in Escobar, *Pluriversal Politics*.

84. Escobar, *Pluriversal Politics*, 121.

85. Alcaldía de Buenaventura, 2017.

86. Johanna del Pilar Cortes-Nieto (2022) "Securing the port against the Black poor in Buenaventura, Colombia," City, 26:5-6, 1045-1062, DOI:10.1080/13604813.2022.2126222

87. Cortes-Nieto, "Securing the Port," 1058.

88. Das, *Life and Words*, 5.

89. Das, *Life and Words*, 7.

90. Marilyn Machado-Mosquera, "Re-existencias de comunidades negras del Norte del Cauca-Colombia por la permanencia en el territorio, y haciéndole frente al extractivismo minero," *Gestión y Ambiente* 24 (supl. 1), 225–47, 2021, 235.

91. Escobar, *Pluriversal Politics*, 129.

92. Quiceno Toro, *Vivir sabroso*, 4.

93. Colombian Constitution, Article 21 Sentence T-088/08, at 3.5.5, trans. Sandra Milena Ríos Oyola, "Uses of the and the Dignification of Victims in Transitional Justice in Colombia," *European Review of International Studies* 9, no. 1 (2022): 34.

94. Sandra Milena Ríos Oyola and Thania Acarón Rios, "Uses of the Concept of Human Dignity and the Dignification of Victims in Transitional Justice in Colombia," *European Review of International Studies* 9, no. 1 (2022): 43.

95. fahima ife, *Maroon Choreography* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021), 90.

Chapter 3

1. Sankofadanzafro, Instagram, April 23, 2024.

2. Sankofa's corporeal aesthetic seamlessly moves between Palacios's movement vocabularies, which come from his training in African contemporary dance, and the Black diasporic popular dance that Sankofa's dancers embody with great skill: hip-hop, krumping, *champeta*, *currulao*, *sabar*, reggaeton, and *gwara*. Part of the excitement in watching their productions is testing one's ability to identify the movements if one has the diasporic literacy to do so.

3. Rafael Palacios, program notes to *La Ciudad de los Otros*, Joyce Theatre, New York City, October 2018.

4. fahima ife, *Maroon Choreography* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021), x.

5. There exists considerable displacement of Colombian Indigenous peoples, and while they may share aspects of Afro-Colombian displacement given the armed conflict, theirs is a much longer and fraught history with the state. This matter is adjacent to the scope of this chapter, but I address indigeneity in Colombia, particularly the Gunadule peoples, in chapter 4.

6. In May 2021 as I was writing the first draft of this chapter (which became an article in *Theatre History Studies*), Colombia was engaged in a nationwide strike where a great majority of students, unions, and Indigenous leaders were protesting the continued social inequality, lack of access to education, lack of health-care reform, and the current right-wing government's delay in implementing the peace accords (2016). The underlying causes of unrest and dissatisfaction stem from the state's continued neglect of the poor, working-class, African, and Indigenous populations in deference to the neoliberal narrative of "economic progress." Similar to *La Violencia* in 1948, the country is divided by liberal and conservative views. Protesters and activists are being killed with impunity by the government-sanctioned police (ESMAD), while nothing significant is being done by the Duque government to address the demands for social justice and security.

7. Palacios, program notes for *La Ciudad de los Otros*.

8. Dance theater is often defined as part of the Euro-American tradition of dance on a proscenium stage that contains narrative elements. Dance theater tends to be associated with the work of Pina Bausch stemming from Mary Wigman and the German *Ausdruckstanz* tradition, but I emphasize that Palacios and Sankofa are part of that genealogy albeit through his association with Germaine Acogny (and her own experiences in Europe, especially with Maurice Béjart). They use narrative elements to

elaborate choreographic structures based on his dance training in France, Senegal, and Burkina Faso and Sankofa's dancers' training in Afro-Colombian and other African diasporic popular dance forms. That narratives emerge from their choreographies allows their "dance theater" to be in conversation with the modernist histories of dance theater globally.

9. Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 9.

10. Saidiya Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2019), 148.

11. VèVè Clark, "Developing Diasporic Literacy: Allusion in Maryse Condé's Hérémakhonon," in *Out of the Kumbla: Caribbean Women and Literature*, ed. Carol Boyce Davies and Elaine Savory Fido (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1990), 308–9.

12. Katharine McKittrick, *Dear Science and Other Stories* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021), 6.

13. Spidering as a Black diasporic strategy stems from Nadine George-Graves, "Diasporic Spidering: Constructing Contemporary Black Identities," in *Black Performance Theory*, ed. Thomas DeFrantz and Anita González (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014).

14. Emphasis added. Tiffany Ruby Patterson and Robin D. G. Kelley, "Unfinished Migrations: Reflections on the African Diaspora and the Making of the Modern World," *African Studies Review* 43, no. 1 (2000): 20.

15. Samantha Pinto, *Difficult Diasporas: The Transnational Feminist Aesthetic of the Black Atlantic* (New York: New York University Press, 2013), x.

16. James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translations in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 249–50.

17. Katherine McKittrick, "On Plantations, Prisons, and a Black Sense of Place," *Social & Cultural Geography* 12, no. 8 (2011): 947–63.

18. Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* and Stefano Harney's "Hapticality in the Undercommons," in T*he Routledge Companion to Art and Politics*, ed. Randy Martin (London: Routledge, 2015), are the sources for the terms "rhythm of work" and "militant arrhythmias." I find these ideas helpful in thinking about the work of a Black undercommons and its recalcitrance in broad daylight against the logics of white supremacy and racialized capitalism.

19. Palacios shared with me that some Colombians did not care for *La Ciudad* because they did not understand what the dancing was. In other words, they were expecting to see folkloric or pat performances of stereotypical (Black) Colombian dances such as *cumbia* or *mapalé*. The dancing and the overall theme or choreographies did not seem particularly "Colombian" to them.

20. Catherine Walsh and Walter Mignolo, eds., *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), xx.

21. Sankofa Danzafro, "#SankofaMiUniversidad," Instagram photo, April 28, 2021, https://www.instagram.com/sankofadanzafro

22. Sankofa's most recent piece, *Detrás del Sur: Danzas para Manuel*, is based on Afro-Colombian writer and philosopher Manuel Zapata Olivella's book *Chango, el gran putas* and debuted on May 26, 2021, at the Teatro Mayor, Bogotá.

23. In late November 2018, I saw a rehearsal in Quibdó and a subsequent perfor-

mance in Bogotá. In June 2019, at one of his *talleres* (workshops), I was invited to present on Black performance theory from a North American perspective and to engage in task-based choreography and devise work with them.

24. Emphasis added. Sylvia Wynter, "1492: A New World View," in *Race, Discourse, and the Origin of the Americas: A New World View*, ed. Vera Lawrence and Rex Nettleford (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), 5–57, quoted in McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, 127.

25. Emphasis added. Denise Ferreira da Silva, "Toward a Black Feminist Poethics: The Quest(ion) of Blackness Toward the End of the World," *Black Scholar* 44, no. 2 (2014): 81.

26. Juan García Salazar and Catherine Walsh, "Memoria colectiva, escritura y Estado: Prácticas pedagógicas de existencia afroecuatoriana," *Cuadernos de Literature* 19, no. 38 (2015): 43.

27. García Salazar and Walsh, "Memoria colectiva," 43.

28. The phrase "to dismantle the master's house" comes from the work of Black feminist intellectual Audre Lorde in "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (1984; Berkeley, CA: Crossing, 2007), 110–14.

29. The Truth Commission in Colombia prefers to use this term rather than the term "reconciliation" to address how to handle interethnic and interpersonal relationships among its citizens after the armed conflict and peace accords. There is a major dilemma in the government as reframes the narrative about who were the "real" victims of the conflict. The term is quite contested, and transitional justice work provides ways to think through concepts of reconciliation and coexistence. I write about what *convivencia* may look like in a small town in Colombia. See Melissa Blanco Borelli, "Community, Coloniality, and Convivencia in the Festival de Danza de Santa María la Antigua del Darién, Colombia," in *Performance, Dance and Political Economy: Bodies at the End of the World*, ed. Anita González and Katerina Paramana (London: Bloomsbury, 2021).

30. Elsie Management, *Furia: Danza colombiana en la escena*, a coproduction between the Ministry of Culture of Colombia and Señal Colombia, uploaded 2017, Vimeo, https://vimeo.com/234036075 (accessed March 23, 2025).

31. Elsie Management, *Furia*.

32. Sankofa was in residence at Northwestern January–March 2025. The troupe staged an abridged and adapted version of *La Ciudad de los Otros* with students for our annual dance concert, Danceworks 2025. During one rehearsal, Palacios told the student interpreters that this piece was a protest and that they had to bring high levels of energy and anger to their solos.

33. I want to thank Maya J. Berry for suggesting this book to me at the Collegium for African Diaspora Dance in February 2020.

34. Tianna S. Paschel, *Becoming Black Political Subjects: Movements and Ethno-Racial Rights in Colombia and Brazil* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), 29.

35. Palacios, program notes for *La Ciudad de los Otros*.

36. I would like to thank Leticia Ridley for sharing this observation with me while she was a graduate student attending my job talk at the University of Maryland's Department of Theatre, Dance, and Performance Studies in November 2018.

37. I want to thank Jacqueline Shea Murphy for her company and for the discussion we had after we saw this piece together at the Joyce Theatre, October 19, 2018, in New York City.

38. ife, *Maroon Choreography*, x.

39. This is the conceptual intervention in the work of cultural geographer Katharine McKittrick.

40. Lauren Berlant, "Citizenship," in *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*, ed. Bruce Bergette and Glenn Hennler (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 38.

41. Berlant, "Citizenship," 37.

42. Andrew Schapp, *Political Reconciliation* (London: Routledge, 2005), 21.

43. Schapp, *Political Reconciliation*, 15.

44. Elsie Management, *Furia*.

45. D'onminique Ndosi Mapula Riley, Review: Danceworks 2025 presents "Signal::Transfer" at Northwestern University, https://seechicagodance.com/review/review-danceworks-2025-presents-signaltransfer-at-northwestern-university-48319 (accessed March 21, 2025).

46. Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments*, 148.

47. They want only a free path. Lyrics from the song "Remolinos," written by Alcídes Díaz and featured in *La Ciudad de los Otros*.

48. "¿Cuál es el origen del mapalé?," https://www.eltiempo.com/colombia/barranquilla/cual-es-el-origen-del-mapale-329182 (accessed November 18, 2021).

49. Manuel Zapata Olivella, *Las claves mágicas de América*, 2nd ed. (Bogotá: Plaza & Janés, 1989), 96.

50. Rafael Palacios, program notes, Joyce Theatre, New York City, February 2022.

51. Emphasis added. Robin Bernstein, "Dances with Things: Material Culture and the performance of Race," *Social Text* 27, no. 4 (2009): 69.

52. Bernstein, "Dances with Things," 70.

53. Bernstein, "Dances with Things," 68.

54. Emphasis added. Bernstein, "Dances with Things," 69.

55. Rafael Palacios, program notes to *La Mentira Complaciente*, Joyce Theatre, New York City, 2023.

56. Bernstein, "Dances with Things," 73.

57. Black thought in action comes from ideas dialogued and developed in the Black Performance Theory consortium biannual meetings.

58. Mlondolozi Zondi, "Venus and the (R)uses of Power: Nelisiwe Xaba's *They Look at Me and That's All They Think*," *TDR: The Drama Review* 64, no. 2 (2020): 19.

59. Zondi, "Venus," 19.

60. I saw *La Mentira Complaciente* twice at the Joyce Theatre in New York City, February 2022. At the talkback, an audience member stated that they did not understand Spanish but wondered if indeed the auction was an auction. Palacios elaborated on the rationale for using the auction and the choice to not translate the text.

61. A Mandinka maroon who escaped enslavement in seventeenth-century Colombia and is credited with starting the first free Black Palenque (maroon enclave) in Latin America, San Basilio del Palenque.

62. The first king of Haiti after declaring independence from France.

63. Although not of Black origins, Simón Bolivar is recognized as the liberator of

Latin America from Spain: Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Panama, Bolivia, and his native Venezuela.

64. Mexican Catholic priest, statesman, and military leader who led the Mexican War of Independence movement.

65. Julius Fleming's first line in *Black Patience: Performance, Civil Rights, and the Unfinished Project of Emancipation* (New York: New York University Press, 2022) summarizes Blackness as such: "The history of blackness is at once a violent history of waiting and a radical refusal to wait" (1).

66. Fleming, *Black Patience*.

67. Patterson and Kelley, "Unfinished Migrations," 20.

68. Charmian Wells, "'Harlem Knows': Eleo Pomare's Choreographic Theory of Vitality and Diaspora Citation in Blues for the Jungle," *Dance Research Journal* 52, no. 3 (2020): 5.

69. Wells, "Harlem Knows," 5.

70. Maya J. Berry, "Black Feminist Rumba Pedagogies," *Dance Research Journal* 53, no. 2 (2021): 29.

71. Priya Srinivasan, "A 'Material'ist Reading of the Bharata Natyam Dancing Body: The Possibility of the 'Unruly Spectator,'" in *Worlding Dance*, ed. Susan Leigh Foster (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 55.

72. Edward Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 39.

73. S. Sandoval cited in William Mina, *Manual Zapata Olivella: Un legado intercultural. Perspectiva intellectual, literaria y política de un afrocolombiano cosmopolíta* (Bogotá: Ediciones Desde Abajo, 2016), 337.

74. Ella Shohat, *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 79.

75. "Going, coming, shuttling, circling" comes from dance scholar SanSan Kwan's description of the diasporic condition among Chinese in *Kinesthetic City: Dance and Movement in Chinese Urban Spaces* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 3. Layla Zami refers to it in her theorization about diaspora and her concept PerforMemory in her *Contemporary PerforMemory: Dancing Through Spacetime, Historical Trauma, and Diaspora in the 21st Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020), 108.

76. Wells, "Harlem Knows," 5.

77. Shana L. Redmond, "Diaspora," in *Keywords for African American Studies*, ed. Erica R. Edwards et al. (New York: New York University Press, 2018), n.p., https://keywords.nyupress.org/african-american-studies/essay/diaspora/

78. Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 15.

79. ife, *Maroon Choreography*, x.

80. This aesthetic descriptor comes from Robert Farris Thompson's ideas about "the aesthetics of cool," which were then taken up by dance scholar Brenda Dixon Gottschild, who expanded them to articulate how to read a Black dancing body in motion. Robert Farris Thompson, *Aesthetic of the Cool: Afro-Atlantic Art and Music* (Pittsburgh: Periscope, 2011); Brenda Dixon Gottschild, *Digging the Africanist Presence in American Performance: Dance and Other Contexts* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996).

81. I want to thank my colleague in performance studies Dotun Ayobade, who

watched "Unction" with me one afternoon (May 20, 2024) during our virtual writing sessions and offered generous commentary on what he noticed. It helped me corroborate what I had been feeling yet struggling to articulate in written language.

82. Thompson, *Aesthetic of the Cool*, and Gottschild, *Digging the Africanist Presence*.

83. Zami, *Contemporary PerforMemory*, 40. She cites the work of Indigenous scholar Leanne Simpson in *As We Have Always Done* in helping her think about the use of repetition as a rhetorical strategy in her own academic writing.

84. José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 74.

Chapter 4

1. Emphasis added. Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (New York: Zone Books, 1998), 158. I want to thank Eike Wittrock for bringing this book and quotation to my attention while we were watching Arkadi Zaides's compelling piece *Archive* at the HAU in Berlin in November 2017.

2. Melissa Blanco Borelli, Bryce Lease, and Royona Mitra, "Introduction: Outing Archives, Archives Outing," *Contemporary Theatre Review* 31, nos. 1–2 (2021): 4–13. Our special issue was honored by the UK's Theatre and Performance Research Association's award for best edited collection in 2022. Thank you to Rachel Hann and Arabella Stanger for nominating us.

3. Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 29.

4. Paola S. Hernández, *Staging Lives in Latin American Theatre: Bodies Objects Archives* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2021), 9.

5. Katherine McKittrick, *Dear Science and Other Stories* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020), 5.

6. Anne Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 7.

7. Agamben is specifically addressing the Holocaust witness and the figure he arrives at is the *Muselmann*—a camp inmate reduced to a state beyond recognition or voice.

8. Stuart Hall, *Selected Writings on Visual Arts and Culture*, ed. Gilane Tawadros (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2024), 266.

9. Hall, *Selected Writings*, 261.

10. Allan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," *October* 39 (1986): 57, https://doi.org/10.2307/778312

11. Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain*, 47.

12. D. Soyini Madison, "Co-Performative Witnessing," *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 6 (2007): 826–31, https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380701478174

13. Griselda Pollock, "Aesthetic Wit(h)nessing in the Age of Trauma" *Euramerica* 40, no. 4 (2010): 831.

14. Pollock, "Aesthetic Wit(h)nessing," 831.

15. Louise Boscacci, "Wit(h)nessing," *Environmental Humanities* 10, no. 1 (May 2018): 343–47, https://doi.org/10.1215/22011919-4385617

16. María del Rosario Acosta López, "Grammars of Listening: or On the Difficulty of Rendering Trauma Audible," *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 93 (2023): 153–70, https://doi.org/10.1017/S1358246123000048

17. Jesús Abad Colorado, *El Testigo: Memorias del conflicto armado colombiano en el lente y la voz de Jesús Abad Colorado*, ed. María Belén Sáez de Ibarra, vol. 1 (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2022), Room 1, 19.

18. Emphasis added. Abad Colorado, *El Testigo*, 20–21.

19. Abad Colorado, *El Testigo*, 21.

20. Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2003), 6.

21. Sontag, *Regarding the Pain*, 8.

22. Sontag, *Regarding the Pain*, 119.

23. Jane Blocker, *Seeing Witness: Visuality and the Ethics of Testimony* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 51. Blocker addresses how journalist Philip Gourevitch felt upon witnessing the remains of massacred Tutsis at the church at Nyarubuye: that he was looking at pictures of the dead, not the dead themselves. She goes on to examine the "troublesome role of photographs in acts of witness" because the witness cannot fathom the horror at which they are looking and must imagine it: "He must engage in imagining *even as* the material facts of atrocity are present to him, *even as* he is in fact seeing them" (51). The role of imagination in encountering violence through the discursive formation of the photograph helps me think through how imagination of generative affect might operate. By generative affect, in this case, I imagine working toward citizens feeling something together about political change and shifts in discourse post-conflict.

24. Blocker, *Seeing Witness*, 60.

25. Blocker, *Seeing Witness*, 60.

26. Ariella Azoulay, *Civil Imagination: A Political Ontology of Photography* (New York: Verso Books, 2012), 1.

27. Azoulay, *Civil Imagination*, 1.

28. Azoulay, *Civil Imagination*, 2.

29. Azoulay, *Civil Imagination*, 2.

30. Azoulay, *Civil Imagination*, 5.

31. Elkin Rubiano, "De la conmoción a la empatía: El lugar de las víctimas en el arte colombiano," *Revista Letras* 22 (2019): 261–84.

32. Ruben Dario Yepez Muñoz, *Afectando el conflicto: Mediaciones de la guerra colombiana en el arte y en el cine contemporáneo* (Bogotá: Instituto Distrital de las Artes, 2018).

33. Juanita Bernal Benavides, "Jesús Abad Colorado's Epidemic Photography: Regarding the Paramilitary Siege on Memory," *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies* 31, no. 2 (2022): 187.

34. Benavides, "Abad Colorado's Epidemic Photography," 189.

35. Azoulay, *Civil Imagination*, 220.

36. Sekula, "The Body and the Archive."

37. Jay Prosser, introduction to *Picturing Atrocity: Photography in Crisis*, ed. Geoffrey Batchen et al. (London: Reaktion Books, 2012), 12.

38. Kara Blackmore, "Scale and Silence: Visual Arts and Symbolic Repair in Colombia and Kenya," *Wasafiri* 35, no. 4 (2020): 54–64, https://doi.org/10.1080/02690055.2020.1800252

39. *Buen vivir* is the Spanish translation of the Andean Quechua term *sumak kawsay*, which means to live harmoniously with plants, animals, humans, and other-than-humans. It aligns philosophically with the concept of *vivir sabroso*, but they must be kept separate to honor their cultural specificities for those who practice, materialize, and define these terms in their everyday living practices.

40. *Maggilagunddiwala* is the Dule word for Arquía, the *resguardo*/reservation where the Colombian Gunadule people live. This is near the town of Unguía in northern Antioquia/Urabá Colombia. The name literally means river that runs to the right, which is how the river was said to flow per the elders in the community. Gunadule people also live in Panama, where they are known as the Kuna people. They primarily live within the Darién gap and the San Blas islands of Panama.

41. "Mugan Boe," Corpografías Archive, https://Corpografías.com/muganboe/ (accessed June 11, 2024).

42. Chloe Sayer, "Molas: Textile Art of the Kunas of Panama," *Selvedge*, n.d., 76–79.

43. "Molas y Winis," Corpografías Archive, https://Corpografías.com/molas-y-winis/ (accessed June 12, 2024).

44. Annabelle Honess Roe, *Animated Documentary* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 4.

45. Honess Roe, *Animated Documentary*, 14.

46. Dance scholar Jacqueline Shea Murphy articulates this idea in *The People Have Never Stopped Dancing* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), which traces North American Indigenous dance and its relationships to American modern dance. Despite erasures and appropriations of North American Indigenous cultural practices within American modern dance, Shea Murphy looks to how Indigenous people maintained and continue to innovate their embodied performance practices.

47. María Regina Firmino-Castillo, "Dancing the Pluriverse: Indigenous Performance as Ontological Praxis," *Dance Research Journal* 48, no. 1 (2016): 55–73. While Firmino-Castillo grounds her research among the Guatemalan Ixil, Kaqchikel, and K'iche'Maya, I find her conceptualization of Indigenous ways of knowing useful for some hemispheric alignment, not to erase difference, but to establish relationality across Indigenous specificities in colonized Central and South American Indigenous tribes.

48. Firmino-Castillo, "Dancing the Pluriverse," 54.

49. *Civilización de los Indios Tules*, 1871, https://catalogoenlinea.bibliotecanacional.gov.co/client/es_ES/search/asset/79149/0 (accessed June 13, 2024).

50. "Territorio Gunadule," Corpografías Archive, https://Corpografías.com/territorio-gunadule/ (accessed June 13, 2024). The majority of Corpografías material about Gunadule people comes from the work of Dr. Abadio Green Stocel, whom we cite and reference often. His doctoral dissertation was linked to our archive as a significant resource by and about Gunadule. See Abadio Green Stocel, "Significados de vida: Espejo de nuestra memoria en defensa de la madre tierra" (PhD dissertation, Universidad de Antioquia, 2011), https://bibliotecadigital.udea.edu.co/bitstream/10495/6935/1/AbadioGreen_2011_MadreTierra.pdf

51. Firmino-Castillo, "Dancing the Pluriverse," 67.

52. As was explained to us for inclusion in our Corpografías Archive.

53. "Galu: Lugares sagrados," https://Corpografias.com/galu-lugares-sagrados/ (accessed June 14, 2024).

54. *Galu Dugbis* can be streamed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e8XxKmvOtJU (accessed June 14, 2024).

55. "Homepage," *El Buen Vivir*, https://elbuenvivir.co/index.php/en/ (accessed June 14, 2024).

56. Eduardo Gudynas, "Buen Vivir: Today's Tomorrow," *Development* 54 (2011): 441–47, https://doi.org/10.1057/dev.2011.86

57. Mónica Mojica and Brenda Farnell, *Chocolate Woman Dreams the Milky Way* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2023).

58. Sue Patricia Haglund, "Dule Poli-Aesthetic Movement: Molas, Boxing, and Poetry" (PhD dissertation, University of Hawai'i, 2015), 6.

59. Haglund, "Dule Poli-Aesthetic Movement," 74.

60. Carlos Andrés Duque Acosta, Jorge Leonardo Orozco Holguín, and Víctor Manuel Quintero Uribe, "Cosmovision, Good Living and Life Plans: Similarities and Differences in Relation to the Philosophy of the Indigenous and Afro People in Three Populations in Colombia," *Revista Lumen Gentium* 6, no. 2 (2022): 75–87, https://revistas.unicatolica.edu.co/revista/index.php/LumGent/article/download/458/259

61. Tom Schofield, David Kirk, Telmo Amaral, et al., "Archival Liveness: Designing with Collections before and during Cataloguing and Digitization," *Digital Humanities Quarterly* 9, no. 30 (2015), http://www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/9/3/000227/000227.html

62. Megan Ward and Adrian S. Warnicki, "The Archive After Theory," in *Debates in the Digital Humanities 2019*, ed. Matthew K. Gold and Lauren F. Klein (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019), 202.

63. Ward and Warnicki, "The Archive After Theory," 202.

64. What follows is a reflection on the design, production, and creation of Corpografías, a digital archive that documents the artistic practices of Afro and Indigenous Colombian communities and the role these practices play in processes of memory, peacebuilding, and reconciliation in the Colombian Pacific. I cowrote an earlier version of this section with Olga Lucía Sorzano, the postdoctoral researcher of the project, for publication in a 2021 special issue of *Contemporary Theatre Review* on the significance of archives. As with most long-term grant projects, sometimes things do not get finished on time. Writing together helped us process the intellectual goals, failures, and challenges we encountered. The last section of this chapter features some excerpts from that article in an updated account of the original publication with more of my own personal reflection given the passing of time. At times, it may still read as a report, but I believe it is valuable to share with other potential researchers, students, and future ethnographers the methodological and practical components of doing this kind of work. Funding bodies sometimes require a stoic tone in the writing. Although I am not always a fan of this particular type of written expression, in this instance, it does provide a pedagogical example on how to conceptualize, materialize, and ultimately reflect on (digital) ethnographic work across multiple levels of difference.

65. Marcela Fuentes, *Performance Constellations: Networks of Protest and Activism in Latin America* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2019), 12.

66. Fuentes, *Performance Constellations*, 16.

67. Fuentes, *Performance Constellations*, 12.

68. Anne Burdick, *Digital Humanities* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012), 7–11.

69. Safiya Umoja Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism* (New York: New York University Press, 2018), 33.

70. Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide* (London: Routledge, 2014), 19.

71. Santos, *Epistemologies of the South*, viii–ix.

72. Elizabeth Povinelli, "The Woman on the Other Side of the Wall: Archiving the Otherwise in Postcolonial Digital Archives," *Differences* 22, no. 1 (2011): 153.

73. The important work of Roopika Risam, beginning with her book *New Digital Worlds: Postcolonial Digital Humanities in Theory, Praxis, and Pedagogy* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2019), offers deep reflection on the role and development of PDH.

74. Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 36.

75. "Embodied Performances in Processes of Memory and Reconciliation in Four Territories of Chocó and the Pacific Medio of Colombia: Guapi, Unguía, Bojayá and Buenaventura," UKRI/Newton Fund grant with Colciencias at Universidad de Antioquia (AH/R013748/1).

76. Stephanie Vella, "Reconsidering Archives and Performance," *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 40, no. 2 (2018): 133–37.

77. Kevin Everod Quashie, "Introduction: Why Quiet," in *The Sovereignty of Quiet: Beyond Resistance in Black Culture* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2012), 6.

78. *Vivir sabroso* is a local expression used by Afro communities in the Pacific. It denotes their worldview or "life philosophy" that involves daily practices such as traveling along rivers, creating kinship, accompanying the dead, going to the crops, going to the gold mines, and celebrating the patron saint's festivities, all fundamental in finding a balance that makes life *sabrosa* (delicious). See Natalia Quiceno Toro, *Vivir sabroso: Luchas y movimientos afroatrateños en Bojayá, Chocó, Colombia* (Bogotá: Universidad del Rosario, 2016).

79. *Buen vivir* derives from the Quechua concept *sumak kawsay* and Aymara concept *suma qamaña*. It "embraces the broad notion of well-being and cohabitation with others and Nature . . . the concept is also plural, as there are many different interpretations depending on cultural, historical and ecological setting," Eduardo Gudynas, "Buen Vivir: Today's Tomorrow," *Development* 54 (2011): 441.

80. Kaitlin M. Murphy, *Mapping Memory: Visuality, Affect, and Embodied Politics in the Americas* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2019), 5.

81. Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011). Thank you María del Rosario for pointing me toward this when we were discussing the synergies in our work one April evening in Riverside.

82. María del Rosario Acosta López, "From Aesthetics as Critique to Grammars of Listening: On Reconfiguring Sensibility as a Political Task," *Journal of World Philosophies* 6, no. 1 (2021): 141, https://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/jwp/article/view/4548

83. Acosta López, "Aesthetics as Critique," 141.

84. Katie Shilton and Ramesh Srinivasan, "Participatory Appraisal and Arrangement for Multicultural Archival Collections," *Archivaria* 63, no. 1 (2007): 90; Gabriella Giannachi, *Archive Everything: Mapping the Everyday* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016), 99–100.

85. Michael Rothberg, "Multidirectional Memory," *Témoigner: Between History and Memory*, no. 119 (2014), http://journals.openedition.org/temoigner/1494 (accessed July 23, 2020).

86. Giannachi, *Archive Everything*, 109.

87. Andrés Bermúdez Liévano, "Political Tussle over Truth and Memory in Colombia," JusticeInfo.net, Hirondelle Foundation, March 19, 2020, https://www.justiceinfo.net/en/truth-commissions/44027-political-tussle-over-truth-and-memory-in-colombia.html

88. Maria Alejandra Navarrete and Laura Alonso, "Overview of Violence Against Social Leaders in Colombia," InSight Crime, February 18, 2020, https://www.insightcrime.org/news/analysis/overview-violence-social-leaders-colombia/

89. Security issues were a major concern, especially when members of the community shared intimate stories. Although interviews were mainly focused on artistic processes without involving information that could put communities at risk, the ongoing situation of social leaders in Colombia demands special attention. In this case, regular ethical procedures and consent forms were not necessarily enough, and a more "reflexive and flexible approach to ethical decision making" was required. Participants were asked before and after testimonies were provided if they were amenable to those stories becoming public. Responses in many cases were that the situation of abandonment and violence in the regions are well known and highly documented. However, as Caroline Tagg et al. remind us, following Maggie Kubanyiova's "ethics of caring," researchers must carefully decide which content goes public. Researchers must care for participants, their intimacy, emotions, and openness, even more when involving social media, WhatsApp, instant messages, and informal conversation in communications with them.

90. "Panamá Sees More Than Seven-Fold Increase in Number of Migrant Children Crossing Through Darien Gap," UNICEF, March 5, 2020, https://www.unicef.org/lac/en/press-releases/Panamá-sees-more-seven-fold-increase-number-migrant-children-crossing-through-darien

91. There is evidence however, of Indigenous groups playing marimba, *el piano de la selva* (the jungle's piano), an instrument brought from Africa in the slave trade (see Birenbaum Quintero, *Rites, Rights, and Rhythms*). Indigenous weavings and handicrafts are also significant and commercialized by associations like Rios Unidos, a rural cooperative of Afro-descendant women that promotes collective work to reaffirm the power of being women of African descent in their own ways of organizing and coming together for mutual aid, herbology, and healing work. This reveals the existence of networks of support between Afro and Indigenous groups.

92. For details on Tejiendo Saberes and Semblanzas please visit "Clases y ensayos, proceso de formación," Corpografías, https://Corpografías.com/clases-y-ensayos-procesos-de-formacion/; for details about the legacy of the Torres family and photos from the personal archive of Jorge Mario Múnera about the Torres family please visit "Dinistia de los Torres," Corpografías, https://Corpografías.com/dinastia-de-los-torres/

93. A revealing connection with Indigenous groups manifests in the production and

staging of the play; the theater collective consulted and included Indigenous characters to help them mediate with the souls and spirits of those who were not properly buried according to the Afro tradition. The expertise of Indigenous spirit mediation was identified as a valuable contribution of this group in the context of the massacre and the seventeen years between the assassination of the victims and their burial.

94. *Minga* derives from the Quechua *mink'a* and is associated with forms of community work in Andean Indigenous communities. It is conceived as a practice, or rather a lifestyle, of sharing that involves human and spiritual exchange, knowledge, and collective production. *Uramba* stems from an Africanist word that connotes solidarity.

95. Interview with the research team June 16, 2020. Translation by Blanco and Sorzano.

96. Kevin Quashie, *The Sovereignty of Quiet: Beyond Resistance in Black Culture*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2012

97. Interview with the Royal Holloway / Universidad de Antioquia research team, June 11, 2020.

98. Interviewed for Corpografías on July 13, 2020.

99. Interviewed for Corpografías on November 16, 2019.

100. Giannachi, *Archive Everything*, 60.

101. Quashie, *Sovereignty*, 3.

102. Informal conversation held in Guapi (March 10, 2020) while talking about traditions and the production of the archive. Author's translation from Spanish to English.

103. Vella, *Reconsidering Archives and Performance*, 133.

104. Interview with Juana on March 10, 2020, in Guapi. Translation by Blanco and Sorzano.

105. Interview with Nany on March 9, 2020, in Guapi. Translation by Blanco and Sorzano.

106. Interview with Elver on March 10, 2020, in Guapi. Translation by Blanco and Sorzano.

107. Informal conversation with Nany held in Guapi on March 10, 2020, while talking about the relevance and uses of Corpografías. Translation by Blanco and Sorzano.

108. Interview with John Erick on June 16, 2020.

109. Interview with Elvia on September 8, 2019, in Bojayá.

110. Interview with José Luis on November 16, 2019, in Bojayá.

111. A Tafur Villareal, "Política cultural y construcción de paz en Colombia 1990–2002," *NOVUM* 6 (2016): 18–34.

112. Santos, *Epistemologies of the South*. Epistemological justice stems from Santos's idea about cognitive injustice. Cognitive injustice is when systems of knowledge production fail to recognize the different ways people around the world, especially those of the global South, know and produce knowledge. Epistemological justice is an attempt to render their knowledges and world-making capabilities as valuable as the Eurocentric models of knowledge rendered universal. Transitional justice refers to how governments respond to aftereffects and legacies of human rights violations, while symbolic justice is an attempts to render justice through ceremonial, spectacular, and performative elements (e.g., Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa).

113. Luis Carlos Sotelo Castro, "Not Being Able to Speak Is Torture: Performing Listening to Painful Narratives," *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 14, no. 1 (2020): 221.

114. McKittrick, *Dear Science*, 125.

115. McKittrick, *Dear Science*, 127.

116. Giannachi, *Archive Anything*, 106.

117. While these four territories appear close by on a map, there is no easy way to connect them. No national highway exists, much of the land is covered in thick vegetation, and riverway transportation has many limitations.

118. Laura E. Pérez, "Enrique Dussel's *Etica de la liberación*, U.S. Women Of Color Decolonizing Practices, and Coalitionary Politics Amidst Difference," *Qui Parle: Critical Humanities and Social Sciences* 18, no. 2 (2010): 121–46.

Conclusion

1. Lina Britto and A. Ricardo López-Pedreros, eds., *Histories of Perplexity: Colombia, 1970s–2010s* (New York: Routledge, 2024).

2. Saidiya Hartman, "Crow Jane Makes a Modest Proposal," in Phoebe Boswell et al., *Five Manifestos for the Beautiful World* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2025).

3. José Medina, *The Epistemology of Protest: Silencing, Epistemic Activism, and the Communicative Life of Resistance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2023), 240.

4. My research group met and watched their rehearsals and subsequent performance in Bogotá in November 2018.

5. MAFAPO (Madres de los Falsos Positivos de Colombia) is a collective of mothers and relatives of young men who were victims of extrajudicial killings by the Colombian military between 2002 and 2008. These young men were presented as guerrillas killed in combat—a practice known as *falsos positivos* (false positives). MAFAPO was founded in 2010, and its activism includes public demonstrations, artistic memorials like the *No parimos hijos pa' la guerra* mural, and participation in legal proceedings, notably with Colombia's Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP). In 2024, MAFAPO collaborated with the JEP to publicly read the names of 1,934 victims, emphasizing the human cost of these atrocities. The corporation Jóvenes Creadores del Chocó, led by Katherin Gil, was started in 2008 in Quibdó, with the objective of training young people in traditional and urban dance and allowing them to conceive an artistic life project in one of the most violent cities in Colombia. The Saüyee'pia Wayuu Foundation is a private cultural organization, nonprofit and based in Uribia, Guajira, created to develop processes to strengthen the Wayuu cultural identity and its values and social and spiritual principles through music, dance, and traditional games. La Guardia Indígena Nacional is a civil organization that is conceived as an ancestral organism and a collective of resistance, unity, and autonomy that defends the territory and the life plan of the Indigenous communities, in response to the factors of violence that threaten the well-being and harmony of their peoples, based on the Law of Origin, the exercise of their own right, and the 1991 constitution. It is not a police structure but a humanitarian and citizen resistance mechanism that also seeks to protect and disseminate their ancestral culture. Its mandate derives from its own assemblies and depends directly on Indigenous leadership. Krump Colombia is the name of a variety of well-known Colombian krump dancers that were brought together to perform in *Develaciones*. Some of the best Colombian krump dancers from different "fams" (families) participated, including Nina, Dacita, Arkos, Fox, Destino, and Big Chino Slim. The last two direct the youth dance company ABC. Oscar González,

better known as "Guache," is a Colombian visual artist and muralist who combines elements of traditional muralism with graffiti and contemporary design aesthetics. Guache has exhibited in solo and group shows in Bogotá, at the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo (2014), and the Centro Colombo Americano in Bogotá (2016), also at galleries in Berlin (2014), Buenos Aires (2015), Toulouse, Paris (2017), and New York (2017). Together with the collective Bogotá Street Art, he has published the editorial projects *Calle esos ojos* (2012) and *Levantar y pegar* (2014). Tambores de Cabildo is a cultural organization led by musicians and managers Rafael Ramos and Cecilia Silva that contributes to the recognition, respect, and dissemination of the cultural diversity of Colombia. Its training programs—based on learning how to play the drum—strengthen the community's own appropriation of their Afro-Colombian heritage as well as their well-being and educational development of the children, adolescents, leaders, and families of the *corregimiento* of the Boquilla, to the north of Cartagena, a land of fishermen artisans and seventeen thousand inhabitants. Tonada is a musical ensemble founded in 2014 in Barranquilla to research, study, practice, teach, and perform the *bullerengue*, a traditional Afro-Colombian musical and dance form (a mix of cultural practices from maroon communities and Indigenous from that area) that originated on the Caribbean coast of Colombia, particularly in regions like the departments of Bolívar, Atlántico, Córdoba, and Sucre. The majority of these descriptions come from my own translation of the *Develaciones* program notes as well as my knowledge of these groups or cultural forms.

6. "Sistematización del Legado," Comisión de La Verdad, published 2022, https://www.comisiondelaverdad.co/sistematizacion-del-legado (accessed July 15, 2024).

7. María Lugones, *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes: Theorizing Coalition Against Multiple Oppressions* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003).

8. Arturo Escobar, Michal Osterweil, and Kriti Sharma, *Relationality: An Emergent Politics of Life Beyond the Human* (London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2024), 165.

9. An earlier version of this chapter appears in Katerina Paramana and Anita Gonzalez, eds., Performance, Dance and Political Economy: Bodies at the End of the World (London: Bloomsbury Press, 2021).

10. Paolo Vignolo, "Santa María de la Antigua del Darién, ¿De lugar del olvido a lugar de la memoria?," in *Historia, cultura y sociedad colonial: Siglos XVIXVIII. Temas, problemas y perspectivas*, ed. César A. Hurtado Orozco (Medellín: La Carreta Editores, 2008).

11. Some of the layout of the Archaeological Park is based on the Gunadule cosmology of the spiral.

12. He was hired by the ICANH for the event.

13. Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 51.

14. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 40.

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